

**A DESCRIPTION OF THE KOM SPEECH WITH SPECIAL  
EMPHASIS ON VARIATION**

***KARUNG TARUN KOM***

**Under the supervision of  
Prof. J.WAR**



**TO  
THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS  
School of Humanities and Education  
NORTH EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY, SHILLONG-22  
2009**

Ph.D

K  
O  
M

2009

---

## DECLARATION

I, Karung Tarun Kom, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, and the contents of this thesis did not form the basis for the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university/institute.

This thesis is being submitted to the North-Eastern Hill University for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics.

(Prof. J. War)  
Supervisor  
Department of Linguistics  
North-Eastern Hill University  
Shillong-22

(Karung Tarun Kom)  
Research Scholar  
Department of Linguistics  
North-Eastern Hill University  
Shillong-22



**NORTH EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS  
SHILLONG-793022**

---

**Dated.....**

**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled '*A Description of the Kom Speech with Special Emphasis on Variation*' submitted to the Department of Linguistics, North Eastern Hill University, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics, is an authentic work done by *Mr. Karung Tarun Kom* and has not been submitted in part or full in this or any university for any degree or diploma.

**Prof. Juanita War  
Supervisor  
Department of Linguistics  
North Eastern Hill University,  
Shillong-22**

**Dr. Shailendra Kumar Singh  
Head  
Department of Linguistics  
North Eastern Hill University  
Shillong-22**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have been fortunate in the long course of my research in Linguistics. Today at its completion, I would graciously wish to convey my gratitude and appreciation for the help, advice and for the way how this thesis has come to shape, to all the people who have been involve with it.

I bow my head with folded palms to Prof. Juanita War, my guide, who in spite of her very busy schedule has been very patient and understanding despite all my limitations. Without her immense help and guidance this thesis would not have seen the light of day. It is a privilege for me to have her as a teacher and a guide. My heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation to you and thanks a lot Ma'am.

Prof. Rajesh Sachdeva (Director I/C Central Institute of Indian Languages -CIIL, Mysore) who as a teaching faculty in the Department of Linguistics, NEHU and as my first guide need a special mention, as it was his scholarly mentoring and advice which led to conceiving the very topic of this research. Thank you Sir.

I also wish to thank Dr. S.K. Singh and the teaching faculties Barika Khyriem, Saralyn Lyngdoh, Bijoy and Dr. Uma as well as the non-teaching faculties for their help at different stages of my research.

Special mention for my friends, Nipuni, Dr. Heshu, Dr. C. Bareh, Mark, Rabha, and my fellow researchers in the Department of Linguistics for their intellectual inputs, encouragement, help and delightful company.

Thank you, Great minds. I would also like to mention my friends Paolenthang, Dr. Sonreng, Wilson, Asangpao, John, Haans and Charles for helping me in typing the manuscript, thanks a lot. And I also want to thank Ms. Dolme, Ms. Vidya, and Ms. Barnali Oinam for their help in my work and for their friendship.

My special thanks to Mr. Alen, Mr. Nando, Mr. Chungneithang, Mr. Julius, Mr. Jonny, Mr. Angampa, Ms. Mercy Leivon, Ms. Caroline, Ms. Alphina Karung, and Ms. Margret Serto, who were always there whenever I needed them for my data collection. Their knowledge in their respective language varieties made my research a lot easier. Their help made me accessible to every regions of Kom speaking area of Manipur. Thanks to you all.

I extend my sincere thanks to Ms. Bashisha for her hand and heart in this work. I am forever indebted to you. Also to my Langlen, I owe a special thank you.

Last but certainly not the least I thank God the Almighty for his constant blessings all through my research work. My parents, my brothers and sister and their families who for all my research work endured through till the end. Their constant support, love, care and concern were the source of my strength to have come this far. Words are not enough to thank you all yet I say so as a sense of my gratitude to you all.

Thanks.

(K. Tarun Kom)

# **CONTENTS**

<i>Declaration</i>	i
<i>Certificate</i>	ii
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	iii
<i>Contents</i>	v
<i>Abbreviations &amp; Symbols</i>	x
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>1-24</b>
<b>1.1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2. Etymology of the word ‘Kom’</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.3. Origin and Their Exodus</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.4. Geographical Profile</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.5. Demographic Profile</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.6. Literacy Rate</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.7 Economy</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.8. The People, Their Dresses and Ornaments</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.9 Festivals</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.10 Hunting</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.11. Warfare</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.12. Beliefs and Practices</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.13. Marriages</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.14. Death</b>	<b>15</b>

1.15. Food Habits	17
1.16. Clans' Stratification	17
1.17. The Chief	18
1.18. Polity	18
1.18.1. Functions of the Council	19
1.19. The Language	21
1.20. Position of Kom in the Tibeto-Burman Language family	21
1.21. Family Tree Diagram	24
<b>Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>25-46</b>
2.1. Kom Literature	26
2.2. Review of Research Works in Kom	28
2.3. Review of the Related Literatures	30
2.4. Traditional Dialectology	32
2.5. Methodology	33
2.6. Criteria for Informant in Traditional Dialectology	38
2.7. Sociolinguistics	39
2.7.1. Semantic Variation	40
2.8. Colour Terms	40
2.9. Literature on Borrowing	41
2.10. Literature Review of Language Change	42

2.11. Literature Review on Standardization	44
2.12. The Choice of the Subject and Explication of Goals	44
2.13. Materials and Methods	45
<b>Chapter 3 PHONOLOGY OF KOM</b>	<b>47-96</b>
3.1. Introduction	47
3.2. Classification of Sounds	48
3.3. Phonemic Inventory	48
3.3.1. Consonants	49
3.3.2. Description, Classification and Distribution of Consonants in Kom	50
3.3.3. Minimal/ Contrastive Pairs of Consonants	65
3.4. Consonant Clusters	70
3.4.1. Definition	70
3.4.2. Consonant Clusters in Kom	71
3.4.3. Consonant Sequences in Kom	72
3.5. Vowels	74
3.5.1. Vowel Contrast	80
3.6. Diphthongs	82
3.6.1 Classification of Diphthongs in Kom	83
3.7. Syllable	84
3.7.1. Syllable Structure of Kom	87
3.8. Tone	92
3.8.1 Definition	92

<b>3.8.2 Tones in Kom</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>3.9. Phonological Processes</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>3.9.1. Assimilation</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>3.9.2. Deletion</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>3.9.3. Vowel lengthening</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>3.9.4. Free Variation</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Chapter 4     LANGUAGE VARIATION</b>	<b>97-134</b>
<b>4.1. Introduction</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>4.2. Phonological variation</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>4.2.1. Devoicing of Nasals Lateral and Flap</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>4.2.2. Consonant Clusters</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>4.3. Lexical Variation</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>4.4. Morphological variation</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>4.5. Syntactic variation</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>4.5.1 Verbal agreement</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>4.5.2 Question words</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>4.6. Semantic Variation</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>4.6.1 Verbs</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>4.6.2. Colour terms</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Chapter 5     LANGUAGE IN CONTACT</b>	<b>135-171</b>
<b>5.0. Introduction</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>5.1. Code switching and Code mixing</b>	<b>135</b>

<b>5.2. Borrowing</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>5.3. Language Standardization</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>5.3.1. Goals of Language Standardization</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>5.3.2. Kom in the process of Standardization</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>5.3.3. The need of Standardization of Kom</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>5.3.4. Standardization of the Writing System of Kom</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>5.3.5. Suggestions</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>5.3.6. Observation</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>Chapter 6 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION</b>	<b>172-178</b>
<i>Tree Diagram and Map</i>	<b>179-180</b>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<b>181-191</b>

## Abbreviations and Symbols

AGR	Agreement
EGR	Ergative
F	Feminine
fut	Future
IMP	Imperative
M	Masculine
Mkr.	Marker
N	Noun
Q.	Question
Q-Mkr	Question marker
Sg	Singular
SOV	Subject Object Verb
V	Verb
I	First Person
II	Second Person
III	Third Person
*	Ungrammatical
★	borrowed word having parallel native words.

DEDICATED

to my Mom and Dad  
for their Love and Prayer

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

*Kom*, an ethno-linguistic marker, stands for both the people and the language. *Kom* is one of the minority linguistic communities of the Northeastern states of Manipur. *Kom* is one of the nomenclatures of a larger group called *Kom-rem*. *Kom-rem* consists of five indigenous minority groups of smaller tribal linguistic communities- Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, *Kom* and Purum. The term *Kom-rem* literally means the *people who emerge from the cave*. The five constituent tribes share a common history and legends of cave origination theory.

### 1.2 ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD KOM

There are various views as to how the people came to be known as *Kom*. One of the views is that the word ‘*Kom*’ is derived from the word *Lukakom* that means ‘wearing turban’ in *Kom* language. From *Lukakom* it gradually moved to *Kakom*, which means ‘to wear’, and from *Kakom* to ‘*Kom*’. According to this view, *Kom* literally means the *people who wear turban or turban people*. Another view that slightly substantiates the previous view is that the *Koms* are the descendants of *Puhring* and *Pudam* who kept long hair and wore turban. This view is supported by a folk song that goes like this;

*Tena umin sharsam kanjok,*

*Thlung lu kankom eya.*

*Kharbom tipun sersam jaklei,*

*Thlung lu kande eya...*

A free translation of the song is;

*Our ancestors grow long hair,*

*And wore turban.*

*But half man half beast did not grow long hair*

*And wore no turban.*

There is also yet another view that holds that the word *Kom* might have been derived from the Manipuri word *Kom* meaning *small opening on the earth's surface or the cavity on the earth or a cave*.

However, it is not easy to explain the term *Kom* as there is no written document to support the claims. The only resources available at our disposal are the folk tales, folk songs and the legends that have been handed down from generation to generation-through oral narratives.

### **1.3 ORIGIN AND THEIR EXODUS**

Koms believe that God created them. Serto, S. (1995)<sup>1</sup> maintained that, “from the very inception of creation, our forefathers told us that they were created by Pathen (God). Firstly, he made man and secondly, woman. Pathen was pleased to call them ‘Mi’ (man). Then Pathen was also pleased to make them husband and wife and called them ‘Mipa leh Minu’ (Man and woman) and blessed them.” He further states that the traditional song supports this belief.

---

<sup>1</sup> Serto, S. (1995, p274). Sanajaoba, N. (ed), 1995. *Manipur: Past and Present* Vol. III (Nagas and Kuki-chins). New Delhi: Mittal publications.

*minu leh mipa leiranot saye-eh*

*Mi inthokna tita ninge yah*

A free translation of the song goes;

*Man and women united in love*

*shall I call it the origin of man.*

According to the traditional belief, Kom people emerged out of *Khurpui*, a *big cave*. This view draws its support from the folktales and the folksongs that tell about the journey of their ancestors until they emerged out of the cave. One of the most common folksongs sung while performing *khurpui laam* (cave dance) goes as-

*Kanhong suk eh, kanhong suk eh,*

*Khurpui ah khan kanhong suk eh...*

A free translation of the song is;

*We came out, we came out,*

*From the cave we came out...*

Another similar cave song that the Koms sing about their origin goes;

*Keini kanhong eh, khurpui ah kansok,*

*Kamkeirang in hma ah aleingak...*

A free translation of the song is;

*We came, from the cave we came out.*

*The Tiger waits us in the front.*

Karung (1976)<sup>2</sup> mentioned, “we learn from our ancestors that our forefathers lived in the nether world. Afterwards they came out one by one through a hole which is in the fort of Manipur”. The myth has it that while trying to come out from the cave, they were obstructed by a tiger and nobody could come out of the cave as the tiger lay in wait to kill them. The *Karungpa* who came out of the cave wearing a loincloth called *ponthe*, made friendship with the tiger. He told the tiger that he himself is a kind of tiger. As his cloth resembled the skin of the tiger, the real tiger believed it and that was the reason that refrain the descendants of the *Karungpa* from eating a tiger or any feline until today. *Saichapa*, the bowman, after coming out of the cave killed the tiger with his arrow. *Leivonpa* cut off the tiger's tongue and wrapped it up in his waist. These people became the heads of the various Kom clans, namely Karong, Saiche, Leivon, Tellein, Hmangte, Serto etc. After killing the Tiger, they came out of the cave and settled in the highland (*Chungkhopui*). All the Komrem group of communities have similar story regarding the origin of their tribe. However, there is a slight variation in the story from one tribe to another. All these communities believe that they came out from a cave.

According to Karung (op.cit), Kom people entered Burma between 100 B.C. and 100 A.D., and sometime in 200 A.D., they moved towards Arakan Hills and Bay of Bengal. Then the Kom people entered Tripura and from there they entered Manipur. It is believed that they came from Mongolia passing through China, Burma and settled in Tripura, Assam, and Manipur.

---

<sup>2</sup> Karung (1976. p62) in Singh, K.B, (ed) An introduction to Tribal language and culture of Manipur (7 Tribes). Imphal: Manipur State Kala Academy.

Serto, S. (ibid) also shared this view stating, “according to the historical course of migration, the Koms are said to have migrated from the land between North east Frontier area and Shan State of Burma. They entered Burma, moved to the Arakan and Lushai Hill and finally entered Tripura. The Soktes, who were more powerful tribe than the rest drove out the Koms, Thadous and other tribes from the entire Chin Hills.”

It is also believed that the Koms migrated from place to place in search of fortune and in search of suitable place for settlement. One of their traditional songs says that;

*Sima tiang mo kirangvan aom?*  
*Marra tiangmo kirangvan aom?*  
*Ruangthei pumkhat choi-inlange;*  
*Ravan ajong seri-bah*

An English translation is;

*Where will be my fortune?*  
*In the East or the West?*  
*Taking a necklace,*  
*Let us go to seek our fortune.*

Another song that describes about their journey as the wandering tribe goes;

*Khulla jinjin kanlon karra,*  
*Kanchung simni thang kanriate-ah,*  
*Thunglam-amo, phelam amo,*  
*Naleingak roh, sendango-eh*

An English translation is rendered as;

*While marching on to seek fortune,  
we travel up to the mount, and  
down in the valley, to and fro,  
under the scorching sunshine .*

It is believed that Koms were among the first group of tribal communities to have arrived in Manipur. McCulloch (1980) stated that “The Kom at one time was powerful tribe, and their chief village not very long ago contained so many as six-hundred houses...” Serto, S. (ibid) stated, “In Meetei chronicles, the Kom was also mentioned as one of the early settler groups. In the legend of *Khamba and Thoibi*, the name of Kom is mentioned here and there (a free translation is ‘When *Khamba* caught the wild tiger in the field of Khoirentak’) *Khambana Kei Phaba* and *Leilangba* chapters incorporate the Kom *Khoirentakki lamyaida pamba keibu Khambana phabada*. The place cited is Kom village. He further stated “...when *Khamba* went in search of flowers he went to Mantak Kom village and plucked flower from there for his fiancé, *Thoibi* ”. Singh (1986) mentioned that the old Kuki are Kom, Chothe, Koireng, Purum, Mantak, Namphou, Lamgang or Hiroi. He further stated that the old Kukis are those neo-Burmese who migrated to Manipur by about 11<sup>th</sup> century AD.

#### **1.4 GEOGRAPHICAL PROFILE**

The Kom tribe originally inhabited the hills lying south of the Imphal valley and some in the hill area -the western part of Manipur, but today, they are scattered in a number of villages and many are settled in the plain of Imphal. This has exposed

them to other cultures and societies and has brought about changes in the Kom society.

## **1.5 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

There is no accurate documentation regarding the population of Kom. The recorded population of the Kom is still a controversy. The Koms, according to 2001 Census number 15,467. The survey report of the Komrem Students Union in Manipur places the total population of Kom at 21,858 individuals. Koms are found in the Northeastern states of Manipur, Nagaland, Assam and Tripura. The majority of the populations reside in Manipur. They are found in all the districts of Manipur and concentrated mainly in the districts of Churachandpur, Bishenpur and Senapati.

## **1.6 LITERACY RATE**

According to the 2001 Census, the literacy rate of the Kom tribe is 75% as against the population of 15,467 both male and female. However, the unofficial survey conducted by a religious group called the Komrem Baptist Churches Association (KRBCA), 90% literacy rate has been reported based on the knowledge of reading the Bible and writing.

## **1.7 ECONOMY**

The Koms are an agrarian society and self-subsistent in their economy. They practice both shifting (*chinglhei*) and wet land cultivation (*phailhei*). They cultivate rice, which is their staple food, and grow potatoes, millet, yam and sugarcane. Domesticated animals include pig, fowl, goat, cow, buffaloes, dog, cat, etc. Apart from agriculture, the people are also involved in other activities such as weaving,

handicraft, tailoring, horticulture etc. Some sections of the Kom community are also engaged in trade and working in government and private offices and institutions. Koms are dependent on forests mainly for resources like timber, bamboo, cane, honey, wax, turpentine oils, etc.

## **1.8 THE PEOPLE, THEIR DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS**

The Koms are predominantly mongoloid in looks and structure with brown skin and are well built physically. Brown (1873) observed that the Koms are usually of a medium height and incidentally with a few tall individuals. He further adds that they are well built and some of them are very muscular with longer arms.

Dresses of the Koms can broadly be classified into female clothing (*Nuhmeipon*) and male clothing (*Pasepon*). The men wear *der* that is a long thin towel and a shirt and shawl. They have *pase pon or saipuikhup* the shawl meant exclusively for men. Women wear sarong called *ponvei* and *Khamtlang*, *ponlak* with *Khonkhi*, a strap of cloth, are some of women's wear.

Both men and women wear traditional ornaments. Koms have traditional ornaments such as bangle (*khutkhi*), armband (*bunghar*), headgear (*lukhum*), earrings (*Korkhei*) and hairpin (*Shaikhoe*) etc. Necklace (*Thichong*), armbands of metals worn in the upper arm called *her* and the women folks wear brass ring ornaments.

Men wear silver earrings, this is done ten days after birth, and necklace is worn before marriage but removed after marriage. These ornaments are mainly used during ceremonies and festivals.

## 1.9 FESTIVALS

The Koms are fond of celebrations and have several festivals celebrated during different sessions of the year. Most of the festivals are celebrated with songs, music and dances. They express their joy at the completion of plantation and harvesting, victory over enemies, and successful hunting. The cultural festivals are performed in each season of the agricultural year. Some of the festivals are celebrated collectively while others are individual.

*Seling* is a harvesting festival where boys have to jump over a cow tied to an erected wooden pole. Every boy is to jump over the cow and everyone who succeeds is given a piece of cloth as an appreciation of the courage. A cow is then killed and the meat is used to feed the boys and girls who work in the paddy field.

*Lhungphun* festival refers to the erection of a mega-stone in remembrance of a person mainly after his or her death. It is also done while the person is alive. On this day all families and friends are invited. It is the occasion of giving tribute to the person for whom the stone erection is done. A ceremony is performed by the person as a fulfillment of obligations in one's lifetime or for the person by his family to commemorate or to remember the person.

*Kumther* is the New Year's Festival based on the old Meitei calendar. It is same as the *cheirouba* of the Meitei, and *uggadi* of Kannada.

*Lamkut* is the biggest and the longest festivals of the Koms. The festivity continues for one month. At dusk, songs and dances (*Lamkut lam*) are held in every house, accompanied by a feast to sanctify the houses and to keep them as sacred places throughout the year.

**Bechap Lam** is celebrated after completing plantation of crops. It is usually celebrated in the month of August (*Jhongpui*) and sometimes until the month of September (*karam*). The festival is celebrated in the moonlit night only. This festival is not celebrated every year because it takes time. The festival is celebrated for a successful and fruitful harvest.

When the whole village completes plantation, the labour organisation called *lawm* request, any well to do man who could host the celebration do so for the whole village. The man who hosts the celebration gives a grand feast to the *lawm* on the final day of the festival. *Sam-pu*, *lhapu*, the musician and the song master, and the elders in the *lawm* assist the *lawm* members in celebrating the festival. The *lawm* gather every night in each of the houses in the village. They dance and sing the songs of the family. In case the family has no songs, the *lawm* would compose songs for the family. During the house visit, the leaders led the *lawm* members strictly. They have to be punctual and sincere. If anyone is found to be late or irregular, the person is punished. After the *lawm* has visited every household, they gather in the house of the host for a feast. The host (*in-tlung*) provides the *lawm* with *ju* (rice-beer) and rice only. The *lawm* contributed meat and *ju*, which they make themselves with the rice they have collected from the village.

**Kut** is celebrated after harvest, which falls in the month of November (*Pheva*). It is believed that, if the harvest ends successfully, the next harvest will be more productive. A group of villagers (*lawm*) harvested for the man who is the host in the village's feast. The *lawm* carried all the rice to his house using their cloth. Usually the last one to harvest hosts the *Kut*. In the evening after the *lawm* has completed the harvest, the host kills a huge Mithun (a kind of Buffalo) for a feast. The whole night

they enjoy by drinking, eating and dancing. In the morning, the *lawm* departs to their respective houses.

### **1.10 HUNTING**

The Koms are excellent hunters. Hunting is not only a means to survive but it is also considered as a sporting activity. The hunters use bows and arrows and the arrows are laced with poison using lactations of wild trees and the glands of some highly poisonous snakes. Hunting dogs are trained for the purpose besides setting up traps and snares of various types.

The Koms hunts various wild animals for their delicious taste and some to ward them off from their crops. Birds are also killed using catapults for consumption. Hunting expeditions are also organized on certain occasions. When the animal is killed, the hunters enter the village singing merrily, beating gong (*Shum*) and blowing trumpets (*Roshem*). Usually, the hunter who gets the first strike at the killed animal retains the head of the animal. A foreleg is given to his sister if any, the breast portion is given to his intimate friend and the rest of the villagers would share the remaining portion. Killing of tiger, elephant and other ferocious animals are regarded as a heroic achievement for which a feast is arranged. The head of the animals killed by a hunter is usually kept in the homes as trophy. A man who can kill 100 animals is highly honored in the society for which a pillar is erected in his memory.

### **1.11 WARFARE**

According to Karung (ibid) 'Koms were and are peace loving people even though they took offensive operations but always took a defensive position'.

However, if their enemy were cruel they would flay the enemy and dry the skin in the sun. They plan their strategy with the help of *thempu* (the magician) who wears magic gear called *shonrei*, which will make him and his force invisible.

## **1.12 BELIEFS AND PRACTICES**

Non-Christian Koms believe in *Pathen*, the supreme God. *Pathen* is the creator of all living beings and the Universe. They believe in the existence of soul after death and that the soul goes to the land of the dead *kathi-kho*. Heaven and hell are considered as the abodes of these souls. People with good deeds inherit heaven after death. The *Pathen* (God) is worshipped for good health, good harvest and the prosperity of the village as a whole by offering sacrifices, praying and performing other rituals. They also believed in the existence of supernatural powers and their relationship with humans. They also worship *Inn-lai* as their household God and make sacrificial offerings of a particular breed of hen, pigs and dogs blood etc...to other spirits. These sacrifices were performed by the priest *thempu or maipa*, who was also an expert in black magic, which is known as *doi*.

**Magic:** In the past, the Koms practised different forms of magic, which also played an important role in their religious life. Magic was considered as an art. *Doikungpu*, the chief magician, imparted certain level of this art to the interested and capable young boys and girls up to certain levels. They used their skill of magic as weapons to fight against their adversaries and even in hunting expeditions. Their expertise in magic helped them at times of hostility.

**Khuser/Khu- inthoi/ Khukham:** this is a ritual performed in the month of January every year. It is a ritual practiced by the village to sanctify the village. During

this ritual, the villagers are required to be in the village and no outsiders were allowed to enter in the village from dawn to dusk. Male members of the village go for hunting and if they come with an animal, a feast and a ritual are performed in the house of the person who killed the animal. However, if they could not get one on this day, an eagle or a bird is killed and offered as sacrifice. No fire is lit in any house until midday when the priest would light a fire in his own house. The villagers would then go and get the fire from his house and light their furnaces. In the ritual, a red dog would be killed and its head and intestines are hung at the village gate. Its blood would then be mixed with a root called *Ai* and sprinkled on the walls of every house in the village. It is done in the belief that evil spirits hate dog's blood.

However, with the advent of Christianity, these rituals and practices including magic (both black and white) for which they were once famous for, are no longer practised by the people.

### **1.13 MARRIAGES**

In Pre-Christian days and even to these days in some cases, marriage of a son or a daughter has to be arranged by the parents. For a male member, his mother's brother's daughter (*Hlodei*) is the preferred bride by the community. Parallel cousins marriage is forbidden in Kom society. Marriage within the clan is prohibited and marriage between sub-clans of a major-clan is also prohibited. The groom has to serve at his father-in-law's house for three years (this practice is no longer practised). This practice is known as *Numhei-hlo*. The alternate form of acquiring a bride is *Jorpui* or love marriage. The third form is through elopement. At present, the practice of acquiring a bride or a groom is done through mutual consent of both the parties. So, arrange and love marriages are the two most common forms of marriage. Monogamy

is mainly practised in the Kom community though some are found practising polygamy too. The reason for the polygamy is said to be due to the barrenness of the spouse.

***Bride price:*** Paying Bride price called *Jorman* is regarded important and is being practised strictly by the Koms. The bridegroom's family pays bride price to the family of the bride while fixing the marriage. It is practised with a strong social motive. Traditionally, there were four kinds of bride price, which has been practised from generation to generation. The first bride price is called *Alukhong-Akangk* or *Man lukacing*, which is the biggest bride price. This bride price consists of *Sum* (a brass gong) and well-grown mithun. The second bride price is *Sum-Kharpruk* or *mithun*. The third bride price is *Rangam*. This bride price is given to the eldest man of the groom's clan usually the eldest among the grandfathers of the boy, that is, the groom. This bride price is paid in cash around six rupees in olden days. The fourth bride price consists of a traditional shawl and a sum of rupees five. This bride price is given to the grandfather of the girl. *Sakamak-serjor* (son-in-laws and daughters) of the boy's father are each presented a traditional shawl. There had been changes though in the bride-price value nowadays. In modern days, the bride-price is payable in cash without kind, equivalent to its value.

***Nuchen or Nushik (mother's share):*** to show love and respect, the son-in-law gives a grand feast to the mother-in-law. On this day, all the friends and relatives of the mother and the daughters are invited for the feast. They dine together and spend the day with great enjoyment. A traditional shawl is presented to the mother. This tradition had been followed from ages and is still regarded as very important.

**Child Birth:** In the past, Kom women believed in supernatural things. They believed that during pregnancy, there were certain things a wife should restrain. Therefore, during pregnancy a woman took great care to observe the social taboos. According to the custom of the Koms, a pregnant woman should always cover her head to protect the baby from evil spirits. This was mostly done when a pregnant woman goes to the forest or outside the house.

In olden days, having baby twins was not preferred. Therefore, in order to avoid twins, a pregnant woman should not use certain materials used by a mother who had given birth to twins. Besides, a pregnant woman also avoided any doubled fruits or twin-fruits. It was also believed that the husband of the pregnant woman should not kill any living creature. The belief is that the child might not live long. All these beliefs were based on the knowledge and practical experiences of the elders through the ages.

When a child is born, the mother is not allowed to walk out of the house for five consecutive days. She is allowed to do so only when the baby is brought out of the house on the fifth day for name giving ceremony. This is called *Naiteso*, which means that the newly born child is brought out of the house.

#### **1.14 DEATH**

The Kom tribe accepts death as an unavoidable event of life. They believed that the spirit of a man after death remains with the family for a year, after which the spirit goes to heaven. They also believed in the existence of place called *mithikhu*, a place where the dead people live and the belief of the existence of the spirit of the

death. They follow different formalities at the time of death and for a year, till a ceremony called *lukasun*, proper dressing of the skull, was performed.

Death is generally classified into three divisions, namely natural death (*thi-phakathi*), childhood death (*naidong-a-kathi*) and unnatural death (*saar-a-akathi*).

**Natural death (Thi-pha-kathi):** When a person dies, each and every one of the relatives, far and near are immediately informed by sending some boys among the neighbours. All the friends and relatives of the deceased bring garlands of flowers and sometimes coins for the deceased believing that the spirit of the dead is still around; those who have lost someone earlier would send messages or things to the dead person through the person who had just died.

**Childhood Death (Naidong a akathi):** When an infant dies, the dead body is not buried in the same way as that of a grown up person. The dead body is buried in the nearby cemetery and the body will be carried through the hollow of the wall if any or through the window. No rituals or formalities are followed.

**Unnatural death (Saar-a-akathi):** People who face violent death, or are killed or murdered are regarded as having met with an unnatural death. The dead bodies of such people are not entitled to proper funeral rites, as in the case of the person who died a natural death. The dead body of such a person is not allowed to be brought into the village. The dead body is taken to the grave directly where formalities are performed as in natural death. However, in present days, this practice has changed except for those who commit suicide.

### **1.15 FOOD HABITS**

Most of the Koms are non-vegetarians. Their custom and their religion prohibited them from consuming animals that are sick and dead. Their custom also forbids eating of birds like crows, vultures, etc as they are regarded as unclean. People who practise magic are more conscious about their food habit as there are many prohibitions required to be maintained for practicing magic. Their staple food is rice supplemented by vegetables, *chatani*, and *anbut* (boiled vegetable without salt). They drink *waiju* a kind of rice-beer, *jukha* a type of country-made liquor.

### **1.16 CLANS' STRATIFICATION**

The clan system among the Koms is the most important aspect of its social system. The clan system still exists in the Kom society. The members of the clan believed that they are descendants of a common ancestor. The Koms believe that the clan and its sub-clans are closely related. The Kom society is divided into social groups, which are again sub-divided into smaller stratum. The clan is the biggest social group and it reflects familial and filial relationship. Clans that are exogamous are Karong, Leivon, Tellein, Serto, and Hmangte. A descendant is traced exclusively through the paternal line. The youngest male of the family looks after the ancestral home and inherits the parental properties.

Serto, M (2007) states "The Kom society originally had seven clans, called *Phung*. These seven clans are the major clans. There are nineteen sub-divisions of Kom clans. The major clans are- Parang, Hmangte, Kilong, Durlin, Leise, Sengte, and Leivon". Serto, S. (ibid) on the other hand maintains that, "The Koms are divided into six to seven main clans. Each clan is again divided into sub-clans. The name of the

clans had been derived according to the activities, they pursued when they came out from the cave. The clans are; Karong, Telen, Serto, Leivon, Hmangte and Lumpheng”.

### **1.17 THE CHIEF**

The village is the highest political unit of the Kom tribe. The village chief called *Sawang* or *Khullakpa* and his council members govern each village. The village chief and his council regulated the village administration. The chief’s consent is necessary for any immigrants in the village. The chief and his council are responsible for the administration of justice, enforcement of executive functioning, maintenance of social practices and customary laws.

McCulloch (ibid) said, “The heads of the pure Kom villages appeared elective...” However, the office of the chief is mostly hereditary if one individual or family founded the village. The chieftainship is passed on from the father to his eldest son. In the absence of any son, the eldest son of the chiefs’ closest relatives inherits the chieftainship.

### **1.18 POLITY**

The administrative system of the Koms is simple. The *Sawang* or the village chief is usually the founder of the village and is the supreme authority. However, according to McCulloch (ibid) he mentioned that the chief of the Kom villages who are elected does not have great powers or perquisite. The *Sawang* (chief) rules the village and runs the affairs of the village assisted by his *Semang-pachong* or the council members. Each council member is assigned to discharge a duty in connection with the village. The sawang appoints a minister on consensus with the villagers at the general meeting of the village.

### ***1.18.1 Functions of the Council***

The Kom village council usually consists of five members though the number depends on the population of the village. The council comprise of the following members;

1. Khullakpa - Village Headman.
2. Mantri (minister) - 2 mantries/ ministers.
3. Tlangva - the announcer or messenger.
4. Thempu -the priest.
5. Thirkasupa -Blacksmith

The *Khullakpa* or Chief is assisted by two *mantris* in the administration of the village. However, in some villages there is a post of *luklakpa* (the assistant chief). The chief and his council fulfill their responsibilities within the traditional customs of the community.

Each household honours the service of the *Khullakpa* or Chief of the village with five tins of rice in a year. However, his council members do not enjoy any such material benefits. The chief is the honoured guest at all village functions. He is given the privilege of the ‘first-meal’ in community feasts or festivals. In matters concerning the state government, the chief represents the village.

***Tlangva:*** He is in-charge of giving information to the villagers and his responsibilities include conveying decisions of the council meetings and gatherings of the villagers. In case the village has guests, he has to prepare food and arrange a place for the guests to lodge for the night.

***Thempu (priest):*** He is responsible for the rites and rituals in the village. He is also in-charge of the health of the villagers. He would attend to the villagers in times of sickness. He also performs sacrifices during religious festivals. He is highly regarded by the people for his important function. The person or the family concerned pays him for his service. However, nowadays the role of the *thempu* is almost non-existent.

***Thirkasupa (blacksmith):*** He is the village blacksmith. A man can be elected as a blacksmith only if he possesses the highest dexterity in black-smithy. He is responsible for making war weapons, like arrows, guns, swords, etc. He also make agricultural tools like hoes, axes, spades, etc, for the villagers.

Besides the above functions, the village council has its song leader called *Lhapu* and a traditional musician called *Sampu*. *Lhapu* is in-charge of leading the songs and dances in festivals of the village. His presence is very important at special feasts and festivals in the village. *Somp* and *Lhapu* have to lead the youths in singing and dancing in festivals and gatherings.

***Lawm (labour organisation):*** this group of the village is called *Lawm*. It consists of the village men and women of every age group. All the men and women who are able to work join the lawm. Any household of the village can hire the *lawm* to work for them during cultivation and harvest. The *lawm* members help each other in service. *Lawm* is not only engaged in economic life of the village but also in festivals and celebrations of the village. Through this organization, the village youths learnt the spirit of co-operation, a sense of duty and dignity. The *lawm* system is still practised as it provides self-dependency in matters of physical labour in the village.

### **1.19 THE LANGUAGE**

The *Komtong* or *Kom-rem tong*, which means ‘Kom language or Komrem language’, is considered as a common language of the Komrem. All the constituting tribes of Kom-rem can communicate through this language. More or less all the languages of these small tribal communities are very similar. Kom language has some similarities with the Lushai of Mizoram, the Hmars of Manipur and the Hrangkhawls, Malsom and Darlong of Tripura. They have a close affinity with Thadou-Kuki, Tarao, Chothe, Saibu-Maring and Nampasi-Tangkhul. The Kom language belongs to the Tibeto- Burman language family. The Roman script is adopted for writing purposes.

### **1.20 POSITION OF KOM IN THE TIBETO-BURMAN LANGUAGE FAMILY**

Northeast India is the home of numerous Tibeto-Burman languages that form the branch of a larger Sino-Tibetan family. In term of language, Sino-Tibetan family is the largest of any spoken in south Asia. Burling (1999) stated that ‘by comparison with most Indian states the seven states of the north east are small in area and low in population, but even by Indian standards they are very high in linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity’. He further stated that ‘the Tibeto-Burman languages of these north eastern states cannot really be counted’. He is of the view that too little is known about this region to list all the languages. Shapiro and Schiffman (1983) stated that due to the unavailability of data for many of the languages of north east India, coupled with our own lack of expertise in this field, it is impossible to give a satisfactory classification. Apart from the lack of proper study in the northeastern languages,

Burling (ibid) pointed out that changing of nomenclature among the Tibeto-Burman languages further complicated its classification. However, regarding his own classification of The Mizo-Kuki-Chin, which is a modification of Shafer and incorporation of Grierson, Burling (ibid) states, “the Mizo-Kuki-Chin Dialects and languages form a branch within Tibeto- Burman is abundantly clear. Indeed, there are far more unified than the languages, for example, the Angami-Pochuri group, and they be no more diverse than Tangkhul, which is usually described as a single ‘language’, even though it has several mutually unintelligible forms”.

Show (1929) mentioned, “The Koms, Aimols, Khawtlangs, Thadous, Lushais, Chins, Pois, Siktes, Paites, Gangtes, etc are undoubtedly all connected and are Kukis, and that the language alone has many similarities and the syntax is not dissimilar. Again, there are their customs which have a common principle running through them all.”

Brown (1873) said that “the only remaining Kuki tribes of importance are those called Aimol, Chiru, Purum, Koireng ( Kuoireng) and Kom”. He even called all these tribes as the sub-tribes of Kuki. Shakespear (1912) made the division of the tribes based on their arrival:

<u>Old Kukis</u>		<u>New Kukis</u>
Aimol, Anal, Chiru	:	Thadous (their other kins)
Chothe, Gangte, Koirou	:	Groups such as, Dongel, Misao
Koireng, Kom, Lamkang	:	Lupheng,Lupho,Ngoilu, Lamhao
Paite, Purum, Simte	:	Thengeo, Thouthang, etc.
Vaiphei, Zou, Hmar	:	

Grierson (1904) classified Kom under the customary name of old Kuki that include Rangkhul, Bete, Halam, Langrong, Aimol, Chiru, Kolren, Kom, Cha, Hmar,

Anal, Haroi-Lamkang. He also described Kom and other languages that constitute old Kukis as a mere dialect of one language. He further states, “these languages are closely related to the central Chin languages. Kom, Anal, and Haroi-Lamkang show a closer connection with the Naga languages than the other dialects of the Kuki-Chin group”. This view is substantiated by Burling’s (1999) classification. According to his classification, the Mizo- Kuki-Chin speakers in North-Eastern India include; Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Kom, Lakher, Mara, Lushai, Paite, Pawi, Ralte, Riang, Vaiphei, and zo.

The position of Kom under the Tibeto-Burman language family differs from one linguist to another. According to the classification made by Grierson- Konow (1903-1928), Kom is placed under Kuki-Chin proper of Old Kuki. Shafer (1955, 1966) grouped Kolhreng- Koireng, Kom and Tarao under Kolhreng unit of Old Kuki branch under Kukish section. Vogalin-Vogalin (1977) put Kom under old Kuki and grouped together with Kolreng (Koireng), Tarao and Anal. Bradley classification of Kuki-Chin-Naga (1970, 1997) placed Kom under Old Kuki of Kuki-Chin-Naga (as shown in diagram 1). Benedict’s classification (1972) and Egerod’s (1974) do not mention about the Kom at all. It appears that the whole classification of the Tibeto-Burman languages itself is still very uncertain. Due to lack of sufficient researches, it is difficult to get the proper division or classification of this language. Hence, it is difficult to fix the position of Kom in the Tibeto-Burman language family. However, Kom, undoubtedly, is one of the Tibeto-Burman languages which has close linguistic affinities with other Tibeto-Burman languages like Hmar, Hrangkhawl, Malsom, Darlong, Lushai and Kuki apart from Koireng, Purum, Chothe, Tarao, Chiru, and Aimol etc.

**Diagram 1. kuki-chin-naga (Bradley 1997) (insert it from other file)**

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

There is hardly any work on Kom, which is linguistically significant. Grierson's (1904) *Linguistic survey of India Vol- III, Part-III*, is the first work ever done on Kom. He states, "so far as I am aware, the two specimens are the first specimens on Kom ever published". Grierson describes about the pronunciation, which may be considered as the phonological aspects of the language. He stated that "vowel /i/ and /e/ seem sometimes to be interchangeable, thus, *pathin* and *pathen*". The present study however could not confirm his claim. This may be true in one variety or two but not in all varieties. He also states that "the vowel /i/ in the suffix 'in' is often dropped after a preceding /a/; thus "*pan*" for "*pa-in*", by father". It is established that the data used in Grierson's work is different from the present Kom. This may be due to the language change-taking place over the years. He mentioned that Babu Bishwarup Singh of Uripok collected the data in 1899 from Sinam Kom village. However, the sentence like '*a-ning-ka-thai-yo*' (he is happy) does not match any one of the varieties of Kom. Grierson also mentioned that "aspirated nasals and liquids are relatively frequent: thus, ka-hla: far: hmu; to see: *ka-hnung-a*, behind: ka-hring, safe, etc but writing is not consistent. For instance like lai and lhai (field) mhang and mang". However, it can be argued that the aspirated nasals and liquids as mentioned by Grierson may be considered as the voiceless sounds. These voiceless sounds are found in some of the varieties of Kom including the standard variety. He also states that /h/ is sometimes dropped before vowels like in a word *hong* pronounced as *ong* in a sentence *hon-kahriŋ-jo* as *oŋ-karhiŋ-jo* meaning, "he came alive". However, analysis of the present data shows that /hoŋ/ and /oŋ/ are two

different words having different meanings “to come” and “to shout or sit” respectively and that there are no instances of other words that shows that the sound /h/ is dropped. Grierson also pointed out that “consonants are occasionally silent; thus, /k/ is dropped in *ka-sa*”, which is supposed to be *ka-sak* (I eat). However, it may be noted that dropping /k/ in *ka-sak* will make the word ambiguous as *ka-sa* may be understood as ‘my son/ hot’ while *ka-sak* clearly mean ‘I eat’. He also mentioned that /n/ and /l/ are interchangeable in Kom. However, the present study shows that /n/ and /l/ are two separate phonemes in Kom. It is found that replacement of /l/ by /n/ in the final position is not very uncommon in Meitei-lon (Manipuri) but it is very limited in Kom. Grierson rightly pointed out that /s/ and /sh/ are used interchangeably in Kom. It is obvious as there is no /sh/ in Kom. Hence, /s/ replaces /sh/ in Kom. Grierson’s work, though scanty and outdated, remain as a commendable and good source of reference.

Karung (1976) made few descriptions about language. He also stated, “The Kom language was brought into writing by the writer very late in 1926 adopting Roman characters in which he added ā, oh, o ti and u to serve the needed vowels”. Karung’s description does not go beyond few lines on nouns, pronouns, ordinals and five illustrative sentences on verbs. Therefore, his work on language and its aspect is minimal and not descriptive in nature.

## **2.1 KOM LITERATURE**

Telien (1994)<sup>3</sup> stated that Kom language which is also known as Komrem language is the variety used by Mongtung group of people. However, analysis of the data under the present study shows that the standard variety is more of a blend form of

---

<sup>3</sup> Telien (1994) in book entitled “K. R. Tongmandan” (The usage of K.R. language) mentioned about the background of Komrem language.

three or more varieties of Kom. Telien made a detail description on how the Mongtung variety became the standard Kom and Komrem language thereon. His work is confined exclusively on the orthography (alphabets) of Komrem, vowels and consonants, the usage of some consonants and phonetic symbols. The phonetic symbols refer to here is the diacritic marks or symbols such as a dot (.) below the letters and as (^) above the letters to indicate length of the vowels, that are employed in the writing system of Kom.

He maintains that Kom adopted modified Roman scripts having 33 characters in capital and small letters. The following is the Kom Script:

#### **Capital letters**

A	Â	B	C	D	E	F
G	H	I	Î	J	K	L
M	N	O	Ô	P	Q	R
S	T	Ṭ	U	V	W	X
Y	Z					

#### **Small letters**

a	â	b	c	d	e	ê
f	g	h	i	î	j	k
l	m	n	o	ô	ō	p
q	r	s	t	ṭ	u	û
v	w	x	y	z		

He further stated that Kom has eleven (11) vowels and twenty -two (22) consonants. The following are the vowels and consonants of Kom.

### **VOWELS**

a	â	e	ê	i	î
o	ô	õ	u	û	

### **CONSONANTS**

b	c	d	f	g	h
j	k	l	m	n	p
q	r	s	t	ţ	v
w	x	y	z		

## **2.2 REVIEW OF RESEARCH WORK IN KOM**

Kom, L. B (1989), in his unpublished M.Phil dissertation, focus his study on the impact of Christianity on the Kom-rem people. Kom tribe is studied as a constituent tribe of Komrem. Apart from Kom, other constituent tribes- Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Purum and Kharam, are also covered in his study. The researcher gave the general background of the Komrem people and the meaning of the term *Komrem* as an introductory. The term *Komrem* used refers to the constituent tribes collectively throughout his study.

Socio-cultural, economic, religious and political aspects are also included in his study. The advent of Christianity in the Komrem society and the growth of the Komrem Baptist Churches Association (KRBCA) are widely covered in his study.

Serto, M. (2007) work is based on the educational and socio-cultural aspects of some Indian tribal communities but special emphasis is given to the Kom tribe of Manipur. The author provides the demography, ethno-history, social structure, traditional religious beliefs and practices, cultural and traditional economy of the Koms. However, his study is primarily on the introduction of western education, the Kom's conversion to Christianity and the social change brought about by the new educational system in the Kom society. In the concluding part of her book, she mentioned about the linguistic similarities between Kom and the old-Kuki languages. According to her, Kom language is similar with Meitei language. She states, "The Kom people spoke different but related languages. Due to some differences in the words, they used a language spoken by majority of the population, generally during public meetings, conferences and get-together. However, sometimes Meitei language and English are used to communicate different words". The word 'different and related language' is rather ambiguous and mis-interpreted as genetically related different languages. However, it is understandable that what she meant is different dialects or varieties of a language. From her statement, assumption can be made that variation is present in Kom.

Kom, S. T. (2002) unpublished thesis deals with the economic condition of the Kom community. He presented the grim picture of the economic status of the tribal communities of Manipur in general, and the Kom tribe in particular. His study shows

that Kom community are much poorer compared with the national average of 36% and the state average of 34%.

Out of the total 355 Kom households surveyed from 15 villages in Churachandpur and Chandel Districts, 275 families (i.e, 85.84%) are found living below poverty line as against the figure 62.42% reported by Tribal Benchmark Survey (TBMs). The study also shows that 46.15% of Koms are landless, 40% are marginal farmers and 13.54% are small farmers. The size of holding among the Kom is 0.85% hectare. The study highlights highest poverty in Pungsalen, Malamphai in Sagang area of Chandel district and Mahou-Tera village of Chandel district, which is recorded as 100%. The lowest poverty in his study is 68%, which is found in upper Khoirentak village. According to him, the Koms, even after fifty years of independence, are still deprived and lagging behind. The economic planning of the country has not benefited the Kom society.

### **2.3 REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

Language variation is the phenomena where there exist some observable differences in the language use in a speech community. It is commonly understood that no one speak a given language in the same way. In fact, individuals use language in their own unique way. Panny (2000) states that ‘All languages that we can observe today shows variation; what is more, they vary in identical ways, namely geographically and socially. These two parameters, along which variation occurs, are in principle independent of each other, although we shall see that there are ways in which they... are interlinked’. Linguistics is commonly understood as the scientific study of language, while the study of variation found within a language or languages especially variation that is geographically or socially conditioned is known as

*Variationist Linguistics. Dialectology* is one of the oldest branches of linguistics, focusing especially on the way language varies geographically. Sociolinguistics focuses on the socially conditioned variation. Dialectology, as the name suggest, is the study of Dialect and Dialects. The focus of the study in Dialectology is usually the dialect or dialects of a language. Dialectologists loosely employ the term “Dialect” with the notion that Language is a collection of dialects and that all speakers are speakers of at least one Dialect. Dialectologists do not necessarily suggest any distinction between dialects where one is linguistically superior to others but consider them as a sub-division of language. In order to avoid complexity over the label ‘Dialect’, Chambers and Trudgill (1995) suggest alternative terminology, which they consider, is more neutral. Chambers and Trudgill in their book ‘Dialectology’ stated that “we shall use ‘variety’ as a neutral term to apply to any particular kind of language which we wish, for some purpose, to consider as a single entity”. They further states that ‘The term will be used in an adhoc manner in order to be as specific as we wish for a particular purpose’. Chambers and Trudgill (ibid) however, made a distinction between Dialect and Accent that is more similar with other Sociolinguists. According to them, ‘Dialect’ is a variety which is grammatically (and perhaps lexically) as well as phonologically different from other varieties. ‘Accent’ on the other hand, refers to the way in which a speaker pronounces, and therefore refers to variety that is phonetically and/or phonologically different from other varieties.

Bayley and Lucas (2007) state that ‘Beginning with the pioneering work of Labov, Shuy, Fasold, and Wolfram in the mid and late 1960s, the study of variation has formed one of the key areas, if not the key area, of sociolinguistics’ of all the modern variationist linguists, Labov is considered as the key figure. Labovian School,

variation theory and quantitative linguistics has lasting impact on the study of language. However, Sociolinguistics is fairly a new discipline compared to Dialectology in language variation studies. Dialectology has a respectable history with its literature, approaches and traditions.

Poulston C. B, and Tucker, G. R,(2003) mentioned that ‘Sociolinguistics has a deep root in regional dialectology or linguistic geography, the study of how same language shows variation from region to region...’ Wardhough (1998) also stated that the studies of social variation (sociolinguistics) in language grew out of studies of regional variation (regional dialectology). Language diversity and dialect differences are age-old phenomena even though systematic study of dialects began only in the latter half of the nineteenth century. One of the oldest references on the language diversity is found mentioned in the Old Testament, in the book of Genesis 11:1-19, some three millennium years ago, when there was only one language without any variation. The Bible says that God confused their speech. In other words, God imposed linguistic diversity on humankind as a punishment for their pride. (Chambers; 1995)

#### **2.4.1 TRADITIONAL DIALECTOLOGY**

Development of Dialect Geography, a methodology or (more accurately) a set of methods for gathering evidence of dialect differences systematically, took place in Germany in 1876. George Wenker took up the task of surveying the Dialects (West Germanic Consonants) to develop the **first great dialect survey**. Traditional Dialectology, more precisely, Dialect Geography came into existence at the time Eduard Sievers published his work *Elements of Phonetics*, Jacob Grimm came up

with has sound law popularly known as *Grimm's Law* and the discovery of a corollary to Grimm's Law by a Danish scholar, Oskar Verner, known as *Verner's Law*. It was a time the Neogrammarian principle *Ausnahmslosigkeit de Lautgesetze* or 'sound changes are exceptionless' dominated European linguistics. McMahon (1996) states that 'Wenker's approach to the regularity hypothesis relies on the assumption that sound change is instantaneous as well as exceptionless, operating for all speech community, and all words with the appropriate phonetic environment, at the same time. Consequently, if the regularity hypothesis is to be upheld, a sound change which has operated in one dialect but not another should have left a clear and definite boundary between the affected and unaffected varieties'. Traditional dialectology in nineteenth century was closely related to historical linguistics. Chambers and Trudgill (ibid) mentioned that '...dialect geography originated in response to a theoretical claim by the Neo-grammarians'. Indeed, one of the major motivations for dialectological research was to check out the neogrammarian notion that sound change was regular and that sound laws admitted of no exceptions.

## **2.5 METHODOLOGY**

Traditional dialectology was a questionnaire based data collection method. The questionnaire used in the great dialect survey consisted of forty sentences approximately written in conventional standard German orthography, to be returned to the sender having transcribed in the local dialect. The informants of the survey were schoolmasters of the entire nation, numbering around 50,000 in total. Few Simple sentences were used in the questionnaire, for instance the first one was "in winter the dry leaves fly around through the air". The method of data collection was exclusively through correspondence. The questionnaires were sent to the area where high and low

German is spoken. Later dialectologist in German supplemented Wenker's questionnaire by adding 200 lexical items and sent to 50,000 schools to elicit the regional synonym.

The goal of Wenker's great dialect survey was to find a single isogloss or, bundle of coincident isoglosses dividing high and low German. Isogloss is an imaginary line drawn on a map marking the boundary between two linguistic variants. This phenomenon was visible across Germany except in the area of Rhine. The first great dialect survey resulted into publishing the first (*sprachatlas*) linguistic atlas and after the gap of forty years the edited work of Wenker was published by Ferdinand Wrede. The first volume of the *deutscher sprachatlas* was appeared in 1926.

Wenker's technique of data collection is questionable in several numbers of counts. First, the use of postal questionnaire instead of employing field workers to collect the data in person. Secondly, the use of standard German Orthography in writing sentences in his questionnaire. Obviously, science of phonetics and systems of phonetic transcription were rather undeveloped at that time. Hence, Wenker might have been compelled to resort to the use of standard German Orthography in view of his informants' obvious lack of any knowledge of phonetic transcription. However it is understood that representing dialect and accent differences using a standardised spelling system is notoriously difficult as orthography do not have the enough mechanism to capture the sound differences in the language. Moreover, the methods and ability of transcription must have varied from one informant to another, leading to inconsistency and chaotic. Finally, the absence of field workers failed to bypass the arbiter of 'good' language used in a community. There is high probability that his

informants must have fallen in line with the norms of 'the correct use of language in a community' in spite of the presence of some regional linguistic variants in the village. It is certainly conceivable since many people are unwilling to accept the presence of non-standard linguistic behaviour in their villages, or at least inclined to modify it in the direction of the standard in their written responses. (McMahon 1996)

In spite of its short coming dialect maps produced by Wenker and his associate proved handy in identifying the shared features by particular varieties and were influential in the development of support for the wave theory of linguistic change. (Trudgil1995) (McMahon1996)

Language survey on the line of dialect geography began to spread across Europe. Similar survey was conducted in Denmark in1898. Survey of Scottish dialects that began in 1952 used (postal) correspondence method of collecting data only in the initial phase of the study. They included the provision of supplementing and augmenting the data as the study progress. Hans-Henning Speital devised a different approach to grade the isoglosses. The considerable varieties of lexical items were collected for the survey. Unlike the earlier surveys, Scottish dialect survey was to elicit lexical isoglosses. Scottish dialect survey resulted into a hypothesis that an item that occurs on only one side of the border is a stronger indicator of dialect than the one that does not. The Speital's work was to grade or evaluate the distributing pattern of isoglosses in term of their function.

Survey of French that began in1896 used the trained workers for gathering data. This is a departure from earlier dialect surveys especially that of *the great survey* where postal or correspondence method was used as a means of data collection.

Gillieron, the editor of the Survey of France, improved upon the method and device of questionnaire that isolated specific items for which responses could be elicited. The questionnaire contained a core of about 1,500 such items with the provision of revision and update as the survey progressed. Interviews were conducted from which well-trained field workers recorded responses from the respondents. At the end of the survey, 700 interviews were conducted at 635 different sites involving 700 informants. Survey of French however included only 60 women and 200 educated informants. The survey was primarily conducted in the rural area that was one of the most basic characteristics of a traditional dialectology. Survey of French resulted in the publication of 13 volumes in 1902 and the final volume was published in 1910.

Survey of French was considered as a touchstone for subsequent surveys because of its quality and result. It was enormously influential so much so that some of its members were inducted to direct Italian dialect's survey in Italy and southern Switzerland. They also established contact and partially involved with the later surveys in United States, Canada, National dialect surveys in Spain, Romania and England and as well as several regional dialect surveys conducted in Europe. The methodology of dialect surveys employed during that period was the same method of dialect geography, using direct interviewing, questionnaire or a combination of the two, and the result was usually presented in atlas form, with each map showing the peculiar variants of a word used in different areas of the country. (McMohan 1996)

The Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada, which began in 1930, employed trained field workers for data collection. The survey area was divided into several regions due to the enormous geographical size. For a questionnaire containing

700 items, interviews lasted for about ten to twelve hours. The number of sitting ranges depending on the informant schedule.

Chambers and Trudgill (ibid) mention that ‘Even so, that length of time pales beside the time required for interviews by the Survey of English Dialects. With a questionnaire of about 1200 items, and all questions framed in a formal way, each interview took twenty to twenty-four hours’. In most of the cases, more than two informants were required to complete one questionnaire and even in some cases interviews were left incomplete.

The questionnaire were generally organised according to semantic fields. The lexical items and grammatical categories that have potential to reveal dialectal variants are identified and clustered into semantically similar groups in order to facilitate the informant to focus on the subject matter rather than on the form of his answers. The semantic fields that formed the part of the questionnaire of both the English and American surveys, includes flora and fauna, the weather, the social activities, kinship, and so on.

Chambers and Trudgill (ibid) stated that ‘in more recent times linguistics has had a certain amount of influence on dialectology’. They further stated that according to modern linguistic thinking, the main drawback of traditional dialectology is the treatment of linguistic forms in isolation rather than as part of the systems or structures. The publication of article called ‘Is a structure dialectology possible?’ by Uriel Weinreich in 1954 paved the way for the development of Structural Dialectology.

Wenker's discovery of what he called Rhenish fan that is all the isoglosses for individual eligible lexical items seemed to go their separate ways in the area of Rhine in Germany. This finding and its theoretical implication that isoglosses reflecting the same sound change could part company seem to indicate that the regularity hypothesis was entirely misconceived, and for a while it was rivaled by the opposing maxim that 'every word has its own history'. This finding made profound suspicion on linguistic theory under almost any guise. Linguistic geography soon came to be seen as an end in itself by distancing itself from any linguistic theory.

## **2.6 CRITERIA FOR INFORMANT IN TRADITIONAL DIALECTOLOGY**

McMohan (1996) states that to obtain information, dialect surveys concentrated on only one type of informant, the NORMS or Non-mobile, Older, Rural Males. Speakers falling into this category were generally thought to speak a 'purer' version of the dialect than mobile individuals, who might have had their speech contaminated by other varieties; young people, who more easily incorporate innovations into their language; urban informants, who are surrounded by speakers of different varieties tend to produce more standard speech than men. Chambers and Trudgill (1980) argue that linguistic studies suggest that there is probably no such thing as a "pure" dialect, since most varieties of language show variable and influenced by other varieties.

Chambers and Trudgill (1980) view that 'focusing of traditional dialectology on rural dialects had led to an almost total neglect, in many countries, of the speech forms used by the majority of the population, namely those who live in towns. This

was of course particularly true of heavily urbanised countries such as England, where perhaps 90% of the population live in towns. Linguists and dialectologists remained, as they still remain to a considerable extent, ignorant about the way in which most people in England (and elsewhere) speak, and have therefore been missing out of great deal of linguistic data'. Hence, it was felt that the study of urban dialects was not only an interesting field but also a necessary task.

Traditionally, dialect geography, as this area of linguistic study is known, is based on the view that 'languages differentiate internally as speakers distance themselves from one another over time and space; the changes result in the creation of dialects of the languages. Over sufficient time, the resulting dialects become new languages as speakers of the resulting varieties become unintelligible to one another,. According to the model of traditional dialect geography, language change and dialect differentiation should always be possible to relate any variation found within a language to the two factors of time and distance alone. In each case, linguists working in this tradition try to explain any differences they find with models familiar to the historical linguist, models that incorporates such concepts as the 'family tree'. Linguistic variation was studied early on for the clues it suggested for the manner in which language changes diffuse.

## **2.7 SOCIOLINGUISTICS**

Labov (2008) states that "It will be helpful to begin with the general considerations that lead us to the study of variation. From one point of view, linguistics is as diverse as the languages it studies; from another, linguistics centers upon a common problem: variation". He considers Variation as the core issue or

central problem of linguistics. Labov further stated that ‘If every yes-no question were related to the corresponding declarative in a uniform way, no linguist would be needed to describe the system or tell new learners how to use it. But when a question is asked sometimes in one way and sometimes in another, sometimes with inversion and sometimes without, or sometimes with a final rise in pitch and sometimes a fall, a linguist is called for’ According to Labov, variation is observable within the individual speaker using language in different contexts as well as between individuals and groups

### **2.7.1 SEMANTIC VARIATION**

Peirsman and Speelman (2009) state that “Different varieties of the same language often come with their lexical peculiarities. Some words may be restricted to a specific register, while other ones may have different meanings in different regions” Semantic variation is the different meanings that particular words have from dialect to dialect, or the different words that are used for the same entity in different dialects. We might more accurately refer to this as the study of lexical semantic variation. In other words, the study of variation in the meanings of words.

### **2.8 COLOUR TERMS**

The number of basic colour terms is between two and eleven. Berlin and Kay (1969) state that Languages evolved from having only two basic colour terms, and gradually added more over time until they reached a ceiling of a maximum of 11 basic terms. Berlin and Kay (op. cit.) further states that if a language has fewer than 11 basic colour terms, then there are strict limitations on which categories it may encode.

It is commonly believed that nothing is static and language does change with time but basic colour terms of a language are believed to be resistant to change. In other words, languages never lose basic colour terms.

Berlin and Kay (op. cit.) proposes seven stages of possible distributional pattern of basic colour terms across the languages of the world.

- (a) Language encoding only black and white falls under stage I.
- (b) The II stage would include red as the third term; stage III would include terms such as black, white, red and either yellow or green.
- (c) If a language has five terms (stage IV), the terms will have both yellow and green.
- (d) If it has six (stage V), it will include, in addition to stage IV a term for blue.
- (e) A language having seven terms (stage VI), will have terms for black, white, red, yellow, green, blue and brown.
- (f) If a language contains eight or more terms (stage VII), then it contains in addition terms for purple, pink, orange, grey, or some combination of these.

There is no unanimity on the criteria of Basic colour terms. According to Berlin and Kay (op. cit.), the colour terms that represent the characteristic of an object is not considered as a basic colour terms. However, Orange, which is derived from the colour of the fruit 'orange', is considered as a basic colour term in English.

## **2.9 LITERATURE REVIEW ON BORROWING**

Borrowing occurs in language contact situation. When there is frequent contact between two or more languages, new words from one language may be

introduced to the other language. This phenomenon is called borrowing. It is regarded as one form of language change, which is motivated by external pressure. Haugen (1950) views the term borrowing 'as the attempted reproduction in one language of patterns previously found in another' According to Bloomfield (1935) 'the adoption of features which differs from those of the main tradition is linguistic borrowing'.

Breardsmore (1986) differentiates between negative transfer and positive transfer. According to him, borrowing that leads to enrichment and reinforcement of the recipient language's lexical stock, is positive transfer; whereas borrowing that affects the norms of recipient language is negative transfer. He, however, states that the value judgement implicit in this designations should be handled with care. He further states that Loans can potentially occur in the field of human activity but seemed to be determined by the following criteria

- (1) The nature of the activity indulged in by the bilingual; if a subject, which is normally and regularly handled in one language frequently is discussed in the other the speaker might find lexical availability in the other language impaired. Thus, a scientist who normally conducts his research in English may readily use English terms in discussing the same subject in another language.
- (2) The frequency of contact between two language communities; the bilingual may well have terms readily available which are indigenous to either of his languages but more frequently contact with an area of activity in one language may lead to an automatic of language A's terminology in language B settings.

## **2.10 LITERATURE REVIEW OF LANGUAGE CHANGE**

Eckert (2000) believes that 'life style' could be the factor of change. She also states that 'ultimately, the social life of variation lies in the variety of individuals'

ways of participating in their communities- their ways of filling in, and of making their mark- their ways of constructing meaning in their own lives', variations arises from what individuals do with the language as they attempt to come to terms with their surroundings.

Wang (1969, 1977) came up with a theory called lexical diffusion. According to this theory, a sound change spreads gradually through the words in which the change applies. Change does not proceed at a uniform rate throughout the affected vocabulary.

Burling (1970) states that "The factors encouraging linguistic diversification are not so clearly known, and most accounts of linguistic changes, not resulting from borrowing, are mere descriptions which make little attempt to explain why the changes take place". According to him, "...people do not always wish to speak exactly like others. Instead of always imitating, we often try, more or less deliberately, to make our speech distinct. As we try to distinguish our speech, new forms or new combination of forms occasionally find their way into our language".

Burling further stated "... men are always inventive enough to find still newer terms and so keep their own in group style distinct. Any regional, social, economic, or political group that wants its identity preserved can use special terms to mark themselves off as unique. So long as men feel the need to communicate across these social boundaries, there will be no limits on how far the styles can diverge. Innovation will be balanced by mutual borrowing as long as the styles and dialects remain in contact. But it is easy to see that once a community no longer need or wish to communicate, and particularly if members of two communities want to demonstrate

their mutual separation, then lexical innovation could rapidly pull the speech of the two communities apart into increasingly divergent styles, dialects, and languages”.

## **2.11 LITERATURE REVIEW ON STANDARDISATION**

Haugen (1966a) has indicated certain steps that must be followed if one variety of a language is to become the standard for that language. In addition to what he calls the ‘formal’ matters of codification and elaboration, the former referring to the development of such things as grammars and dictionaries and the latter referring to the use of the standard in such areas as literature, courts, education, administration, and commerce. Haugen says there are important matters to do with ‘function’. These seem logically prior. He says a norm must be selected and accepted because neither codification nor elaboration is likely to proceed very far if the community cannot agree on some kind of model to provide a norm. That norm is likely to be or to become an idealized norm, one that users of the language are asked to aspire to rather than one that actually accords with their observed behaviour.

## **2.12 THE CHOICE OF THE SUBJECT AND EXPLICATION OF GOALS**

A number of factors influence the researcher’s choice of this subject for study. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, little or no study on Kom language has been done. Hence, this language remains unexplored and very little is found mentioned in books or known to the outsiders. Hence, the *first goal is descriptive*, i.e., to describe the nature of Kom language, especially focusing on the standard Kom or the common core of different varieties. Hence, attempt is made to present the description of the sound system or the phonology of the standard Kom.

The present researcher, being an inhabitant of Manipur, (where the language is mostly spoken) and one of the native speakers of the language, is aware of the variations to some extent and of the many issues that are still to be settled as far as standardisation is concerned. Accordingly, the *second goal is sociolinguistic* in nature, exploring the types and extent of variation that exists and to establish causes or linking factors that explain variation. Hence, study on the language is divided broadly into six geographical areas of the Kom speaking population. Some relevant sociolinguistic aspects are also discussed at the end. It is a humble attempt to present an insight of the language. It is also partly designed to serve as a language and socio-cultural documentation. And perhaps but most importantly, it is designed as an introductory work for future researchers to follow up for in-depth study so that proper standardization of Kom may be achieved, pedagogic materials may be produced which will aid the Kom language in preservation and maintenance for the betterment of the future generation.

### **2.13 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The methodology adopted by the researcher for the present work is mainly *the participant observation method* where the researcher actively involves with the speakers in real linguistic situations. Questionnaire is also used for the collection of data which include basic words and sentences from five different villages across the regions for cross-examination with a view to analyzing variation pattern, considering standard Kom as a base. The entire database is collected by means of tape recorder and then transcribed. Cultural specific items are included in the data in consultation with the expert native speakers. In addition, conversational materials and other texts are used to widen the database. The present study can be broadly divided into two parts. Data Collection for Chapter-3 is slightly different from chapter-4 and chapter-5.

The data used in chapter-3 is collected from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources include religious texts such as Holy Bible, Hymnbooks and entire set of New Testament in audio form, folktales and songs. The primary sources are obtained from two senior informants in order to substantiate the data that could not be elicited from the secondary sources. The data for Chapter-4 and Chapter-5 were elicited mainly from primary sources by interviewing informants from each of the speech varieties across the six regions and further substantiated by secondary sources

## CHAPTER 3 PHONOLOGY OF KOM<sup>4</sup>

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION<sup>5</sup>

Phonetics and phonology are concerned with the study of speech sounds, how humans produce and understand them. It is a field concerned with the complexity of speech sounds. According to Lass (1984:1) Phonology is “concerned with the function, behavior and organization of sounds as linguistic item” while Phonetics is “the study of sounds themselves in the physical world; the physical world being comprised of fields like physiology, anatomy, neurology and psychology of human beings”.

Lyons (1981:66) brings in the notion of the “Phonic Medium” which is made up of all the sounds that play a role in languages. Phonetics is thus the study of this *Phonic Medium* where as Phonology does not deal with the Phonic Medium as such. It deals only with a specific number of sounds that are present in that particular language.

Despite the various definitions by linguists, trying to separate ‘phonetics and phonology’, there is still a good deal of controversy as to where exactly they lie. Both branches are related and there cannot be a clear-cut distinction as such. Sounds cannot be studied in a particular language without referring to the articulatory properties (Phonetics), and conversely, these articulatory properties cannot be studied without

---

<sup>4</sup> The phonological description of standard Kom, which is considered as the common core of all the varieties. However, standard Kom is basically the Mongtung variety. Data from audio Bible (New Testament: Psalm) further substantiated by two elderly Mongtung variety speakers is used.

<sup>5</sup> The definitions and descriptions in this chapter is based on an eclectic approach since the work is descriptive, not theoretical.

referring to their linguistic functions (Phonology). As Lyons (1981:66) points out, “Phonology draws upon the finding of phonetics (though differently according to different theories of Phonology)”. In addition, Spencer (1996:2) points, “phonetics research has to be geared towards those capacities of the human vocal tract which sub serve language specifically”.

### **3.2 CLASSIFICATION OF SOUNDS**

Sounds are classified into two broad categories: Vowels and Consonants. Vowels are described as sounds produced by altering the shape of the oral cavity allowing the air to flow more or less freely as ‘open approximants’. Diphthongs fall within the category of vowels. Consonants, on the other hand, are those sounds produced by constricting the vocal tract at some point and creating a sort of diversion from the flow of air.

### **3.3 PHONEMIC INVENTORY**

To understand a language’s phonology, linguists seek to locate all of the basic sounds, which will serve as the building blocks for distinguishing words from each other. These sounds are called Phonemes. Phoneme refers to the basic speech sound of a language. The number of sounds that can be uttered in a language is very large but the phonological system organizes these sounds in a particular way such that only a small subset of phonetic differences (e.g. in English, /t/ vs. /d/ or /e/ vs. /i/ can serve to distinguish words. The remaining differences are regulated by rule.

Kom<sup>6</sup> has (34) thirty-four phonemes .Of these (24) twenty-four are consonants and (10) ten are vowels. The minimal pairs for consonants in (3.2.2) and vowels in (3.5.1) can support this.

---

<sup>6</sup> Refers to the standard Kom of Montung variety

### 3.3.1 Consonants

Kom has twenty (20) consonant phonemes of which nine (9) are stops, including three (3) nasals, three (3) fricatives, one (1) flap, one (1) lateral, two (2) affricates and one (1) glide. The consonant phonemes make distinction between aspirated and unaspirated sounds, voiced and voiceless sounds especially for stops. The consonants are represented in a five-way contrast for stops, namely bilabial, alveolar, palatal, velar and glottal. Nasal sounds are contrasted into three, i.e. bilabial, alveolar and velar. Affricates are contrasted into one only, i.e. palatals, fricatives are contrasted into three i.e. bilabial alveolar and glottal. Flaps and lateral on the other hand are contrasted into alveolar with both voiced and voiceless as shown in the table.

#### CONSONANT CHART

	Bilabial	Labio-Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop	p    b p <sup>h</sup>		t    d t <sup>h</sup>		k k <sup>h</sup>	ʔ
Nasal	m		n		ŋ	
Fricative		v	s			h
Affricate				tʃ    dʒ		
Approximant				j		
Flap			r			
Lateral			l			

## CONSONANT CHART OF BORROWED SOUNDS

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Velar
Stop	b <sup>h</sup>	d <sup>h</sup>	g g <sup>h</sup>

### *3.3.2 Description, classification and distribution of consonants in Kom*

Consonants are speech sounds produced by significantly obstructing the airflow through the vocal tract generally described and identified by using a three-term label, indicating whether:

1. The sound is voiced or voiceless
2. the place of articulation which refer to a series of movements by a set of active organs moving towards or coming into contact with certain organs of speech which remain relatively motionless and
3. The manner of articulation refers to the specification of the kind of closure or narrowing of the vocal tract in the production of a sound.

Consonants are classified into several types differing in the kind of obstructions involved:

#### *Stops*

Stops/plosive sounds are those sounds produced when there is a complete closure in the vocal tract and the air is released suddenly. The air pressure, which had built up behind the closure rushes out giving an explosive sound. Such sounds are called 'Stops'. The stops have contrast between

1. Voiced and voiceless
2. Unaspirated and aspirated

There are nine stops in Kom. These include /p/ / p<sup>h</sup> /, /b/, /t/ /t<sup>h</sup>/, /d/, /k/ /k<sup>h</sup> / and /ʔ /.

*/p/ is a voiceless bilabial plosive.* During the articulation of this sound, the closure is made at both the lips and the air is released suddenly. In the production of /p/, the lower lip acts as the active articulator. /p/ occurs in the initial, medial and final positions in Kom.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/pa/ 'father/man'	/səpa/ 'grandmother'	/kaɪp/ 'shoot'
/pət/ 'thread'	/tepu/ 'april'	/səp/ 'friend'
/pɔm/ 'whole'	/aɪpu/ 'hen'	/təp/ 'to cry'

*/p<sup>h</sup>/-* as compared to /p/ differs only in the aspiration. /p<sup>h</sup>/ is an aspirated sound as there is an audible breath of air during the release of the closure. Thus, */p<sup>h</sup>/ is the voiceless bilabial aspirated stop*; it occurs only initially and medially in Kom.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
/p <sup>h</sup> a/ 'time'	/kutip <sup>h</sup> a/ 'palm'
/p <sup>h</sup> o/ 'shield'	/pɔnp <sup>h</sup> a/ 'bedsheet'
/p <sup>h</sup> ur/ 'weight/burden'	/kəp <sup>h</sup> aɪr/ 'leprosy'

*/b/- is a voiced bilabial stop.* It is the voiced counterpart of /p/. A closure is made at both the lips, the air is then released with an explosion, and there is vibration in the vocal cords. The only difference between the two sounds is in terms of voicing. It occurs in initial and medial positions.

**Initial**

**Medial**

/ba/ 'jam'

/sabəka:ɪ/ 'lion'

/bu/ 'food'

/aba:k/ 'branch of a tree'

/buiɾək/ 'sky/cloud/'

/tʰiŋbi/ 'forest'

*/b<sup>h</sup>/- is a voiced bilabial aspirated stop.* This sound is articulated in the same way as /b/, the only difference being aspiration. /b<sup>h</sup>/ in Kom is found only in borrowed words.

**Initial**

**Medial**

/b<sup>h</sup>ara/ 'fare'

/beb<sup>h</sup>a:ɪ/ 'etiquette'

/b<sup>h</sup>ɔt/ 'ghost'

/gumb<sup>h</sup>iɾ/ 'crocodile'

*/t/- is a voiceless alveolar plosive.* In the production of /t/, the tip of the tongue touches the alveolar ridge and there is no vibration. It occurs initially, medially and finally in Kom.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/təp/ 'to cry'	/aɪrtək/ 'duck'	/pət/ 'thread/cotton'
/tɒn/ 'work'	/manto/ 'brinjal'	/kət/ 'door'
/tən/ 'to cut'	/aɪrtui/ 'egg'	/mət/ 'banana'

*/t<sup>h</sup>/* is a **voiceless aspirated stop**. This sound is articulated in the same way as /t/ but it differs in aspiration. It can occur only in the initial position and medial position.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
/t <sup>h</sup> i/ 'death'	/mat <sup>h</sup> ei/ 'flies'
/t <sup>h</sup> ai/ 'fat'	/kət <sup>h</sup> a/ 'good'
/t <sup>h</sup> ei/ 'to hear/fruit'	/vət <sup>h</sup> u/ 'dove'

*/d/-* is the **voiced alveolar stop**. This sound is produced when the tip of the tongue touches the alveolar ridge and the vocal cords vibrate during its articulation. It occurs initially and medially.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
/dan/ 'law'	/ɕikdai/ 'lizard'
/daɪr/ 'bell'	/rədai/ 'dew'
/dət/ 'to ask/pray'	/təŋdi/ 'sweet heart'

*/d<sup>h</sup>/* is an *aspirated voiced alveolar stop*. It differs from /d/ only in regards to aspiration. It is found only in borrowed words. Hence, it is a borrowed sound. It occurs in the initial position and medial position.

**Initial**

**Medial**

/d<sup>h</sup>arna/ ‘*protest*’

/p<sup>h</sup>ʊmd<sup>h</sup>i/ ‘*lump of marsh*’

/d<sup>h</sup>obi/ ‘*laundry*’

/bənd<sup>h</sup>aŋ/ ‘*mortgage*’

/d<sup>h</sup>ʊp/ ‘*incent stick*’

/gəd<sup>h</sup>a/ ‘*donkey*’ (a stupid person)

[d<sup>h</sup>] sound seems less distinct from [d] sound in Kom. There is a tendency of fluctuation of aspiration. Aspiration is found to be prominent among the younger age group below 30 years of age.

*/k/* is a *voiceless velar plosive*. The back of the tongue comes into contact with the back of the hard palate in the production of this sound. /k/ occurs in the word initial, medial and final in Kom.

**Initial**

**Medial**

**Final**

/kei/ ‘*my*’

/bəkɾup/ ‘*community/congregation*’

/sʊk/ ‘*to hit*’

/kɾʊt/ ‘*hand*’

/sa:kt<sup>h</sup>ei/ ‘*edible*’

/bək/ ‘*to call*’

/kuɾ/ ‘*ear*’

/sʊkt<sup>h</sup>e/ ‘*mistake*’

/saɪk/ ‘*to eat*’

*/k<sup>h</sup>/* is an **aspirated voiceless plosive**. It is articulated in the same manner as /k/ and it differs from the sound /k/ only in aspiration. It occurs in initial and medial positions in Kom.

**Initial**

/k<sup>h</sup>a/ 'that'

/k<sup>h</sup>ɔn/ 'waist'

/k<sup>h</sup>ui/ 'bee'

**Medial**

/ɾɪŋk<sup>h</sup>u/ 'life'

/t<sup>h</sup>ɪŋk<sup>h</sup>u / 'bundle of wood'

/t<sup>h</sup>eik<sup>h</sup>a/ 'plum'

*/g/* is a **voiced velar plosive**. It differs from /k/ in voicing. It is produced when the tip of the tongue meets the back of the hard palate and the vocal cords vibrate. This sound however, is found only in the borrowed words. Therefore, it is considered as a borrowed sound in the language.

**Initial**

/gari/ 'car'

/gamsa/ 'loin'

/guli/ 'tablet'

*/g<sup>h</sup>/* is a **voiced velar plosive**. It is produced in the same way as /g/ the only difference being aspiration. This sound is found only in borrowed words in Kom.

**Initial**

/g<sup>h</sup>əri/ 'watch'

/g<sup>h</sup>i/ 'milk product extracted from butter'

*/ʔ/- is a glottal stop.* This sound is articulated in the larynx with closure or narrowing of the vocal cords and it is released with an explosion. */ʔ/* occurs finally

### **Final**

*/ɾʔ/* ‘imperative marker’

*/leʔ/* ‘and’

### ***Fricatives***

In the production of Fricative sounds, no closure is made anywhere, there is only narrowing. The active articulator moves towards the passive articulator at some point in the vocal tract so that a very narrow gap is made for the air to pass through. In such cases, the air is released with an audible friction. In Kom, there are three fricative sounds */v/*, */h/* and */s/*.

*/v/- is a voice labio-dental fricative.* The sound is produced when the lower lip (active articulator) touches the upper teeth (passive articulator) and the air is released with an audible friction. The vocal cords vibrate during the articulation of this sound. The sound */v/* occurs initially and medially in Kom.

#### **Initial**

*/vaɪɾpa/* ‘pole star’

*/vʊm/* ‘to bury’

*/vat<sup>h</sup>u/* ‘dove’

#### **Medial**

*/p<sup>h</sup>əɾva/* ‘pigeon’

*/t<sup>h</sup>lavaɪɾ/* ‘moonlit’

*/kavuɪɾ/* ‘snow’

However, it is to be noted that in Kom, /v/ and the bilabial approximant /w/ are in free variation.

*/s/- is a voiceless alveolar fricative.* It is articulated by bringing the blade of the tongue near the alveolar ridge in such a way that a narrow gap is formed and the air from the lungs escapes through the oral cavity with audible friction. /s/ occurs initially and medially in Kom.

**Initial**

/sai/ 'bow'

/sanu/ 'daughter'

/saɪk/ 'to eat'

**Medial**

/k<sup>h</sup>ɔmsaɪt/ 'bed bug'

/pase/ 'man'

/pɔnsi/ 'cloths'

*/h/- is a voiceless glottal fricative.* The glottis is constricted and the air from the lungs is released with an audible friction in the production of this sound. /h/ can occur initially and medially in the language.

**Initial**

/ha/ 'teeth'

/hɔmpui/ 'tiger'

/həp/ 'to put/to load'

**Medial**

/rehui/ 'festival'

/t<sup>h</sup>eihai/ 'mango'

/rəhɔn/ 'garden'

## *Nasals*

Nasal sounds are sounds produced when the velum is lowered to allow the free passage of the air through the nasal and oral cavity. There are three nasal sounds in the Kom phonological system. They are /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/.

*/m/- is a voiced bilabial nasal.* In the production of this sound the lips make a firm contact with each other releasing the air through the nasal cavity and the vocal cords vibrate producing a voiced sound. /m/ occurs in all the positions in the language.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/mɔt/ 'banana'	/kəməʊk/ 'to worship'	/kʊm/ 'year'
/mai/ 'pumpkin'	/k <sup>h</sup> ʊmsaɪt/ 'bed bug'	/laɪm/ 'dance'
/mɛɾvaɪn/ 'heaven'	/tɾɪmp <sup>h</sup> ʊi/ 'needle'	/vʊm/ 'to bury'

*/n/- is a voiced alveolar nasal.* In the articulation of this sound, the tip of the tongue makes a firm contact with the alveolar ridge. The velum is lowered, opening the nasal passage for the air to pass through. The vocal cords vibrate and a voiced alveolar sound is produced. /n/ occurs in the initial, medial and final positions.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/nu/ 'mother'	/sene/ 'milk'	/tɔn/ 'work'
/nai/ 'child'	/rɪŋnu/ 'earthquake'	/tlaɪn/ 'to run'
/nəŋ/ 'you'	/pɔnvei/ 'loin'	/vɔn/ 'stomach''

**/ŋ/-** is articulated when both the back of the tongue make a firm contact with the back portion of the hard palate and the velum is lowered down to open the nasal cavity. The vocal cords vibrate and the air escapes through the nasal cavity producing a voiced sound. Hence, **/ŋ/ is a *voiced velar nasal***. It occurs initially, medially and finally.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/ŋa/ 'fish'	/tʃaŋk <sup>h</sup> a/ 'bitter gourd'	/vaɪŋ/ 'to bless'
/ŋuina/ 'sadness'	/dəŋka/ 'currency/silver'	/tlaɪŋ/ 'mount'
/ŋaidam/ 'forgiveness'	/vaɪŋt <sup>h</sup> ət/ 'blessing'	/k <sup>h</sup> aɪŋ/ 'generation'

### ***Tap/Flap***

A tap/flap is a sound produced when the tip of the tongue makes a single tap against the alveolar ridge. When the tip of the tongue is brought in contact with the alveolar ridge by a single rapid contact between the two articulators and the air is released through the oral cavity without any friction. The vocal cords vibrate  
**/r / is described as a *voiced alveolar flap***. It occurs in the initial, medial and final positions in Kom.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/re/ 'war'	/miru/ 'human bone'	/kur/ 'ear'
/rop/ 'chest'	/inruk/ 'thief'	/k <sup>h</sup> ur/ 'hole'
/rəm / 'land'	/kəri/ 'intestine'	/tur/ 'poison'

### ***Laterals***

Laterals are sounds produced when there is obstruction of the air stream at a point along the centre of the oral tract, with incomplete closure between one or both sides of the tongue and the roof of the mouth.

*/l/ is a voiced alveolar lateral.* In the articulation of /l/, the middle part of the blade of the tongue comes in contact with the alveolar ridge allowing the air to escape from the sides of the tongue and the vocal cords vibrate. /l/ can occur only in the initial and the medial position.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
/lu/ 'head'	/t <sup>h</sup> la/ 'moon'
/la:m/ 'to dance'	/dailɪm/ 'shadow/shed'
/ləm/ 'road'	/k <sup>h</sup> ulei/ 'night'

## *Approximants*

There is only one Approximants sound in Kom /j/. However, as mentioned earlier, the *voiced bilabial approximant* /w/ is in free variation with the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ and it will not be treated as separate phoneme.

During the articulation of this sound, the lips approach with each other and there is slight narrowing in the vocal tract but it does not produce audible friction. The vocal cords vibrate to produce the voiced sound; it occurs initially and medially. As is mentioned earlier, the sound /w/ and the fricative /v/ are in free variation in Kom language.

### **Initial**

/wəi/ 'left'

/wa/ 'bird'

/wui/ 'fert'

### **Medial**

/mərvɑːn/ 'heaven'

/sawai/ 'husk'

/bewa/ 'december'

*/j/- is a voiced palatal approximant.* During the articulation of this sound, the back of the tongue approaches the back portion of the hard palate, but the degree of narrowing does not produce an audible friction. The vocal cords vibrate to produce a voiced sound; it occurs initially and medially.

### **Initial**

/jek<sup>h</sup>ʊm/ 'bed'

/jaːŋsʊm/ 'mosquito'

/jotpi/ 'nail'

### **Medial**

/ajajuŋ/ 'root of a tree'

/majʊ/ 'mouse'

/majʊn/ 'urine'

## ***Affricates***

In the production of affricate sounds, more than one manner of articulation is involved. A stop is first made and this contact is slackened so that there is friction at some point of the articulation. Kom has two affricate sounds. They are /tʃ/ and /dʒ/

*/tʃ/* is a **voiceless palatal affricate**. It is produced when the blade of the tongue makes a firm contact with the hard palate and there is no vibration in the vocal cords and thus it is a voiceless sound. In the production of this sound there is a complete closure at some point of time and then released it with a friction. It occurs in the initial and medial positions.

### **Initial**

/tʃai tʃɔt/ ‘beetle’

/tʃu/ ‘if’

/tʃɛm/ ‘sword’

### **Medial**

/mantʃun/ ‘to mix’

/kuttʃɔi/ ‘gift’

/matʃi/ ‘saliva’

*/dʒ/* is a **voiced palatal affricate**. It differs from /tʃ/ in terms of voicing. It occurs in the initial and medial positions.

### **Initial**

/dʒu/ ‘wine’

/dʒui/ ‘to follow’

/dʒɛm/ ‘to cane’

### **Medial**

/akadʒɛ/ ‘asleep’

/akadʒɔŋmi/ ‘sinner’

/adʒui/ ‘to follow’

### ***Voiceless liquids***

The status of voice and voiceless bilabial nasal /m/ /ᵐ/; voiced and voiceless alveolar nasal /n/ /ᵑ/; voiced and voiceless velar nasal /ŋ/ /ᵑ̃/ voiced, voiceless alveolar flap /ɾ/ /ɽ/; voiced and voiceless alveolar lateral /l/ /l̥/ cannot be ascertained, as there are no credible minimal pairs to treat them as separate phonemes. The inconsistencies in their occurrences make it difficult to assign them as an allophone of either of the phonemes.

To consider /m/ /ᵐ/, /n/ /ᵑ/, /l/ /l̥/ and /ɾ/ /ɽ/ as separate phonemes is difficult since there are no credible minimal pairs to substantiate the claim. Voiceless bilabial nasals /ᵐ/, voiceless velar nasal /ᵑ̃/, voiceless alveolar nasal /ᵑ̃/, voiceless alveolar lateral and flap /l̥/, /ɽ̥/ occur in initial and medial position (in a disyllabic word); whereas voiced bilabial nasal /m/, voiced alveolar nasal /n/, voiced velar nasal /ŋ/ and the voiced alveolar lateral and flap /l/, /ɽ/ occurs in all the three positions. In the present study, only the voiced sounds are considered as separate phonemes. However, there is a possibility of the voiceless sounds to be the devoiced form of the voiced or as separate phonemes for which need further study. Mizo and Hmar, the two Kuki-Chin languages that are closely related with Kom show similar pattern. Hmar, for instance, consider the voiced and voiceless stop, laterals and flaps/trill as separate phonemes. Thadou, another Kuki-Chin language also has devoiced lateral /l̥/ as a separate phoneme. However, in Kom the status of these sounds in questions are still uncertain.

In order to substantiate the claim, examples are given below;

*/m̥/- is a voiceless bilabial nasal. /m̥/ occurs in the initial and medial positions (in disyllabic words) in the language.*

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
<i>/m̥a/ 'first/initial'</i>	<i>/t<sup>h</sup>um̥ɪŋ/ 'story'</i>
<i>/m̥ai/ 'face'</i>	<i>/rə̃m̥ɪŋ/ 'name'</i>
<i>/m̥ɔŋ/ 'place'</i>	<i>/m̥ə̃m̥u/ 'hawk'</i>

*/n̥/- is a voiceless alveolar nasal. It differs from /n/ concerning voicing. It occurs in the initial and medial positions (in disyllabic words).*

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
<i>/n̥aɾ/ 'nose'</i>	<i>/ɪn̥ɪ/ 'two'</i>
<i>/n̥əɾ/ 'lips'</i>	<i>/kãn̥ɔŋ/ 'back'</i>
<i>/n̥uknə̃t/ 'anger'</i>	<i>/kãn̥ai/ 'nearer'</i>

*/ŋ/ is a voiceless velar nasal. /ŋ/ occurs initially and medial positions (in disyllabic words).*

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
<i>/ŋak/ 'to wait'</i>	<i>/nũŋak/ 'girl'</i>
<i>/ŋəkna/ 'request/ urge'</i>	<i>/kə̃dai ŋə̃ɾ/ 'quietly'</i>

*/ɸ/* is a **voiceless alveolar flap**. It occurs in the initial and medial positions (in disyllabic words) in Kom.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
<i>/ɸikdai/</i> ‘lizard’	<i>/ɸiɸui/</i> ‘saliva’
<i>/ɸe/</i> ‘war’	<i>/miɸɪŋ/</i> ‘human’
<i>/ɸitəɾ/</i> ‘able to say’	<i>/manɸet/</i> ‘to know’

*/l/* is a **voiceless alveolar lateral**. It occurs in the initial position and the medial positions (in disyllabic words).

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
<i>/laɪm/</i> ‘path’	<i>/kaɭɾt/</i> ‘to enter’
<i>/lɔp/</i> ‘isolate’	<i>/suɭɔ/</i> ‘gooseberry’
<i>/lei/</i> ‘field/medicine’	<i>/k<sup>h</sup>uɭei/</i> ‘night’

### 3.3.3 *Minimal/ Contrastive Pairs of Consonants*

The *voiceless bilabial stops* */p/* and its *voiced congener* */b/*

<b>/p/</b>	<b>/b/</b>
<i>/pa/</i> ‘father’	<i>/ba/</i> ‘jam’
<i>/pu/</i> ‘grandfather’	<i>/bu/</i> ‘food’
<i>/pui/</i> ‘big/female’ (animate)	<i>/bui/</i> ‘finish/extinct’

The voiceless bilabial stops /p/ and its aspirated congener /p<sup>h</sup>/

/p/	/p <sup>h</sup> /
/pa/ 'father'	/p <sup>h</sup> a/ 'time'
/pu/ 'grandfather'	/p <sup>h</sup> u/ 'revenge'
/pi/ 'grandmother'	/p <sup>h</sup> i/ 'to wash'

The voiceless alveolar stop /t/ and its voiced congener /d/

/t/	/d/
/tɔŋ/ 'word'	/dɔŋ/ 'shallow'
/tɛn/ 'to run'	/dɛn/ 'law/ commandment'
/tɚp/ 'to cry'	/dɚp/ 'below/down'

The voiceless alveolar stop /t/ and its aspirated congener /t<sup>h</sup>/

/t/	/t <sup>h</sup> /
/tei/ 'to read'	/t <sup>h</sup> ei/ 'to hear/ fruit'
/tun/ 'work'	/t <sup>h</sup> un/ 'companion/disciple'
/tai/ 'happy'	/t <sup>h</sup> ai/ 'fat'

The voiceless palatal /tʃ/ and its voiced congener /dʒ/

/tʃ/	/dʒ/
/tʃuŋ/ 'up'	/dʒuŋ/ 'fly'
/tʃei/ 'bring'	/dʒei/ 'to spread'
/tʃɛm/ 'sword'	/dʒɛm/ 'to cane'

The voiceless velar stop /k/ and its aspirated congener /k<sup>h</sup>/

/k/	/k <sup>h</sup> /
/kui/ 'to call'	/k <sup>h</sup> ui/ 'bees'
/ku/ 'nine'	/k <sup>h</sup> u/ 'village'
/kɛ/ 'leg'	/k <sup>h</sup> ɛ/ 'more than'

The bilabial nasal /m/ and the alveolar nasal /n/

/m/	/n/
/mai/ 'pumpkin'	/nai/ 'child'
/mu/ 'seed'	/nu/ 'mother'
/mi/ 'man'	/ni/ 'aunty'

The bilabial nasal /m/ and the velar nasal /ŋ/

/m/	/ŋ/
/pum/ 'solid mass'	/puŋ/ 'flourish'
/lum/ 'hot'	/luŋ/ 'stone'
/səm/ 'to distribute'	/saːŋ/ 'paddy'

The alveolar nasal /n/ and the velar nasal /ŋ/

/n/	/ŋ/
/sun/ 'to write'	/suŋ/ 'to cook'
/tlaːn/ 'to run'	/tlaːŋ/ 'mountain'
/tun/ 'work/now'	/tuŋ/ 'to reach'

The bilabial stop /b/ and the bilabial approximant /v/

/b/

/v/

/bəi/ 'mouth'

/vəi/ 'left'

/bu/ 'container'

/vu/ 'mist/ice/snow'

/bui/ 'squirrel'

/vui/ 'fert'

The alveolar fricative /s/ and the glottal fricative /h/

/s/

/h/

/sa/ 'animal'

/ha/ 'tooth'

/sai/ 'elephant'

/hai/ 'stop'

/suk/ 'to hit/punch'

/huk/ 'to save'

The bilabial stop /b/ and the bilabial nasal /m/

/b/

/m/

/bu/ 'food'

/mu/ 'see'

/bəi/ 'mouth'

/mai/ 'pumpkin'

/bui/ 'squirrel/finish'

/mui/ 'bride'

The voiced bilabial nasal /m/ and its voiceless counterpart/m̥/

/m/

/m̥/

/mai/ 'pumpkin'

/m̥ai/ 'face'

/mu/ 'seed'

/m̥u/ 'see'

/ama/ 'he/she'

/am̥a/ 'first/ahead/front'

The voiced alveolar nasal /n/ and its voiceless congener /ŋ/

/n/	/ŋ/
/nai/ 'child'	/ŋai/ 'near'
/na/ 'sick'	/ŋa/ 'leaf'
/nəŋ/ 'you'	/ŋəŋ/ 'suffer'

The voiced alveolar flap /r/ and its voiceless counterpart /ɾ/

/r/	/ɾ/
/re/ 'war'	/ɾe/ 'a kind of ethnic cupboard'
/rik/ 'heavy'	/ɾik/ 'louse'
/rɪŋ/ 'neck'	/ɾɪŋ/ 'alive'

The voiced alveolar lateral /l/ and its voiceless<sup>7</sup> congener /ɭ/

/l/	/ɭ/
/lo/ 'to take'	/ɭo/ 'earn/salary'
/lei/ 'tongue'	/ɭei/ 'medicine'
/la/ 'spleen'	/ɭa/ 'song'

---

<sup>7</sup> As stated earlier the phonemic contrasts of the voiced and voiceless nasals, lateral and flap given above show that they can be considered as separate phonemes but the contrastive pairs are not readily available unlike other phonemes. The data is obtained from elderly people and literary texts. The data does not represent the speech of the younger generation as the data obtained from the younger informants below 30 years shows no consistency in the contrast. The speech of the younger generation shows more of free variation between the voiced and the voiceless. Regarding the voiceless /ɭ/, it is randomly found only in the speech of the older generation. In spite of making effort to obtain data from old literary texts, desired results cannot be achieved. Due to the scanty data availability, contrastive pairs cannot be made with /ɭ/. There is no evidence of this sound in the speech of the younger generation. Hence, we can assume that the sound is possibly declining so much so that it cannot be considered as a separate phoneme or an allophone

The alveolar nasal /n/ and the alveolar lateral /l/

/n/

/l/

/nu/ 'mother'

/lu/ 'head'

/nai/ 'child'

/lai/ 'god'

/nei/ 'to have'

/lei/ 'tongue'

The alveolar lateral /l/ and the alveolar flap /r/

/l/

/r/

/ləi/ 'tongue'

/rəi/ 'flower'

/lu/ 'head'

/ru/ 'bamboo'

/lɪŋ/ 'to plant'

/rɪŋ/ 'to live'

### 3.4. CONSONANT CLUSTERS

#### 3.4.1 Definition

The term *consonant cluster* refers to 'those sequences of consonants that occur either initially or finally in syllables' (Catford, 2001). In other words, a sequence of more than one consonant will have to form part of the same syllable without any intervening vowel between them. For example, the sequence of /t/ and /r/ in the word 'true' is an initial consonant cluster and the sequence of /f/ and /t/ in the word 'soft' is a final consonant cluster in English. These clusters belong to the same syllable without any vowel between them. Those sequences of consonants that occur beyond a syllable do not form a consonant cluster. They are abutting consonants and they are regarded as consonant sequences. Some linguists do not consider syllabic boundary of their occurrence as a criteria of distinction between consonant cluster and



	/t <sup>h</sup> la/	'month'
3. -tr	/trimp <sup>h</sup> ui/	'needle'
	/an-trəm/	'spinach'
	/dʒan-trim/	'midnight'
4.-t <sup>h</sup> r-	/ʊm-t <sup>h</sup> rəm /	'gourd'
	/t <sup>h</sup> ɪŋ-t <sup>h</sup> re/	'dragon fly'

### 3.4.3 Consonant sequences in Kom.

There is a wide variety of consonant sequences in Kom. Gemination is also possible in a word medial position. The first members of the medial clusters are mostly nasals. Besides nasals, only voiceless stops like /t, k, p, k<sup>h</sup>, t<sup>h</sup>/ and the liquid /r/ can occur as the first members in a medial two consonant clusters. The phonemes /j, t, b, s, tʃ, m, h, r, p, t<sup>h</sup>, d, k, l, t<sup>h</sup>, ŋ, k<sup>h</sup>/ can occur as the second members of the medial consonant clusters.

The following are the examples of consonant sequences

- -ps-            /həpsa/            'to add'
- -kt-            /əkadiktək/        'accuracy'
- -kd-            /adəkdek/        'actual'
- -kl-            /lɪkli/            'bottle'

- -ks-            /təksə/            ‘health/body’
- -k<sup>h</sup>l-         /ək<sup>h</sup>latəʔa/        ‘far off’
- -mt-           /əkətəmtək/       ‘abound’
- -mn-           /iŋomna/           ‘agreement’
- -np-           /mənɪpak/          ‘to acclaim’
- -nb-           /mənboŋ/           ‘abbreviate’
- -nt-           /mənto/            ‘brinjal’
- -nt-           /tlʊnto/            ‘deed/act’
- -nt<sup>h</sup>-         /ɪnt<sup>h</sup>ʊɪpui/        ‘to accompany’
- -nd-           /məndon/          ‘to remember’
- -nk-           /ɪmənkop/          ‘to fix’
- -nk<sup>h</sup>-         / mən<sup>h</sup>e/            ‘to increase’
- -ntʃ-          /məntʃʊn/          ‘to add’
- -ndʒ-          /əndʒidʒo/        ‘to acclimate’
- -ns-           /manseɪ/           ‘to lengthen’
- -nt<sup>h</sup>-         /mənt<sup>h</sup>ʊɪ/         ‘to make sour’
- -nr -          /mənɪrəŋ/          ‘to send’
- - nɪ-           /məniɪt/           ‘to know’

- -ŋɕ-                    /tloŋɕi/                    ‘*manner of address*’
  
- -ŋd-                    /səraŋdaɾ/                    ‘(*indigenous*) *violin*’
  
- -ŋtʃ-                    /tʃuŋtʃəŋ/                    ‘*regarding*’
  
- -ŋm-                    /əkəhoŋmək/                    ‘*absent*’
  
- -ŋh-                    /nɪŋhəi/                    ‘*abstain*’
  
- -ŋdʒ-                    /hɪŋdʒa/                    ‘*abundance*’
  
  
- -ɾ n-                    /ət<sup>h</sup>ərnokaʔ/                    ‘*afresh*’
  
- -ɾ ɾ -                    /əsiraʔ/                    ‘*aside*’
  
- -ɾ p<sup>h</sup>-                    /serp<sup>h</sup>ala/                    ‘*balance*’ (*borrowed* )
  
- -ɾ t<sup>h</sup>-                    /dʒəɾ t<sup>h</sup>a/                    ‘*autumn*’
  
- -ɾ p -                    /tɪɾpat/                    ‘*leech*’

### 3.5 VOWELS

Vowels are sounds in spoken language characterized by open approximation of the articulators in contrast to consonants. The vowels are produced when the mouth and the throat come together forming a tube-shape cavity which starts at the larynx and ends at the lips. Moreover, the configuration of this tube (vocal tract) is shaped by the action of the articulators. It depends partly on the position, which the tongue takes in the mouth and the throat, and partly on how the lips shape the exit from the cavity.

They are referred to as vocoids in phonetics. The shape and the tract can be varied by altering the position of the tongue and the lips thus resulting in different vocal sounds. Three different parameters are needed to accurately and adequately describe vowels: these are *body of the tongue, height of the tongue and the lip position.*

### ***Body of the tongue***

It is divided into front, central and back. Front vowels are produced with the front of the tongue raised towards the hard palate. Central vowels are produced when central part of the tongue is raised. Back vowels are those sounds produced when the back of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate.

### ***Height of the tongue***

At this level, vowels are divided into high vowel, mid high, mid-low and low vowels. High vowels are those produced when the tongue is in its highest position. Mid-high is the area of articulation immediately below the high vowels, mid low is the area of articulation immediately above low vowels which are sounds produced with the tongue in its lowest position.

### ***Lips position/ shape of the lips***

Refers to the position of the lips, which can be rounded or unrounded resulting in the production of rounded open vowels and unrounded spread vowels. Rounded sounds refer to the visual appearance of the lips when they assume a round shape. Unrounded sounds on the other hand refer to the appearance of the lips when they are fairly closed together and stretch sideways.

Kom has ten vowels in its sound system. These are /i/, /ɪ/, /ʊ/, /u/, /e/, /ɛ/, /a/, /o/, /ə/ and /ɔ/.

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i ɪ		ʊ u
Close-mid	e		o
Open-mid	ɛ	ə	ɔ
open	a		

/i, ɪ, e, ɛ, a/ are the front vowels, /ə/ a central vowel and /ʊ, u, o, ɔ/ are the back vowels in Kom.

### *Distribution of vowels*

[i] It is a **high front unrounded** vowel. [i] occurs in initial, medial and final positions.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/in/ 'to drink'	/tiŋ/ 'to send'	/əkət <sup>h</sup> i/ 'death'
/iraɪŋ/ 'trouble'	/t <sup>h</sup> iŋ/ 'ginger'	/t <sup>h</sup> i/ 'blood'
/irai/ 'friday'	/silŋ/ 'ant'	/kəni/ 'sun'

[ɪ] It is a *lower high front unrounded* vowel. [ɪ] occurs in initial and medial positions.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
/ɪn/ 'house'	/mɪt/ 'eye'
/ɪnʃuk/ 'to steal'	/kəmɪn/ 'ripe'
/ɪndɪŋ/ 'stand'	/tʃɪl/ 'hill'

[e] It is a *mid high front unrounded* vowel. [e] occurs in initial medial and final positions.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/em/ 'stylish'	/sem/ 'to make'	/se/ 'go'
/ek/ 'excreta'	/bep <sup>h</sup> u/ 'pot'	/te/ 'small'
/emək/ 'wrong'	/k <sup>h</sup> eʔ/ 'over take/above'	/kəre/ 'voice'

[ɛ] It is a *mid low front unrounded* vowel. [ɛ] occurs in initial and medial positions only.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
/ɛn/ 'look'	/təksɛn/ 'trust'
/ɛm/ 'stylish'	/tʃɛm/ 'knife'
/ɛk/ 'dung'	/pat <sup>h</sup> ɛn/ 'god'

[ə] It is a *central mid unrounded* vowel. It occurs in the initial and medial positions only.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
/ətʃʊŋ/ 'above'	/əkət <sup>hi</sup> / 'death'
/əkatan/ 'running'	/mərvan/ 'sky'
/ənu/ 'mother'	/məndi/ 'thatch'

[a] It is a *low central unrounded* vowel. It occurs in all three positions.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/aɪrtui/ 'egg'	/naɪr/ 'nose'	/dʒuk <sup>h</sup> a/ 'alcohol'
/aɪrsi/ 'star'	/baɪŋ/ 'wall'	/bora/ 'sack'
/antɾəm/ 'mustard'	/kabiŋ/ 'cheek'	/əppa/ 'father'

[u] It is a *high back long rounded* vowel. [u] occurs in medial and final positions.

<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/k <sup>h</sup> ur/ 'cave'	/lʊp <sup>h</sup> u/ 'dandruff'
/kavur/ 'snow'	/k <sup>h</sup> u/ 'rain'
/lulʊŋ/ 'caterpillar'	/əppu/ 'grandfather'

[ʊ] It is a *high back rounded* vowel. [ʊ] occurs in initial and medial positions. It does not occur in final position.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Medial</b>
/ʊp <sup>h</sup> u/ 'box'	/tʊn/ 'now'
/ʊmt <sup>h</sup> um/ 'smooth gourd'	/lʊŋ/ 'stone'
/ʊm/ 'to eat/chew' <sup>8</sup>	/akətʊŋ/ 'reach'

[ɔ] It is a *lower mid back rounded* vowel. [ɔ] occurs in the medial and final positions only.

<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/k <sup>h</sup> ɔn/ 'back'	/əmrɔ/ 'stay'
/mət <sup>h</sup> ɔk/ 'encourage'	/t <sup>h</sup> irɔ/ 'to die'
/mɔt/ 'banana'	/mrɔ/ 'to drink'

[o] It is a *mid back rounded* vowel. [o] occurs in medial and final positions.

<b>Medial</b>	<b>Final</b>
/vok/ 'pig'	/kətʃo/ 'pillar'
/mkom/ 'roll'	/tlo/ 'do'
/kətlo/ 'little'	/mənto/ 'brinjal'

---

<sup>8</sup> Accurate gloss is not found in English. It literary mean the state of putting item/ object inside the mouth without crushing or swallowing it.

### 3.5.1. Vowel Contrast

The **high front unrounded** vowel /i/ and the **high back rounded** vowel /u/.

/i/	/u/
/ti/ ‘to send’	/tu/ ‘poison’
/abi/ ‘scar/mark’	/abu/ ‘leaves’
/k <sup>h</sup> i/ ‘wind’	/k <sup>h</sup> u/ ‘village’

The **high front unrounded** vowel /i/ and the **mid high front unrounded** vowel /e/.

/i/	/e/
/ʃi/ ‘salt’	/ʃe/ ‘male animal’
/t <sup>h</sup> i/ ‘to die’	/t <sup>h</sup> e/ ‘to make mistake’
/k <sup>h</sup> i/ ‘ring’	/k <sup>h</sup> e/ ‘over take/above’

The **mid high front unrounded** vowel /e/ and the **mid back rounded** vowel /o/.

/e/	/o/
/me/ ‘meat/face’	/mo/ ‘question marker’
/se/ ‘go’	/so/ ‘that’
/nem/ ‘soft/tender’	/nom/ ‘to press’

The **mid high front unrounded** vowel /e/ and the **mid low front unrounded** vowel /ɛ/.

/e/

/ʃe/ 'gender mkr' (masculine)

/ke/ 'leg'

/se/ 'go'

/ɛ/

/ʃɛ/ 'soak'

/kɛ/ 'to climb'

/sɛ/ 'mithun' (a kind of buffalo)

The **mid low front unrounded** vowel /ɛ/ and the **low central unrounded** vowel /a/.

/ɛ/

/ʃɛ/ 'soak'

/nɛ/ 'milk'

/nɛm/ 'short'

/a/

/ʃa/ 'tea'

/na/ 'leaf'

/nam/ 'slow'

The **low central unrounded** vowel /a/ and the **mid-low back rounded** vowel /ɔ/.

/a/

/da: ŋ/ 'no'

/da: n/ 'law'

/ba: ŋ/ 'stop'

/ɔ/

/dɔ: ŋ/ 'tender/new'

/dɔ: n/ 'attention'

/bɔ: ŋ/ 'short'

The *low central unrounded* vowel /a/ and the *mid back rounded* vowel /o/

/a/

/t<sup>h</sup>a/ ‘good’

/la: m/ ‘dance’

/p<sup>h</sup>a/ ‘time’

/o/

/t<sup>h</sup>o/ ‘gets up’

/lom/ ‘fall’

/p<sup>h</sup>o/ ‘shield’

### 3.6 DIPHTHONGS

A diphthong is a sequence of two vowels and are also known as “vowel glides” in which the tongue glides from one vowel to the other before the articulation is complete. They can, therefore, be described in terms of the tongue position and shape of the lips. Though a diphthong has two vowels, it is considered as a single unit and is a “syllabic”.

In a diphthong, one of the vowel segments is more prominent than the other and according to the prominence received by a diphthong; It is classified as *falling* (also called *decrescendo*) or *rising* (also called *crescendo*). A falling diphthong has the first vowel more prominent whereas the second vowel is more prominent in the rising diphthong.

Diphthongs are like vowels in that they are produced with a relatively open vocal tract and a well defined formant structure and they serve as a nucleus of a syllable. Diphthongs are unlike vowels in that they cannot be characterised by a single vocal tract shape or a single formant pattern. Diphthongs are dynamic sounds in which the articulatory shape changes during the sound production.

Kom has five diphthongs, /ai/, /ui/, /oi/, /əi/, /ei/. All these can occur in initial and final except /ei/. /ei/ occurs only in the final position. The syllabic structure of diphthongs in Kom is V (open) and CV (open). Hence, Kom does not permit the occurrence of diphthongs in the medial position of a syllable.

### 3.6.1 Classification of diphthongs in Kom

Kom has five diphthongs.

/ai/, / ui/, /oi/, /əi/, /ei/

<b>Initial</b>			<b>final</b>		
/ ui/	-	/ui/	'dog'	/tui/	'water'
				/hɔmpui/	'tiger'
/ai/	-	/ai/	'bite'	/nai/	'child'
				/mai/	'pumpkin'
/əi/	-	/əini/	'we'	/nuŋəi/	'women'
				/bəi/	'mouth'
/ei/	-			/malei/	'tongue'
				/t <sup>h</sup> ei/	'fruit'
				/t <sup>h</sup> ɪŋkɔrkei/	'tapioca'
/oi/	-	/oi/	'loving expression' <sup>9</sup>	/sap məroi/	'eryngium'
				/k <sup>h</sup> oi/	'bee'
				/doi/	'magic'

<sup>9</sup> Accurate translation of this word is not found in English.

### DIPHTHONGS CHART IN KOM

First member	Second member
	<b>i</b>
<b>u</b>	+
<b>a</b>	+
<b>ə</b>	+
<b>e</b>	+
<b>o</b>	+

### 3.7 SYLLABLE

Syllable can be seen from both phonetic and phonological point of view. From the phonetic point of view, attempts have been made to define the syllables of a language on the basis of articulatory effort needed to in order to produce them. The pulse or monitor theory of syllable production proposed by Stetson (1950)<sup>10</sup>, argued that each syllable corresponds to an increase in air pressure, air from the lungs being released as a series of chest pulse. This can often readily be felt and measured particularly in emphatic speech.

Ashby, Michael and Maidment, John. (2005) state that the shortest stretch of speech that a speaker can actually pronounce in a natural way is the syllable. They further maintained that ‘a syllable is like one pulse of speech. It always contains one

---

<sup>10</sup> See Crystal (1987) and also quoted in Ladefoged (2001, p,221)

loud or prominent part (almost always a vowel sound), and many optionally have consonant sounds preceding or following the vowel’.

According to Catford (1988), the syllable is defined “as a minimal pulse of initiatory activity bounded by a momentary retardation of the initiator, either self – imposed, or more usually, imposed by a consonant type of articulatory stricture”.

Ashby, Michael and Maidment, John (op.cit) viewed that the syllable is a phonological unit-that is, as a grouping of sounds in accordance with certain rules, which differ from language to language.

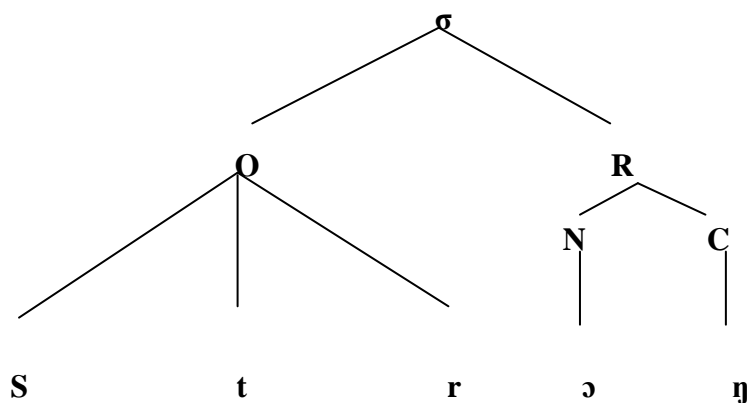
Pike (1943) defines a syllable as “a single unit of movement of the lung initiation which includes but one chest of speech”, but he also note elsewhere that.....other criteria.....have been advanced for syllable such as relative loudness of the phonemes. Sonority prominence (made up of inherent sonority, length, stress, special intonation or a combination of some of these) and change in stress as pitch.

Ladefoged (1982) defines the sonority, as “the sonority of a sound is its loudness relative to that of the other sounds with the same length, stress and pitch.” Phonetically, syllables are usually described as consisting of a centre which has little or no obstruction to airflow and which sounds comparatively loud or: before and after this centre (that is, at the beginning and end of the syllable) there will be greater obstruction to airflow (Roach: 1983; 57).

Phonologically, the syllable is “a unit containing one and only one vowel either alone or surrounded by consonants in certain arrangements. (O’ Connor 1973).

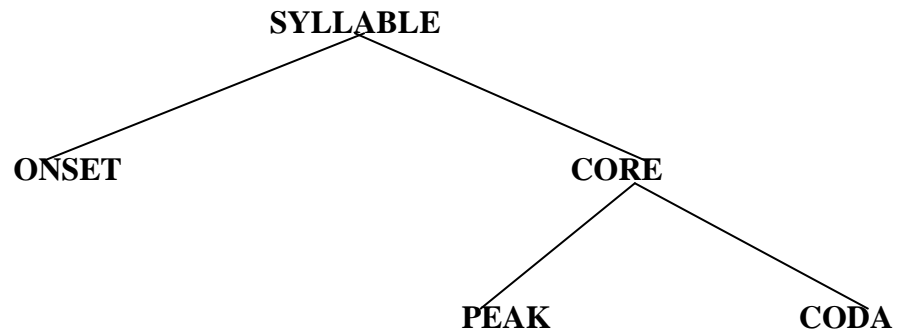
A syllable is divided into three parts. The first part or the beginning called the *onset* (syllable initial), the middle part the *peak* (nucleus) and the last part the *coda* (syllable final). However, it is not necessary that a syllable must consist of all the three parts; it can consist of only the peak or an onset and peak or onset or coda.

A syllable structure or diagram of the English word “Strong” is represented below where “O” represents the onset /str/, “N” the nucleus /ɔ/ and “C” the coda /ŋ/.



*Syllable Structure proposed by Pike (1947)*

A syllable can also have an optional onset followed by an obligatory rhyme. The rhyme is further divided into nucleus and coda. The onset is defined as any consonant(s) preceding the nucleus. The nucleus is the central segment of the syllable. It is a structural place filled by vowel(s) of the syllable. The coda is made up of any consonant(s) following the nucleus. Therefore, the rhyme consists of the obligatory nucleus and consonant(s) following it. The rhyme also called the *core* and nucleus, the peak of the syllable.



A syllable can be *open* or *closed* depending on whether the syllable ends in a consonant or a vowel. An *open syllable* is a syllable whose rhyme is made up of nucleus (vowel) whereas a syllable whose rhyme is made up of any nucleus followed by one or more consonants is said to be *a closed syllable*.

A consonant at the end of the syllable is called an *arresting* consonant and a *released* consonant if in the beginning of a syllable. A syllable in the form CV is called a *light syllable* and a syllable in the form CVV or CVC is called a *heavy syllable*.

### 3.7.1 *Syllables Structure of Kom*

Kom has an open, closed and syllables without onset and coda. Open syllables, for instance, in words like, /ka/ -my, /se/- to go, etc..., closed syllables as in words like /saŋ/-paddy, /jam/-slow, etc. In Kom, as in other Tibeto-Burman languages, the syllabic division depends primarily on the preceding and the following environments of the syllable peak. Some syllables beginning with vowels lack onsets in Kom.

*Structure in monosyllabic words*

**Open syllables**

V	/o/	'yes'
	/ui/	'dog'
	/ai/	'crab'
	/u/	'brother/sister'
CV	/je/	'to sleep'
	/ka/	'my'
	/t <sup>h</sup> i/	'to die'
	/se/	'to go'
CV	/k <sup>h</sup> ui/	'bee'
	/tui/	'water'
	/nui/	'to laugh'
	/dzui/	'to follow'
	/mui/	'bride'
CCV	/t <sup>h</sup> la/	'moon'
	/t <sup>h</sup> lan /	'grave'
	/tlan/	'hill'

## Closed syllables

VC	/at/	'to cut'
	/aɪ/	'hen'
	/aŋ/	'shoulder'
	/oŋ/	'to shout'
CVC	/saŋ/	'paddy'
	/tlaŋ/	'mount'
	/dʒam/	'slow'

## Disyllabic words

### Second syllable open

CV\$CV	/sə-pa/	'son'
	/kə-re/	'sound'
	/pa-se/	'boy'
	/kə-nu/	'my mother'
CV\$CV	/k <sup>h</sup> u-lai/	'court yard'
	/ma-lei/	'tongue'
	/sə-rui/	'squirrel'
	/bu-tui/	'rice soup'

V\$CV	/ui-pui/	'bitch'
VC\$CV	/ar -tui/	'egg'
CV\$CV	/pui-se/	'husband'
CVC\$CV	/riŋ-nu/	'earthquake'
	/var -pa/	'pole star'
	/vok-pa/	'male pig'
CV\$CV	/sai-pui/	'elephant'
	/tui-pui/	'flood'
CVC\$CV	/var -noi/	'world'
	/rik-dai/	'lizard'

**Second syllable closed**

CVC\$VC	/rəm-ar /	'wild fawl'
CV\$CVC	/kai-kuŋ/	'prawn'
	/tui-k <sup>h</sup> ur /	'pound'
	/nai-doŋ/	'baby'
	/tfoi-lam/	'top'
CV\$CVC	/sa-kər /	'horse'

	/p <sup>h</sup> u-tʃɔŋ/	‘roof’
	/və-sak/	‘sparrow’
	/sə- rat/	‘cow’
CV\$CCVC	/an-trəm/	‘spinach’
CVC\$CVC	/mər-vot/	‘leech’
	/lɔŋ-set/	‘love’
	/dʒɪŋ-kar /	‘morning’
	/rɪm-p <sup>h</sup> ɔr /	‘worm/caterpillar’
CCV\$CVC	/t <sup>h</sup> la-var /	‘moonlight’

***Polysyllabic words***

**Final syllable closed**

CV\$CVC\$CVC\$CVC	/p <sup>h</sup> ai-tʃam-dai-lɪm/	‘shadow of the valley’
CVC\$CCV\$CVC	/dʒan-t <sup>h</sup> la-var /	‘moon lit night’

**Final syllable open**

CV\$CVC\$CV	/doi-kɔŋ-pu/	‘head magician’
CVC\$CV\$CV	/lɔŋ-di-nu /	‘sweet heart’ (female)
CVC\$CVC\$CVC\$CV	/mən-dɔn-sət-na/	‘remembrance’

## 3.8 TONE

### 3.8.1 *Definition*

According to Crystal (2003), the term *tone* refers to distinctive pitch levels of a syllable. Traditionally, *tone* is reserved for the description of languages that specify pitch for every syllable of a word in their lexicon. A language is a ‘tone language’ if the pitch of the word can change the meaning of the word. Not just its nuances, but its core meaning”.

A language with tone is one in which an indication of pitch enters into the lexical realization of at least some morphemes. It refers to a phonological category that distinguishes two words or utterances, and is thus a term only relevant for languages in which tone plays some sort of linguistic role. Some of the scholars observed that a language with tone is one in which an indication of pitch enters into the lexical realization of at least some morphemes.

When language distinguishes a word from each other using the different distinctive pitch levels then the language has lexical tones. Languages that have level tones and contour tones are called tone languages. According to Clark and Yallop (1990) “Tone is a feature of the lexicon being described in terms of prescribed pitches for syllables or sequences of pitches for morpheme or words”

Some languages distinguish only two levels of tone while other distinguishes up to four levels. There are two types of tones. They are:

- (1) Register tones
- (2) Contour tones

**Register tones:** There are different kinds of register tones. They are – (i) High or rising tone; (ii) Low or falling tone; (iii) Medial tone or level tone.

**Contour tones:** There are two kinds of contour tones. They are:

(i) Rising (ii) falling (iii) Rising falling (iv) Falling-rising.

### 3.8.2 Tones in Kom

Kom is a tonal language. Tone plays a very important role in the language as the same word may mean two or three different things with the changing of the tone.

There are two register tones in Kom at the lexical level. They are – (i) high tone (↗)

and (ii) low tone (↘). High tone is a tone with high pitch falling slightly and low tone

is a tone with low pitch.

Consider the following minimal pairs of **tones**.

High	Low
/t <sup>h</sup> ái/ ‘edible’	/t <sup>h</sup> ài/ ‘oil’
/t <sup>h</sup> éi/ ‘able’	/t <sup>h</sup> èi/ ‘fruit’
/s <sup>h</sup> ún/ ‘day’	/s <sup>h</sup> ùn/ ‘to stab’
/túi/ ‘tasty’	/tùi/ ‘water’
/réi/ ‘axe’	/rèi/ ‘flower’
/súk/ ‘slave’	/sùk/ ‘to hit’
/sák/ ‘to sing’	/sàk/ ‘to make’
/atfúŋ/ ‘he rides’	/atfùn/ ‘on top’

### 3.9 PHONOLOGICAL PROCESSES

Schane (1973) stated that ‘When morphemes are combined to form words, the segments of neighboring morpheme become juxtaposed and sometime undergo change. Changes also occur in environments other than those in which two morphemes come together-for examples, word initial and word final positions, or the relation of a segment vis-a- vis a stressed vowel.’ Phonological processes in Kom can be discussed at various levels. However, the present study is concentrated only on the four processes, namely, Assimilation, Deletion, Vowel lengthening and Free variation

#### 3.9.1 Assimilation

Assimilation is a common phonological process by which the segment of a speech sound becomes more like that of another segment in a word (or at a word boundary). In otherwords, it is the process of sound change due to the influence of one sound upon another. Progressive assimilation refers to the process where a sound changes under the influence of the preceding sound. Regressive assimilation on the other hand refers to the sound change that takes place due to the influence of the following sound.

In Kom, regressive assimilation is found to be common. The vowel /a/ gets assimilated into /ə/ in final position if followed by an open syllable. The following examples can be considered:

/va/ ‘bird’      /vəsək/ ‘sparrow’

/ka/ ‘I’      /kəsək/ ‘I sing’

### 3.9.2 *Deletion*

It is a phonological process by which a sound present in its underlying phonemic form is removed from the phonemic form in certain environments. Deletion is also known as Elision and Truncation where a sound is lost from a sequence. It is the exact opposite of epenthesis, the addition of a sound into a word.

Two phonological processes occur in Kom:

#### a) *Vowel deletion*

The phoneme /i/ in the second syllable is deleted if followed by a nasal /n/ and preceded by a vowel. The following examples are noted:

/ama-in/	-	/aman/ 'by him'
/mi-in/	-	/min/ 'by man'
/tutɛ-in/	-	/tutɛn/ 'by no one'
/dʒisu-in/	-	/dʒisun/ 'by Jesus'
/pa-in/	-	/pan/ 'by father'
/sa-in/	-	/san/ 'by son'

#### b) *Consonant deletion*

The glottal stop /ʔ/ in Kom is deleted in the final positions of the second syllable in casual speech. Consider the following examples:

/ka-eʔ/	/ka-e/	'it is'
/anmu-aʔ/	/anmu-a/	'by seeing'
/bi-aʔ/	/bi-a/	'from the star'

### 3.9.3 Vowel lengthening

It is a process whereby short vowels become long in certain environment. In Kom as in Thadou, a neighboring Tibeto-Burman language, vowels lengthen when followed by a sonorant sound. Consider the following examples:

/da: ŋ/ 'no'

/da: n/ 'law'

/dɔ: n/ 'attention'

### 3.9.4 Free variation

Free variation is the non-contrastive alternation between two or more phonemes in the same phonological environment. In Kom, /v/ and /w/ are differentiated in orthography but in spoken form, they are in free variation. The speed and degree of formality in casual speech determine this condition of the two phonemes. The following examples are noted:

/vaɾpa/	~	/waɾpa/ 'polestar'
/vɔk/	~	/wɔk/ 'pig'
/t <sup>h</sup> lavar/	~	/t <sup>h</sup> lawar/ 'moonlight'

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **VARIATION**

#### ***4.1 AN INTRODUCTION***

In this Chapter, an attempt is being made to analyse the variation pattern of Kom. Depending on geographical location, there is a marked regional variation found in Kom. For example, Kom spoken in Sagang in Churachanpur District is different from those spoken in Sinamkom and Saikul villages of Senapati District of Manipur. In order to bring out the variation present in the language, the Kom speech community of Manipur has been broadly divided into six geographical areas (shown in Map in Page-180). The present study is conducted in each of the varieties across the Kom speech community, with each speech variety consisting of several villages. A proper description of the varieties under study is presented in the following chapter.

The Kom speech community is the most scattered people of Manipur. Though less in population, they are found in all the Districts of Manipur except in Ukhrul District. Besides, they do not occupy any compact area in the state and as such other communities numerically out-numbered them and they are minority wherever they settled.

The present study is conducted on the Six Regional Varieties that are given below;

1. Mongtung Variety
2. Sinamkom Variety
3. Moirang variety

4. Mantak Variety

5. Sagang Variety

6. Tonsen Variety

Even though the grouping of the speech varieties given above is based on their geographical location, it also partly conforms to the historical lineage of the community. A study on the history of each of the variety indicates that Koms have the tendency to stay together in groups and sub-groups. Not much can be said about the group composition before their entry into Manipur, but it appears that ever since they entered Manipur, they scattered into sub-groups and occupied the hills and valleys of Manipur. Till date, inter-village migration continues. Yet, every sub-group maintains their distinctive identity. Whenever they migrate and establish a new settlement, they take their village name along with them.

#### **1. Mongtung Variety**

The speakers of Mongtung variety are the group who once inhabited the hilly areas of Tamenglong District of Manipur. The main village of Mongtung speakers is Songphel Khullen in Tamenglong, and the erstwhile Hlongching, Mongkotjang, Songphel and Taitak villages in Tamenglong District are said to have been founded by the people who migrated from Songphel Khullen. Besides Songphel Khullen, there were also two villages, viz., Wakotphai in Nagaland, and another village by the name Mongtung in Karbi anglong District of Assam. Of the three villages, Wakotphai is the only village that exists today and the other villages were deserted; people left for better place in the subsequent years and the village does not exist any longer.

It is believed that the village got its name from a man whose name was Mongtung. Surprisingly, there are no more people in the place called Mongtung in Karbi Anglong District of Assam today. It is not known how they disappeared. They probably became extinct due to calamities like epidemics, high mortality rate or were merged with the Kukis or Hmars of the surrounding area.

The present day Saikul and Makokching villages were founded from the Songphel village of Tamenglong District. And the last group of people who left Songphel village were the ones who settled in Samulamlan village in Sagang area of Churachandpur District where they still retain their old village name. Makokching and Saikul are the two main villages of Mongtung speakers of Senapati District besides Ichum Keirap. In the present study the speakers of these villages, viz., Makokching, Saikul and Ichum Keirap, are taken as Mongtung variety speaker. Though Mongtung variety is considered as the standard variety of Kom, however, under the present work, they are studied as one of the varieties of Kom.

## **2. Sinamkom Variety**

Sinam Kom variety is spoken in the Senapati District of Manipur. However, the area is much nearer to Imphal East District of Manipur. The Distance between Sinamkom Village and Imphal is 15 (Fifteen) Kms. Therefore, the contact between the speakers of this speech variety and Manipuri speakers are much greater due to their geographical proximity. The Speakers of this variety include, Ngakhapat, Lairok, Maibung Kullen and Maibung Likli villages.

### **3. Moirang Variety**

The variety of Kom spoken in the Moirang area of Bishenpur District of Manipur is considered as Moirang variety. All the villages starting from Moirang to Kom Keirap is clubbed under Moirang speech variety. The Kom-Keirap (also known as Project, derived from the Loktak hydro-electric project), Khoirentak, Sengpangjar, Kangathei villages are some of the villages speaking the same variety. It is also true that there is a slight variation within this group itself. However, the variation is relatively less to be considered as a separate variety. Moirang variety is closer to the Sinamkom and Mongtung variety. When enquired from the Mongtung variety speakers about the differences they perceived between their speech and Moirang variety, the differences in 'the speed' is being reported. In otherwords, the speakers of Moirang variety speak faster than the Mongtung speaker. The study reveals that the vocabularies of the two varieties are more or less the same.

### **4. Mantak Variety**

Mantak variety is one of the marked varieties of Kom language. It is spoken in the village of Mantak in Chandel District of Manipur. Mantak is one of the oldest Kom villages having around 1000 (one thousand) speakers. It is situated inside the physical boundry of Thoubal District of Manipur. However, they are officially put under the administrative jurisdiction of Chandel District on ethnic ground. It may be mentioned that the state administration placed most of the tribal communities in hill districts for better administrative purpose. Under the Mantak variety, Litan in Chandel District is included. Thikhup also known as Moirang - Mantak can be clubbed under

Mantak variety. The accent and vocabulary of Moirang - Mantak is almost the same with Mantak speech of Chandel District. Mantak village of Chandel District is located near Kakching, a Meitei speech community. Hence, it is sometimes known as Kakching- Mantak. This variety has shown high resemblance with Aimol and Koirang languages which are found in the adjacent vicinity. The Mantak variety is unique because it resembles none of the other varieties of Kom.

#### **5. Sagang Variety**

The Sagang variety is spoken in the Sagang area of Churachandpur District of Manipur. Sagang is considered one of the biggest Kom populated areas of Manipur. Sagang villages are geographically closer to Moirang variety. Sagang Khupui is the oldest village in this surrounding area of greater Sagang surrounded by various small villages like Lukhumbi, Tuiringphaison, Lungkhur, Theikakbi, Lukhumbi, Malamphai, Khunomphai, Lairam-wangma and others.

#### **6. Tonsen Variety**

The other variety of Kom spoken in Chandel District of Manipur is Tonsen and Mahou-tera. It shows some unique features that may be considered as separate variety of Kom. There is a slight variation within these two villages, that is, Tonsen and Mahou-tera. However, there is no significant variation in speech between Tonsen and Tonsen Tampak villages as there are in close proximity with each other. This variety has speakers numbering more than 1000 (one thousand). This variety is closer to Sagang variety.

## 4.2 PHONOLOGICAL VARIATION

### 4.2.1 Devoicing of nasals lateral and flap

Sagang, Mantak and Tonsen varieties of Kom shows no devoicing of nasals /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/, lateral /l/ and flap /ɾ/ while the other three varieties, Mongtung, Moirang and Sinamkom exhibit this feature though it is not consistent. Their status are discussed in the previous chapter. The following examples are considered;

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/m̥it/	/m̥it/	/m̥it/	/mit/	/mit/	/mit/	<i>eye</i>
/n̥ar/	/n̥ar/	/n̥ar/	/nar/	/nar/	/nar/	<i>nose</i>
/kopi l̥əm/	/kopi l̥əm/	/kopi l̥əm/	/kopi ləm/	/kopi ləm/	/kopi /	<i>cabbage</i>
/səŋui/	/səŋui/	/səruɪ/	/səruɪ/	/səruɪ/	/sətəŋ/	<i>squirrel</i>
/kədai ŋəɾ/	/kədai ŋəɾ/	/kədai ŋəɾ/	/kədai ŋəɾ/	/kədai ŋəɾ/	/kədai ŋəɾ/	<i>quietly</i>

In some instances in words that are verbs and nouns, /u/ in Mongtung, Moirang, Sinamkom and Tonsen changes to /ɿ/ in Sagang variety if followed by a nasal /ŋ/ or a velar /k/ in the final position. The following are some of the examples:

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/suŋ/	/suŋ/	/suŋ/	/sɿŋ/	/suŋ	/suŋ/	<i>cook</i>
/vuk/	/vuk/	/vuk/	/vɿk/	/vɛl/	/vuʔ/	<i>beat</i>
/suk /	/suk /	/suk /	/sɿk /	/suk/	/suʔ/	<i>come out</i>
/kaikuŋ/	/kaikuŋ/	/kaikuŋ/	/kaikuŋ/	/keikuŋ/	/kaikuŋ/	<i>prawn</i>
/tʃuŋ/	/tʃuŋ/	/tʃuŋ/	tʃɿŋ/	/tʃuŋ/	tʃuŋ/	<i>ride</i>

In Sagang, one of the Kom Variety /ə/ changes to /i/ if followed by /r/ in medial position. It is also found that /r/ and /l/ in this variety are in free variation. This particular feature is exclusive to Sagang only. It is sometimes bidirectional. It is noted that /l/ cannot occur in final positions in any of the Kom varieties except Mantak. However, because of the free variation of /r/ and /l/, there are possibilities of it occurring in the final positions in Sagang. The following examples are considered:

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/səri/	/səri/	/səri/	<b>/sili/</b>	/səri/	/səri/	<i>seven</i>
/kəret/	/kəret/	/kəret/	<b>/kilit/</b>	/kəret/	/kərət/	<i>eight</i>
/məri/	/məri/	/məri/	<b>/mili/</b>	/rəl/	/məri/	<i>snake</i>
/kəri/	/kəri/	/kəri/	<b>/kili/</b>	/kəri/	/kəri/	<i>intestine</i>

Examples of /l/ in final position and the interchange of /r/ and /l/

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/kalur/	/kalur/	/kalur/	<b>/kalul/</b>	/alur/	/kalur/	<i>glory</i>
/ɕeipar/	/ɕeipar/	/ɕeipar/	<b>/leipal/</b>	/reipar/	/reipar/	<i>flower</i>
/selɔi/	/selɔi/	/salɔi/	<b>/serɔi/</b>	/salɔi/	/salɔi/	<i>buffallo</i>
/məlei/	/məlei/	/məlei/	<b>/mərei/</b>	/məlei/	/məlei/	<i>tongue</i>

/t<sup>h</sup>/ changes to /s/ in Sagang if preceded by a vowel /ə/ in the medial position.

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/kət <sup>h</sup> a/	/kət <sup>h</sup> a/	/kət <sup>h</sup> a/	/kəʂa/	/əsa/	/kət <sup>h</sup> a/	<i>good</i>
/kət <sup>h</sup> inpa/	/kət <sup>h</sup> inpa/	/kət <sup>h</sup> inpa/	/kəsinpa/	/kərolpa/	/kət <sup>h</sup> inpa/	<i>my friend</i>
/vət <sup>h</sup> u/	/vət <sup>h</sup> u/	/vət <sup>h</sup> u/	/vəsu/	/vət <sup>h</sup> u/	/vət <sup>h</sup> u/	<i>dove</i>

In Tonsen, another variety of Kom, /k/ does not occur in the final position unlike other varieties. The sound is substituted by /ʔ/. The following are the examples:

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/vuk/	/vuk/	/vuk/	/vik/	/vɛl/	/vuʔ/	<i>hit</i>
/tuk/	/tuk/	/tuk/	/tuk/	/tuk/	/tuʔ/	<i>cut</i>
/suk/	/suk/	/suk/	/sɪk/	/suk/	/suʔ/	<i>punch</i>
/buk/	/buk/	/buk/	/buk/	/buk/	/buʔ/	<i>Pile up</i>

/ɔ/ changes to /ə/ in Tonsen variety in medial position. Examples can be illustrated thus:

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/sakɔr/	/sakɔr/	/sakɔr/	/sakɔr/	/sakɔr/	/sakəʔ/	<i>horse</i>
/hɔŋ/	/hɔŋ/	/hɔŋ/	/hɔŋ/	/hɔŋ/	/həŋ/	<i>come</i>
/tlɔŋ/	/tlɔŋ/	/tlɔŋ/	/tʃɔŋ/	/tʃɔŋ/	/təŋ/	<i>word</i>
/mərvət/	/mərvət/	/mərvət/	/mərvət/	/mərvət/	/mərvət/	<i>leech</i>

In Tonsen /dʒ/ changes to /j/ in initial and medial position in monosyllabic and disyllabic words. The following are the examples:

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/dʒe/	/dʒe/	/dʒe/	/dʒe/	/dʒal/	<b>/ja/</b>	<i>sleep</i>
/zəŋ/	/dʒəŋ/	/dʒəŋ/	/dʒəŋ/	/dʒəŋ/	<b>/jəŋ/</b>	<i>penis</i>
/dʒui/	/dʒui/	/dʒui/	/dʒui/	/dʒui/	<b>/jui/</b>	<i>follow</i>
/məzʊn/	/mədʒʊn/	/mədʒʊn/	/mədʒʊn/	/dʒʊn/	<b>/məjʊn/</b>	<i>urine</i>
/zɔ:ŋ/	/dʒɔ:ŋ/	/dʒɔ:ŋ/	/dʒɔ:ŋ/	/dʒɔ:ŋ/	<b>/jɔ:ŋ/</b>	<i>monkey</i>

In Mantak, another variety of Kom, the vowel /ə/ after a consonant in a word changes to /i/ if preceded by nasals or a flap.

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/rədai/	/rədai/	/rədai/	/lədai/	<b>/ridai/</b>	/rədai/	<i>mist</i>
/rəsə/	/rəsə/	/rəsə/	/rəsə/	<b>/risə/</b>	/rəsə/	<i>voice</i>
/mənli/	/mənli/	/mənli/	/minli/	<b>/minli/</b>	/minli/	<i>four</i>
/mənɸak/	/mənɸak/	/mənɸak/	/mənɸak/	<b>/minɸak/</b>	/mənɸak/	<i>praise</i>

As stated earlier, addition of /l/ is seen in the final position in Mantak after a vowel.

This is a remote feature to the other varieties of Kom. While the occurrence of /l/ in Sagang variety in final position is an exceptional case due to the free variation of /r/ and /l/.

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/kutma/	/kutma/	/kutma/	/kutma/	<b>/kutmal/</b>	/kutma/	<i>finger</i>
/be/	/be/	/be/	/be/	<b>/bel/</b>	/be/	<i>pot</i>
/kuttfe/	/kuttfe/	/kuttfe/	/kuttfe/	<b>/kuttfel/</b>	/kuttfe/	<i>index finger</i>
/artøktfe/	/artøktfe/	/artøktfe/	/artøktfe/	<b>/artøktfel/</b>	/artøktfe/	<i>duck(M)</i>
/ke/	/ke/	/ke/	/ke/	<b>/kel/</b>	/ke/	<i>leg</i>

**/pui/** in Kom is a feminine marker and a quantifier. In Mantak, it changes to **/pi/** in the final position. That is, the diphthong **/ui/** changes to **/i/**. The following examples can be considered:

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/lampui/	/lampui/	/lampui/	/lampui/	<b>/lampi /</b>	/lampui/	<i>road</i>
/arpui/	/arpui/	/arpui/	/arpui/	<b>/arpi/</b>	/arpui/	<i>hen</i>
/artøkpuui/	/artøkpuui/	/artøkpuui/	/artøkpuui/	<b>/artøkpi/</b>	/artøkpuui/	<i>duck(F)</i>
/saratpuui/	/saratpuui/	/saratpuui/	/saratpuui/	<b>/saratpi/</b>	/saratpuui/	<i>cow</i>
/saipui/	/saipui/	/saipui/	/saipui/	<b>/saipi/</b>	/saipui/	<i>elephant</i>

/t/ changes to /tʃ/ in the initial and medial positions if followed by a vowel and a nasal.

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/tɔn/	/tɔn/	/tɔn/	/tɔn/	/tʃɔn/	/tɔn/	<i>word</i>
/tun/	/tun/	/tun/	/tun/	/tʃun/	/tun/	<i>work</i>
/ɪntɪŋ/	/ɪntɪŋ/	/ɪntɪŋ/	/ɪntɪŋ/	/ɪntʃɪŋ/	/ɪntɪŋ/	<i>sooth</i>

It is also seen in Mantak that /s/ also changes to /tʃ/ in initial and medial positions if followed by a vowel /a/ and /e/. Examples are as follows:

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/sak/	/sak/	/sak/	/sak/	/tʃak/	/sak/	<i>eat</i>
/se/	/se/	/se/	/se/	/tʃe/	/se/	<i>go/walk</i>
/saŋ/	/saŋ/	/saŋ/	/saŋ/	/tʃaŋ/	/saŋ/	<i>paddy</i>
/pase/	/pase/	/pase/	/pase/	/patʃal/	/pase/	<i>male</i>
/sasai/	/sasai/	/sasai/	/sasai/	/tʃatʃai/	/sasai/	<i>rice</i>

#### 4.2.2. Consonant clusters

Mongtung, Sinamkom, Moirang have the consonant clusters while Sagang Mantak and Tonsen shows no consonant clusters. Consider the following example.

Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
/tlan/	/tlan/	/tlan/	/tlan/	/tlan/	/p <sup>h</sup> u/	<i>run</i>
/tlay/	/tlay/	/tlay/	/tʃɪŋ/	/tʃɪŋ/	/lon/	<i>mount</i>
/t <sup>h</sup> lan/	/t <sup>h</sup> lan/	/t <sup>h</sup> lan/	/t <sup>h</sup> an/	/t <sup>h</sup> an/	/k <sup>h</sup> an/	<i>grave</i>
/antram/	/antram/	/antram/	/anʃəm/	/anʃəm/	/antəm/	<i>mustard</i>
/suntrɪm/	/suntrɪm/	/suntrɪm/	/suntʃɪm/	/suntɪm/	/suntɪm/	<i>midday</i>

### 4.3. LEXICAL VARIATION

It is commonly understood that languages change over time and vary according to place and social setting. We can observe Lexical variation- differences in words and phrases by comparing the way a language is spoken in different places and among different social groups. Despite the belief that the standard variety is widely used in any language, there still remains a great deal of lexical diversity within the language when proper observation is done. This shows that the existence and vitality of the dialects present in the language should not be undermined. The lexical variation in Kom, for instance, is best demonstrated by the variety of words used for the same item in different parts of the Kom speaking area of Manipur. If one goes, for instance, to Moirang area, Makokching –Saikhul and Sinamkom area, one may eat /*binɔt*/ as a curry; sleep on the /*dʒek<sup>h</sup>ɔm*/ with /*kaŋk<sup>h</sup>ɛr*/ to protect oneself from /*dʒaŋsɔm*/ at night. while people in the Tonsen-Mahou area would probably offer /*moro*/ as a curry and /*kaɸuŋ*/ to sleep with /*kaŋk<sup>h</sup>an*/ to protect from /*t<sup>h</sup>ant<sup>h</sup>an*/ at night. Though the offer may appear to be different, it is pretty much the same. /*binɔt*/ and /*moro*/ stand for the same item that means *loofah*. So is the /*dʒek<sup>h</sup>ɔm*/ with /*kaŋk<sup>h</sup>ɛr*/ and /*kaɸuŋ*/ with /*kaŋk<sup>h</sup>an*/ that stands for *bed/cot* and *mosquito net*. While the the /*t<sup>h</sup>ant<sup>h</sup>an*/ is the Tonsen-Mahou area counterpart of /*dʒaŋsɔm*/, which means *mosquito*. The same item is manifested into different versions but understood in the same way in different regions of the Kom speaking areas of Manipur. The six varieties of Kom, which is, Mongtung, Sagang, Sinamkom, Tonsen and Mantak exhibit very few variations in the lexical items. Few examples are found where variation is in all varieties that can be illustrated in the following table:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	
	Mongtung	Moirang	Sinamkom	Sagang	Mantak	Tonsen	Gloss
1.	/nə̀r̥mi/	A	A	A	/ak <sup>h</sup> əm̥səl/	A	<i>beard</i>
2.	/k <sup>h</sup> ʔn/	A	A	/mə̃tɪŋ/	D	D	<i>Back</i>
3.	/mən̥gəl/	A	A	A	/beja:ŋ/	E	<i>Bean</i>
4.	/mə̃ŋt <sup>h</sup> a/	A	A	A	A	/salŋ/	<i>Chili</i>
5.	/wai sɔ̃l̥u/	/t̥sɔ̃mprei/	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<i>Peach</i>
6.	/binət/	A	A	/bepət/	/p <sup>h</sup> ək <sup>h</sup> ro/	/moro/	<i>Loofah</i>
7.	/d̥ʒən̥səm/	A	A	/sansan/	D	/t <sup>h</sup> ant <sup>h</sup> an/	<i>Mosquito</i>
8.	/d̥ʒekhum/	A	A	A	/p <sup>h</sup> an/	/kaʃuŋ/	<i>Bed</i>
9.	/kaŋk <sup>h</sup> ɛt/	A	A	A	A	/kaŋk <sup>h</sup> ən/	<i>Mosquito net</i>
10.	/uilə̀vən/	/tuirabə̃nt <sup>h</sup> ei/	/sə̃pt <sup>h</sup> ei/	/lẽŋt <sup>h</sup> ei/	/sitabən/	D	<i>Passion fruit</i>
11.	/lek̥dai/	/kaikɪŋ/	A	/mpuirk/	A	A	<i>Lizard</i>
12.	/ne/	A	A	/t̥u t̥u/	D	D	<i>Breast</i>
13.	/vən/	A	A	/pɔi/	D	D	<i>Stomach</i>
14.	/rən̥çɪŋ/	A	A	A	/ə̃rɪk-ə̃rai/	/khəw wa/	<i>Insect</i>
15.	/hə̃wə̃it <sup>h</sup> ə̃rak/	A	A	A	/be/	/be/	<i>Pea</i>
16.	/t <sup>h</sup> ɪŋsən̥ma/	/awət <sup>h</sup> abi/	A	B	B	B	<i>Papaya</i>

From the above examples, we can see Lexical variation, i.e, differences in the vocabulary within the varieties of Kom. Thereby usage of certain vocabulary of the Kom language reveals the identity of the speaker and the geographical location he inhabit.

Some of the vocabularies are regionally specific in nature: for instance, the usage of words like /kahui tan/ and /kahui k<sup>h</sup>ui/ which means ‘very nice’ is basically a Moirang and Tonsen specific. This is not commonly found in the other varieties of Kom. Whenever the speaker(s) used the word /katui tan/ meaning ‘very tasty’ it

indicates the Moirang variety. The same is true of /*katui k<sup>h</sup>ui*/ which refer to the same meaning in Tonsen variety. It can be illustrated thus;

Tonsen	Moirang	Gloss
/katui k <sup>h</sup> ui/	/katui tan/	<i>very tasty</i>
/kahui k <sup>h</sup> ui/	/kahui tan/	<i>very nice</i>

#### 4.4. MORPHOLOGICAL VARIATION

There is a variation in word formation pattern between Mantak variety and the rest of the varieties.

In Mantak variety ‘stealing’ is a compound word. Examples are shown below;

ruk + t<sup>h</sup>o = rukt<sup>h</sup>o

Steal + to do = stealing

V + V = N

(1) rukt<sup>h</sup>o          hi          səmək

Stealing          is          bad

‘Stealing is bad.’

In all the other five varieties, the word ‘stealing’ is a single word as shown below.

mruk

Steal = stealing

V = N

(2) mruk          hi          t<sup>h</sup>əmək

Stealing          is          bad

‘Stealing is bad’.

In other five varieties, /ɪnʁuk/ which is a one word can stand alone whereas in Mantak variety /ʁukt<sup>h</sup>o/ consist of two words or compound words as /ʁuk/ alone do not mean ‘stealing’.

It can be further substantiated by the following examples;

**(1) Mantak**

tuibol	tʃe	ŋoi	
Bathing	go	IMP	
‘Let’s go bathing’			
tui + bol	=	tuibol	
Water + bath	=	bathing	
N+V	=	N	

**(2) Sinamkom and Sagang**

tui-ʔinsi		se	ʁi
Water+ bath		go	IMP
‘Let’s go bathing’			
tui + ʔinsi	=	tuiʔinsi	
water + bath	=	bathing	
N+V	=	N	

### (3) Moirang and Tonsen

msi	se	ri
Bathing	go	IMP

‘Let’s go bathing’

msi

bathing

N/V = N

In Mantak variety /*bol*/ ‘bath’, necessarily need /*tui*/ to mean ‘bathing’. It cannot stand alone. However, in other varieties such as Sinamkom and Sagang, /*tui*/ meaning ‘water’ is optional. It can be attached to /*msi*/ to mean ‘bath’ or detached. In Moirang and Tonsen variety, /*tui*/ is not required to attach with /*msi*/ ‘bath’, and /*msi*/ alone can mean ‘bathing’. Therefore, when the Mantak variety speaker speaks other languages, they have the tendency to use their word formation system. For instance if a Mantak speaker produces a Manipuri (meiteilon) sentence, it would probably be produced like the following sentence;

isɨ+iɾuba	tʃat	se
water+bathing	go	IMP

‘Let’s go bathing’

N+V

However, in Manipuri, /*isɨ*/ ‘water’ is not required to mean ‘bathing’. /*iɾuba*/ alone denotes the meaning of bathing.

#### 4.5. SYNTACTIC VARIATION

It is well known fact that all Tibeto- Burman (TB) languages are verb final languages i.e. it has the construction of Subject +Object+ Verb (SOV). The same is applicable to the sub-group of Kuki - Chin languages. One may confuse the structure of these languages especially when the sentence has the subject and object, which is occupied by personal pronoun due to its richness in verbal agreement.

##### 4.5.1 Verbal agreement

Almost all the Kuki-Chin group has rich verbal agreement. Of them Mizo and Hmar are the striking example. Kom, which is remarkably close to Mizo and Hmar, has shown the similar feature.

Interesting enough, variation in agreement pattern is found between the varieties of Kom.

##### (a) Intransitive verb with first person

###### 1. Mongtung

kei	kəɖʒe	ɛŋ
I	sleep	AGR

‘I sleep’

###### 2. Sinamkom

kei	kəɖʒe	ɛŋ
I	sleep	AGR

‘I sleep’

### 3. Moirang

kei	kəɖʒe	ɛŋ
I	sleep	AGR

‘I sleep’

### 4. Sagang

kei	kəɖʒa	əŋ
I	sleep	AGR

‘I sleep’

### 5. Mantak

kei	<b>ki-ɖʒal</b>
I	AGR-sleep

‘I sleep’

### 6. Tonsen

kei	kəja	m
I	sleep	AGR

‘I sleep’

## (b) Intransitive verb with second person

### 1. Mongtung

nəŋ	kəɖʒe	ʃe
You	sleep	AGR

‘You sleep’

### 2. Sinamkom

nəŋ	kəɖʒe	ʃe
You	sleep	AGR

‘You sleep’

**3. Moirang**

nəŋ	kəɖʒe	ʃe
You	sleep	AGR

‘You sleep’

**4. Sagang**

nəŋ	kəɖʒa	ʃe
You	sleep	AGR

‘You sleep’

**5. Mantak**

nəŋ	ni-ɖʒal
You	AGR-sleep

‘You sleep’

**6. Tonsen**

nəŋ	kəja	je
You	sleep	AGR

‘You sleep’

The above examples show the variation in the agreement system in this language. In all five varieties, agreement follows the verb whereas in one variety i.e. Mantak, agreement precedes the verb. It is noticed that the agreement of the intransitive verb is with the subject.

Phonological variation is also seen in the agreement markers. Three varieties have the same agreement marker /εη/ in the sentence 1 in variety 1, 2, and 3. Sagang and Tonsen varieties have agreement markers /əη/ and /ɪn/ which are phonologically slightly different from agreement marker/εη/ of the other four varieties.

Phonological variation is also seen in the verbs of the sentence. Consider the following:

**(c) Transitive verb with first person**

**1. Mongtung**

kə-pa-ɪn	(kei)	avuk	εη
My-father-EGR	1sg	beat	AGR

‘My father beats me’

**2. SinamKom**

kə-pa-ɪn	(kei)	avuk	εη
My-father- EGR	1sg	beat	AGR

‘My father beats me’

### 3. Moirang

kə-pa-m	(kei)	avuk	ɛŋ
My-father- EGR	1sg	beat	AGR

‘My father beats me’

### 4. Sagang

kə-pa-m	(kei)	avik	əŋ
My-father- EGR	1sg	beat	AGR

‘My father beats me’

### 5. Mantak

kə-pa-niŋ	kei	avəl	
My-father- EGR	1sg	beat	

‘My father beats me’

### 6. Tonsen

kə-pa-m	(kei)	avuʔ	m
My-father- EGR	1sg	beat	AGR

‘My father beats me’

(d) Transitive verb with second person

1. **Mongtung**

kə-pa-m	(nəŋ)	avuk	ʃe
My-father- EGR	1sg	beat	AGR

‘My father beats you’

2. **Sinamkom**

kə-pa-m	(nəŋ)	avuk	ʃe
My-father- EGR	1sg	beat	AGR

‘My father beats you’

3. **Moirang**

kə-pa-m	(nəŋ)	avuk	ʃe
My-father- EGR	1sg	beat	AGR

‘My father beats you’

4. **Sagang**

kə-pa-m	(nəŋ)	avik	ʃe
My-father- EGR	1sg	beat	AGR

‘My father beats you’

5. **Mantak**

ka-pa-niŋ	nəŋ	avəl	
My-father- EGR	1sg	beat	

‘My father beats you’

## 6. Tonsen

kə-pa-in	(nəŋ)	avuʔ	ʃe
My-father- EGR	1 sg	beat	AGR

‘My father beats you’

### (e) Transitive verb with third person

#### 1. Mongtung

kə-pa-in	əma	avuk
My-father- EGR	1 sg	beat

‘My father beats him/her’

#### 2. Sinamkom

kə-pa-in	əma	avuk
My-father- EGR	1 sg	beat

‘My father beats him/her’

#### 3. Moirang

kə-pa-in	əma	avuk
My-father- EGR	1 sg	beat

‘My father beats him/her’

#### 4. Sagang

kə-pa-in	əma	avik
My-father- EGR	1 sg	beat

‘My father beats him/her’

## 5. Mantak

kə-pa-niŋ	əma	avəl
My-father- EGR	1 sg	beat

‘My father beats him/her’

## 6. Tonsen

kə-pa-in	əma	avuʔ
My-father- EGR	1 sg	beat

‘My father beats him/her’

In transitive sentences, all the five varieties shows agreement with the object whereas Mantak variety lacks agreement. In the five varieties object is optional and can be dropped whereas in Mantak, object is obligatory because it lacks agreement. It is to be noted that third person agreement is marked by Ø marker.

### 4.5.2 Question words

Interrogative sentences in Kom are usually comprised of a WH- Question and a Question marker /mo/. Question marker /mo/ in Mantak variety is fixed. It is always attached with the Wh-Q as shown in example 1. When the Question Marker is moved it become ungrammatical. As shown in example 2.

### Mantak

1. han-mo ni-ce sik?  
Wh-Q II-go fut

‘Where will you go?’

\* 2. han            ni-ce sik mo?  
 Wh-            II-go fut Q

‘Where will you go?’

Whereas in other five varieties (Montung, SinamKom, Sagang, Tonsen and Moirang) Q- marker is not fixed. It can occur along with the Wh-Q or with the personal agreement marker. As shown in example 1 and 2 below.

1. k<sup>h</sup>on-mo kase- sik che?  
 Wh-Q II-go fut II

‘Where will you go’

2. k<sup>h</sup>on kase- sik che-mo?  
 Wh- II-go fut II Q

‘Where will you go?’

## 4.6. SEMANTIC VARIATION

### 4.6.1 VERBS

A study on the use of verb among the varieties of Kom has revealed variation in the semantics of verb. For example the verb ‘to eat’.

#### (a) *The Verb ‘to eat’*

All the varieties use the verb /sak/ ‘to eat’ in Mongtung, Sinamkom, Moirang, Sagang and /tjak/ in Mantak. Tonsen use /baʔ/ as a verb for ‘eating food’. (All the three differs phonologically but they are same semantically).

## Sentence 1

### 1. Mongtung, Sinamkom, Moirang and Sagang

kei bu kə-sak

I rice AGR eat

‘I eat rice/ I am eating food’

### 2. Mantak

kei bu ki-tjak

I rice AGR eat

‘I eat rice/ I am eating food’

### 3. Tonsen

kei bu kə-baʔ

I rice AGR eat

‘I eat rice/ I am eating food’

## Sentence 2

### 1. Mongtung, Sinamkom, Moirang and Sagang

kei an kə-sak

I curry AGR eat

‘I eat curry/ I am eating curry’

### 2. Mantak

kei an ki-tjak

I curry AGR eat

‘I eat curry/ I am eating curry’

### 3. Tonsen

kei            an        kə-sum  
I                curry    AGR eat  
'I eat curry/ I am eating curry'

All the five varieties use the same verb for eating food (rice) and curry but different verb is used in Tonsen Variety. Separate verb is employed for food and curry in Tonsen variety according to the state or type of the food consumed. Food in Tonsen variety falls under the category of solid where the verb /baʔ/ is used while curry falls under the category which is usually vegetables and the word /sum/ is used. However, the verb for curry is not fixed as the types of curry determine the type of the verb assigned. The verb used for vegetable-curry is different. While Mongtung, Sinamkom and Moirang use the same word /sak/ for 'meat curry', the other varieties, that is, Mantak and Tonsen use /ei/. Sagang variety, on the other hand, uses both /sak/ and /ei/. The following examples are considered:

#### 1. Mongtung, Sinamkom and Moirang

kei    me    kə-sak  
I        meat AGR eat  
'I eat meat.'

#### 2. Sagang

kei    me    kə-sak/ kəʔ-ei  
I        meat    AGR eat  
'I eat meat.'

### 3. Mantak

kei me kə-ei

I meat AGR eat

‘I eat meat.’

### 4. Tonsen

kei me kə-ei

I meat AGR eat

‘I eat meat.’

Another verb /se/ is also used in Kom. It is optional for ‘eating meat’ in Mongtung, Sinamkom and Moirang varieties. Hence, /sak/ is commonly used. /ei/ is more commonly used in Sagang variety than the verb /sak/. But in Tonsen variety no verb other than /ei/ is used for eating meat. The verb /ei/ is also used for describing animals that eat flesh. It is uniformed in all the varieties.

### 1. Mongtung, Sinam Kom, Moirang and Sagang

humpui-m me a-ei/ sak

Tiger EGR meat eat

### 2. Sagang, Mantak, Tonsen

humpui-m me a-ei

Tiger EGR meat eat

‘Tiger eat meat/ the tiger is eating meat’

The verb /ei/ and /se/ is also used as *bite* in Kom. However, the intensity of the bite and the manner of the bite determine the usage of these verbs. /ei/, /se/ and /bak/ are the three possible verbs used to describe for *dog bite*. In Moirang, the verb /ei/ is used to describe the *evil spirits and demon* eating human flesh or soul. Hence, the usage is uncommon in Moirang variety because of its negative connotation. The verb /baʔ/ in Thadou language is partially similar with the verb /baʔ/ of Kom's Tonsen variety. However, /baʔ/ in Thadou is used in a certain form of eating with certain types of food consumptions. The manner of eating is the criteria for assigning the verb in Kuki and Kom. The manner of eating rice and the type of cereal food differ. The word /baʔ/ is exclusively used for eating certain types of dried food in Thadou language. /baʔ/ is used in Thadou for eating certain food like /tʃʰaŋpal/ which is also known as /tʃɛŋpak/ in Manipuri which is dried flattened rice made from specific types of rice found in Manipur and beans.

**(b) The verb 'to smoke'**

The verb drink /ɪn/ is common to all the varieties. There are some languages that use the same verb for 'eat' and 'drink'. Assamese is one of the best examples. Nagamese, for instance, has no separate word for sweet and tasty. The word 'mitha' is used for both to mean tasty and sweet. Kom, on the other hand, use separate words to denote eating and drinking. However, there is variation in the word smoking among the varieties of Kom.

### 1. Mongtung, Moirang, Sinamkom

kei    biri    kə-in  
I      bedi    smoke  
  
'I smoke bidi'

### 2. Sagang

kei    biri    kə-mut  
I      bedi    smoke  
  
'I smoke bidi'

### 3. Mantak

kei    biri    ki-ɕɔp  
I      bedi    smoke  
  
'I smoke bidi'

### 4. Tonsen

kei    biri    kə-məhəp.  
I      bedi    smoke  
  
'I smoke bidi/ I am smoking bidi'

The six varieties of Kom use the four different verb for *smoke*. In Moirang, Sinamkom and Mongtung varieties the verb /m/ is used for smoking. As stated above,

the verb /ɪn/ is used for *drinking* in Kom. Some of the Tibeto-Burman languages use the same verb for drinking and smoking. Manipuri (Meitei-lon) for instance is one where the same verb /t<sup>h</sup>ək (pa)/ is used for drinking and smoking. The same is true for Khasi, an Austro-Asiatic language. The six varieties of Kom use the four different verbs for *smoke* is used for both drinking and smoking. The verb /mut/ is used for *smoke* in Sagang variety, /ɔ̃ɔp/ in Mantak variety which also means *kiss or kissing*. In Kom /mɛɔ̃ɔp / is ‘Kiss or kissing’. In Tonsen variety, the verb /mɛhɛp/ is used which has an extended meaning for *inhale*. Hence in Moirang variety, the verb /ɪn/ is used for both smoking and drinking. In Tonsen, /mɛjɔp/ which is used as smoking in Mantak, also mean *suck and kissing*. In Thadou, the word /tʃɛp/ is *smoke* which literary mean *suck or sucking*. Tonsen variety has shown the use of separate verbs for drinking, smoking and eating. In other words, separate verb is used for the intake of solid, liquid, and gas. Moreover, the use of separate verbs for the intake of vegetable and non-vegetable is also visible. Whereas, in other varieties, there is overlapping in the use of verb at least in one item.

**(c) The Noun ‘spider’**

It is often said that the Eskimos have many lexical items to describe the different types of snow, and that the Car Nicobarese having different words to describe different stages of coconuts. The environment and the need resulted to the expansion of words in their language to meet their requirements. A similar phenomenon is found with the slightly different manner in the study of the six varieties of Kom

In Sinam Kom variety /raŋ/ is the word for *spider*. There are two kinds of spider found in Sinam Kom region. They are:

1. /raŋ/ (home)
2. maimum(wild)

/raŋ/ is considered as the main spider. It is found in the walls and ceiling at home. So, the generic term for spider in this variety is /raŋ/. /maimum/, on the other hand, it is found in the fields and mountains. It is considered the specific type of spider in Mantak variety, the word for spider is also /raŋ/. There is no other name for /raŋ/ other than the one found in the region. In Sagang variety, the generic term for spider is /wainm/ /wainm/ is one of the types of spiders.

1. /wainm/ (home)
2. /tʃ<sup>ə</sup>raŋ tʃ<sup>ə</sup>raŋ pu/ (wild)
3. /jɛntəkaipu/ (wild)

In Moirang variety, there are three names for spider.

1. /raŋkeipu/ (home).
2. /mɛntekeipu/(wild)
3. /maimum/ (wild)

In Tonsen variety and Mongtung , there is only one term for spider.

1. /maimumpa/ (home and wild)

/raŋkeipu/, which is found in homes, is considered as the main spider.

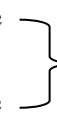
/mɛntekeipu/ is found in the fields and forest. /maimum/ is a small spider that is less significant. It is considered as spider because of it resemble to /raŋkei/. Both Sagang and Moirang variety have the same word for spider .They call it /maimum/ as this particular type of spider is found in these regions. In Tonsen and Mongtung variety, the term for spider is /maimumpa/. There is no other name for spider other than /maimumpa/. All the spiders found at home or outside are considered as one. /maimumpa/, the main spider in Tonsen and Mongtung is less significant types of Spider in Sagang and Moirang varieties. /maimumpa/ in these varieties is the one that does not make cobweb. In Mantak, web making is the basic characteristic of a spider. While in other varieties, differentiating the types of spiders is based on their physical structure. /raŋ/ in all varieties means ‘cobweb’. /kei/ is *to weave*, and /pu/ is the *doer of action*. Hence, /raŋkeipu/ literary mean ‘the one who weave cobweb’. However, in some varieties spiders that does not weave web are also included in the group. In some way the spider which is labelled as a weaver of cobweb is not so. Almost similar case is reported from Trinidad and Tobago where the migrant ethnic Indians painted the goddess *maa kali* into pink in order to differentiate from the indigenous people who are mostly black. *Maa Kali*, as the name suggests, is normally black in India and elsewhere but in Trinidad and Tobago due to ethnic tension and hatred between the two communities resulted in the change of the colour of Maa Kali into

pink. Hence, for this community Maa Kali can be pink and still considered as black. This shows that different cultures have different ways of perception, relating and interpreting the world around them according to their needs and worldview.


(d) **The verb ‘to run’**

In Mongtung, Moirang, Sinamkom, Sagang and Mantak, /tlan/ is used for both ‘run’ escape and elope. All the varieties have the same form except the Tonsen variety, which have the word /kan/. The tonsen variety /kan/ is the counterpart of /tlan/ in other variety. However, it is debatable whether the two words are synonymous or not. One may argue that they are not synonymous at all. Synonymy here refers to dialectal synonyms. Dialectal synonyms are those in which pairs of words belong to different dialects of the same language. Ideally, the two words should be synonymous as they are from the varieties of the same language. Dialectal synonymy would only consider the synonyms of two or more dialects with an extended meaning escape and elope. /kap<sup>h</sup>u/, /antʃom/ and /kan/ of which /kap<sup>h</sup>u/ and /antʃom/ are synonymous.

**1. Mongtung, Moirang, Sinamkom, Sagang and Mantak**

/tlan/ <sup>11</sup>	<p><b>Run</b></p> <p>Elope</p> <p>Escape</p>		Extended meaning
----------------------	--	---	------------------

**2. Tonsen**

/kan/	<p><b>Escape</b></p> <p>Elope</p>		extended meaning
-------	-----------------------------------	---	------------------

The above example indicates the literal/primary meaning of the verb ‘tan’ is *run* while the others ‘elope’ and ‘escape’ are the two extended meanings of it. /kan/

---

<sup>11</sup> /tlan/ is /tan/ in Sagang and Mantak since there are no consonant clusters in these varieties.

on the other hand has 'escape' as literal/primary meaning while 'elope' as its extended meaning. The difference between /tlan/ and /kan/ is in the literal/primary meaning of the two. Unlike /tlan/ the word /kan/ does not have 'run', even as extended meaning.

In Tonsen variety /p<sup>h</sup>u/ and /antʃom/ are used for the verb run. Interestingly /p<sup>h</sup>u/ and /antʃom/ seem to exhibit the phenomena of complete synonymy. Total or complete synonymy is words, which can interchange in all contexts without the slightest change in the meaning. It should be noted that complete synonym of two words or more is extremely uncommon in a language. Ullmann (1972) held that 'it is almost a truism that total synonymy is an extremely rare occurrence, a luxury that language can ill afford'. However, analysis of these words /p<sup>h</sup>u/ and /antʃom/ do not show any change of meaning in all context. Semanticists are also of the view that two lexical items bearing the same semantic resemblance to one another will not survive in a natural language. There is a possibility that either one of the two words in question may have been borrowed from other language and the meaning which it holds earlier undergone changes and resemble with the adjacent word. As it stands today, the two words emerge as a complete synonymous word in this variety. It may be noted that all the variety do not have any other word for run other than /tlan/.

#### **4.6.2. COLOUR TERMS**

It generally held view that colour perception is similar across linguistic communities, but the way how colours do categorized in the language differs widely depending on one's perception. It is established that numbers of colour terms varies from one community to another.

The present study will focus only on the basic color terms and one non-basic color term of the six varieties.

Kom basic colour terms may be presented based on the Berlin and Kay's classification.

	<b>Basic Colour terms</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
1.	/kəbaŋ/	<i>White</i>
2.	/kadum/	<i>Black</i>
3.	/Kəsən/	<i>Red</i>
4.	/əkə <sup>?</sup> ɛŋ/	<i>Green</i>

	<b>Non-Basic Colour term</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
1.	/ai <sup>?</sup> ɛŋ məŋfu/	<i>Yellow</i>

Kom would fall under the stage III (third) category, having the above given basic colour terms. However, there is overlapping of green and yellow in the language. Twenty-two informants consisting of a man in the age group of 40-66 years and a lady aged 58 years, and 20 younger people consisting of 10 boys in the age group of 25-32 and 10 girls in the age group of 23-25 years were interviewed. The two older persons reported /ɛŋ/ or /əkə<sup>?</sup>ɛŋ/ for green. And 8 (eight) boys and 4 (four) girls reported /ɛŋ/ for green.

<b>Mongtung</b>	<b>Moirang</b>	<b>Sinamkom</b>	<b>Sagang</b>	<b>Mantak</b>	<b>Tonsen</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
/ɛŋ/	/ɛŋ/	/əkə <sup>?</sup> ɛŋ/	/saŋlen/	/ɛm/	/ər <sup>?</sup> ɛŋ/	<i>Green</i>

Interestingly 6 (six) girls and (2) two boys reported /nabumətʃu/ which means *colour* of the leaf that is *green*. And all of them reported /ai<sup>2</sup>ɛŋ/ or /ɛŋ/ as *yellow*. Hence, there is an overlapping of green and yellow in the language. To them /ɛŋ/ is derived from /ai<sup>2</sup>ɛŋ/ which is *turmeric* in Kom. The colour of ‘turmeric’ /ai<sup>2</sup>ɛŋ/ is yellow. Hence, /ɛŋ/ cannot be the colour green.

This is a case of overlapping of colour terms since basic colour terms are believed to be ‘resistant to change’. Yellow is one of the frequently used term in Kom society. However, yellow is not treated as a basic colour term as the colour /ai<sup>2</sup>ɛŋ/ is derived from the turmeric colour. There is wide variation in the usage of non-basic colour terms in the varieties of Kom. Yellow colour is one of the best examples as shown below;

#### **Mongtung**

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. ai <sup>2</sup> ɛŋ | <i>turmeric colour</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------------|

#### **Moirang**

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 2. ai <sup>2</sup> ɛŋ | <i>turmeric colour</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------------|

#### **Sinamkom**

- |                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 3. ai <sup>2</sup> ɛŋ mətʃu | <i>turmeric colour</i> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|

#### **Sagang**

- |                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| 4. komola mətʃu | <i>orange colour</i> |
|-----------------|----------------------|

### **Mantak**

5. antʃəmpar                      *mustard flower*

### **Tonsen**

6. jeiŋaŋ mətʃu                      *turmeric colour*

Kom use the word for colour as /mətʃu/ is probably borrowed from *Meiteilon*<sup>12</sup> /mətʃu/ colour. Most of the Kuki-Chin languages also used a borrowed word for colour. The two Kuki-Chin languages who used /rəŋ/ a borrowed word from Indo-Aryan are Kuki and Vaiphei.

---

<sup>12</sup> *Meiteilon* means Meitei language, which is commonly known as Manipuri. The word *Meiteilon* and Manipuri is interchangeably used in this present study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **LANGUAGE IN CONTACT**

#### **5.0. INTRODUCTION**

It is said that long-term contact generally induces processes of change, interference or convergence even among quite distant languages. Change is the way of life and no one can remain static when the whole world changes with time. In this case, language is no exception. Manipur is home to various tribal linguistic groups. There are about 32 (thirty-two) tribes and other lesser-known tribes. Every tribe has their own language. Even though the government recognized only few dominant languages, there are many lesser-known unclassified languages in this multi linguistic society of Manipur

#### **5.1. Code switching and Code mixing**

Code switching and code mixing is one of the most common language phenomena found among the Kom speakers. Hudson (1980) stated that the particular dialect or language that a person chooses to use on any occasion is a code, a system used for communication between two or more parties.

Koms, being a multilingual community, tend to use other languages as well and in a very competent manner. Switching between languages is a communicative option available to the Kom speech community. Switching serves as an expressive function and has special meaning attached to it. Code switching is considered as a positive force in maintaining multilingualism. However, in some cases, it is cited as a factor that could lead to language loss. Frequent Code switching between languages

serves important functions. The reason for Code switching is to include other non-Kom speakers in the conversation, as Kom is not a widely used language in Manipur. They also switch to other languages using it as a secret code when they want to exclude some of the hearers in their conversation.

Hence, it is established that in Kom speech community, the type of code or resource used in switching is either from the varieties within the language or from other languages. The type of code used by a Kom speaker is usually determined by the speech event like topic and participants of the domain. For instance, in Churches, the Pastor read the Scripture and make the sermon in standard Kom but switch to local variety outside the Church. Sometimes the Pastor uses local variety to create an overtone situation while delivering the sermon. It is commonly observed that speakers of the varieties of Kom will use *Komtong*, the standard Kom to communicate with the speakers of other varieties of Kom. However, speakers of *Mongtung* and *Moirang* will use their own varieties, as it is similar to the standard Kom or *Komtong*. Sometimes when one Kom speakers meet another speaker from another village, they will switch their speech to *Meiteilon* after exchanging greetings and enquiries are made in standard Kom. The local varieties of Kom are usually used in informal groups, and other personalized activities. Kom speakers may switch code to redefine the interaction as appropriate to different social settings, or to avoid continual code switching or defining the interaction in terms of any social functions. Code switching is often used as a strategy of neutrality or as a means to explore which code is most appropriate and acceptable in a particular situation. Switching from Kom to *Meiteilon* in a public speech event is a symbol of accommodation or neutrality shown towards other speech communities present in the event so that it will enable other language

speakers to participate totally in that particular occasion. The speaker will switch over to Kom for a brief period to convey the message that is concern only to the Kom speech community and resume the act with the same code. Here the switching of code is more or less like an in-group speech or register. Varieties of Kom, Meiteilon, Kuki, English and even Hindi are some of the most commonly used codes.

Code mixing is common amongst the speakers of Kom. The frequent use of other languages made them habituated to this phenomenon. The practice of code mixing has resulted to the greater amount of lexical borrowing in Kom language.

## **5.2. Borrowing**

Due to close contact with other different languages, Kom have heavily borrowed lexical items into its vocabulary. These borrowed words are usually those that do not exist in their language. They also borrowed lexical items even from English and Hindustani. Some Hindustani words of Arabic origin are also seen in the Kom vocabulary which is believed to have been borrowed via *Meiteilon*. The borrowing has enriched the language considerably. Some of the borrowed words are assimilated to Kom language after nativising them while some retain their original forms. Borrowing of words does not necessarily mean that Kom language is inadequate; it is a universal phenomenon as no language is self sufficient on its own. Moreover, no language is free from borrowing or being borrowed.

Their immediate neighbours, who are mostly dominant, in every spheres of life, have considerably influenced Kom. The influence of Manipuri on Kom is visible even in their life style let alone the language. Apart from some basic tribal structure of

tribalism and their religion, hardly any distinctive tribal traits can distinguish them from their plain neighbours especially the Manipuri (Meitei) society. It is, however, true that most of the communities are undergoing changes. Globalisation and modern social system are also partly responsible for making borrowing of lexical items in the vocabulary. The advancement in science and technology, improvement in communication, new political and educational set up and other factors have extensively enhanced the contact between different linguistic communities than ever before. Hence, no society can live in isolation and contact becomes the norm of the day. Nevertheless, there are certain traits, which can be attributed to the influence of dominant communities. Of which, language is one. Koms and Meiteis who consider themselves as 'the son of the soil' have been living together for centuries in the Manipur valley. Most of the tribal communities in Manipur have settled in the valley but majority of them are still found in the hills and foothills of Manipur. They all are commonly known as the hill people. The Kom speakers, on the other hand, are found mostly in the valley and foot hills of Manipur. Perhaps they may be the first tribal community who came down and settle in the valley of Manipur. The ways and ideas of their plain neighbours especially the Manipuri (Meitei) society have great bearing on them. Moreover, Meiteilon, being the state official language and the lingua franca of the various tribal linguistic communities certainly enjoy more prestige than any of the languages found in the state of Manipur.

Kom, a Tibeto-Burman language, has been in contact with Manipuri, another Tibeto-Burman language for ages. Manipuri, on the other hand, has the history of being in contact with Assamese, Hindi and other Indo-Aryan languages for centuries. Ever since Manipur came under Vishnavism, the influence of Bengali and Sanskrit

came in a big way. Manipuri itself has corpus of Sanskrit words that is believed to have come via Bengali. Most of these vocabularies are related with the Vishnavite religion. Some of the borrowed vocabularies including those from Sanskrit and Hindustani origin are presented below.

<b>Manipuri</b>	<b>English gloss</b>
/apra:d/	Sin
/saŋskaɪr/	Cremation
/puɔʒari/	Hindu priest
/raksa/	Protection
/puɔʒa/	Offering
/sorat/	A rite perform after death
/mɛndəp/mɛntɔp/	Hall
/jatra/	Pilgrimage
/sastra/	Scripture
/d <sup>h</sup> ərma/	Religion/principle

Some words are borrowed, as there is no indigenous word in the vocabulary. Some of the words are given below:

/ad <sup>h</sup> ɪksiaʔ/	Speaker
/d <sup>h</sup> ərna/	Protest
/bilati/	Foreign

/beb <sup>h</sup> ar/	Etiquette
/radʒia/	State
/muk <sup>h</sup> ia mantri/	Chief Minister
/radʒia pal/	Governor
/keinia/	Bride
/natəḱ/	a play
/kavi/kabi/	Poet

These borrowed words are used in Manipuri Hindu society. However, it is hardly found in Kom or any tribal languages. The borrowed words listed above are related to what Bloomfield (1935) termed as ‘cultural borrowing.’

It is commonly accepted that languages that are dominant and have more prestige tends to be the donor language while languages that are less dominant are usually recipient languages. However, there are also cases where vocabularies from less prestige languages find their way into the lexicon of the dominant and high prestige languages. The types of borrowed lexical items could be those words indicating abstract ideas or words associated with materials or other objects which are cultural specific to the donor language. Interestingly, the use of /bṛ̃ṅsa/, a loan word from Kuki- Chin vocabulary for the ‘beef’ is widespread among the young and middle aged Manipuri males. Consumption of beef is forbidden in Manipuri society. It has religious implication. Even though considerable number of slaughter houses increase

over the years in the valley, the society is yet to accept the fact. Hence, beef remain as unacceptable to the society and the name itself has the negative connotation. In order to lower down the overtone, /bɔŋsa/ is used as a mask, in spite of having the indigenous counterpart for /bɔŋsa/, which is /sansa/ in Manipuri. This type of borrowing is more or less similar to what Valkhoff (1930)<sup>13</sup> calls ‘loan of convenience’

There are fairly large number of borrowed words mostly of Manipuri and some of Hindustani origin, which have found entry into the Kom lexicon. Some of these words still retain their original shape while others have undergone partial or complete changes and got assimilated into the Kom language. It is also observed that the type of borrowing also differ from one variety of Kom to another depending on their geographical location and backgrounds, that is , their exposure and contact with other language groups.

However, it is not always easy to identify the original source of the words. In some cases, words are directly borrowed from the immediate dominant language but in some case, words are borrowed directly from the sources that may not be immediate neighbour of the recipient language. Hence, the answer of how the borrowed vocabularies made an entry into the recipient languages requires serious analysis. In most cases, loan words often come through the medium of some intermediate languages. In that case, the borrowed word may be obtained by the recipient in its original form or with partial alteration due to the influence of

---

<sup>13</sup> See Beardsmore (1986, p 60)

intermediary language. In the case of Kom, Manipuri is both the donor and intermediary language in case of lexical items from Hindustani<sup>14</sup> origin.

Some of the borrowed lexical items of the six varieties under study is discussed below. The data is elicited from informants between the age group of 18 to 23 years. Considerable amount of data is obtained, however, only few data is presented in order to show the types of borrowing in these varieties. It is illustrated in the following tables;

### 1. Mongtung

Mongtung	Manipuri	Gloss
upak	ubak	<i>plank</i>
keiɽap	keirak	<i>ladder</i>
bofa	bofa	<i>sack</i>
sori	sori	<i>knife</i>
p <sup>h</sup> ɔ̄tɔ̄n	pudon/t <sup>h</sup> aŋmei	<i>lamp</i>
səŋxom ★	səŋgom	<i>milk</i>
mət lap <sup>h</sup> aŋ	lap <sup>h</sup> oj lap <sup>h</sup> aŋ	<i>bunch of banana</i>
kobi	kobi	<i>cabbage</i>

<sup>14</sup> Hindustani includes Hindi and Urdu, and their main source is Sanskrit for Hindi and Parso-Arabic for Urdu.

tʃəmpɾa	cəmpɾa	<i>lemon</i>
pʰənəitən	poŋheidon	<i>guava</i>
koməla	komala	<i>orange</i>
kəpətʰei	kəbohei	<i>pomegranate</i>
tʰeipon	tʰeibon	<i>jackfruit</i>
khu məʔon	numit məʔon	<i>weather</i>
sarək★	sorok	<i>road</i>
kəntʰon	kontʰon	<i>gate</i>
lupau	lubau	<i>dandruff</i>
akao★	kao-baʔ	<i>kick</i>
nəm	nəm-(baʔ)	<i>push</i>
itʰak★	itʰak	<i>wave</i>
kapupa★	mapu	<i>owner</i>
taŋkʰai★	taŋkʰai	<i>half</i>
kəhaŋ★	ahaŋ(baʔ)	<i>empty</i>
tʃiŋ	ciŋ	<i>hill</i>
mkʰon★	mkʰon	<i>garden</i>

The borrowed lexical items shown above have indicated the types of borrowing present in the Mongtung variety. Some of the lexical items are partially assimilated in the native form while the others remain unchanged. The motive of borrowing is due to sheer necessity as some of the borrowed items are not native to the culture. This is evident from the borrowed name for guava /p<sup>h</sup>ənəitən/, which is /pɔŋheidon/ in Manipuri. /pɔŋ/ in Manipuri is the name for a *land*, which was located between present day China, and Burma. /hei/ stands for *fruit*. Hence, it is believed that guava is a fruit brought from the land of the /pɔŋ/. The borrowed word is assimilated to the sound system of the language. The star marked lexical items shown in the table is to indicate that the equivalent native word is found in this variety.

## 2. Moirang

Moirang	Manipuri	Gloss
upak	ubak	<i>plank</i>
keiɟap	keiɟap	<i>ladder</i>
bofa	bofa	<i>sack</i>
k <sup>h</sup> au	k <sup>h</sup> au	<i>bag</i>
sofi	sori	<i>knife</i>
pɔtɔn★	pudon/t <sup>h</sup> aŋmei	<i>lamp</i>
t <sup>h</sup> au★	t <sup>h</sup> aw	<i>oil</i>

səŋgom★	səŋgom	<i>milk</i>
mət lap <sup>h</sup> aŋ	mot lap <sup>h</sup> aŋ	<i>bunch of banana</i>
kopi	kobi	<i>cabbage</i>
tʃəmpɾa	cəmpɾa	<i>lemon</i>
p <sup>h</sup> ənəitɔn	paŋheidon	<i>guava</i>
koməla	komala	<i>orange</i>
kəpət <sup>h</sup> əi	kəbohei	<i>pomegranate</i>
t <sup>h</sup> eipɔŋ	t <sup>h</sup> eibɔŋ	<i>jackfruit</i>
kəni məʔɔŋ	numɪt məʔɔŋ	<i>weather</i>
sarɔk★	sorok	<i>road</i>
kɔnt <sup>h</sup> ɔŋ	kont <sup>h</sup> ɔŋ	<i>gate</i>
lupau	lupau	<i>dandruff</i>
akao★	kao-baʔ	<i>kick</i>
nəm	nəmbaʔ/in-(baʔ)	<i>push</i>
It <sup>h</sup> ak	It <sup>h</sup> ak	<i>wave</i>
kapupa	kapupa	<i>owner</i>
taŋk <sup>h</sup> ai★	taŋk <sup>h</sup> ai	<i>half</i>
kəhaŋ★	ahaŋ(baʔ)	<i>empty</i>

əhəwna★	əhəwba	<i>beginning</i>
tɪŋ	cɪŋ	<i>hill</i>
ɪnk <sup>h</sup> ɔn★	ɪnk <sup>h</sup> ɔn	<i>garden</i>

Moirang variety borrowed some lexical items despite having their own indigeneous vocabulary. The star marked lexical items shown in the table is to indicate that the equivalent native word is found in the variety. Thus, the intensity of borrowed words increases in Moirang variety than the Mongtung Variety.

### 3. Sinamkom

Sinamkom	Manipuri	Gloss
upak	ubak	<i>plank</i>
keɪɾap	keɪrak	<i>ladder</i>
bofa	bofa	<i>sack</i>
k <sup>h</sup> au	k <sup>h</sup> au	<i>bag</i>
sofi	sori	<i>knife</i>
pɔtɔn	pudon/thaŋmei	<i>lamp</i>
t <sup>h</sup> au	t <sup>h</sup> aw	<i>oil</i>
səŋgom	səŋgom	<i>milk</i>

mət lap <sup>h</sup> aŋ	mot lap <sup>h</sup> aŋ	<i>bunch of banana</i>
kopi	kobi	<i>cabbage</i>
tʃəmpɾa	cəmpɾa	<i>lemon</i>
p <sup>h</sup> ənəitən	paŋheidon	<i>guava</i>
koməɾa	komala	<i>orange</i>
kəpət <sup>h</sup> əw	kəbohei	<i>pomegranate</i>
t <sup>h</sup> eipon	t <sup>h</sup> eibon	<i>jackfruit</i>
kəni məʔon	numit məʔon	<i>weather</i>
sarək	sorok	<i>road</i>
kənt <sup>h</sup> on	kont <sup>h</sup> on	<i>gate</i>
lupau	lupau	<i>dandruff</i>
akao	kao-baʔ	<i>kick</i>
nəmbaʔ	in-(baʔ)	<i>push</i>
t <sup>h</sup> ak	it <sup>h</sup> ak	<i>wave</i>
kapupa	kapupa	<i>owner</i>
taŋk <sup>h</sup> a	taŋk <sup>h</sup> ai	<i>half</i>
kəhaŋ	aŋaŋ(baʔ)	<i>empty</i>

əhəwna	əhəwba	<i>beginning</i>
tʃɪŋ	cɪŋ	<i>hill</i>
ɪnkʰɔŋ	ɪnkʰon	<i>garden</i>

The above examples show that the sound system of Sinamkom and Mongtung is more or less the same. Hence, assumptions can be made that less variation exist between the two varieties. However, the extent of borrowing differs depending on the amount of exposure and contact with other speech communities.

#### 4. Sagang

Sagang	Manipuri	Gloss
tʰoŋpa	tʰoŋ	<i>door</i>
upak	ubak	<i>plank</i>
sori	sori	<i>knife</i>
bepʰu	korpʰu	<i>pot</i>
tʰaŋmei	tʰaŋmei	<i>lamp</i>
tʰau	tʰaw	<i>oil</i>
səŋkʰom★	səŋgom	<i>milk</i>
mət lapʰaŋ	mot lapʰaŋ	<i>bunch of banana</i>

kopi	kobi	<i>cabbage</i>
tʃəmpɾa	cəmpɾa	<i>lemon</i>
p <sup>h</sup> ənəitən	paŋheidon	<i>guava</i>
koməɾa	komala	<i>orange</i>
t <sup>h</sup> eipon	t <sup>h</sup> eibon	<i>jackfruit</i>
udʒək★	ujok	<i>forest</i>
kəŋtʃeibun	kaŋjeibun	<i>ground</i>
pət	pət	<i>lake</i>
kəni məʔon	numit məʔon	<i>weather</i>
t <sup>h</sup> a məŋaŋ	t <sup>h</sup> a məŋan	<i>moonlight</i>
leiŋaŋ	leiŋaŋ	<i>mud</i>
səɾək	sorok	<i>road</i>
səmudɾa	səmudɾa	<i>ocean</i>
urʊm	urum	<i>shade</i>
kont <sup>h</sup> on	kont <sup>h</sup> on	<i>gate</i>
k <sup>h</sup> onpaɾ	k <sup>h</sup> onban	<i>water canal</i>

Interestingly, Sagang is the only variety that has an indigenous vocabulary for the word *ladder*. The borrowed lexical items in Sagang presented above have shown that the phonological variation of the same lexical items borrowed from the same source by different varieties of Kom. This indicates that the sound system of Sagang slightly differ from the other varieties of Kom. This is one of the reasons why variation is seen in Sagang variety when compared with the other five varieties.

## 5. Mantak

Mantak	Manipuri	Gloss
ahaŋ	ahaŋ(baʔ)	<i>empty</i>
asaŋ	saŋ(ba)	<i>long</i>
akoiba	akoibaʔ	<i>round</i>
atiŋ p <sup>h</sup> it	atiŋbaʔ	<i>straight</i>
at <sup>h</sup> ot	at <sup>h</sup> ot(paʔ)	<i>soft</i>
ameɭ-t <sup>h</sup> i	məsak t <sup>h</sup> i(baʔ)	<i>ugly</i>
atap	atap(pa)	<i>slow</i>
akə-k <sup>h</sup> et-na	k <sup>h</sup> etnaba	<i>different</i>
aka tʃaut <sup>h</sup> ok	poŋbaʔ/caut <sup>h</sup> okpa	<i>proud</i>
aməsɪŋ	masɪŋ	<i>number</i>
maipak	maipak	<i>win</i>

nəi nəm	nəm(baʔ)	<i>press</i>
nəi-ʔil	m-(baʔ)	<i>push</i>
kao★	kao-baʔ	<i>kick</i>
nəi p <sup>h</sup> oi	p <sup>h</sup> oi(baʔ)	<i>pluck</i>
atao	tao(baʔ)	<i>float</i>
alɔp	lɔppaʔ	<i>sink</i>
akət <sup>h</sup> ɔm	at <sup>h</sup> ɔm(baʔ)	<i>sweet</i>
t <sup>h</sup> auna sa★	t <sup>h</sup> auna p <sup>h</sup> əbaʔ	<i>brave</i>
upak	ubak	<i>plank</i>
tʃəkəp	c <sup>h</sup> egəp	<i>tong</i>
sori	sori	<i>knife</i>
kɔlp <sup>h</sup> u	kɔrp <sup>h</sup> u	<i>pot</i>
k <sup>h</sup> ao	k <sup>h</sup> ao	<i>bag</i>
sirat-saŋ	saŋgon	<i>cowshed</i>

The presence of borrowed lexical items is seen in Mantak variety. The phonological variation in the borrowed lexical items with other five varieties indicates that the sound system of Mantak variety is slightly different from other five varieties of Kom. The data above also shows that Mantak variety has borrowed extensively

from Manipuri than the three varieties, Mongtung, Sinamkom and Moirang. This indicates that the extent of influence from Manipuri differs from one variety to another.

## 6. Tonsen

Tonsen	Manipuri	Gloss
akəhaŋ	ahaŋ(baʔ)	<i>empty</i>
akoipa	akoibaʔ	<i>round</i>
akətɪŋ	atɪŋbaʔ	<i>straight</i>
akət <sup>h</sup> ot	at <sup>h</sup> ot(paʔ)	<i>soft</i>
akətap	atap(pa)	<i>slow</i>
aŋ-k <sup>h</sup> ət-na	k <sup>h</sup> ətna	<i>different</i>
akəpɔŋ	pɔŋbaʔ/caut <sup>h</sup> okpa	<i>proud</i>
aməsɪŋ	masɪŋ	<i>number</i>
maipak	maipak	<i>win</i>
nəm	nəm(baʔ)	<i>press</i>
kao	kao-baʔ	<i>kick</i>
p <sup>h</sup> oi	p <sup>h</sup> oi(baʔ)	<i>pluck</i>
alɔp	lɔppaʔ	<i>sink</i>

akək <sup>h</sup> ʊm	at <sup>h</sup> ʊm(baʔ)	<i>sweet</i>
t <sup>h</sup> auna	t <sup>h</sup> auna p <sup>h</sup> əbaʔ	<i>brave</i>
upak	ubak	<i>plank</i>
keirap	keirak	<i>ladder</i>
tʃaru	c <sup>h</sup> aru	<i>straw</i>
sofi	sori	<i>knife</i>
korp <sup>h</sup> u	korp <sup>h</sup> u	<i>pot</i>
porak <sup>h</sup> ao	borak <sup>h</sup> ao	<i>sackbag</i>
k <sup>h</sup> ao	k <sup>h</sup> ao	<i>bag</i>
thaomei	thaŋmei	<i>lamp</i>
thao	thao	<i>oil</i>
jaiŋaŋ	jaiŋaŋ	<i>turmeric</i>
lupau	lupau	<i>dandruff</i>
k <sup>h</sup> uniŋ	k <sup>h</sup> uniŋ	<i>elbow</i>
tenuŋa	tenəwa	<i>parrot</i>
ŋəlakpi	ŋəlakpi	<i>kingfisher</i>
k <sup>h</sup> unu (home)	ləmk <sup>h</sup> unu	<i>dove</i>
kopi	kobi	<i>cabbage</i>

alu	alu	<i>potato</i>
tʃəmpɾa	cəmpɾa	<i>lemon</i>
poŋheitən	paŋheidon	<i>guava</i>
komala	komala	<i>orange</i>
heinou★	heinou	<i>mango</i>
t <sup>h</sup> eiponʝ	t <sup>h</sup> eibonʝ	<i>jackfruit</i>
mət lap <sup>h</sup> aŋ	mot lap <sup>h</sup> aŋ	<i>bunch of banana</i>
ujok★	ujok	<i>forest</i>
kəŋtʃeibʊŋ★	kaŋjeibʊŋ	<i>ground</i>
pət	pət	<i>lake</i>
kəni məʔonʝ	numit məʔonʝ	<i>weather</i>
k <sup>h</sup> a məŋaŋ★	t <sup>h</sup> a məŋan	<i>moonlight</i>
leinaŋ★	leiŋaŋ	<i>mud</i>
sorət★	sorok	<i>road</i>
sə mudɾu	sə mudɾa	<i>ocean</i>
urəm★	urum	<i>shade</i>

kənt <sup>h</sup> ɔŋ	kont <sup>h</sup> ɔŋ	<i>gate</i>
k <sup>h</sup> ɔŋ	k <sup>h</sup> ɔŋban	<i>water canal</i>

Tonsen variety has shown that it has borrowed different lexical items from Manipuri which include nouns, verbs and adjectives. The borrowed words commonly found in all the five varieties, for instance, words for *pomegranate*, *lemon*; etc has shown that the parallel word for these lexical items is not found in Kom. It is foreign to the culture and hence, they are borrowed from other sources. As stated in the earlier chapter, the three varieties of Kom namely Sagang, Mantak and Tonsen do not have consonant clusters, however, borrowed words like /tʃəmpɾa/ *lemon* is found in their vocabulary. The consonant cluster /-pɾ-/ in the word for *lemon* is not found in any of the varieties. The /g/ sound as in /saŋgom/ *milk* is not found in the indigenous sound system. Some varieties like Sinamkom retain the original sound whereas in Sagang the sound is replaced by /k<sup>h</sup>/. This phenomenon shows the differences in the adaptability and resistance of the borrowed sound system. Borrowing of lexical items with different sound system may trigger the change in the sound system of the recipient.

It is obviously noticeable that borrowing is a natural phenomenon and no language is immune to linguistic contact and borrowing. Studies have revealed that sometimes massive borrowing has taken place without serious implications for the language involved and that in some cases, borrowing was a sign of language attrition and death. It was seen that language death involves heavy lexical borrowing. The

study on borrowing shows that cultural borrowing is common in Kom. In other words, there are no parallel words that exist in the indigenous vocabulary. The study also shows that lexical items are borrowed even when parallel vocabularies exist. There is a possibility that rare native words may be lost and replaced by foreign words in a long run. It also shows that there is no uniformity in the borrowing. Some varieties borrowed more lexical items than other varieties and these borrowed items undergo changes or retain their original forms. This is also one of the reasons for variation found among the varieties of Kom. Borrowing is one of the factors of language change. Massive borrowing may result in language pollution and language death.

### **5.3. Language Standardization**

Wardhaugh (2006) states that language standardization is “the process by which a language has been codified in some way. That process usually involves the development of such things as grammars, spelling books, and dictionaries, and possibly a literature”. In other words, one variety or some spoken forms from various varieties of a particular language has been written down in an official manner with the intention of making this particular variety the preferred variety. Duranti (1997) substantiates this view by maintaining that “Writing down a language also establishes a particular dialect or register among the several in use at any particular time as the standard language. Such a practice has important consequences not only for the destiny of local dialects that are different from the one chosen that is different from the standard but also for the type of idealization made by students of language”. Haugen (1966) has indicated certain steps that must be followed if one varieties of a language is to become standard for that language. In other words, some deliberate human intervention is required to make a variety a standard one.

### **5.3.1. Goals of language standardization**

One of the basic goals of language standardization is to make the speakers within a community understand better in the presence of variation or diversity in their speech. It is one of the means to solve the confusion when a language has so many varieties. The problem will cease if the community agree on a set of words and a set of rules for pronunciation, spelling, and grammar. The main task of standardization is defining the rules, selection of variety, and reaching an agreement on the language issue for wider communication. Once a standardization work is completed the language can be used in official purposes be it in literary work, mass media or even in the schools.

The process of standardization is considered vital in Kom as it exhibit the presence of six regional varieties. The promulgation of the standard variety of Kom is necessitated in a situation where speakers from the community speak their own varieties. One of the cases is the introduction of Kom in the schools of Manipur. Children of the Kom community speak widely divergent varieties of Kom, but they are all to be taught, speak and write in standard Kom in the schools. There is no language policy for the children to be taught in their own varieties at least in the educational establishment of Manipur. The students as well as the teachers are expected to be familiar with the standard vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar of Kom. In fact, Children across the country are taught in similar fashion i.e. imparting the same written standard vocabulary and grammar. Even in the public gathering where speakers from all varieties are present, the announcers and those who make the speech are expected to speak in an intelligible variety. If they were to speak in their

own varieties of Kom, speakers from other varieties would have difficulty in understanding them.

The other, though often unstated, goal of standardization may be to eliminate diversity, which may be perceived as a threat to the unity of the community. Due to this reason, there is a notion, though considered somewhat as a radical ideology, of one nation one language. Sometimes the diversity is reflected in different, though closely related, dialects but sometimes it is reflected in completely different languages. It is another means to discourage people from speaking their local dialects or languages. Sometimes the native speakers of the non-standard dialects or languages become willing participants in this process in their desire to be integrated into the society. However, sometimes there are cases where they vehemently resist the move as they perceive it as the linguistic suppression or domination.

As stated, standardization sometimes had the effect of eliminating diversity. In the case of Kom, the Tonsen variety of southern region of Chandel District and Mantak variety spoken in Thoubal District of Manipur, are different from the standard Kom that they may be considered as a separate language by the layman. Following the education policy of the state government and the one common language policy as well as the social pressures to conform to the set norms', these varieties are shrinking in the domain of use and are likely to be extinct or replaced completely by more prestigious variety in the near future. The similar phenomenon exists not only in the situation of Kom but also in many of linguistic communities. This phenomenon entails that departure from the norms is not tolerated well. However unconscious it may be, there is an underlying stigma attached with the one who divert from the commonly accepted variety.

The process of standardization may be necessary for a workable technical reasons but this policy also act as one of the contributing factors leading to the extinction and near extinction of the majority of dialects and minority languages. There is also a notion that views language standardization as a political issue, and as such linguists should not get involved though it may be studied by Sociologists and Sociolinguists interested in the Social and political aspects of language. The reason often stated in standardization of language is prescriptive exercise for language development, though in reality there are political reasons behind them. The work of prescriptive grammarians are basically for the improvement of the language or perhaps to preserve what they believe to be an earlier, purer form of the language, and linguists have also sometimes gotten involved in the debate in these cases because of their expertise. Standard variety is normally characterized by a set of highly prescriptive rules in which any deviation from the set rules is forbidden. However, the problem is that linguists are not supposed to say what is right and what is wrong. In other words, linguist should not be party to it, as they are not expected to make any value judgement. Linguists may act as language activists as they often become closely involved with the people whose languages they study. They may become advocates for these groups when their languages or their well-beings are threatened because of the language policies of governments. However, they should maintain neutrality in any vexed issues regarding language, as the goal of linguist is to bring light and not the heat. This does not mean that the work of the linguists should be confined to descriptive alone; it can be prescriptive depending upon the need and nature of the problem. It is, however, considered ideal to have a balanced approach, both descriptive and prescriptive. In addition, it is always desirable for linguists to restrain from language politics

Standardization policy is also considered by many as a calculated move to exclude certain groups from power. If the standard is based on the variety of one particular group, either from a particular region or a particular class, then this gives people in that group an advantage when it comes to jobs and other positions of power. This view may have some element of truth but at the same time, it cannot be completely true to all the cases of standardization process as there are some sincere effort on the part of proponents of language standardization for the betterment and development of the language in question. It may have some adverse affect but the positive aspects of standardization should not be undermined altogether.

### **5.3.2. Kom in the process of standardization**

Standard language according to Trask (1997) ‘...that variety of a language considered by its speakers to be the most appropriate in formal and educational context’. Standard variety is generally one which is written, and which has undergone some degree of regularization or codification.

Let us look at the standard Kom and the process of standardisation in the language and its different varieties. Standard languages are the result of a direct and deliberate intervention by society. This intervention, called ‘standardization’, produces standard varieties/languages which once were just ‘dialects’ (in the another sense, i.e. non-standard varieties). *Kom tong* which is considered as the Standard Kom is also one of the varieties of Kom. It is believed to be Mongtung variety. The particular variety was chosen for translation of the Bible in Kom. The choice was based on the belief that Kom and other constituent tribes of *Komrem* share the common ancestor. And with the belief that one of their ancestors named *Mongtungpa*

speaks the purest and invariant forms of Kom. It may be mentioned that the Bible was meant not only for Kom but also for other constituent tribes of Komrem viz, Aimol, Koireng, Chiru, Purum. Interestingly, Kom was put into writing in 1927 by Mr. (Late) Teba Kelong, missionary/educationist of that time, much ahead of the translation of Bible. However, the variety he adopted in his primer is unclear even though it is believed to be that of Mongtung variety. Nevertheless, it would either be Mongtung or Moirang variety.

The speakers of Mongtung variety constitute majority of the section of the Kom population. In those days they were educationally and economically more advanced than the speakers of other varieties of Kom. The varieties in which the primer, songs and Bible were written became the standard variety in the case of Kom. So in the case of Kom choice of standard variety is chiefly through selection based on historical beliefs.

Standard varieties are mostly codified varieties. Codification is usually achieved through the writing of grammars and dictionaries, which records and sometimes prescribes the standard form of the language. Dictionary writers (lexicographers) have to decide which words to include in a dictionary as part of the standard variety, which forms to mark as dialectal, and which to omit altogether etc. They generally take the usages of educated and socially prestigious members of the community as the norms.

The codification process was initiated, in the case of Kom, by the missionary/educationist of that time, Mr. (Late) Teba Kelong who wrote the first Kom Primer in 1927 even though the variety he adopted in the Primer is debatable. However, the variety he used is similar with the standard variety and hence it is

considered as standard Kom. The few available Hymns and the Bible were written in this variety. The pastors, who were also teachers during those days, were mostly speakers of this variety. Dictionary was written in 1982 by M. Telian. Their contribution to the language was immensely noteworthy. However, mere writing of simple Dictionary and Bible should not be considered as complete achievement of codification process. Most importantly, the language remains undescribed and no proper grammar is written so far. Hence we can assume that codification is yet to be achieved.

### **5.3.3. The need of Standardization of Kom**

Standardization is necessary and vital for most languages. Standardization process is required even for those languages that are considered to be stable. Certain set rules must be followed by languages so that people can communicate effectively with one another as there are differences in speech that occur among the speakers of a language. Sometimes the differences are so pronounced that one can identify them from which region or community the speaker originates. The task required for the Standardization of Kom Language is to revitalize the existing variety i.e. standard *Komtong*, which would accommodate all the varieties of Kom and create a better writing system of the language.

Standardization is particularly important when there are great differences between varieties or dialects in a language. The presence of Varieties or Dialects in Kom is a great challenge for the language even though they are mutually intelligible. Standardization does not mean the elimination of dialects in favor of a new standard form. Dialects are preserved in certain domains and in the community of speakers.

Revitalizing any language requires modernizing the vocabulary, publishing a standard writing system, and incorporating new words into the language. The existence of modern dictionaries and grammar makes the work of standardization much easier and more complete.

Standardization of Kom requires a consensus on a writing system (Roman script) that could be used among the speakers of the six regions of the Community and to establish rules for writing to minimize the variation among the varieties keeping in mind the differences of speech from one another.

The method of standardization involves selecting a process, which would lead to a consensus on the alphabet and on the writing practices used among the Kom speaking community. Effort should be made to respect the social and stylistic differences in speech among the Community. During the interaction with the members of the community, it was highly recommended that the speech of the elders be selected as the basis for writing and for the coinage of new words for the language.

#### **5.3.4. Standardization of the Writing System of Kom**

Standardizing the writing system of the Kom language would be of great benefit in the retention and revitalization of the Kom language. Enhancing a standard literary form that is and has been used by native speakers will assist in the preservation of the older forms of speech, especially the speech of elders.

If all Kom speakers resort to utilize one standard written form, it would be easier for literacy in the Kom language. Curriculum, materials development would be

much easier and its teaching and implementation would be more effective in schools where the language is authorized to be taught. Use of Kom in important documents, signboards and other publicity material would be made available along with other languages to encourage community awareness on how important and vital it is to maintain the native language.

Standardizing the Kom orthography will greatly help in the promotion, development, and production of materials in the Kom language. The following questions on standardization was used by the researcher to facilitate the discussion during the interaction session with the informants (native speakers).

1. What is the purpose for standardizing a language?
2. Why do people decide to standardize a language?
3. Is it possible to establish one single standard writing system for their language?
4. What standards in the Kom language need to be developed and agreed upon?
5. What aspects of the language should be standardized?
6. Should each region decide to standardize the variety spoken within their own community?
7. What would standardizing the Kom language mean for their Community?
8. What are the benefits of standardization of the Kom language?
9. How do you feel about standardizing the language?
10. Do you feel that Kom language should be standardized?
11. Is standardization the best means to save their language?
12. If you standardize a language, do you lose your dialect?

Discussion should focus on speech variations in both the spoken and written forms as there is a distinct region based variation found in Kom. The researcher in his interaction with the speakers of the language from the six regions has observed that most respondents have expressed the need to standardize their language. Considerable numbers of respondents feel that it would be a good idea to standardize the alphabet for Kom. Some of them are of the view that a common consensus should be sought on the variety of language to be chosen as the standard variety, and on the writing system of the language. Others feel strongly that a compromise should be sought to facilitate the successful standardization of their language. The brief interaction on the issues with the Kom intellectuals and scholars resulted in the following views:

1. Standardize the existing variety (Kom tong) that is used at present.
2. To find out the similarities and differences of words among the varieties of Kom.
3. Consult with elders on word meanings, vocabulary, and other aspects of the languages.
4. The presence of variation should be considered.
5. Set the standards according to the oldest form of the language.
6. Standardize the words that will be able to serve everyone.
7. To seek the expertise of linguists and the peoples who have been involved or gone through the process of standardizing their language.

The main concern expressed was to preserve the dialects or varieties although the researcher had explained that standardizing the language would not necessarily affect the dialects or varieties. However, some community members continued to feel that it would require them to do away with their dialects or varieties. Consultations

were held with the members of the Kom Literature Society, including elders, language teachers, and speakers of six varieties. The discussion focused on reviving old or traditional terms for vocabulary development and Language Standardization.

The researcher explained to them about the Language Standardization Process and the purpose at length. Following the discussion on the various issues on the language, the group felt that standardizing the orthography was an excellent idea. Almost all of them felt that financial constraints were the main reason for the meager production of written materials on Kom. They are of the view that standardization of the language would facilitate more consistent writing system in the language, resulting in fewer problems to the readers and users of the language. Revamping of the almost defunct Kom Literature Society was suggested in order to produce more writings that are refined and other literary works. The interaction session resulted with the following opinions:

1. Resolved to use the existing Kom script i.e modified Roman script
2. Re-examine the writing system
3. Decide on the diacritical marks, which are in use
4. Outline the differences in pronunciation among the speakers of the language
5. Writing of the grammar
6. Find out the problematic areas in the use of language
7. Keep the original usage of the language
8. Coin the new words
9. Standardize the language to suit the present need

### **5.3.5. SUGGESTIONS**

In order to maintain or develop any language the role of the speakers of the language is vital. Without the support or the cooperation of the speakers, it is almost impossible to maintain any language. Language necessarily requires speakers to survive. A language can die when the speakers deny or are denied the opportunities to use or speak their language. The attitude of the native speakers is crucial for the survival and development of the language. The speakers need to have positive attitude towards their language. They should use their language in every possible way. They need to accept with an open mind to any move that would facilitate the betterment of their language. They need to come forward to help those who come to help them for the development of their language. The Kom speakers must play a vital role for the revitalization or the development of their language. They need to come up with a concrete plan for the development of their language. An ambitious language development project for Kom is the need of the hour. A committee of language lovers, and language experts should be constituted for the implementation of the project. Assistance could be sought from the governmental organizations like Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) for materials and expertise. There are also some governmental and non-governmental organizations at home and abroad that work for the development of the languages, which are considered to be endangered or near extinction.

The Kom language development society can approach these organizations for the language development project. The project could be unilateral or joint ventures with other organizations. A better road map needs to be drawn for the achievement of the desired result.

The Convener of the project should give a presentation on the standardization plan. The purpose of the consultation programs and the conference should be outlined. The main thrust areas would be

1. To conduct conference, seminars and workshop on standardization
2. To decide what needs to be standardized
3. To decide on a standard writing system
4. To formulate rules of spelling and grammar
5. To coin new words whichever necessary
6. To find out the indigenous words and their meaning

In collaboration with the Kom Literature society, Kom academia, intellectuals, students bodies, local meetings should be conducted in each region of the Manipur where the Kom speakers are found in order to consult with the people of the region to understand their problems and issues and also to make them aware of the need to have a standardized language and the use of it. There is also the need to consult the elders, teachers, linguists, and language specialists in developing a standard literary form for the Kom language. The consultative meetings are needed to be held within each territory to reach a common consensus on the vexed issues that are likely to come up in the process of standardization. To serve as a guide for discussion purposes, a questionnaire on standardization is needed be developed by the steering committee.

The consultation process has to be designed to ensure that the conference and its results were supported and accepted by the community. It should be aimed to involve as many Kom-speaking people of all regions as much as possible in the

process of standardizing the language and also identifying language issues and concerns.

The consultative committee responsibilities should include

- Designing a questionnaire in consultation with the experts and committee;
- Deciding venues and establishing dates for consultation;
- Holding consultations on week-ends and evenings and also during holidays and festivals;
- Arranging an open session with the local people
- Identifying and contacting key participants in each region; and
- Writing a report on each consultation meeting and send it to each churches, clubs and selected individuals.

### **5.3.6. Observation**

The researcher in his observation has identified some of the key issues and concern of the language and the speakers of others varieties. There is wider acceptability of *Kom tong* as the one to be standardized. However, there is a feeling among the speakers of other five varieties that Mongtung variety as of now is polluted due to the influence of other linguistic community in the neighboring area. Nowadays, ‘Mongtung’, which stands for a group of people, is used as a term to refer to somebody with a hybrid speech. Due to negative connotation attached to the term ‘Mongtung, it is considered offensive to call anybody as Mongtung. This attitude will have great bearing on the future of the language since the standard Kom is represented

by Mongtung variety. The researcher in his study has shown the influence of other languages on Mongtung variety, which is evident from the presence of phoneme /x/. However, this will not pose as a serious problem. Codification of a standard Kom will minimize the language change up to some extent. The study also shows the excessive borrowing that take place almost in all the six varieties in particular and Kom in general. This trend needs to be controlled by coining new indigenous words or revitalizing the old vocabularies that are no more use by the speakers. Language variation is considered as problem for Kom. Most of the speakers in their deliberation have pointed out the disadvantages of variation. However, most of them seem to be unanimous in their belief that there is greater amount of mutual intelligibility among the varieties of Kom or at least with the *Kom tong*.

Hence, variation in Kom should not be viewed as acute problem. Rather it should be considered as a boon and not a bane as it has the potential to provide and enrich the standard variety with alternative lexical resources. The lack of vocabulary or lexical items in the standard variety could be filled from other varieties of Kom. The co-existence of other varieties of Kom side by side with the standard variety can serve as the language resource ‘data bank’ and supplement the standard variety in making it more dynamic especially in stylistic and other creative writings possibly with their inherent resources. It can be bore in mind that the other varieties of Kom are not deficient or sub-standard in comparing with the standard variety even though they fail to be choosen as the standard variety. It has been the means of communication for the speakers for ages and it has all the necessary features like that of the standard variety.

In view of this, the idea of doing away with these varieties of Kom will amount to destroying the ancient resources. Instead, strategies have to be developed so that this inherited priceless wealth should be well channelized to aid the standard variety. Kom is yet to attain the vitality that a language earns from the used in organized society. The *Kom tong* which used to be the lingua franca of all the Komrem group of communities for decades is far removed from the grass root and it fail to grow or spread not only to the constituent members of *Komrem* but also within the community, among the speakers of varieties of Kom. This shows the lack of proper policy for the language. There is a need to establish proper linkages within the community especially with the regional varieties speakers in order to ensure both horizontal and vertical flow of communication. Hence, one needs to adopt a flexible pluralistic approach in planning the language.

The world we live in is reduced into a global village now. With the globalization and advancement in the field of science and technology, mobility is faster than ever before. We live in a world of contact situation. We are in contact not only with our immediate neighbors but also with those living in distant lands. The advancement in mass media and other technologies enable us to do so. There are contact-induced changes in the language, which resulted into language variation. Kom is not immune to these impacts. Therefore, it is quite understandable that Kom, with its speakers scattering in different geographical locations is bound to show some forms of variation, which we have identified it as a regional varieties. Hence, it should not be a surprise to any speakers of Kom to encounter a deviant form of speech from his fellow speakers.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

The study has been carried out to describe the Kom speech with special emphasis on variation. The study is classified into six Chapters with findings, unresolved issues and suggestions for further research work. This chapter is devoted to look into the foregone chapters before the summation of the research.

The study starts out with a presentation of the Historical and Socio-Cultural aspects of the Kom ethnolinguistic community. Keeping in mind the limited work available in Kom, effort has been made to give a total glimpse of the people and their socio-cultural and historical background in the introductory section of the work.

The first section deals with the Kom and the tribes who constitute the Kom-rem group of people. This section also mentioned about the Komrem people who believed that they originated from a cave.

Etymological explanation of the term 'Kom' is given in the second section from the historical and literary perspectives. One of the views is that Kom-Rem is 'people who wore turban' and the other view is that they 'came out of the cavity of the earth.'

The third section deals with the origin and exodus of the Kom. Two views are given about their origins in this section: the first view resembles the biblical theory of creation, while the second view is that of the cave origination theory, which other tribal communities of the North-East India also share.

The main analysis of the thesis starts with the third chapter, which describe the sound system of the standard Kom, which they perceived to be the common core of all the varieties of Kom. The language has 34 phonemes of which 24 are consonants and 10 are vowels, consonant cluster is found in this language. The possible second member of the cluster are- /t/ /l/ and /r/. Four voiceless consonants are also found in the language. However, their status could not be determined because of their inconsistency of their occurrence. This is one of the issues raised for further research to determine the nature of these sounds. The study also noted 10 vowels in this language. The presence of 5 diphthongs is also found. Phonological processes of assimilation and dissimilation is also attempted.

The fourth chapter deals with the variation present in the language. The study examined the six varieties of Kom, that is, Mongtung, Moirang, Sinamkom, Sagang, Mantak and the Tonsen varieties based on their geographical location. The first focus is on the phonological variation of these six varieties. The finding includes the absence of voiceless sounds in 3 varieties of Kom namely, Sagang, Mantak and Tonsen varieties. The voiceless sounds are voiceless bilabial nasal /m̥/, voiceless alveolar nasal /n̥/, voiceless velar nasal /ŋ̥/, voiceless alveolar flap /ɾ/ and voiceless alveolar lateral /l̥/.

The presence of /j/ is found in Tonsen variety. /j/ is not present in other variety including the standard Kom. The absence of /k/ in final position of the syllable is found in Tonsen variety. This is specific to Tonsen variety as in all the other varieties including standard Kom allow the occurrence of /k/ in final position. In place of /k/,

realization of /ʔ/ is observed. The presence of /x/ in Montung variety is observed. None of the varieties including the standard Kom have /x/ instead /k<sup>h</sup>/ is present in all the varieties.

/l/ and /r/ as free variation is observed in Sagang variety. It is not the case in any of the other varieties including the standard Kom. /l/ and /r/ in Sagang is in free variation. In other varieties, /l/ and /r/ are not in free variation. This permits occurrence of /l/ in final position of the syllable in Sagang variety.

There is no consonant cluster in three varieties of Kom namely Sagang, Mantak and Tonsen. Whereas, in the other three varieties of Kom the consonant clusters occurs.

The second focus is on the lexical variation of the varieties of Kom. The analysis shows that there are regionally specific lexical items present in the language. Lexical variation is one of the factors that show variation in the language.

The other section deals with the syntactic variation of the six varieties. Kom is an SOV (Subject + Object + Verb) language. It is ergative absolutive. The variation is seen in agreement system. Except Mantak variety, all the five varieties exhibit the same agreement system. In Mantak, agreement follows the subject while in other varieties agreement follows the object. In the WH question, the question marker is fixed with the WH question, whereas in other varieties question marker is not fixed, it can occur with WH or it can occur with the agreement. In this section, a study is done on the semantic properties of nouns and verbs. It is found that semantic variation is found in the verb 'to run'. In the five varieties there is only one verb describing the

action, whereas in Tonsen variety there are two verbs used to describe the action. Interestingly it is also found that the two verbs /antʃom/ and /p<sup>h</sup>u/ are complete synonyms. Tonsen variety is one of the rarest varieties which has completely synonymous verb. As it is said that completely synonymous verb are rarely found. The verb /tlan/ in the five varieties has a counterpart in Tonsen variety as /kan/. However, it is found that /tlan/ and /kan/ are not synonymous as the latter lack the semantic properties of its counterpart. A semantic property of a verb 'to eat' is also analysed in this section. Interestingly it is found that all the five varieties use the same verb 'sak' (eat/to eat) for both rice and curry. However, in Tonsen variety separate verb 'to eat' is used for rice and curry. Separate Verbs 'eat/to eat' for vegetable curry and meat curry is also found. In the verb 'to smoke' four different verbs are found among the six varieties of Kom. Two varieties use the same verb /ɪn/ for 'to smoke' and 'to drink'. Tonsen variety is the only variety, which has separate verb for 'eating', 'drinking' and 'smoking'.

A study on the basic colour on the six variety shows that separate colour terms are found used in the non-basic colour 'yellow'. The study also shows that overlapping of basic colour 'green' and non-basic colour 'yellow' in Moirang variety. Non-basic colour 'yellow' perceived differently by the speech varieties is also evident. A study on the noun 'spider' indicates that different cultural variety perceived different thing according to the environment. Variation in the perception of the insect spider is found among the varieties.

Chapter.5 deals with the Language Contact situation. The study in this chapter is sociolinguistic in nature. Bilingualism, Code-switching, Borrowing is discussed in

this section and Standardisation of Kom is discussed in the final section of the chapter. The phenomenon that happens due to language contact is also discussed. It is found that Kom speakers are highly bilingual. Code-switching and Code-mixing is also found to be common. Discussion on the borrowing shows that extensive borrowing takes place. The borrowed lexical items range from function and content words. It is also found that Indo-Aryan vocabularies are borrowed by this language via Manipuri. The borrowed words found in Kom are mostly from Manipuri. The study shows that borrowing takes place due to need-filling motives. However, it also found that some borrowed words are borrowed even when there is indigenous vocabulary. Borrowing enriches the Kom vocabulary and at the same time, it eliminates the indigenous vocabularies. There is no uniformity in borrowing among the varieties of Kom. One variety has more borrowed words than the other variety. This different ranges of borrowing among the varieties resulted into language variation in Kom. Borrowed words are mostly found among the younger generation. Most of them have a passive knowledge of their indigenous terms. Hence, it may be assumed that negative transfer happens in this language at the same time. It is also felt that excessive borrowing will lead to language death. The final portion of this chapter discussed about the standardization process in Kom. The study shows that Kom is yet to attain fully standardised. The need for standardisation is felt due to the presence of regional varieties in Kom. It is also mainly felt necessary in view of potential danger posed by external pressure in the form of language borrowing. Some measures are also suggested for standardization that includes coining of words, expansion of vocabulary and establishment of arbiters such as Dictionary and Grammar.

Kom, as stated earlier, is one of the smallest but complex linguistic communities. Their intricate social set up is reflected in their intricate usage of the

language or vice versa. Ever since they settled in Manipur, they spread in small groups, occupying different geographical areas and came under the influence of neighbouring languages, and resulted into the diversification in their speech. In fact, every village has its own local variety, distinct at least in some ways from that of the neighbouring Kom villages.

Kom, being unexplored and known very little to the outside world, the present study attempted to describe the sound system of the language, especially focusing on the invariant structure or the common core of different varieties. Accordingly, focus is on the variations within the language focussing on the regional varieties. Effort is also made to establish the causes or factors that explain the variation, which is sociolinguistic in nature. Since there is a felt need for the development of language and codification of standard form, the present study also explores some of the issues that are still to be settled as far as standardization is concerned.

### **Unresolved Issues**

The status of voice and voiceless bilabial nasal /m/ /ṃ/;voiced and voiceless alveolar nasal/n/ /ṅ/;voiced and voiceless velar nasal /ŋ/ /ṅ/ voiced, voiceless alveolar flap /ɾ/ /ɽ/; voiced and voiceless alveolar lateral /l/ /ḷ/ cannot be ascertained, as there are no credible minimal pairs to treat them as separate phonemes. The inconsistencies in their occurrences make it difficult to assign them as an allophone of either of the phonemes. In the present study, only the voiced sounds are considered as separate phonemes. However, there is a possibility of the voiceless sounds to be the devoiced form of the voiced or as separate phonemes for which further study is required to draw a conclusion of those particular sounds.

The present work does not attempt to resolve all the issues but raises issues for future researchers. It is a humble attempt to present an insight of the language. It is also partly designed to serve as a language and socio-cultural documentation. And perhaps but most importantly, it is designed as an introductory work for the future researchers to follow up for in-depth study so that proper standardization of Kom may be achieved, pedagogic materials may be produced, Kom language may be developed and it will aid in preserving and maintaining the language for the betterment of the future generation.

---

Figure No. 2 Grierson's classification ( to be inserted from the other file)

MAP of Manipur. ( insert it from the other file)

## ***BIBLIOGRAPHY***

### **A. BOOKS**

- Abbi, Anvita. 2003. *A Manual of Linguistic Fieldwork and Structures of Indian Languages*. Germany: Lincom Handbook in Linguistics 17.
- Aichison, Jean. 2001. *Language Change: Progress or Decay?* (3rd Edition)  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Anonby, Stan J. 1997. *Reversing Language Shift: Can Kwak'wala be revived?*  
(Master Thesis University of North Dakota)
- Ashby, Michael and Maidment, John. 2005. *Introducing Phonetic Science*.  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bareh, Curiously. 2008. *A Descriptive Analysis of the Jawai and Rymbai Dialect of Khasi*. (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis). NEHU, Shillong.
- Bayley, R. and Lucas, Ceil. (eds) (2007). *Sociolinguistic Variation: Theories, Methods and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beardsmore, H. Beatens. 1986. *Bilingualism: Basic Principles*. England: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Bell, Roger T. 1976. *Sociolinguistics: Goals, Approaches and Problems*. London:  
B.T. Batsford Ltd.
- Benedict, Paul K. 1972. *Sino-Tibetan: A Conspectus*. (Contributing editor: James A. Matisoff, Department of Linguistics, University of California, Berkeley). Cambridge:  
Cambridge University Press.
- Berlin, B. and P. Kay 1969. *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

- Besnier, Niko. 2006. 'Diversity, Hierarchy and Modernity in Pacific Island communities'. In Duranti Alessandro (ed), *A Companion of Linguistic Anthropology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Limited.
- Biber, D. Conrad, S. Reppen, R. 1998. *Corpus Linguistics, Investigating Language Structure and Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bloomfield, Leonard. 1935. *Language*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Breadley, David. (ed.). 1997. *Tibeto-Burman Languages Classification*. Tibeto-Burman Languages of Himalaya (paper in South East Asian Linguistics 14) Canberra: Australian National University.
- Brown, R. 1873. *Statistical Account of Native State of Manipur*. Calcutta: Office of The Superintendent of the Government Printing.
- Burling, Robbins. 1970. *Man's Many Voices: Language in its Cultural Context*. New York / Chicago / San Francisco / Atlanta/ Dallas / Montreal / Toronto / London / Sydney. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1992. *Patterns of Language: Structure, Variation and change*. California: Academic Press Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1999. *The Tibeto-Burman Languages of Northeastern India*. University of Michigan
- Catford, J.C. 1977. *Fundamental Problems in Phonetics*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1988. *A Practical Introduction to Phonetics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chambers, J. K and Trudgill, P. 1980. *Dialectology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1982. *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Chambers, J. K. 1980. *Sociolinguistics Theory: Linguistic Variation and its Social Significance*. Oxford UK and Cambridge USA: Blackwell Publishers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1995. *Sociolinguistics Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Chomsky, Noam and Maurice Halle. 1968. *The Sound Pattern of English*. Cambridge, MA. MIT Press.
- Clark, V.P, Eschholz, P.A., Rosa, A.F. (Ed) 1994. *Language Introductory Readings*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Clark, J. and Yallop, C. 1995. *An Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Coupland, N and Jaworski, A. (eds), 1997. *Sociolinguistics, A Reader and Coursebook*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Coulmas, Florian, 2001. 'Sociolinguistics' In Mark Aronoff and Janie Rees-Miller (eds), *The Handbook of Linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Cruse, D.A. 1986. *Lexical Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (ed.) 1987. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1980. *A Dictionary of Linguistic and Phonetics*. London: Basil Blackwell.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2000. *Language Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Downes, William. 1998. *Language and Society*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eckert, Penelope. 2000. *Linguistics Variation as Social Practice: The Linguistics Construction of Identity in Belten High*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Garrett, Paul B. 2006. 'Language Contact and Contact Languages'. In Duranti Alessendo (ed), *A Companion of Linguistic Anthropology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Limited.

Gilbadi, Joseph. 1996. *MLA (Modern Language Association) Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press Pvt Ltd.

Grierson, G. A. 1927. *Linguistics Survey of India* Vol. 1 Part 1. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1928. *Linguistics Survey of India*. Vol. II. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1995. *Language of North Eastern India: A Survey*. Vol.1. Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

Hale, Austin. 1982. *Research on Tibeto-Burman Languages*. In Werner Winter (ed) Trends in Linguistics. State-of-the-Art Report 14. Berlin. New York. Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers.

Haokip, Paothang. 2007. *The Phonology of Thadou: A Typological an Generative Study*. (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis) NEHU. Shillong.

Haugen, Einar. 1972. *The Ecology of Language*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Hockett, Charles. F. 1958. *A Course in Modern Linguistics*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

- Hudson, Richard A. 1980. *Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hudson, T.C. 1911. *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, Delhi, Low Price Publication (Reprint), 1987
- Jones, Daniel. 2003. *English Pronouncing Dictionary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Khoi Lamthang. 2001 *A phonological reconstruction of Proto Chin* (Unpublished M.A Dissertation) Payap University, Thailand
- Kom, L. B. 1989. *The Kom-rem people and their development through Christianity* (Unpublished M.Phil. Thesis), Manipur University, Imphal
- Kom, S. T. 2000. *Poverty of the Scheduled Tribes in Manipur- A case study of the Kom Tribes in Churachandpur and Chandel Districts*. (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis), Manipur University, Imphal
- Labov, W. 1994. *Principles of Linguistic Changes I: Internal Factor*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2001. *Principles of Linguistic Changes II: Social Factor*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ladefoged, P. 1982. *A Course in Phonetics*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2001. *A Course in Phonetics*. (4rd edition), Fort Worth: Harcourt College Publishers.
- Ladefoged, P. and Maddieson, I. 1996. *The Sounds of the world's languages*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

- Lass, Roger. 1980. *Phonology: An Introduction to Basic Concept*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Laver, John. 1994. *Principles of Phonetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Losii, Heshu. 2008. *The Ethnosemantic Study of the Mao Language*. (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis), NEHU. Shillong
- Lyons, John. 1968. *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press.
- Marckwardt, A. H and Dillard J.L. 1994. 'Social and Regional Variation'. In Clark V.P., Eschholz, P.A., Rosa, A.F. (ed), *Language Introductory Readings*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- McCulloch, M. 1859. *An Account of the Valley of Manipur*. Calcutta: Selection from the Records of the Government of India. No. XXVIII.
- McMahon, A. 2002. *An Introduction to English Phonology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1996. *Understanding language change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- O'Connor, J. D. 1973. *Phonetics*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- Penny, Ralph. 2000. *Variation and Change in Spain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pike, Kenneth. 1947. *Phonemics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Post, Mark.W. 2007. *A Grammar of Galo*. ( Ph.D Thesis) La Trobe University, Australia

- Poulston, C.B. and Tucker, G.R. (eds). 2003. *Sociolinguistics: The Essential Readings*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Quirk, Randolph and Sidney Greenbaum. 1973. *A Universal Grammar of English*. London: Longman Group Limited.
- Radford A, Atkinson M, Britain D, Clahsen H, Spencer A. (eds) 1999. *Linguistics-An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Remsangpuia. 2008. *Puroik Phonology*. Shillong: Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Culture (DBCIC), Shillong.
- Riley, B.T. (ed.) 1999. *Encyclopedia of Linguistics*. Vol.1-4, New York: Oxford University.
- Roach, Peter. 1982. "On the distinction between 'stress-timed' and 'syllable-timed' Languages". In Crystal, D. (ed), *Linguistic controversies*. London: Edward Arnold.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1991. *English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course*. (2nd edition), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Roberts, Paul. 1994. 'Speech Community', In Clark, V.P, Eschholz P.A, Rosa, A.F. (eds.), *Language Introductory Readings*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Romaine, Suzanne, 2001. 'Multilingualism'. In Mark Aronoff and Janie Rees-Miller (eds.), *The Handbook of Linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Sanajaoba, N. (ed), 1995. *Manipur: Past and Present*. Vol.1II. (Nagas and Kuki-Chins). New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

- Sekere, N.Belina. 2004. *Sociolinguistic variation in spoken and written Sesotho: A case study of Speech varieties in Qwaqwa*. (M.A.Dissertation).  
University of South Africa.
- Selkirk, Elisabeth. 1984. *Phonology and Syntax: The Relation between Sound and Structure*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Serto, Manilei. 2007. *Education and Social Change among Indian Tribes: The Kom of Manipur*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House.
- Schane, Sanford. 1973. *Generative phonology*. Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Shafer, Robert. 1966. *Introduction to Sino-Tibetan*. (Part-1). Otto Harrassowitz:  
Wiesbaden.
- Shakespeare, J. 1912. *The Lushai Kuki Clans*, Delhi, Central Publishing House,  
(Reprint, 1985).
- Shapiro, Michal C. and Schiffman, Harold F. 1983. *Language and Society in South Asia*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Shaw, William. 1929. *The Thadou Kuki*. New Delhi: Cultural Publishing House.
- Shuy, Roger W. 1994. 'Dialects: How They Differ'. In Clark, V.P., Eschholz, P.A.,  
Rosa, A.F. (eds), *Language Introductory Readings*. New York: St.  
Martin's Press.
- Singh, K.B, (ed), 1976. *An Introduction to Tribal Language and Culture of Manipur (7 Tribes)*. Imphal: Manipur State Kala Academy.
- Singh, W. Ibohal. 1986. *The History of Manipur (An Early Period)*. Imphal:  
Manipur Commercial Co.

- Spencer, Andrew. 1996. *Phonology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Sponlsky, Bernard. 2004. *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Thangneireng, S. (ed). 2003. *Kom-Rhem Chonden Daan (The customary Laws of the Kom- rhem tribes)* The Kom- Rhem Chiefs' Welfare Organization, Churachandpur District, Manipur.
- Trask, R. L. 1997. *Key Concept in Language and Linguistics*. London: Routledge.
- Trudgill, Peter. 1995. *Sociolinguistics*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), London: Penguin.
- Ullmann, Stephen. 1957. *The Principles of Semantics*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Glasgow: Jackson and Oxford: Blackwell
- Wardough, R. 2002. *Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Wang, W. (ed), 1977. *The Lexicon in Phonological Change*. Mouton: The Hague
- Woolard, Kathryn A. 2006. 'Codes Switching' In Duranti Alessendro (ed), *A Companion of Linguistic Anthropology*. Oxford; Blackwell Publishing Limited.
- Weinreich, Uriel. 1953. *Languages in Contact: Findings and problems* .The Hague: Mouton.

## **B. JOURNALS AND OTHER SOURCES**

- A History of the Komrem Baptist Churches Association*. 2007. Published on the Occasion of KRBCA Golden Jubilee Celebration (1957-2007). Imphal: Published by the Golden Jubilee History Committee, The Komrem Baptist Churches Association, Manipur.

- Bekrup Hla.* 2006. Imphal: Komrem Hymn Committee, KRBCA, Manipur.  
(5<sup>th</sup> Edition).
- Fishman, Joshua. (1980). *Minority Language Maintenance and the Ethnic Mother Tongue School.* *Modern Language Journal*, 64 (2), (Pp.167-172).
- Hugan, E. 1966a. *Dialect, Language and Nation.* *American Anthropologist*, 68. (9)  
(22-36).
- Karong, Teba. 1973. *Komrem Primer-I.* Imphal: Komrem Literature Society,  
Manipur.
- Karung, Mangpu. (ed.). (2005). *Souvenir Kom Dialect.* Imphal: Kom Literature  
Committee, Manipur
- Kom, M. B. (2000). *Millenium Magazine.* Delhi: Komrem Students Union, Delhi.
- Kom, K. Sonjachung. 1993. *Komrem Thut.* Imphal: Novelty Printers.
- Pakhup, L. 1994. *Hla Ther.* Imphal: Komrem Baptist Church Association, Manipur  
(Compiled and edited, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition,).
- Pathen Tlong Intheng Rabu.* Calcutta: The Bible Society of India.
- Telen, M. 1992. *The Concise Anglo-Komrem Dictionary.* Imphal: S.M. Press.
- Tlongtep Ther leh Hla.* 1976. Calcutta: Bible Society of India.
- Tlongtep Ther leh Hla.* 2006. Calcutta: Bible Society of India. (The Audio  
Version of the New Testament and Psalm).
- Wang, W. 1969. *Competing Changes as a Cause of Residue.* *Language.* Pp 45: 9-25.

### C. INTERNET

Labov, William. Home page and Power Point sites. [www.ling.upenn.edu/~labov](http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~labov)  
and <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~wlabov/home.html> including  
<http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~wlabov/PowerPoints/PowerPoints.html>

Piersman, Yves. and Speelman, Dirk. 2009. *Word Space Model of Lexical Variation*.  
In the Proceedings of the EACL 2009 Workshop on GEMS: Geometrical  
Models of Natural Language Semantics. Athen: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. (Accessed  
on 18th July 2009).<http://portal.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1705417> and  
[http://delivery.acm.org/10.1145/1710000/1705417/p9-peirsman.pdf?  
key1=1705417&key2=2832849821&coll=DL&dl=ACM&CFID=11046265  
8&CFTOKEN=28336751](http://delivery.acm.org/10.1145/1710000/1705417/p9-peirsman.pdf?key1=1705417&key2=2832849821&coll=DL&dl=ACM&CFID=110462658&CFTOKEN=28336751)

Roach, Peter. 2002. A Little Encycloepadia of Phonetics. (Accessed and downloaded  
on 10th June 2009). <http://www.personal.reading.ac.uk/~llsroach/peter/>

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Bio-data**

- 1. Name** : Mr. Karung Tarun Kom
- 2. Father's Name** : Mr. Karung Shaikhupthang Kom
- 3. Date of Birth** : 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1977
- 4. Sex** : Male
- 5. Nationality** : Indian
- 6. Religion** : Christianity
- 7. Category** : Schedule Tribe
- 8. Present Address** : Department of Linguistics,  
North Eastern Hill University  
Mawlai, Shillong – 22,  
Meghalaya
- 9. Permanent Address** : Tonsen Village, (Warlengphai). P.O.  
Sugnu, Chandel District, Manipur-  
795101
- 10. Educational Qualification** : M.A. Linguistics (NEHU)
- 11. Experience** : Investigator in NELD Project and  
Resource person in LIS, India
- 12. Area of Research Interest:** Endangered Language, Minority Language Issues and  
Tibeto-Burman Language Studies.
- 13. E-mail:** [tarunkom@gmail.com](mailto:tarunkom@gmail.com) **Ph. No.** 09863049711 (M)  
: [tarunkarung2006@yahoo.co.in](mailto:tarunkarung2006@yahoo.co.in)

