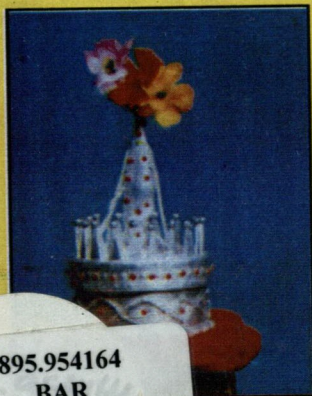


A
SHORT
HISTORY
OF
KHASI LITERATURE

(updated to 1993 in a renewed version)

Hamlet Bareh Ngapkynta



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(Updated to 1993 in a renewed version)



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1998-2000*

**Chapter IV includes a few transliterated verses
from 'Khasee New Testament' published in 1831**

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I

Linguistic Affinity

Khasi is an offshoot of the Mon-Khmer language, a group of Austro-Asiatic family of the Austric superstock. The other branch of the Austro-Asiatic family, is Malayo-Polynesian. Khasi forms an isolated Austric island in the midst of its neighbouring speeches such as Bengali, Assamese, Garo and Lalung and has since retained its identity. The discovery of the Mon-Khmer language spoken in Burma, Indo China and Malaysia was first revealed by J.R. Logan at the middle of the 19th century. Pater Schmidt elaborated the classification of the Austric superstock and different datum were presented afterwards by other linguists for assessment. Within the Austro-Asiatic family are the Munda and its allied languages – Santal, Kol. Ho etc. spoken in Bihar, Orissa and the neighbouring places. The fact that Khasi is located midway between Mon Khmer and Munda may indicate certain historical links between their speakers. Within the Austro-Asiatic family are comprised the related languages-Mon, Palaung-Wa, Khmer, Semang-Sekai, Khasi, Munda Annamite, Muong and Cham. Schmidt explored the existence of an Austric stock composed of Austronesian

(now grouped into Malayo-Polynesian) and Austro-Asiatic, which again is classified into :-

- a) Khmer, Bahnar, Mon, Stieng, Lemet,
- b) Senoi (Sakai), Semang,
- c) Palaung, Riang, Wa group,
- d) Khasi group and
- e) Munda group.(1)

Przyluski split the Austro-Asiatic family into three groups, Munda, Mon-Khmer and Annamite, Mon-Khmer being classified into :-

- a) Central-Mon-khmer-Bahnar, Stieng, Kouï, Chong, Pear, Panong;
- b) Eastern-Cham, Jarai, Rade, Sedang;
- c) Malay Peninsula-Semang, Sakai, Jakun;
- d) Nicobarese;
- e) Middle Salween-Palaung-Wa, Riang and
- f) Khasi

Sebouk's classification is as follows :-

1. Mon-Khmer; -Cham, Semang, Nicobarese, Khmer, Palaung, Mon, Khasi etc.
2. Munda;
3. Muong-Annam-Vietnamese.

The classification reveals that whatever

(1) The theories relating to the classification of Austro-Asiatic speech are reconstructed on the basis of the **Austro-Asiatic Mon-Khmer Studies Publication No. I** of the **Linguistic Circle of Saigon** and the **Summer Institute of Language 1964. pp. 147-163.**

methodology used, no great alteration has been made from the approach of Pater Schmidt.

George Maspero limited the comparative analysis to comparative phonology between Mon-Khmer and Palaungic, his view complying with the thesis that a majority of Mon-Khmer speeches have no tones, whereas the present researchers show that most of these speeches including Khasi have a two-tone system. Havesy assigned vital relationship between Finno-Ugric that is on the Mon-khmer substratum. Finno-Ugric or Finno-Ugrian of Ultra-Altaic speech is spoken in Hungary and parts of Findland. This is yet to be ascertained.

Sebouk classified Austro-Asiatic family into the following groups :-

1. Mon-Khmer : Cham, Semang, Nicobarese, Palaung, Khmer, Mon, Khasi, etc.
2. Munda

Haudricot's classification implies that the Thai-Vietnamese congenates at the main levels belong to the general South-East Asiatic Vocabulary while at the same time, he reveals some conformities between the Vietnamese tones and Mon-Khmer final consonants.

The division of this family is now seven-fold which are Bahnaric, Katuic. Khasi, Khmeric, North Laos and Palaungic. The Khmer of Cambodia and the Mon of Burma are known as the most powerful who had once built kingdoms, among the other speakers of Mon-khmer language, in the East Asiatic lands.