

# The NEHU Journal

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# *The NEHU Journal*

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## Editorial

I begin this editorial with an apology for the delay in getting the present issue off. Actually it was not planned to be a literature issue, as it has turned out to be, courtesy the hard work put behind it by the Associate Editor. It was meant to be a social science issue that somehow could not happen, though not the least for lack of submissions. There were enough submissions, but they were

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I note this with some surprise that most of our contributors are, fortunately or unfortunately, not subjected to peer review, and when they are asked to revise/rewrite as per the referee's comments they are shocked and their egos are hurt. They decide not to revise/rewrite and send their articles to some 'better' journal. This is not only true of senior colleagues who have some reason to rebel against the referees' comments but even the younger ones do not seem to have the necessary courage and culture to be rectified. They live in a world of their own creation, as most of us often do, but they must look out of their window and see how much the world has changed outside.

Literature is quite a different cup of tea. It is about creativity, and any piece of creativity is an object of art. Hence at least worth having a critical look at it, if not appreciate it, particularly if the creator is not a celebrated figure. But one must move on with the belief that some of the best creations can come out of the fingers of the most ignoble, the most uncelebrated, the most unknown, and the most unexpected...

**NEHU**

This issue is dedicated to such a possibility.

T B Subba  
Editor

## CoEditorial

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**Anne** I note this with some sense of remorse that most of our contributors are, fortunately or unfortunately, not subjected to peer review, and when they are asked to revise/rewrite as per the referee's comments they are shocked and their egos are hurt. They decide not to revise/rewrite and send their articles to some 'better' journal. This is not only true of senior colleagues who have some reason to rebel against the referees' comments but even the younger ones do not seem to have the necessary courage and culture to be rectified. They live in a world of their own creation, as most of us often do, but they must look out of their window and see how much the world has changed outside.

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**T B Subba  
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## Gender and Power: Some Women-centred Narratives from Ao-Naga Folklore

TEMSULA AO

The image of woman is generally projected as the weaker sex in the normative hierarchy of any patriarchal system. This is however often belied by certain figures from myths, legends and history the world over, wherein she is depicted as the embodiment of power of a different kind. The association of some extra-ordinary or extra-human power with women has been a curious but integral aspect of narratives of human history and civilisation.

However, the articulation or projection of this concept is culture-specific and culture-sensitive. Social structures and belief systems of different people obviously inform the tales, legends and myths about such women. Lutz Rohrich, in his book, *Folktales and Reality* states, "Every folktale is somehow connected to reality." (p.3) For example, it would be difficult to find accounts of warrior-like heroines in Naga lore because in Naga society, women are debarred from taking up weapons of warfare. Nor would there be any queen in the lore because in the egalitarian and patriarchal society of the Nagas, the concept of a woman ruler would be untenable. The power structure within the family and society among the Nagas has always rested with the male. But in certain narratives from folklore, one can see a subtle reversal of role and subversion of this power structure within society in relation to the very principles on which it rests.

The Ao-Nagas too, like the other Naga tribes, are a patriarchal society where the males wield power in all spheres of

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life. But in their folklore there are numerous women-centred narratives which depict women as the dominant characters wielding power which traditionally belongs to the man. From these narratives, four protagonists have been taken as representing the different aspects of this concept of reversal of the traditional power-structure based on gender. In these narratives, it will be seen that these women possess or are endowed with that extra power or mental energy through which they can control or manipulate events and fortunes at the most crucial moments in their lives. The stories, taken from four different kinds of narratives from Ao-Naga folklore, operate within the framework of the male dominated society of the Aos.

The first one is about a woman called Longkongla, the heroine of an origin myth who is supposed to be the progenitor of an Ao clan called the Ozukumer, the literal translation of which is: one who is transformed from a bird. (*Ozu* means bird in the Ao language).

Chungliyimti is believed to be the first village established by the three forefathers of the Aos after they emerged from six stones at a place called Lungterok. Longkongla, a spinster, lived in this village. One day when she was sitting at her loom, she happened to see a hornbill fly past her house in all its beauty and majesty. Seeing such a beautiful and magnificent bird, she cried out saying how nice it would be if she had even a feather of such a bird. The next thing she knew, a hornbill feather came fluttering down from the sky and settled on her loom. She picked up the feather lovingly and treating it like a precious treasure, locked it up in the cane basket where she kept all her valuables. After a few days when she looked inside the basket, to her great surprise she found that it had turned into a cocoon of some sort. So she took it outside and left it in the fork of a tree. Not long afterwards a child's cry could be heard from the exact spot. The people, hearing this unusual sound coming from a spinster's house came to investigate and saw that it was a male child. Many of the women tried to pick it up but it would not go to anyone. Longkongla, after some hesitation went to pick it up and to everyone's surprise the child stopped crying and came

willingly to her. So she took him home and called him Songmaket and brought him up as her own son. He was also known as Ozukumer because everyone believed that he came into being from a bird's feather.

It became apparent that Longkongla did possess some supernatural powers and the people too began to view her differently. The son that she received as a gift from the bird grew up to be a very handsome and accomplished young man and his fame spread far and wide. Not only that, Longkongla too prospered and became the owner of many barns full of grain and a great number of domestic animals.

As mother and son prospered thus, the villagers became jealous of them and realizing that her prosperity was due to the boy acquired through her mysterious power, they secretly plotted to kill him. After several unsuccessful attempts, during a community fishing trip some villagers treacherously drowned him in a deep eddy of the river and made out that it was an accident. Longkongla knew that her son was strong and an expert swimmer and so she could not accept the accident theory. So she persuaded one of her son's friends to tell her exactly what happened and this boy, out of remorse for being unable to help Ozukumer, told her how the villagers deliberately pushed him into the eddy. From that day onwards Longkongla was consumed with the desire to avenge her son's death.

An opportunity soon presented itself. One day the entire adult population of the village went to the fields leaving only the children at home. Seizing this opportune moment for revenge, she invited all the young ones and fed them a sumptuous feast. She then lured them into an empty house, locked them inside and set fire to the house killing all of them.

Longkongla then had to flee from the village and for this escape, her supernatural allies threw down a thin cord, clinging to which she was pulled heavenwards. She was given a stern warning

not to even glance earthward, but the cries and clamourings of her domestic animals were so insistent and touching that she looked down on them at which instant the cord broke and she was dashed upon the branches of a tree called *Kabusing* and died.

Incidentally, even today, when cut, this tree oozes a reddish sap which the Aos say is Longkongla's blood. And it is also believed that all her domestic animals who fled from the village along with her became the wild animals inhabiting the Ao areas: boars (from pigs), stags (from cows), deer (from goats), wolves (from dogs), ocelots (from cats), wild fowls (from chickens) etc. The Aos still refer to these wild animals as Longkongla's animals.

The origin of this Ozukumer clan is thus traced, not to the 'mainstream' origin myth of Lungterok of the Aos, but to Songmaket, the son of this woman called Longkongla.

The second narrative is about a woman called Akangla, the heroine of a legend. Her story goes back to the days when there was a state of protracted warfare between two Ao villages called *Longkhum* and *Nokrang*, a village famous for its fierce warriors and who were considered to be invincible. It was the Longkhum villagers who were the aggressors and they were facing some serious logistical problems. The distance between the two villages was great, therefore it was imperative for the warriors from Longkhum to secure a safe half-way camp, which a friendly village called Waromung provided. Akangla was from this village and her house was one of the lodges for the transient army.

The Longkhum assault was beaten back time and again not because they were inferior in warfare, but because the Nokrang warriors had packs of fierce dogs that fought alongside their masters, snapping at the enemy and causing great havoc and confusion among them. After one such debacle, the leader of the group lodged in her house told Akangla about the dogs of the Nokrang warriors. She calmly told the Longkhum warriors that there was a simple solution to the problem and that she, Akangla, would show them the way.

Then she set to work.

She called all the village women and told them to wash their hair on a particular day. She instructed them to gather every bit of hair that fell during the washing and bring the same to her. Next, she asked them to cook some pots of the special sticky rice that all Aos love. Akangla then ordered the women to take a fistful of the rice and inserting a few strands of the hair gathered at washing, roll the same into a tight ball. These were distributed to the Longkhum warriors on their next assault on Nokrang with her instruction: "As soon as the Nokrang dogs are set upon you, throw the balls of rice to them and see what happens". The Longkhum warriors did exactly as Akangla instructed them and as the battle progressed the dogs were so busy untangling the hairs and sticky rice from their mouths that the attackers killed them off easily and turned their ferocity on their masters whom they overcame that day and took many heads as trophies.

Attributing their victory that day to Akangla's ingenuity, the Longkhum warriors acknowledged her as their benefactress and called her a Wise Woman who accomplished what mere brute force of the men could not. This legendary heroine has been immortalized in many folksongs and ballads. Incidentally, according to the Ao practice relating to names, the name Akangla is perpetuated within her clan and will continue to be done so for all time to come. Not only that, the history of Lungkhum's victory over Nokrang is encoded in that name.

Among the tales in Ao-Naga folklore, there is a type which depicts certain characters who possess supernatural powers. The next narrative is about such a person called Yajangla, who, it was believed, not only had a tiger as her familiar spirit, but could also transform herself into a tigress if she chanted some magic formula. She could also conjure spirits and perform miracles. But the secret of her supernatural powers was kept hidden from everybody, including her husband. Outwardly, she led life as a normal village wife and in due course of time gave birth to a son.

Since she could not help her husband in the field for quite sometime due to her confinement, he found it increasingly difficult to cope with the weeds which seemed to flourish more than the crops. Tired of his daily complaints about this, Yajangla one day asked her husband to stay at home with the baby so that she could go to the field and see for herself.

On reaching the field she saw that her husband had indeed very good reasons to complain and worry about the crops. Seeing that mere human efforts would be ineffective in tackling the weeds, she decided to use her supernatural powers to do the job. She summoned a number of spirits and commanded them to dig trenches all round the field. Next, she wove a network of fine thread and spread it over the entire field. As she pulled the nets towards her chanting some words, only the weeds got caught in the net, which were dumped into the trenches. The process was continued till not a single weed remained in the field. She then caused the trenches to be filled up with earth again by her magic.

In the evening Yajangla went home and told her husband that weeding of the field was complete. He was a little skeptical but when he went there the next day, he was astounded by what he saw and was amazed that his wife, a woman, could perform such a task in one day. Suspecting that his wife indeed had some supernatural powers, he came home and began to question her. At first she refused to say anything, other than asking him whether he was not glad that the difficult job was done. But the husband persisted; she must reveal the secret to him because he was her husband. She again replied that it would be in the interest of the family if her secret remained with her only. But the husband was adamant: he, as her husband, had the right to know.

After several days of bickering over this, Yajangla gave in to her husband's insistence and agreed to reveal her secret, but at the same time she warned him that there could be serious consequences for which he should be willing to take responsibility. He replied that

he was prepared for any eventuality. Seeing that he was beyond reason, she instructed him to take certain precautions as the revelation of her secret could turn out to be extremely dangerous for him. First she asked him to make a high perch for himself on the ceiling of the house. Then she instructed him to collect several conical baskets and keep them on the perch. Next she told him to keep a large collection of stones handy.

Even as the preparations were taking place, Yajangla once again tried to dissuade her husband from the idea as the revelation might prove to be too powerful and even fatal. But having come this far, he was not at all willing to abandon the project, which was beginning to excite him in a strange way. So Yajangla gave up and the stage was set for the drama about to take place.

Seeing that there was no turning back now, Yajangla gave her last instructions to her husband, "When I conjure up my spirits, I shall be transformed into another form and will try and eat you up. In order to repel my attacks you must push the conical ends of the baskets into my mouth when I jump up at you. If my power lasts longer, you must throw the stones into my mouth to protect yourself. So be prepared for the ferocity of my nature when I am under this spell."

When night came the husband climbed onto his seat on the perch and looked down on his wife who was chanting some strange words. The instant she finished the incantation, she was transformed into a full-grown tigress, displaying the natural aggressive ferocity of one which has had a cub recently. Growling menacingly, the tigress leaped, baring her teeth at the human crouching on the perch. The man did exactly as the wife had instructed earlier. First the conical ends of the baskets were thrust into the tigress's mouth, but the animal kept leaping up at him, so he threw the stones into its mouth. But all his efforts of defense proved futile because the contest was between unequal powers which continued most of the night. Eventually the superior and superhuman power of the tigress

prevailed, who killed him and began to eat his flesh. As soon as she tasted human flesh she began to return to her human form gradually. She then quickly grabbed her baby who was wailing throughout the battle between the parents, and began to suckle him from breasts swollen with overflowing milk.

Hearing the commotion in the house and the baby's incessant cries through the night, the neighbours assembled as day broke. When they came, Yajangla had not yet fully reverted to her human self and was still chewing a portion of the husband's leg even as the baby suckled at her breast.

On being questioned by the neighbours, Yajangla, without showing any emotion or regret, gave this explanation, "Oh, the baby's father was at fault. It was he who forced me to reveal my secret magical powers to him in spite of my repeated warnings. Because of my supernatural powers, I became a tigress and killed him and ate him up. I am not to blame because when I am under the influence of these magical powers I cease to be a human being for that period and have no control over my actions. And I still say that it was wrong of him to force me to do it".

The neighbours and the village council could not take any action against Yajangla because they saw some logic in her statement and were also afraid of her strange powers. They however made a stipulation: if she wished to stay on in the village, she must promise not to use her magical powers ever again. To this she readily agreed and lived in the village to a ripe old age.

The next story is about a woman who has no name as though she represents every woman and whose clever handling of a potentially dangerous situation has become idiomatic in the Ao language to refer to this inherent cunning in women. In this narrative, the focus is on the woman's power over man because of her sex.

This woman's husband had a special 'dao', which he sharpened every day even though he rarely used it for daily chores.

He kept it sharp and shining and gave strict instructions to his wife never to touch it. But in spite of knowing what the consequences would be if her husband found out, one day the woman used it for what she thought was a simple task: cutting a small piece of wood. As luck would have it, the *dao* was damaged because the wood was much tougher than she had thought. She was in great panic as she had experienced the man's wrath when he was enraged even over seemingly trivial matters. But this was a very serious offense and she knew that she was in for the most severe punishment if she did not do anything to circumvent his fury. However, after the initial panic, she calmed down somewhat and decided that she would tell him the truth herself at the most appropriate moment.

When the man returned from the field that evening he found that his favourite curry had been cooked. He also noticed that his wife was in very excited and flirtatious mood. After a very satisfying meal, when they were in bed and engaged in the conjugal act, the wife blurted out in a tearful voice about what happened to his precious *dao*. But caught in a state of intense passion at the moment, the husband dismissed the damaged weapon as of no consequence and told her not to worry about it at all. However in the morning, when he saw the damage to his prized possession, he was at first furious with his wife for disobeying him; but he soon realized that he could not even scold her because she had very cunningly averted his wrath by choosing to tell him about it when he was at his most vulnerable state. He could do nothing but chuckle to himself in chagrin for being outwitted by the woman.

Even today, when an Ao man is seen to be hopelessly under the spell of his wife in spite of her lack of any apparent claim to great beauty or other noteworthy qualities, people smile and comment on his plight by saying, "Oh it is the story of the broken *dao* all over again!". Thus this woman's adroit manipulation of the power of her sex for her own survival has found currency in the idiom of the people, signifying woman's sexual domination over man.

From the intellectual and psychic elements embodied in these narratives certain observations can be made about the nature of power that women have been shown to possess in the patriarchal society of the Aos. In actual reality in this society, women are considered to be of little or no significance in matters relating to the origin, history and civil life of the people. But in the "fictive reality" (Ben-Amos in Rohrich, 1979 p.x) of these narratives, women have been portrayed as re-appropriating the powers that men actually wield in real life.

From time immemorial the perpetuation of race and clan among the Aos has been claimed as the sole prerogative of the male. But Longkongla's story contravenes this time-honoured principle. Since a woman cannot be allowed to usurp this role in a male-dominated society, the supernatural element has crept into the narrative, which shrouds the actual parenthood of the child in mystery. Nevertheless, the origin of the clan founded by this child has been legitimised within the race because Ozukumer clan is now acknowledged as a sub-clan of the Longkumers, one of the three major phratries among the Aos. While all other clans trace their origins to the first fathers who emerged out of six stones at Lungterok, the Ozukumers trace theirs to Songmaket the foster child of a woman called Longkongla. It is through this narrative that the status of a woman as the progenitor of the Ozukumer clan in the patrilineal Ao society has been given social recognition.

Akangla's story illustrates an unacknowledged aspect of warfare: that mere physical prowess and weaponry are not enough in warfare. The men failed to recognize the obstacles in the battle field and relied only on the conventional method of battle. Therefore it is intriguing to note that in an occupation viewed as an exclusively male domain and where a woman would have no role to play, it was the practical, common sense advice of an ordinary housewife which showed her intelligent analysis of the ground reality and which eventually enabled the Longkhum warriors to prevail over their

enemy. Here is a classic example of the superiority of 'brain over brawn' and it is in acknowledgement of this 'different' intellectual power of woman even in the most unlikely arena like warfare between men that Akangla's story has been perpetuated in many a song and ballad. It continues to be a significant narrative in Ao-Naga folklore and oral history.

The encounter between man and woman in Yajangla's story can be understood at the psycho-dramatic level. The core element in the contest is the possession of a secret. As long as it remains the sole possession of the woman, she is the superior of the two. This the man cannot tolerate and he coerces her to reveal it to him, in doing which, he is trying to dispossess the woman of her source of power over him. The dual nature of this power is another intriguing feature of the narrative: left to herself with the secret Yajangla uses only the positive aspect of her power, which results in mutual benefit. But when she is ultimately compelled by her husband to relinquish her exclusive possession of it, she decides to display the destructive element of the power, which in the end enables her to retain her superiority over him by physically destroying him. For the unfortunate man it all began when he could not accept being outdone by the woman in the field. At the end of the story, Yajangla repeatedly states that it was her husband, and not she who was to blame for the killing, a claim which none of the villagers could refute. Another interesting point about this narrative is the transformation of a human into another form. By transforming herself into a form other than human, Yajangla re-enters the realm of nature from the realm of nurture where she played the role of the submissive wife and mother. Through the transformation scene, the narrative assumes the characteristic of a virtual performance in a surreal ambience which presents the woman's ultimate enactment of power. Rohrich says that 'Transformation into an animal becomes a humiliating dehumanisation, it has no lasting effect on the victim; it only helps increase the story's tension' (p.83). Granting that the magical

element does introduce tension into the narrative, the transformation in this narrative, however is seen more as a manifestation of the hidden power of the woman rather than a 'dehumanizing' factor. As for the victim, he pays the ultimate price with his life when he loses the struggle for supremacy over the woman, who triumphantly uses the powers of the transformed self to destroy him. Moreover, by undoing the transformation at the end of the narrative, Yajangla is restored to the ranks of ordinary humans with no discernible 'dehumanization', though the acceptance by the villagers of her 'human' self is conditional upon her promise that she would remain so. This is also a tale which exemplifies the co-existence of fantasy and reality in folk narratives.

The last narrative is a simple but effective example of the power of female sexuality over man and how woman has employed this power as a strategy for survival in a man's world since time began. Being a male has always been considered man's ultimate source of power over woman. But the subtle irony in the tale lies in the fact that this very source of the man's power is so cleverly manipulated by the woman that in the end it turns out to be the agent of his subjugation. By circumventing the inevitable reprisal of the man with the power of her sex, the woman subverts the very process of domination and appropriates the power for her own survival. This is a classic example of how women use their sexuality to resist and subvert unbalanced power relationships and create their own domain in daily life.

These narratives raise some broad questions of what it means to be a woman in patriarchy and at the same time undermine some basic misconceptions about the gender bias of power structure in human society.

Folklore of any people anywhere in the world can be viewed as a reflector of the reality of life lived by people in different contexts. As Ben-Amos asserts, "The folk narratives of any group

reflect the multiplicity of levels of meanings that is to be found in any human society” (in Rohrich, 1979 p.xii). The narratives, other sayings and locales may vary, but the essential truth about the nature of woman’s power in any male-dominated society tends to be similar. The definition of woman as the weaker sex is a male construct; advocated and enforced by man to perpetuate his superiority and prestige in society. But as the examples from Ao-Naga folklore demonstrate, such a generalization is often discredited, not only in discourse but in reality too.

#### SOURCE OF STORIES

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## Book Review

**Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih and Robin S. Ngangom (ed.),**  
*Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from the North-east.*  
NEHU Publications, Shillong, 2003, pp.264, Rs.230.

For a long time now, the North-east has been the troubled zone, “a seething cauldron” torn by the ethnic crisis, economic failures, terrorist violence and mounting claims of regional autonomy and separatism. Lost in the haze and blur of contemporary history very often, it is usually conceived not so much as a landscape inhabited by real people but only as a fictional metaphor of a world gone awry. No wonder it lurks rather uncertainly at the edge of an average Indian’s consciousness.

On reading this artistically packaged anthology, one is certainly disabused of a number of preconceived notions about the North-east and its rich cultural heritage. A world of eerie contradictions leaps out of these pages as tradition rubs shoulders with modernity, folk rhythms jostle uneasily with the western pop, virgin forests stand a mute testimony to the debauchery of urban life, and recalcitrant nativism co-exists with the ‘otherness’ of the outsiders. This anthology certainly does rip the mask off the multi-layered and complex history/culture of the region, revealing the face of the people and the landscape that is anything but just salubrious and enthralling.

This anthology also has a definite purpose beyond its immediate poetic appeal. If on the one hand it brings the ‘gunshots’ and ‘the bloodstained faces’ of the North-east within earshot distance, on the other it takes us right into the hearts of the people, their dreams and desires, myths and memories, and long struggles through history. By thus bringing us into direct contact with the cultural history of the people, it opens up the possibility of a dialogue

we may have thought never existed. If in our troubled times poetry can synergize this dialogue, it could be said to have achieved much more than it ordinarily does. For such a possibility alone can redress one of the understandable complaints of the editors that, for all the political rhetoric, this remains a “little known and largely misunderstood” region of India.

In all, this anthology showcases some forty-five contemporary poets of the region, reflecting not only myriad styles and trends but also diversity of concerns within “the Seven Sisters,” which, in itself, is no mean achievement. However, the representation of each state is somewhat erratic. Meghalaya, the home-state of the editors, leading the way with as many as fourteen poets; Manipur a close second with eight; Arunachal and Mizoram struggling hard to catch up with barely two poets each. Tripura and Assam have seven poets each whereas Nagaland has only five. If space is a marker of identity, then this kind of unequal distribution does raise questions of internal hegemony of languages/cultures. Especially so, because the editors have chosen not to address this issue.

Interestingly, all the poets selected from Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland have one thing in common: they all write originally in English. While celebrating the “fading voices/of deaf (tribal) women,” Mamang Dai, a journalist who belongs to the Adi community of Arunachal, does not forget to mourn the endless wait of “the silent hillmen” for “the long promised letters/and the meaning of words”(pp. 4-5). Her retreat into personal memories is only a way of reclaiming historical consciousness, and it is on the interstices of both that the political content of her poetry becomes manifest. Yumlam Tana, a teacher from the Nyishi tribe who is almost apologetic about writing in English, is acutely self-conscious about losing his tribal identity inscribed in *Porno* and *Jupung* to *kurta* and *pyjama*. It is another matter that he manages to counterbalance his loss through his universal claim “to the Bible/The Quran, the Gita/ And all human endeavours/In Science, Art and Commerce” (p.13).

Occasionally, he also dips into the archives of Nyishi myths, bringing out poetic pearls of astounding beauty.

Though the personal note dominates the poems of H. Ramdhintari, a poet from Mizoram who now lives in Maryland, U.S.A., she is conscious that "We're at the far end of the earth/ where the touch of the sun ceases to have meanings" (p.197). However, her contemporary Mona Zote, who lives in Aizawl, is more explicitly political as she ominously waits for the "bomb" to fall "on those of us, unaware under/The catastrophe of houses against trees," and is even eager to "leave words too and be/a gunrunner" (p.203). Though both T. Ao and Nini Lungalang from Nagaland are among the better-known and older voices, each bears an unmistakable individualistic stamp. While T. Ao's poems such as *The Epitaph* and *Rumour* pulsate with a definite fable-like quality, Nini Lungalang returns "to where I began," a world throbbing with social and political tensions, often caught through "neighbour's quarrel/over a strip of land" or the personal pain of "I too have a brother slain." Among the younger lot, Monalisa Changkija, a Dimapur based journalist, and Easterine Iralu, a lecturer at Nagaland University, impress by virtue of their uncanny ability to resurrect the social conscience. If Monalisa raises her voice in support *Of a People Unanswered*, Easterine Iralu regrets that "One day, my son/when you come to ask me/what colour was the sky/before it turned grey/I will no longer have the answers" (p.222).

Assamese and Manipuri poets distinguish themselves by their unswerving commitment to their respective languages, though it hardly ever takes the form of linguistic chauvinism. Most of the Assamese poets are fairly young, the only exception being Nilmani Phookan, a much older and well-respected Sahitya Akademi Award winning veteran. In his all-too-familiar romantic world, "the plantain leaf (still) trembles," "distant dreams of trees/move past," and "the afternoon sun melts/into the shoreless waters." Only very rarely does he surprise with an unexpected turn of a phrase or an image, and even when he does as in "In the frost-silent Japanese silk-night/if I could die" (p.57), the burden of existence is not much

lightened. Among the younger generation of Assamese poets, Jiban Narah and Prem Narayan Nath are apparently the only inheritors of Nilmani's romantic sensibility. Jiban discovers his own voice in intensely personal poems such as *Mother* and *Night's Portal*, and despite its long-winded invocations and veiled references to the ethos of the Mishing tribe, his poem *The Buddha* fails to make its mark. However, Prem Narayan has a deeper and richer resonance as he captures "the hum of *raga gandhara*/in darkness" with as much elan as he shows while recording the "rumblings from the earth's womb" that throw up "scores of dead bodies suddenly" (p.50). Nilim Kumar, Anubhav Tulasi and Sameer Tanti combine a certain earthy rawness of passion with more contemporary staccato speech rhythms. If Nilim Kumar questions "where are you bound, brother/with all those dead birds/on your shoulder," Anubhav Tulasi shares his anxiety over a dog "barking long since/Fretting in my blood." But it is left to Sameer Tanti, who has also crafted *The Ballad of Bones*, to state: "How do I hold hunger guilty/Hunger is my mother's first miscarriage/the third world of my agony" (p.67). Although she is the lone woman poet from Assam, Anupama Basumatary is easily the most powerful of all voices in her language. In comparison to other women poets from Nagaland and Mizoram who write in English, it is she whose concerns are overtly and explicitly feminist. Not only is she interested in historicising the silence of women through the image of "the stone-body," but she also speaks of woman's essential exclusion and loneliness in her poetic ramblings *An Evening On the Banks of the Ganges*. Often she manages to transcend the politics of exclusion, thus revealing a strong universal strain in her poetry, which is self-evident when she says, "In the hope of achieving something/Every man is only losing himself" (p.22). A poetic sensibility that sees "a childhood dawn" "in the cluster of mushrooms" is certainly no ordinary talent.

Of the Manipuri poets, again only two are women, and the rest all men. Kunjarani Longjam Chanu and Atambam Ongbi

Memchoubi are both teachers by profession and have published more than two collections each. Kunjarani's "hunters" that "stand in front of you/Carrying poison arrows" and "black maidens" that fall "inside the deep ravines" "along with the white slabs of snow" fester in our memory as much as Memchoubi's *The Goddess of Lightning* and *My Beloved Mother* do. A popular children's writer and a much published poet, R K Bhubonsana, in his rather longish musings *Should Lights Be Put Out Or Minds Kept In The Dark*, exposes in a playfully sardonic manner the designs of the government in perpetuating the people's subjugation by not promoting literacy among them. Yumlebam Ibomcha's *For the Next Birth* and Raghu Leishangthem's *Politician and White Dove* are also poems in a similar vein, though Ibomcha's *Story of a Dream* and Raghu's *The Old Woman's Pitcher* leave a much stronger impression because of their depth of feeling and sensitive portrayal of character/situation. Thangjam Ibopishak, who along with Ibomcha is a Sahitya Akademi Award winning poet, creates unfailing images of the land and its people. While gushing over his land in a manner least bashful, "Manipur, I love your hills, marshes, rivers/Greenfields, meadows, blue sky" (p.88), he does not allow himself to be blinded by the fact that it is also "the land of the half - humans" where "for six months just head without body, six months just body without head" (p.93). The mythology of the land interests him as much as does its poetry or its history. If Saratchand Thiyam, an engineer by profession, stands out by virtue of being able to sing of both *Shillong* and *Africa* with equal ease, Ilabanta Yumnam, a teacher, marks himself out through the tardy, prosaic rhythms of his poetic outpourings.

Of the seven sisters, the only two that betray a baffling sense of linguistic diversity are Meghalaya and Tripura. In Meghalaya, one comes across poets in languages as varied as Hindi, English, Khasi and Bengalee, whereas in Tripura, Bengalee and Manipuri happily co-exist with Chakma and Kokborok. Tarun Bhartiya, who is from Meghalaya and writes in Hindi, appears to have internalised

the ethics of postmodernism, and so celebrates the fragmentation of thought and being with a rare irreverence and panache. Just as he has no qualms about saying that "Cow Mother's thighs should be rubbed with pepper," he's equally blase about sniffing "reality of gunpowder in the breath of reporters" (p.114). Piyush Dhar, who writes in Bengalee, brings a razor-edged sharpness of a typical Bengali sensibility to bear upon his reflections on the mindless nuclear arms race in *Five Pokhran Poems*. There could not have been a more forthright indictment of Pokhran than this: "Infanticide ditches crisscross/your dreamy chest, too, Pokhran;/today your silent sands bury in their voice/an epitaph of vice" (p.121). Of several poets writing in English in Meghalaya none is so cosmopolitan as Ananya S Guha, who is very much at home, be it *In Calcutta*, *Mymensing* or his *Poem for Punjab*. If Anjum Hasan impresses with her deft use of the Japanese form in *November Haikus*, Robin S Ngangom sweeps us along by the sheer force of his haunting images in the searing evocation of the *Native Land*. But this, indeed, appears somewhat pale in comparison with the range, depth and intensity displayed by Khasi poets such as Paul Lyngdoh, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih and Bevan L Swer. As their effort is to explore the archeology of Khasi legends, folk-tales and customs, their poems often sizzle with a peculiar pungency of a purely local variety.

This variety of localism is also available in the poems of Niranjana Chakma, Sefali Debbarma and Chandra Kanta Murasingh, all from Tripura, though they practise their craft in Chakma and Kokborok languages respectively. While Sefali Debbarma celebrates the local sounds and smells in her intensely personal poems; Chandra Kanta's crisp, compact lyrical meditations slowly bring her into contact with "our beloved soil." In the poems of Niranjana Chakma one senses a definite rage born out of irrevocable 'silence' that most of the tribal communities have come to accept as their *fait accompli* over the centuries. In an intensely moving poem, Kalyanbrata Chakraborti captures the plight of Manirung Reang, "a girl from the hills" who falls prey to "the gun-toting belligerents,"

with only “the birds and the wind” grieving for her. A similar portrait of a “woman suffering this society’s grievous hurt” bristles out of a poem by Gambhini Sorokkhaibam, who originally writes in Manipuri. However, the crowning glory of this collection are two poems by Krittibas Chakraborty, both of which could be regarded as the final tribute to the awesome linguistic plurality of the North-east in particular and our country in general. Originally written in Bengalee, for inclusion in this collection, these poems have been translated not directly from the language in which they were written but instead from Tripuri into English. More significantly, these two poems bring into sharp focus for us, once again, the complex issues of hybridised identity, belonging and homelessness. While wondering with the poet “How long you will burn, Northeast horizon!” (p.247), we feel as though we have come back full circle, once again. With apprehensions about the future of the North-east buzzing in our ears, we return from this mythopoeic journey, sadder and somewhat wiser as well.

Despite the fact that poetry often does not lend itself to an easy linguistic transfer, most of the translations in this collection have been competently handled. Often while reading these poems, one gets the impression as though all of them including the ones not originally written in English have been so written. The use of words or expressions from a variety of host languages, however, doesn’t set up any jarring rhythms. On the contrary, it ties up rather well with the politics of translation that, in any case, should have informed the very spirit of such a collection. By preferring the “foreignising” mode of translation to the “domesticating” one, the editors have not only demonstrated their respect for the notion of linguistic plurality, but also made a significant statement of their ideology and intent. Of course, they deserve a full round of applause for their success in accommodating a vast “polyphony of voices,” reflecting an equally bewildering range of thematic concerns and formal preferences. These are the voices that ought to be heard with passionate concern, even compassion and urgency. More than the ordinary lovers of

poetry across the country, this collection should strike a chord among those who wish to understand the cultural labyrinths of the North-east, and respond to the multiple challenges such an understanding often poses.

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**Sujata Miri, *The Broken Circle*, London, New Delhi: Minerva Press, 2003, Price Rs 250).**

The *Prologue* starts with the cries of a child. Then screams and protestations, of a mother thrown out and a baby's incessant crying. The beginning of the circle...

The child in Chapter One has grown up into a young woman:

"She had just turned fourteen and there were already two boys who claimed to love her, each proposing marriage..." This is Asha, nubile and full bodied, vivacious and full of beans. It is a delightful accentuation by the novelist as she opens the narrative with the trepidation relating to Asha's awakening sexuality. It is amazingly candid and acerbic at the same time. Every page in the novel is pulsating with warm figures, bristling with a rugged earthiness and racy sensuality.

As you read the novel, you are momentarily surprised by its clinical bluntness. This is solely Asha's story, a tale bold and brash. The setting is Lalchand Basti, the colony that is "home" to the

Nepali community of Shillong. The scene shifts to other localities, Lumphing, to "somewhere less Nepali & more cosmopolitan-Pokseh", then Umpling.

Asha is a wonderfully drawn character, very sensual and irresistible. She can twist men around her little finger, a truth she learns early in life. She is surrounded by her ridiculous Laban *Phuphu* and aunts. Crude, coarse and artless. She elopes, is brow bitten and bundled back home. Consequently a "respectable" marriage is arranged, with Golu Bahadur, a clerk, and Asha is ecstatic "She was one rare bride who thoroughly enjoyed her own wedding. The festivities, financed by her guilty father, were lavish and the meals rich with Nepali, Bengali and Khasi specialities...." Then follows some petty clashes with her in laws and another victim falls to her charms, her brother-in law Deepu. She is aware of her physical allure, and makes full use of it. Her desires are flimsy, but her needs are immediate. Money matters a lot to her, but her obsessive passion for a two timing, scheming older man, the highly exhibitionist Nirmal Chhetri leads her to plumb the depths of despair. She flings herself against him in secret rendezvous which carries her to bliss and destruction. Then follows more intrigues and shady deals of a surreptitious degree racket, where her husband Golu is involved. Then a murder, and the resultant trappings of the uncouth police probings and the emergence of an unsuspecting social worker. The circle widens. She is caught in a web spun by other men in her life and she cannot break free of debauchery and greed as she flaunts and lives as she pleases unabashedly. In her frantic search for physical fulfillment, she ruins her defenseless youngest daughter Lakshmi's vulnerable world too.

It is Sujata Miri at her best. She does not mince words in the dissection of sexual violence and the circularity of the dissolution of a woman's life based on greed and lust. Asha is no Emma Bovary, because she has no saving self-delusion. The familiar locales, Police Bazaar, Laban, Malki, Dreamland Cinema Hall and Guwahati add to the topicality of the issues involved. The reader would tend to

judge everything and everyone in this novel by a relentless straightforward uncovering of actions of a broad sample of men in relation to a woman — an interesting method. This is a world where time is measured with *Chitrahara* programmes on the TV, as well as revealing some attempt to people with objects, and the need for consumption as an outlet for anxiety: “We are not basti wallahs. You must dress the children well.... Now you have a TV, a tape recorder, a sewing machine, besides the new bed and almirahs. Does anybody else in our family have this?”

The story is tragic to the point of pathos and the indirect narration adds to the callous indifference of the events. Sujata Miri retains a distance that evokes objectivity but also seems disdainful. Asha remains a sad figure and an object of pity.

Neither can we call it a cultural study of an interpretative kind, so any notion of a *final* meaning is always endlessly put off. Probably a little amount of sociological inquiry is inevitably caught up in this ‘circle of meaning’. Definitely the novel betrays very strong tenets of popular pulp fiction, but probably the title bespeaks of the irony where the unity, wholeness, and the feminine spirit or force denoting “the circle” is broken off.

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**Selma K. Sonntag, *The Local Politics of Global English*, Lexington Books, New York, 2003, pp152.**

This is a book that opens up one’s understanding of the linguistic dimensions of globalization which, in the explanatory words of the author herself, “pushes forward global English hegemony.” In doing so, however, it creates its own antithesis as it “politicizes

the language issue and hence “potentializes” a reaction. The burden is to ensure that the potential of this reaction is linguistically democratic.” Immense scholarship has gone into mapping out the contradictions that are inbuilt in such a situation, dynamic and unique enough to this century, to initiate the kind of academic interest that would garner rich dividends at the political and the personal level.

Sonntag begins by drawing upon the linguist Braj Kachru’s typology of concentric circles as a starting point, for differentiating the cases covered in the book according to the degree of global English usage. She then familiarizes the reader with certain key concepts of globalization, such as hegemony, resistance, elites, subalterns, and liberalization and democratization before launching into a discussion of the complexities of global English as it manifests itself in various countries.

The United States representing an English-speaking core corresponding to Kachru’s inner circle sees language as a neutral tool for communication and not as an identity marker. Language rights have not been established under American law and there are, according to the author, several contending views among Americans on language politics. The overall picture that one has of the American scene is that it exudes both hegemony and democracy in economic as well as linguistic globalization.

Her next case study presents an interesting analysis of the politics of language in France. Whilst attempting to stamp out the Breton language, the French state puts forward the “same arguments and logic for its battle against global English that the Breton nationalists use against French linguistic hegemony”. This transference between what she calls “local and global of oppressor and oppressed” is characteristic of the local politics of global English in France. Language politics in France remains a confrontation between regional languages and French linguistic hegemony. This has, however, been compromised, not only in global terms as English becomes the sole working language in Francophone countries, but

also internally in France. Sonntag views the local politics of global English in France as being post-modern by virtue of the shifting roles of hegemon and register .

Chapter Four looks at the subaltern language politics in India which has influenced the dynamics of English language usage in the country. Sonntag follows what she calls the “messy local politics of Indian democracy” from its colonial resistance in the 1920s when Gandhi convinced the Congress to organize along regional language lines, to the kind of vernacular language politics dominating the states of Bihar and UP in recent years. Perceptively so, she arrives at the conclusion that, in India the politics of the English language is essentially local. Although English was introduced by a global power, it has become part of the local, political and linguistic landscape of the country. The global face of English in India is Indian English. It has become synonymous with the elite class but it has also been appropriated by subalterns. And as a final comment she remarks that the subalterns can become the new local elite in India. However, the only valid conclusion that she can really come to is that, amidst reigning discordance there are truly multiple voices in India worth listening to, and she observes that some of these voices are subaltern ones.

In the penultimate chapter of the book, Sonntag compares the language politics of South Africa and Nepal, countries that are in democratic transitions. South Africa is part of Kachru’s outer circle, an “official English” country, whereas Nepal is a “marginal English” country. In South Africa, English has been the language of liberation and democracy, hegemonic and liberatory, elitist and democratic. During apartheid, South African Blacks used English as the language of protest and resistance despite the different language policy preferences of various segments of the liberation movement. Multilingualism in the post apartheid years is valued by Black South Africans in the informal and private sphere. But in the public arena, the majority of Black South Africans would opt for English. However, the political debate on linguistic democratization

and globalization in South Africa is not yet over since the new South Africa reflects the tension between the ideal of pursuing a truly transformative South African political project and the reality of seeking improvement in a majority of South Africans.

There are several points of similarities between South Africa and Nepal but the important difference lies in the fact that English has never played the role that it did or currently does in South Africa. As in South Africa the democratic transition ushered in a new multilingual policy where the Nepalese were assuredly tolerant of global English. In South Africa multilingualism advocates actively resist global English. There is an emerging position of global English in Nepalese society which hints at a class based struggle as the more likely future for Nepal.

Sonntag concludes with a salient observation that global English represents the possibility of globalization from above as well as from below, especially in terms of a democratic subaltern resistance to linguistic hegemony.

Each case study presents the human face of a political conundrum, where the choices to be made are sometimes dictated by the linguistic policies of a larger community or as in the case of South Africa, chosen by the people themselves. Needless to say, it is a book to be read not only by language scholars but by all and sundry as it brings into focus the linguistic complexities of globalization. Sonntag has succeeded in employing the tools of culture, language and history to conceptualize a situation that is necessarily global.

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**Robbins Burling, *The Language of the Modupur Mandi (Garo), Vol.I: Grammar***, NJ,: Bibliophile South Asia in association with Promilla & Co. Publishers, New Delhi, 2004. Pp. xiii + 406 (hardback); Price: Rs. 750.00.

This is the first descriptive study of the grammar of the "Mandi" dialect of Garo spoken in Bangladesh. The book under review is divided into fourteen chapters: (1) The language and the people, (2) Segmental phonology, (3) Juncture and prosody, (4) Morphophonemics and variation, (5) Core grammar: an overview, (6) Verbs, (7) Optional verb affixes, (8) Nouns, (9) Nominals, (10) Numerals, (11) Minor parts of speech, (12) Complex noun phrases, (13) Subordination, and (14) Restructuring. Besides these fourteen chapters, the book also contains three appendices: (A) Texts, (B) Questions for study, and (C) Glossary of linguistic terminology; references, and two indices: index of affixes and index of topics.

In the introductory chapter of the book, Robbins Burling (henceforth RB) outlines the goals/scope of the grammar of the Garo spoken in Bangladesh. He mentions three groups of people the book is intended for. The first group comprises the people "...whose goal is to learn one of the Garo dialects". "The second group is professional linguists and Tibeto-Burmanists". And the third group of people consists of "...people who speak Garo as their native language".

Although the book is a descriptive study of the grammar of the dialect of Garo spoken in Bangladesh, the author has successfully tried to compare some of the structures of this dialect with those of the Garo spoken in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya. Each section of a particular chapter has been assigned "one of three levels, elementary, intermediate, and advanced". In addition to assigning each section to one of three difficulty levels, the author has labeled the levels as A, B, and C respectively.

An inexperienced reader may find it confusing about the fact that similar things are not discussed under the same topic

(e.g., noun phrases are described in chapters 5, 8, and 12; different types of postpositions have been described in two different chapters, viz., chapters 8 and 9; etc.). Also, one finds a lot of repetitions (e.g., the minor word classes have been discussed twice in chapters 5 and 11). We perhaps cannot blame the author for this. RB clearly states in the introduction to the book that "...Do not try to work straight through the book from the beginning to the end. You would get hopelessly bogged down. This is not that sort of book" (p.6), and that "...As such, I have permitted myself a good deal of repetition" (p.7).

In the first chapter of the book, RB talks about the concepts the "Mandis" (of Bangladesh) have about the "A'chiks" (of Garo Hills in Meghalaya). He points out that the Mandis identify their dialect as "a form of "A'beng" and that Mandi has several mutually intelligible dialects spoken in Bangladesh. According to RB, the Garos of Garo hills are "less often bilingual in any language than those who live in Bangladesh..." (p.15), and Mandi is heavily influenced by Bengali.

The second, third, and the fourth chapters are dedicated to the description of the phonology of Mandi. The phonological description is quite adequate. The *glottal stop* or "Raka", one of the prominent phonological features of Mandi/Garo, has been dealt in detail (pp.32-41). The description given is clear and comprehensive. It would have been better, at least from the point of view of a linguist, if the author had presented a detail description of the phonetic and phonemic aspects of the various segmental sounds, viz., consonants, monophthongs and diphthongs; consonant sequences/clusters; distinctive features of the segments, etc.

The section on morphophonemics (pp.71-76) gives a concise description of some prevalent morphophonemic rules in the language. Though some interesting morphophonemic rules of the verb patterning in the language have not been dealt with in detail, such patterning is covered in other places. This section presents a

beautiful description of the variations found among the various dialects. RB finally describes the changes in pronunciation due to the linguistic influence of Bengali and English on the Mandi language. For instance, the phoneme /s/ never occurs in word- or syllable-final position in older Mandi, but the "...Bengali borrowings have established /-s/.." (p. 87), and, as a result, now we find words like *dos* 'ten', *bas* 'enough', etc.

The fifth chapter attempts to provide a brief overview of the "core grammar" of Mandi, and describes the structure of simple sentences, verbs, noun phrases and minor word classes.

The description of the verbal structure of Mandi has been presented in chapters six and seven. The distinction between a "verb base", a "verb stem", and a "verb" (sic) is important in Mandi, and RB has explained the distinction very clearly (p.107). RB points out (p.112) that the Garo dialects do not have separate transitive and intransitive verbs. The transitive verb-forms are obtained by adding the causative affix *-et-* or *-it-* in Mandi and *-at-* in A'chik (Garo). The suffixes like sentence completing suffixes, tense-aspect suffixes, imperative suffixes, subordinating suffixes, nominalizing suffixes associated with verbs (pp.120-136), and adverbial affixes such as progressive *-ing-*, *-eng-*, *-ong-*; negative *-ja-*, etc. (pp. 139-153) have been discussed in great detail in these two chapters. One wonders why RB includes the 'causative' affix, *-et- ~ -it- ~ -at-*, which is generally associated with verbs, among the adverbial affixes. A detail study of the auxiliary verbs, conjunct verbs and compound verbs would have increased the usefulness of the book, especially for the language learners.

The eighth chapter deals with the nouns in Mandi. In this chapter, RB discusses the "category prefixes" (classifiers) associated with nouns, formation of plural, case markers, and final noun suffixes. I feel that some of the so-called final noun suffixes, e.g., *-sa ~ -ha* 'only' (p.205) should have been described as emphatic particles.

Chapter nine is on nominals, and describes the pronouns, question words, postpositions, and borrowed Bengali case markers and postpositions (such as *a-ge* 'before, ago', *po-re* 'after' etc.). The description of case markers and postpositions could have been presented along with the brief description of the same in the previous chapter. Also, the nouns and adjectives could have been described in this chapter as they, too, are nominals.

The Mandi numerals have been described in the next chapter (chapter ten). RB identifies *gip-a* as the ordinal numeral marker. Thus *sa* 'one': *sa-gipa* 'first (one)', *gin* 'two': *gin-ipa* 'second (one)', and so on.

The numeral classifiers (pp.247-256) such as *ak-* ~ *sak-* 'people', *mang-* 'animals', *rong-* 'round', *kol-* 'holes', *king-* 'thin flat things', etc. have been described under the headings 'core classifiers', 'shapes, materials, places', 'pieces, parts, groups, bundles, loads', 'containers', etc.

In the eleventh chapter, adverbs, locative words (e.g. *-cheng-* 'before'), defective nouns, "gi-type" adjectives, courtesy expressions, interjections, conjunctions, reduplication, echoes, etc. have been described as minor parts of speech.

The next chapter presents a brief description of the structure of the complex noun phrases in Mandi.

Chapter thirteen describes the structure of subordinated sentences in Mandi. Instead of having a separate chapter just on subordination and briefly mentioning the word order, the author should have discussed various processes like coordination, passivization (described in chapter fourteen, p.340), interrogation; negation; conjunctive participle construction (RB gives just one example without having mentioned the construction on p.346 in chapter fourteen) etc.; structure of conditional sentences; relative-correlative constructions (described in chapter fourteen, p.333) in one place, and he should have devoted a complete chapter on word order in Mandi describing the order of noun and adjective,

postpositions, noun and genitive, adjective and numerals, etc. The last section of the chapter talks about the equational sentences (p.329), but it does not consider the existential sentences.

In the last chapter titled 'restructuring', RB talks about the relative-correlative construction involving *je* and *ba* in great detail. Here, RB notes that *je* occupies the same position as the demonstrative pronoun in a noun phrase. Although *je* has been borrowed from Bengali, Mandi/Garo has "...not borrowed the full complexity of the Bengali relative system" (p.334). The *ba*-relatives, according to RB, "are less common than the *je* relatives". The other constructions discussed in this chapter include "balanced questions", passive, comparative with *-kal-* and *-bat-*, postposed noun phrases, postposed subordinate clauses, and subject fronting.

Appendix A contains four Garo folk-tales with interlineal translation. These tales "are taken from a book written by Kohima Daring called *Mandi Di sarangna Golpo: Stories for Garo Children*" (sic). Appendix B contains questions for study based on the contents presented in each chapter. In Appendix C, RB provides readers with a very useful glossary of linguistic terminology.

The sections dealing with various aspects of syntax are not comprehensive in scope. A separate section on word-formation in Garo/Mandi would have enhanced the beauty of the book. The way this book uses certain grammatical terms leaves the reader uneasy. One such term is "balanced questions".

One of the most distinctive features of the book under review is the overall approach used by the author to describe the categories and structures at the levels of syntax, morphology, and phonology. Various grammatical constructions (e.g. imperative, negation, etc.) and categories (subject, case suffixes, etc.) are described in terms of their form as well as their pragmatic function(s).

Additionally, the author's discussion on the interaction of grammatical structure with contextual factors such as the variation of styles and the social class/status of the speakers, etc. will be

valuable particularly for sociolinguists. This book is the first descriptive grammar, which includes analysis of syntax, morphology, and phonology of Garo/Mandi in one place.

On the whole, the author covers a wide spectrum of topics related to grammar of Modhupur Mandi (Garo). This is a good and worth reading book with lots of information on the grammatical structure of Garo, though there are a couple of small lapses that may be ignored when compared with its merits. RB deserves praises for writing a commendable book on the grammar of Garo providing the findings hitherto unexplored. RB has made an invaluable contribution to the Tibeto-Burman linguistics. This book will also be useful for the teachers/learners of Garo as a second language.

The efforts of the author are laudable and the book is worth collecting for the people interested in the study of languages and cultures of tribal population of India and its neighboring countries.

The printing of the book is clear and quite pleasing to the eye.

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