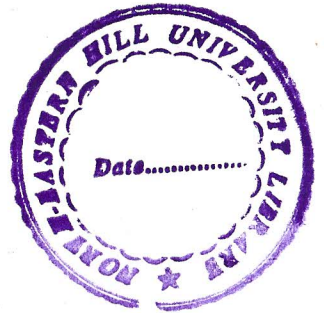


**DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE
JOWAI AND RYMBAI DIALECTS OF
KHASI**

**THESIS
SUMMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE
REQUIREMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN LINGUISTICS**

**BY
Curiously Bareh**



**UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
PROF. J. WAR**

**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
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NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
SHILLONG-793022
2007**


DEDICATION


**To my parents for their love
and support**

DECLARATION

I Curiously Bareh hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that 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.

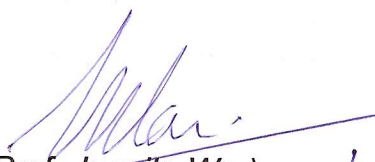
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Chareh
1.6.2007
(Curiously Bareh)

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Abbreviations and List of Symbols

A.	Answer
ABL	Ablative
ACC	Accusative
AGR	Agreement
ASSO	Associative
BE	<i>Be</i> -Verb
CAU	Cause to (Causative verb)
DS	Deep Structure
ECP	Empty category Principle
EPP	Extended Projection Principle
F	Feminine
FUT	Future
GB	Government and Binding Theory
HON	Honorific Marker
IMM	Immediate Future
IND	Indefinite
INF	Infinitive
INFL	Infinitival
INTR	Interrogative
Intr.	Intransitive Verb
Inst.	Instrumental
LF	Logical Form
M	Masculine
MED	Medial
Mkr.	Marker
NOM	Nominative
OSV	Object Subject Verb
OVS	Object Verb Subject
PF	Phonetic Form
Poss.	Possessive
PL	Plural

PNG	Person number and gender
PROG	Progressive marker
PROX	Proximate
PST	Past Tense
Q.	Question
Q-Mkr	Question marker
REFL	Reflexive
REL. Pro	Relative Pronoun
REM	Remote
Sg	Singular
SOV	Subject Object Verb
SVO	Subject Verb Object
SS	Surface Structure
Tr.	Transitive Verb
VSO	Verb Subject Object
VOS	Verb Object Subject
I	First Person
II	Second Person
III	Third Person
JW	Jowai
RB	Rymbai
ŋ'	vocalic /ŋ/
+ HUM	Human
- HUM	Non-human
>	Become or change to
*	Ungrammatical
∩	Recent borrowed word
θ	theta theory

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 An Introduction

This thesis aims to provide the descriptive analysis of Pnar. Depending on geographical location, there are sub-dialectal variations. For example, the Pnar variety spoken in Jowai area is different from those spoken in Rymbai, Sutnga, Shangpung and other areas. In an attempt to bring out the structure of Pnar, two dialects are taken into consideration; Jowai and Rymbai. Jowai being the centre of Jaintia Hills and the Jowai dialect is understood in varying degrees by all in the Jaintia Hills and Rymbai is a dialect of Rymbai, and is the native language of the researcher.

1.2 The Pnars

Earlier writers give different names for both the people and the dialect of Pnar. Grierson (1928) called it *Synteng*, Spencer (1967) called it *Jaintia* and so on. But the Pnars prefer to call themselves Pnar. *Synteng* is a name given to them by other speakers, where as, *Jaintia* is a political name that cover both the Pnar speakers and the War speakers that settled within the Jaintia Hills district.

1.3 Location

The name **Meghalaya** is derived from Hindi word, which is literally, means 'The Abode of Clouds'. This state was inaugurated as an autonomous state within Assam on the 2nd April, 1970. It was declared a state of Indian Union on Jan. 21st, 1972. Administratively, Meghalaya consists of seven districts namely, East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills, Jaintia Hills, East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Ri Bhoi and South Garo Hills District¹.

¹ See Joshi (2004) *Meghalaya – Past and Present*.

The picturesque Khasi and Jaintia Hills² lies between 24° 58' and 26° 7'N, and 90° 45' and 92° 51'E. Bareh (1967) states that the Khasis and the Jaintias inhabit the eastern and central portions of Meghalaya. Until 1972, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills formed one district. Subsequently in the same year Jaintia Hills district was carved from the Jowai sub-division. In 1960, a considerable portion of north Jaintia Hills was merged with Mikir Hills district (now Karbi Anglong) so that the area of the district was reduced to 5,541 sq.miles.

The Jaintia Hills covers an area of 3285.5 sq.kms North Cachar and Karbi Anglong border the north-east and Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) on the south of this district. This roughly corresponds to the hilly position of the ancient Jaintia kingdom. The height of the peaks and ridges vary between 3250 feet to 5150 feet approximately. The headquarter town of Jowai is situated at an elevation of 5150 feet above sea level³.

A recent work by P.M.Passah and S.Sarma (2001) shows that the districts of Jaintia Hills lies between latitudes 20°58' and 26°3'N longitudes 91°59' and 92°51'E and covers an area of 3295.5 sq.kms. approximately. It is surrounded on the north, the east and south-east by Assam, on the south by Bangladesh and on the west by Khasi hills.

1.4 Food Habit

The staple food of Pnar is rice, which forms the main item of two principal meals. They consume pulses preferably mushroom and different kinds of vegetables, which include potato, brinjal, pumpkin, cucumber beans, peas, tomato, leafy vegetables, roots and tubers. They are non-vegetarians and eat beef, pork and chicken.

² See Dutta (1982)

³ See Joshi (2004). *Meghalaya – Past and Present*.

They also take fowl, birds, egg and fish. *Kha tyrkhong* (dry fish) is their favourite food item. They use mustard oil and sometimes pig fat as cooking medium. The common fruit consumed by them are bananas, pineapples, oranges and jackfruits. They do not drink much milk. They prefer tea without milk. They collect plenty of honey from the nearby jungle both for their own consumption and for the purpose of selling. They are fond of betel nuts and betel leaves.

1.5 Population

According to the the Census of India 2001, Jaintia has a total population of 299,108. in an area of 3819 Sq. Km. the sex ratio of Jaintia Hills District is 996 females to 1000 males, which is a bit higher than the state (Meghalaya) average of 972 females to 1000 males. The total literacy in the district is 51.9 %.

1.6 Genetic Classification⁴

The study of language history and the relationships among languages is one of the tasks of *comparative linguistics*. The traditional procedure that linguists use in determining a true historical (genetic) relationship is called the *comparative method*. This term does not refer to a fixed procedure that is to be followed rigidly. Rather, it refers to the analytical techniques linguists employ in reconstructing the history of languages they are hypothesized to be members of the same language family.

Genetic classification is a historical classification based on the assumption that languages have diverged from a common ancestor. It uses early written remains as evidence and when this is lacking, deductions are made by using the comparative method to enable the form of the parent language to be reconstructed. The approach has been widely used since its introduction at the end of the 18th Century, and

⁴ See Crystal (1987)

provides the framework within which all worldwide linguistic surveys till date has been carried out.

The **Austro-Asiatic Family**⁵ is a scattered group of languages in Asia found from eastern India to Vietnam. The family once covered a larger area until Tai language speakers migrated south from southern China. The **Viet-Muong Branch** includes **Vietnamese** and **Muong** (both languages of Vietnam). The former is written in a form of the Latin script.

Austro-Asiatic is probably the most 'archaic' family in Southeast Asia and East India, in the sense that nearly all its languages are surrounded by more recent arrivals of the Austronesian, Tai-Kadai, Sino-Tibetan, and Indo-European families, or are retreating under the advance of these languages.

According to **Schmidt (1906)**⁶, the *Austro-Asiatic* family comprises of the Austronesian and the Austro-Asiatic as its sub-families. The Austro-Asiatic group (to which Khasi belongs), including languages scattered over 'nearer and further India'.

The Austro-Asiatic languages according to **Sebeok (1942)** are divided into three main branches. The broad division and sub-divisions which are given by him can be represented in the following diagram;

⁵ See Schmidt (1906), Zide (1992)

⁶ As quoted by Grierson (1927 [1966])

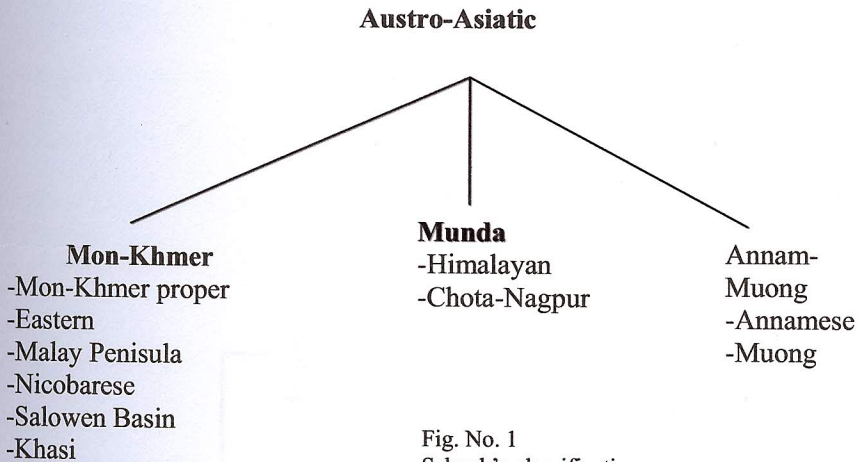


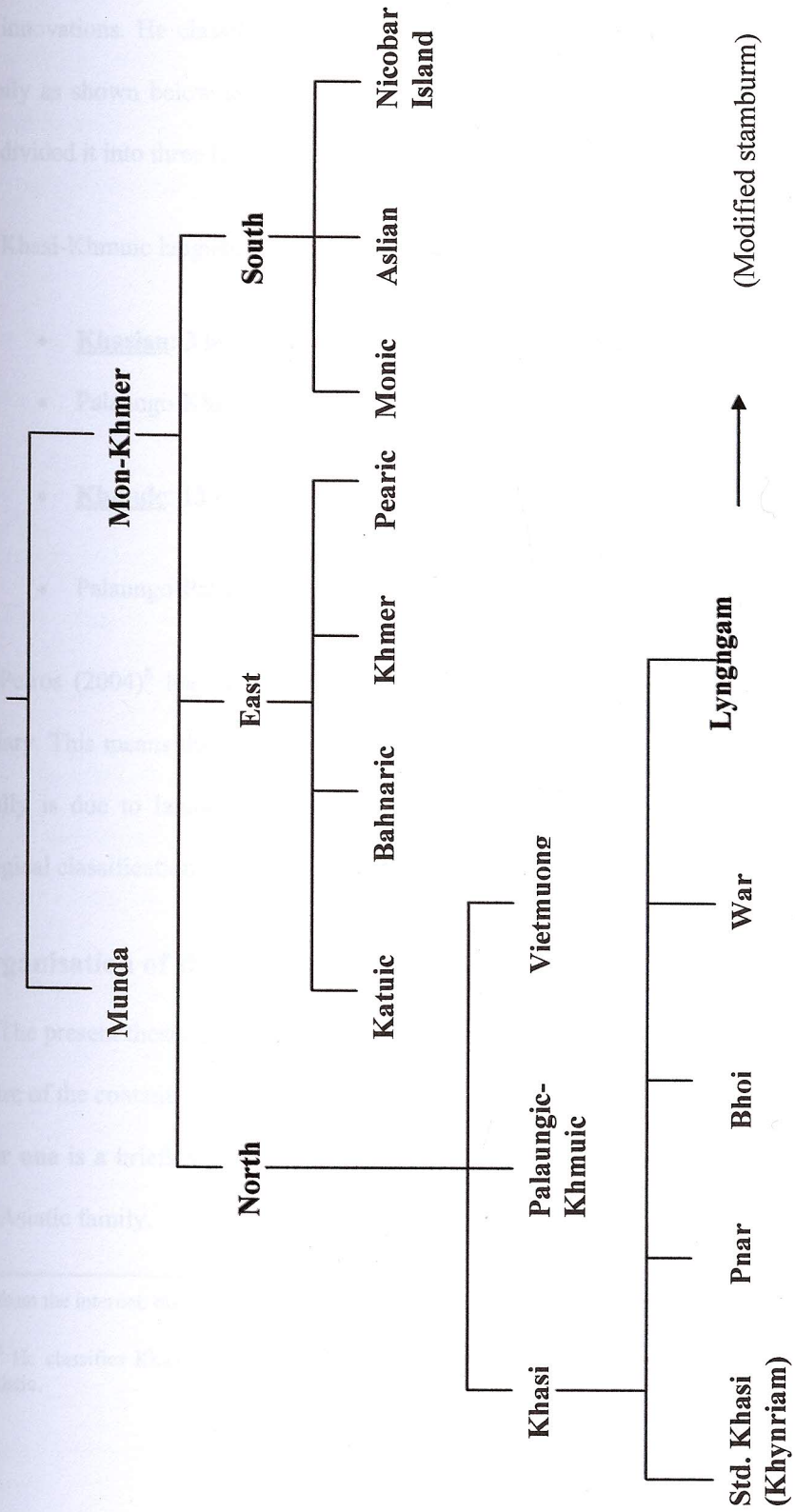
Fig. No. 1
Sebeok's classification
of Austro-Asiatic

In his classification, Khasi forms a separate sub-branch of the Mon-Khmer family. Sebeok (op.cit.) claims that '... the relationship of Mon-Khmer proper to the languages classed with it as coordinate within the larger group of Mon-Khmer, namely Eastern Languages, Khasi, Nicobarese, the languages of the Sloven Basin (chiefly Palaung), and those of the Malay Peninsula... has never been seriously challenged.

Pnar a dialect of Khasi belongs to the Austro-Asiatic family of languages, which is branched under the Mon-Khmer. Diffloth in his early edition (1974) grouped Khasi language and its dialects directly under Mon-Khmer along with Palaungic, Monic, Khmuic, Vietmuong, Katuic, Bahnaric, Pearic, Khmer, Semang, Sakai and Semelaic. And in his latter edition (1982), he regrouped Khasi language along with Palaungic-Khmuic and Vietmuong under the North branch of the Mon-Khmer.

Zide (1992) also grouped Khasi language under the north branch of Mon-Khmer. Hence the original work of Zide and Diffloth do not account for the sub-classification of Khasi. Therefore, accordingly a modification has been made to show the status of Pnar in the Austro-Asiatic family based on the stambuum of Zide (1992) and Diffloth (1982) (as shown in figure 2).

Austro-Asiatic



In his latest classification, rather than establishing cognates, Diffloth (2005)⁷ compares reconstructions of various classes, and attempts to classify them based on shared innovations. He classifies Khasi-Khmuic languages as a separated branch of the family as shown below and under that branch he classed Khasi as Khasian and further divided it into three languages.

- Khasi-Khmuic languages
 - **Khasian**: 3 languages of eastern India and Bangladesh.
 - Palaungo-Khmuic languages
 - **Khmuic**: 13 languages of Laos and Thailand.
 - Palaungo-Pakanic languages

Peiros (2004)⁸ lexicostatistic classification, based on percentages of shared vocabulary. This means that a language may appear to be more distantly related than it actually is due to language contact, so it is only a starting point for a proper genealogical classification.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

The present thesis has seven chapters and each of them is divided according to the nature of the content.

Chapter one is a brief write up about 'Pnar' and its genetic affiliation within the Austro-Asiatic family.

⁷ Source from the internet: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austro-Asiatic_languages.

⁸ He classifies Khasi as a separate branch of the Austro-Asiatic languages on the basis of lexicostatistic.

Chapter two introduces the theoretical framework of Phonology and Morphology under which the present work is subsumed.

Chapter three provides a descriptive analysis of the Pnar from the two dialects; Jowai and Rymbai. An attempt has been made are the phonemic inventory of Pnar and the possible sound structure; its combination in the word, such as consonant clusters, and syllabication.

Chapter four attempts to provide the morphology of Pnar, such as Pronouns, Nouns, Verbs, Cases, Tenses etc.

Chapter five attempts to analyze the Word Order of Pnar and its variations. Certain approaches have been made to account its variation. Syntactical and pragmatical analyses are taken into consideration to solve the surface variations of its order. To account for the variation of word order, pro-drop theory also is taken as a framework.

Chapter six gives the syntactic analysis of verb phrase and noun phrase. Noun phrases are discussed from two points of view that are the simple noun phrase and the noun phrase under GB framework.

Chapter seven entitled *Conclusion* gives the findings and the unresolved or unsolved issues in the entire analysis, and the conclusion.