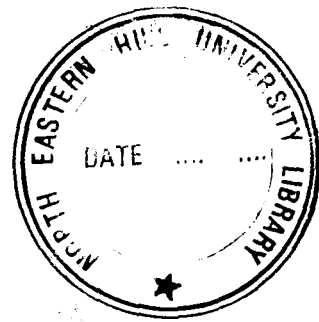


# **TYPOLGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RONGMEI**

**Abstracts**

**Guigongpou Gonmei**



**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS  
NORTH EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY  
SHILLONG  
2010**

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# **TYPOLGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RONGMEI**



**Abstracts**

**Guigongpou Gonmei**

Submitted to the Department of Linguistics

North Eastern Hill University, Shillong for the Fulfillment of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics

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NORTH EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY  
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# Typological Characteristics of Rongmei

## Abstract

Typology simply means the classification of languages into types. Crystal (1987) considers typology as the comparison of the formal similarities that exist between languages and an attempt to group languages into structural types, based on phonology, grammar, or vocabulary, rather than in terms of any real or assumed historical relationship. *“The classifications of language in terms of those structural properties that are shared by virtue of common genetic origin or areal contact are known as the study of typology”*. Therefore, a typological classification system organizes languages into the similarities and differences in their structural types based on phonology, syntax, and morphology rather than in terms of historical relationships.

Greenberg’s famous study, *‘Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements’* (Greenberg 1963), has demonstrated that languages can be classified according to the basic order of subject, object and verb (SOV). This is a particularly successful typology since a number of other features can be predicted from the order of these three elements (SOV).

## Chapter 1: Rongmei: People and Culture, Land and Language

Rongmei is one of the sub-tribes of the Naga and is considered as one of the biggest among the Nagas. Rongmei means *‘Men from the South’*. Rongmei is also known as *‘Kabui’* (a composite name of Rongmei and the Puimei) or *‘Maruangmai’ Inruanghmai*. Rongmei is an ethno-linguistics term that stands for both the tribe and the language. Linguistically, Rongmei belong to the Tibeto-Burman family (*Sino-Tibetan*) but no proper classification has been given about Rongmei but they are assumed to fall under the *Naga-Bodo* sub-group (Grierson 1909-1928).

Different language groups surround Rongmei and due to these reasons Rongmei has many borrowed elements. Manipuri, Mao, Angami, Kuki-Chin etc are some of the language neighbors of Rongmei. Rongmei are spread over the three states of Manipur, Assam and Nagaland and in compact and contiguous territory, which lies between 93°E and 94°E longitude and 25°40’N latitude approximately. In Manipur, Rongmei are found

in Tamenglong district and in Imphal valley. In Nagaland, Rongmei are found in Peren district and in some isolated places in Kohima. In Assam Rongmei are found in Assam valley near Silchar.

According to the 1991 census, Rongmei has a population of about **68,925(Manipur)**. However, in the 2001 census Rongmei has increased almost double fold, the population stood at **82,386**. Rongmei has about **195** villages maybe more and at present, an unofficial census is estimated at around having **1, 80,000** Rongmei speakers approximately from all parts of India where they are settled with **60,000** from Manipur state alone.

### **1.11 Genetic and Language Classification**

Rongmei or Kabui belongs to the western branch of the Kukish section of Burmic sub-division of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages (Shafer, 1955). According to Greirson (1909), Rongmei or the Kabui falls under the Naga-Bodo sub-group of the Tibeto-Burman family. Rongmei are term as the transitional language between the Angamis and the Bodo-Group of languages.

(Classification chart will be given)

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The Tibeto-Burman family of languages, considered by many to be a branch of a large Sino-Tibetan family, is, in terms of number of languages the largest of any spoken in south Asia. Shafer (1955) reports about 300 of these languages. The existence of the TB family was posited as early as the 1980s when it was noticed that many words in “*Written Tibetan*” (WT), attested since the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D., appeared cognate to forms in “*Written Burmese*” (WB), attested since the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. British colonial rulers and scholars in India and Burma began to study some of the dozens of little known “*tribal*” languages of the region that seem to be genetically related to the two great literary languages, Tibetan and Burmese. The early works was collected and compiled in the Linguistic Survey of India (Grierson and Konow 1903-1928), three volumes of which (Vol.III, Parts 1, 2, 3) are devoted to these TB languages.

In the '*Linguistics survey of India*', G A. Greirson has presented a brief grammatical sketch of Rongmei popularly called as '*Kabui Grammars*' but he does not go beyond describing the consonantal and vocalic phonemes of the language. In the recorded volumes of the Linguistic Survey of India, "*Kabui*" or "*Maruanghmei*" presently called as Rongmei language was also documented to some extent by Grierson. However, due to the time factors and other circumstances like illiteracy on the part of the source, collections of datas and documentation of the works are limited.

There are also some books mostly historical ones published by local authors. Some of the books and journals published on the Rongmei language are rare but they provide some information about the literature of Rongmei. Prof. Gangmumei one of the pioneers of Rongmei literature has expounded on some of the historical facts regarding the Rongmei people. However, he fails to give a linguistic background of the Rongmei people. In one of his book "*The history of Zeliangrong: from Makhel to Rani Gaidinliu*", he presents a clear account of the tribe and their background but it does not go beyond the history of the tribe. Other authors like Ramkhun, Makuga, etc., have given their own description regarding the Rongmei history and people and they too failed to give any grammatical description of the Rongmei language. Elungkiebe (2004) in his book "*Learning Zeliangrong Dialects with English*" has given some of the basic word list with their meanings. He has also given some of the parts of speech like, Noun, Pronoun, Adjectives and some basic sentences. Fr. Francis SDB(1991) has also given some of the basic words form in his book "*The Rongmei Dictionary*", but he too provides only the commonly used words and does not used any linguistically scientific method.

### **Chapter 3: Phonological Typology of Rongmei**

The most prominent and noteworthy phonological features of the Tibeto-Burman languages in general is their use of tones<sup>1</sup> to convey phonemic distinction. These tones are not observed with equal rigour in every member languages, in many Himalayan languages, they are in fact hardly noticeable while so little is known about the phonetic properties of many Tibeto-Burman languages that it is difficult to come to any hard and fast conclusions.

**3.1 Phonemic inventory of Rongmei:** The sound system of Rongmei consists of 19 consonants & 6 vowels under segmental features, and three tones, mid-level, high-rising and low-falling. Rongmei phonology consists of seven vowels (*a, i, e, o, u, ə, ɔ*) and twenty consonantal sounds (*b, c<sup>h</sup>, d, g, k, k<sup>h</sup>, l, m, n, ŋ, p, p<sup>h</sup>, r, s, t, t<sup>h</sup>, z ʔ*).

**3.2.1 The Consonantal System:** In Rongmei, the consonantal system makes use of the distinction between aspirated and unaspirated, voiced and voiceless in the case of stops and fricative. The other manner of articulation in which consonants are found to occur are nasal, affricative, trill, lateral and semi-vowel. Rongmei has 19 consonantal sounds. They are; *b, c<sup>h</sup>, d, g, k, k<sup>h</sup>, l, m, n, p, p<sup>h</sup>, t, t<sup>h</sup>, h, r, s, ŋ, z, ʔ*. They are found to occur in six places of articulation- bilabial, dental, alveolar, palatal, velar and glottal. The description of their occurrence in different places of articulation is given in the table below:

**Consonants will be described in the following ways.**

- a. Place of articulation (bilabial, alveolar etc.)
- b. Manners of articulation (stops, flaps etc.)
- c. Phonation process (voiced /voiceless)
- d. Aspiration.

**3.2.1.1 Description and distribution of consonantal sounds.**

*/p/* */p/* is the voiceless bilabial stop and occurs in the initial, medial and final positions.

Initial:	<i>/piŋ/</i>	‘fear’
Medial:	<i>/munpuan/</i>	‘flower’
Final:	<i>/kap/</i>	‘cries’

*/p<sup>h</sup>/* */p<sup>h</sup>/* is the voiceless bilabial aspirate stop and is found to occur in the initial and medial

positions only.

Initial:	<i>/p<sup>h</sup>ei/</i>	‘cloth’
Medial:	<i>/koip<sup>h</sup>un/</i>	‘plot of land’

*/t/* */t/* is the voiceless dental unaspirated stop and occurs in the initial, medial and final

positions.

Initial:	/tiŋ/	‘rain’
Medial:	/katiŋ/	‘edge’
Final:	/k <sup>h</sup> ət/	‘one’

/t<sup>h</sup>/ /t<sup>h</sup>/ is the voiceless aspirate dental stop and occurs in the initial and medial positions.

Initial:	/t <sup>h</sup> iŋ/	‘wood’
Medial:	/kat <sup>h</sup> iak/	‘style/ design’

/c<sup>h</sup>/ /c<sup>h</sup>/ is the voiceless alveolar stop and found in the initial and medial positions.

Initial:	/c <sup>h</sup> ei/	‘sticks’
Medial:	/kac <sup>h</sup> uŋ/	‘middle’

/k/ /k/ is the voiceless velar unaspirated stop and occurs in the initial, medial and final positions.

Initial:	/koi/	‘house’
Medial:	/napkuak/	‘plate’
Final:	/pak/	‘run’

/k<sup>h</sup>/ /k<sup>h</sup>/ is the voiceless velar aspirated stop and can occur in the initial and medial positions.

Initial:	/k <sup>h</sup> un/	‘hole’
Medial:	/moik <sup>h</sup> ou/	‘smoke’

/ʔ/ /ʔ/ is the glottal stop and occurs only in the final position of the word.

Final:	/giʔ/	‘skin’
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**3.2.2 Vowels:** Vowels are sounds which are produced without the constriction in the air passage and the air flows out of the mouth freely and the sounds are relatively distinct.

The vowels sounds in Rongmei are described in the following three ways:

- Body of the tongue-the body if the tongue can be divided into front, central and back of the tongue.
- Height of the tongue-the height of the tongue can be high, mid and low (high, mid high, mid low and low).
- Position of the lips-the lips can be rounded or unrounded or close/open.

Vowels in Rongmei occur in almost all the position except a few restrictions which will be represented while dealing with the phonemic contrast and the allophonic distribution. The phonemic contrast is shown in all possible environments on the basis of minimal pairs.

### 3.2.2.1 Description and distribution of Vowels sounds

/i//i/ is a high, front and unrounded vowel and occurs in the initial, medial and final positions.

Initial:	/inri/	‘axe’
Medial:	/tim/	‘wet’
Final:	/chi/	‘lips’

/e//e/ is the front, mid, unrounded vowel and occurs only in the medial and final position.

Medial:	/t <sup>h</sup> en/	‘hang’
Final:	/nde/	‘sarcastic’

/a//a/ is the low, back, unrounded vowel and occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial:	/ak <sup>h</sup> enmai/	‘bears’
Medial:	/lan/	‘wealth’

/ə//ə/ is a central, mid, unrounded vowel and is found to occur in the medial position only.

Medial:	/kənam/	‘back/above’
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/o//o/ is the higher-mid, back, rounded vowel and occurs only in the medial and final position. In the initial position /o/ occurs as an address term or an expression of surprise.

Medial:	/pon/	‘mill’
Final	/bonpo/	‘palm’

/ɔ//ɔ/ is a back, lower-mid, rounded vowel and occurs only in the final position.

Final:	/k <sup>h</sup> ɔ/	‘jaw’
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/u//u/ is the back, high, rounded vowel and can occur in the medial and final position of the word.

Medial:	/nc <sup>h</sup> uŋ /	‘centre’
---------	-----------------------	----------

Final: /su/ 'boar'

/b/ /b/ is the voiced bilabial stop and occurs in the initial, medial and final positions of the word.

Initial: /bam/ 'bench/seat'

Medial: /kabam/ 'foundation'

Final: /dab/ 'smashes'

/d/ /d/ is the voiced dental stop and is found to occur in the initial, medial and final position of the word.

Initial: /din/ 'stand'

Medial: /kadui/ 'juice'

Final: /bad/ 'boils'

/g/ /g/ is the voiced aspirated velar stop and is found to occur in the initial and medial position only.

Initial: /gun/ 'snow'

Medial: /kagui/ 'circle/ring'

### 3.2.4 Diphthongs:

A diphthong is a sequence of vowels  $V_1V_2$  in a syllable which are pronounced in the same time as a single vowel. Thus it is effective and consists of two half vowels, the first of which undergoes a rapid transition into the other. One of the members of the vowel sequence making up of a diphthong will always dominate over the other. If the dominant member is the first vowel of the sequence as in English [ai], then we speak of *Falling diphthong*. However, in many cases we find diphthongs of the form [ia] where the dominant member is the second vowel of the sequence. Such are called *Rising diphthong*. Rongmei has short unstressed oral diphthongs. The following diphthongs are found in Rongmei: iu, ui, ua, ei, au, ia, ai, oi, ou, eu, etc. Most of the diphthongs in Rongmei are found to occur in medial (iu, ui, ua, ei, oi, ia, eu) and final position of the word (iu, ui, eu, oi, ou, ai, au).

Examples:

Medial: /iu/ /liuc<sup>h</sup>i/ 'spinster'

	/ui/	/duirian/	‘pipe’
	/ua/	/puan/	‘dresses’
	/ei/	/meiri/	‘track of footprints’
	/oi/	/kəloimai/	‘change’
	/ia/	/thiakriak/	‘ethics/style’
	/eu/	/seumai/	‘rust’
Final:	/iu/	/miu/	‘black’
	/ui/	/lui/	‘like/similar’
	/au/	/tau/	‘burn/step on’
	/ou/	/nou/	‘wife’
	/ai/	/mai/	‘person’
	/əu/	/səu/	‘wash’
	/eu/	/theu/	‘oil/rise’
	/oi/	/moi/	‘fire’

### 3.3 Syllable Structure

A sequence of phonemes with one peak of sonority is called a syllable. A syllable may consist of three parts. The first part or the beginning is called ‘*onset*’ (syllable initial), the middle one ‘*peak*’ (nucleus) and the last sound ‘*coda*’ (syllable final). It may consist of only peak or may be onset and peak or onset, peak and coda.

#### 3.3.1 Syllabic Structure in Rongmei:

A syllable in Rongmei consists of a nucleus with or without an onset and with or without a coda. The nucleus or peak is always a vowel. Rongmei syllable system consists of the following six patterns:

#### Monosyllables:

V	/a/	‘I’ POSS
	/e/	‘AGR’
CV	/lu/	‘song’

CVV	/liu/	‘buy’
CVC	/sum/	‘console’
CVVC	/suan/	‘boil’

Being an agglutinative language, compounding is a common process of word formation and words up to 4 syllables occur frequently. In Rongmei words up to nine syllables are also found though not very frequent. Below are examples where a period (\$) marks the syllable boundary. The examples are not exhaustive but will show some of the possible syllabifications.

**Disyllables:**

V\$CVC	/amik/	my eye’
V\$CVV	/azai/	my blood’

**Trisyllables:**

CV\$CV\$CVC	/karapei/	old lady’
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**Tetrasyllables:**

CV\$CVC\$CVC\$CV	/karakrakk <sup>h</sup> ou/	sometimes/occasional’
------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------

**Pentasyllables:**

CVV\$CVC\$CV\$CV\$CVC	/p <sup>h</sup> aik <sup>h</sup> atnac <sup>h</sup> əruk/	one hundred and six’
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**Hexasyllables:**

CVV\$CV\$CVV\$CV\$C\$CVCVC	/p <sup>h</sup> aipadeina-c <sup>h</sup> əruk/	‘four hundred and forty’
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In Rongmei, words can consist up to nine syllables. But this is possible only if compound words and affixation are taken into consideration.

**3.4.1 Tone:** Tone refers to a distinctive pitch level of a syllable. In most of the Tibeto-Burman languages different words are distinguished from each other by means of tones which have distinctive meanings. There are two types of tone. They are:

- a). Registered Tones
- b). Contour Tones

Registered tones are single kind of tone at one level. They are three different kinds- (i).

High or rising tone, (ii). Low or falling tone and (iii). Medial or level tone.

Contour tones are fluctuating tones. They are of two types: (i). Rising-falling, and (ii). Falling-rising. *However, the occurrence of contour tones is not found in Rongmei.*

**Tones in Rongmei:** There are three registered tone in Rongmei. They are – (i) high or rising tone; (ii) low or falling tone; and (iii) mid or level tone.

High or Rising Tone:

/imbut/                      ‘ashes’

Low or Falling Tone:

/bi/                              ‘mud’

Medial or Level Tone:

/dui/                             ‘water’

**3.4.1.1 tones in Rongmei**

Tone is phonemic in Rongmei. The falling and rising of tone leads to change in meanings. Some of the examples with different tones having different meanings are shown below.

<u>High tone</u>		<u>Medial tone</u>		<u>Low tone</u>	
/si/	‘carry’	/si/	‘dog’	/si/	‘sand’
/hu/	‘poison’	/hu/	‘front’	/hu/	‘teeth’

**Chapter 4: Morphological Typology of Rongmei**

Morphology is a branch of grammar, which deals with the structure or forms of a word. It is the study of word formation. Words are made up of meaningful units called morphemes. Morphemes are of different types- lexical and grammatical morphemes, free and bound morphemes, inflectional and derivational morphemes, etc. words are made of roots and affixes etc.

## 4.1 Morphological typology

The first systematically developed theory of linguistics typology was in relation to morphological typology. i.e. the ways in which individual morphemes are combined into words in different languages. Morphology typology groups languages into four types namely;

1. Isolating
2. Agglutinative
3. Fusional
4. Polysynthetic or incorporating.

Like most TB languages, Rongmei is an agglutinative language, where there are combinations of two or more morphemes to form meaningful utterances. For example, take the word such as;

pak+ tat + kan + mai

run go Perf.ASP

‘runaway’

The above example can be represented as that of a good verbal compound where there are combinations of more than one morpheme.

## 4.2 Roots:

A form which cannot be further analyzable either in terms of derivational or inflectional morphology is known as Root. It is that part of a word that remains when all inflectional and derivational affixes have been removed. A root is the basic part always present in lexeme. In Rongmei, root may be free or bound. Some of the non-segmental roots which are also words are given below.

Examples: - /zou            ‘monkey’

              /tin/            ‘rain’

              /mai/           ‘person’

**4.2.2 Bound roots:** Roots which cannot stand alone without the help of affixes or other morphemes are called bound roots. In Rongmei, roots are mostly of bound types. Bound

root may be further divided into two types- 1) Nominal Bound Roots, and 2) Verbal Bound Roots.

**4.2.2.1 Nominal Bound Roots: In Rongmei, one characteristics of morphology is the presence of Nominal markers.** Nominal bound roots are found in all kinship terms, body parts (birds, animals, human being etc) and other noun forms. Some of them are shown below.

Kinship terms:

/-pu/	‘father’
/-pui/	‘mother’
/-pou/	‘grand father’

To all these kinship terms the pronominal markers such as- [a-]-first person, [naŋ-]second person and [ka-]-third person pronominal and proper nouns (name of a person) can be prefixed to give a complete sense/ meaning of a word.

Examples:

/a-pu/	‘my father’
/naŋ-pui/	‘your mother’
/ka-pou/	‘his/her grandfather’

Body parts;

/-pi/	‘head’
/-bon/	‘hand’

With Pronominal

/a-pi/	‘my head’
/a-bon/	‘my hand’

Other Nouns:

Most of the nouns in Rongmei are bound roots. Generally the noun or nominal marker- [ka-] is found prefixed to some inanimate nouns.

Examples:

/kaleu/ or /-leu/	‘field’
/kakoi/ or /-koi	‘house’

The nominal marker-[ka-] can be replaced by the pronominal markers- [a-]-first person, [ka-]second person and [pa-]-third person pronominal which gives the meaning as belonging to the 1person, 2person and 3person.

Examples:

/aleu/            ‘my field’

/nan̩koi/        ‘your house’

/kap<sup>h</sup>ei/        ‘his shawl’

/ak<sup>h</sup>uan/        ‘my voice’

**4.2.2.2 Verbal Bound Roots:** All verbal roots are bound roots. They are more numerous than the nominal ones. In Rongmei, the nominal bound roots are prefixed by pronominal markers or by [ka-] which gives a general noun forms. Whereas the verbal bound roots are suffixed by the nominalizer – [-mai] to give a complete sense/meaning of a word.

Examples:

/tad-/    or    /tadmai/    ‘go’

/tu-/    or    /tumai/    ‘eat’

Here the suffix [-mai] is a nominalizer but the word formed by suffixation of [-mai] to the verbal root cannot be treated as noun.

### 4.3 Affixes:

Affixes are bound morphemes which can only occur attached to a root, stem or word. *In Rongmei, there are only prefixes and suffixes and has no infix.* Rongmei which is an agglutinative language, affixes are very important as they take part in the formation of various words and in deriving several word classes- namely; verb, noun, adjective and adverb. Besides this, they are used in forming several sentence types- such as declarative, negative, interrogative and imperative sentences.

#### 4.3.1 Prefixes:

Prefixes are limited in number as compared to suffixes, and they are used in word class formation. Rongmei has only pronominal prefixes.

**4.3.1.1 Pronominal Prefixes:** There are three pronominal prefixes found in Rongmei:

They are-

1p	a-(tuaŋ) - first person	'mine'
2p	naŋ-(tuaŋ) - second person	'your'
3p	ka-(tuaŋ) - third person	'his/her'

Following are the examples where the pronominal prefixes form a word by prefixing it to the root or stem.

/koi/	'house'	/akoi/	'my house'
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### 4.3.2 Suffixes

Suffixes in Rongmei are numerous and they play an important role. For examples, various sentence types can be constructed by the suffixation of respective markers and various suffixes can be added one after another by which the meaning also added to it. The suffixes can be grouped into- nominal and verbal suffixes.

**4.3.2.1 Nominal Suffixes:** Suffixes which can be added only to nouns are grouped as nominal suffixes which include the following;

**4.3.2.2 Case Suffixes:** Case is a grammatical category which establishes a relation that a noun or pronoun has with some other word in a sentence or a phrase. Rongmei has 7(seven) case markers. Among them *nominative, genitive and locative case* ending are not obligatory sometimes, they can be dropped or deleted. The case markers/endings present in Rongmei are:-

1. Nominative	[-mai]
2. Accusative	[-ta]
3. Genitive	[-tuaŋ], [-khaŋ]
4. Locative	[-khou], [-tun]
5. Instrumental	[-ruai]
6. Ablative	[-khouruai], [-tunruai]
7. Associative	[-khatni], [-kənai?]

**4.5 Gender:** Gender distinction in Rongmei is determined on the natural recognition of sex i.e. Masculine and Feminine. On the basis of semantic-morphological criteria, nouns are primarily classified into two classes.

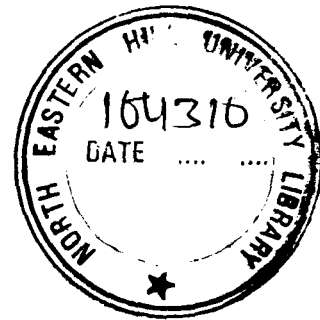
- 1) Animate
- 2) Inanimate.

Both human and non-human nouns are differentiated for masculine and feminine genders. It is to be noted that in Rongmei all inanimate nouns are considered as neuters.

In Rongmei there are different genders markers for both masculine and feminine though it may not be fully expressed. In case of (-human), (+animate) nouns, the words ‘ci’, ‘kalu’ are used to denote the masculine whereas the word ‘kui’, ‘noi’ are used to denote feminine.

Examples:

guai	‘cattle’
guai+chi	‘bull’
guai+kui	‘cow’
gi	‘dog’
gi+kui	‘bitch’
gi+lu/kalu	‘male dog’



But let’s take the case of human nouns. In human the masculine gender is denoted by the words like ‘pu’(man/father), ngon(boy/male) whereas for feminine the words are pui(lady/mother) tuna(girl/female). However, it is to be noted here again that **gender markings especially in humans are abstract in Rongmei**. There are various ways of expressing gender in Rongmei and to differentiate between these two genders the following nouns are lexically marked as masculine and feminine as in this kinship terms;

Examples;

Masculine	Feminine
kagon ‘husband’	kanou wife’
ngon cabuan ‘bachelor’	tuna cabuan ‘maid/young girl’

pu	father'	pui	'mother'
pou	uncle'	nei	'aunty'
pou	'grandfather'	pei	'grandmother'.

**4.8 Verbs:** Verbs in Rongmei can be defined as roots which can take the morphemes for tenses, aspects and moods. *Verbs are not marked for persons, numbers and genders in Rongmei.* Roots verbs may be divided into two according to their structures namely; (i) simple verbs and (ii) derived/complex verbs. Most of the simple roots verbs are monosyllabic while the derived forms are formed so to say through compounding. *Verbs in Rongmei are either transitive or intransitive.*

**4.8.1 Simple root:** simple root consists of a root and also with absolutely nothing else attached to it. Simple roots in Rongmei are a free morpheme that is they can stand independently on their own in larger construction. Examples:

tat	'go'
nui	'laugh'
sam	'fly'

**4.8.2 Transitive and intransitive verbs:** there are no separate markers for transitive and intransitive verbs in Rongmei. Transitive verbs are those which can take a direct object whereas intransitive are those which cannot take direct object but can have an indirect object.

Transitive	Intransitive
tu eat	nui 'laugh'
ti 'gives'	diŋ 'stand'

**4.8.3 Compound verbs:** In Rongmei compound verbs are formed by combining of two or more roots morphemes' together.

Examples: jai tat bammai  
 Drag(V) go(V) pres.ASP  
 'dragging'

#### 4.8.3.1 Explicator compound verbs:

Rongmei has a small amount of explicator verbs usage which forms as a closed set of verb functioning as explicators. Like any other Tibeto-Burman languages V1V2 sequences in Rongmei cannot be altered and V2 cannot take the tense markers.

Examples:

oi apple kaguaina ta tu ngam pari the

I apple all -ACC eat- ECV ASP

'I ate up all the apples'

**4.8.4 Auxiliary verbs:** auxiliary verb are a small set of verb subordinate to the main lexical verb, which help to make distinctions in mood, aspects and tense etc. in Rongmei there are two types of auxiliary verbs (i) main auxiliary and (ii) modal auxiliary.

In Rongmei main auxiliary verb expresses the meaning of 'be' and 'have'. It functions as a copula in non-verbal predicates and uses obligatorily in locative predicates, past tense and in stative sense of possessions. *It follows the MV.*

Examples: oi doctor k<sup>h</sup>uan ne

I doctor 'be' ASP

'I was a doctor'.

**4.8.4.2 Modal auxiliary verbs:** diu 'can' and khuni 'might/may' are the modal auxiliaries in Rongmei and they are in bound form; *Modal auxiliary verbs in Rongmei follows the MV.*

Examples:

oi tat -diu e

I go MOD

'I can go'

anei khoutei tat khuni nu e

We there go MOD -ASP

'We might go there'

## Chapter 5: Syntactical Typology of Rongmei

Syntax is the study of grammatical relations between words and other units within the sentence. Syntax and morphology have separate functions but they are closely associated in its usage in the formation of a grammatical sentence.

### 5.2 Basic Word order

Word order has been at the centre of many discussions of correlations between languages features, and Greenberg showed that the order found in a number of constructions correlated with the basic order of SOV. Thus, based on Greenberg's framework there arise the notion of word order type. Greenberg (1963) demonstrated that there were correlations between various features of ordering. For example, in his universal 2 he states;

*'In languages with post positions, the genitive almost always precedes'.*

The normal word order of the Tibeto-Burman languages is of SOV and like any other Tibeto-Burman languages, Rongmei also shares the syntactical features of the family i.e. the normal order of word in an unmarked sentence is SOV. The variation in word order is not only in case of Rongmei alone, but almost all languages of the world encounter these variation. Moreover, it can be seen through the notable work of the prominent scholars in the field, like Greenberg, Hale etc.

*Rongmei exhibits SOV as the basic word order in the unmarked pattern*, which can be fully justified in sentences with structure clause as given below. However rongmei does not allows free scrambling as in the case of some SOV languages. Thereby lexical constituents are not easily/freely scramble in this language.

The following sentences show the order of words in Rongmei.

oi nap tu ye

i rice eat-ASP

'I eat rice'.

nan a-ta hou ye

you me-ACC saw- ASP

‘You saw me’

We can see from the above examples that the occurrence of the object can be interchange, which shows that *Rongmei has a relatively free word order*. Thus, Rongmei as a Tibeto-Burman language represents the patterns as explain by Zograph (1982) which states that;

***‘The normal word order in the Tibeto-Burman sentence is SOV-Subject, Object and Predicate, though this is not always the case and everywhere it does not follows’.***

It could be mention here that in case of the verbs which do not take a direct object i.e. intransitive, the order of the sentences is S+V as exemplified in the following sentences;

(S+V)

oi tat bam me

i go-PROG ASP

‘I am going’.

naŋ nui bam me

You laugh-PROG ASP

‘You are laughing’

The above given sentences shows that the consistencies of (S+V) in the final position in Rongmei are clearly noticed.

**5.2.1 Order of indirect-Direct object:** In rongmei the *indirect object (IO) precedes the direct object (DO) in the unmarked word order*.

Example: tom roi ros k<sup>h</sup>aŋ mun ti ye  
tom NOM IO DAT DO give ASP  
‘Tom gave flowers to rose’

**5.2.2 Genitive:** if a language has post positions, Greenberg’s universal states that genitive precedes the governing noun. Likewise, *in Rongmei, the genitive precedes the governing (head) noun*. In Rongmei the genitive marker is ‘tuaŋ’, and there is an agreement between possessive and genitive markers.

Examples: sita tuaŋ

Sita GEN

‘Sita’s’

Possessive marker in rongmei is also indicated by ‘tuaŋ’.

ram tuaŋ si

Ram POSS dog

‘Ram’s Dog’

**5.2.3 Post-position:** Just like the entire verb-final languages, *Rongmei also has postpositions which follow the noun*. Canonical structures:

NP-PP.

Examples: deli khou

Deli LOC

‘at delhi’

**5.2.5 Comparison:** In rongmei like any other TB languages, *the marker of comparisons follows the Standard of Comparison*. Comparison marker in Rongmei is ‘suaŋ’ and standard marker is ‘ran’

Examples: tom sita suaŋ keu ranne

Tom sita MKR COMP tall STD COMP

‘tom is taller than sita’

**4.2.6 Adjectives:** *Adjectives in Rongmei usually follow the head noun they qualify* and it is also one of the characteristics of SOV languages as observed by Greenberg.

Language Universal 5: “*if a language has a dominant SOV word order and the genitive follows the governing noun, then adjectives likewise follow the head noun*”.

Example;

tuna hougaimei

Girl beautiful

‘Beautiful girl’

Adjectives do not undergo change for gender however the case markers and plural markers are attached to the adjectives, not to the head noun.

Example;

guaichi hejmai

Bull-(GEN) red

'Red bull'

**5.2.7 Classifiers:** Classifiers are generally rich in Tibeto-Burman languages, Rongmei makes use of this classifiers for denoting the semantic classification of the referent on the basis of the qualities of the noun, that is, its physical shape, size state etc. They occur with numerals and the classifiers precede the numerals. *In Rongmei classifiers follows the noun.* Examples:

Human nouns take the classifiers 'gan'.

gan khat

Class-one

'One man'

Nouns denoting (-human, +animate) take the classifiers 'ak<sup>h</sup>at'

Si a-k<sup>h</sup>at

Dog class-one

'one dog'

Nouns denoting plants trees etc. also take the classifiers 'ak<sup>h</sup>at'

t<sup>h</sup>iŋbaŋ a- k<sup>h</sup>at

Tree class-one

'one tree'

**5.3 Noun Phrase:** A noun phrase is that element in a sentence which functions as the subject, object and complement in post positional phrase. *The noun phrase in Rongmei consists of a head noun and one or more attributives which precedes or follows the head noun.* It may be of the following types-

- i).The attributive noun phrase
- ii).The co-ordinate noun phrase, and
- iii).The appositive noun phrase.

In Rongmei noun phrase consists of the head noun which may be used by one or more modifiers. Generally, modifiers may be an adjective, possessive, a numeral or quantifier. Consider the following examples; (N+ADJ)

ingon tanmei

Man strong

'strong man'

When the head noun is modified by an adjective and a quantifier, word order is that, the head noun is followed by the adjective, and followed by the quantifier as exemplified below;

ingon daimei kanai (N+ADJ+QUANTF)

Man big twos

'two big man'

When the numeral is present in the noun phrase then the plural marker can both be used.  
Example:

tuna kalungaimei nun

Girl beautiful PL

'Beautiful girls

tuna kalungaimei padeih

Girl beautiful four

'four beautiful girls

It is to be noted here that in Rongmei the modifiers following the head noun is reversed under certain conditions. If the noun is followed by postposition to express the case, the modifiers gets preposition as shown below:

keumai ingon ta (ADJ+(N+CASE))

Tall man-ACC

'to tall man'

keumai ingon khouroi

Tall man-Ablative

‘from tall man’

*In the case of possessive, the modifier precedes the head noun.* The order is possessive+noun phrase, as shown in the following examples;

a-tuaŋ lairik

Me+POSS book

‘my book’

#### 5.4 Verb phrase:

Verb phrase may consist of a verb (V) + a noun phrase (NP). The verb phrase in English and other Indo-Aryan/ Indo-European languages has different structure, since the whole phrase can carries information about Mood, Tense, Voice, Modality and Aspects unlike the noun phrase (NP). Verb phrase has two functional parts;

*Verb phrase in Rongmei may consist of a lexical verb or a ‘be’ verb which must obligatorily present, and there are some other optional elements such as adverbs which generally precede the verb.* There are simple sentences in which the verb phrase consists of only verb as in the following examples.

aniu po bam me

We read-PROG-ASP

‘we are reading’

When the VP takes two NPs, the first NP is the direct object and the second a indirect object i. e. the NP function as direct object is obligatory element as exemplified below.

oi ka-khaŋ lairik ti ye

I he DAT book give-ASP

‘I give him a book’

It is to be noted that the post-verbal elements formed in Rongmei consists of the aspect marker, the modal, tense marker and the ergative marker as shown below;

oi tat bamme

I go-PROG ASP

‘I am going’

*In the verb phrase consisting of verb and adverb, the adverb precedes the verb as shown in the following examples;*

kamei khouhei guan puni

She LOC-here come-FUT

‘She will come here

Therefore the underlying structure of the verb phrase in Rongmei may be presented as;

**VP (ADV) - (NP1-case) - (NP2-case) V**

*Auxiliary Verb: In rongmei which is an SOV language, the auxiliary verb follows the main Verb. However, the occurrence of auxiliary verbs is limited*

Example:      nan roi      ata      hou kan      ne

You    NOM    to-me    see AUX.V ASP

‘You had seen me’

**5.4.3 Relative clause:** Relative clause in Rongmei is introduced by the particle in which the relative clause always precedes the head noun with no relative pronoun. In other words, *Rongmei exhibits externally headed relative clause where the relativised nouns occur to the right of the clause.*

Consider the following example in rongmei:

The head NP which is relativised is in the subject position;

oi roi chithi timei pu ta hou ye

I DAT letter give man ACC see ASP

‘I saw the man who gave me the letter’,

We can see from the above examples that the relative clause never occur after the relativised noun in which the relativised noun is the object subject position. It can be stated that the relativised noun is in the object position when the causative marker ‘—‘is’ added to the relativised noun.

Consider the following example in Rongmei;

pak tat mei ingon tei nimtou ye  
 Run go-partl- man DET catch-ASP  
 ‘the man who runaway is caught’.

In Rongmei the relativised NP or the embedded NP cannot be deleted that is both are used obligatorily as is clear from the ungrammaticality of the following sentences.

naŋ roi ti mei kuaŋ tei oi suman the  
 You NOM give Partl- watch ACC Ip lost ASP  
 ‘I lost the watch which you gave’

***Rongmei does not allow the internally headed relative clause construction which contains the relative nouns.*** Consider the following example;

pen mp<sup>h</sup>aŋ mei pu a-koi k<sup>h</sup>ou guaŋ e  
 Pen get-Partl boy/man my house LOC come ASP  
 ‘the boy/man who got the pen came to my house’

It is important to note that the relative participle and its relativised noun cannot be separated from each other as shown in the following example;

oi ti-mei kuaŋ tei naŋ su - man ne  
 I give-Partl watch DET you CAUS lost ASP  
 ‘you lost the pen which I gave’.

It is clear from the above given examples that Rongmei does not follow the real/other Tibeto-Burman relative clause construction in which the relative clause is expressed by the participle, but not the relative pronoun. ***Being a Tibeto-Burman language Rongmei has no relative pronoun.*** The absence of relative pronoun is one of the important typological features of Tibeto-Burman languages so does rongmei.

### 5.5 Types of Sentence:

Sentences may be viewed essentially as the combinations of nouns and verbs. Sentence in Rongmei usually contains a noun phrase as the subject and a predicate phrase which is a predication of the subject.

The surface order of a sentence in Rongmei would be:

Sentence → Subject + Predicate

Sentence → ± Sub ± IO ± DO ± V

Following are the illustrated examples of sentences in Rongmei;

oi ka-ta hou e  
Ipsg 3psg acc saw + Sn Mkr  
“I saw her”

lairik tebəl rukhou nai-ye  
book table on+LOC Pre-ASP  
‘The book is on the table’

As we see from the above examples, the sentence may have only one noun which directly involved in performing the action, it may also contain two or three nouns which may directly or indirectly involved in the event. Hence the sentence may be transitive or intransitives.

Traditionally, a distinction has always been made between ‘transitive’ and intransitive’ sentences. Transitive sentences have more than one noun that is directly involved in the event, the second noun usually refers to the undergoer in an action, and for example “the goalkeeper caught the ball whereas, intransitive sentences have only one noun directly involved in the event. The doer of the action, For example ‘the tree is falling’. Let’s consider the following sentences;

Examples

aleu-nun palup bamme  
child+PL play PROG-ASP  
‘The children are playing’

kamei jip kan the  
he sleep Perf ASP  
‘He slept’

When the third noun is present in the sentence, it is a ditransitive sentence and the third noun here are the recipient or the beneficiary involved in the action.

Let’s consider the following examples of transitive and ditransitive sentences in Rongmei.

mary epal tu- we  
Mary apple eat ASP

‘mary eats apple’

tom	skul-tun	tat	kan -ne
Tom	skul-LOC	go	Perf-ASP

‘tom went to school’

In Languages like Rongmei which has a case system, all the events and actions are identifiable by their case markings. For example, the first noun.i.e.the one occurring alone in the intransitive sentences and the ‘doer’ in transitive ones, are the nominative case, and the second noun is in the accusative case and the third in the dative case.

### 5.5.1 Simple Sentence:

A simple sentence consists of one main clause in the surface phrase structure.

Example in Rongmei:-

hei	si	ye
Det	dog	ASP

‘this is a dog’

### 5.5.2 Compound sentences:

A compound sentence is composed of two or more independent or main clause connected either by the conjunctive coordinators or the disjunctive coordinators.

Example in Rongmei:

kanou	kanai	kagan	lau	tat	kan	ne
Wife	and	husband	field	go	PERF	ASP

‘Husband and wife went to the field’

### 5.5.3 Complex Sentences:

A complex sentence is built up of a main clause preceded by one or more sub-ordinate clause.

Example in Rongmei:

naŋ	palup	sini	oi	palup	lag-ge
you	play	even if	1p	play	NEG

‘Even if you play I will not play’

It is now possible to say that, the intransitive sentence opens up a subject and predicate slot, the ditransitive sentence opens up a subject slot, two object slots and predicate slots

and so on. Thus, we can summarize the structure of the sentence types that we have discussed as follow.

- Intransitive → subject + Predicate
- Transitive → subject + object + predicate
- Ditransitive → subject + Object + Object + predicate
- Stative/Equative → subject + complement + Predicate

## **Chapter 6: Findings and Conclusions**

The thesis was purely an empirical works based on the proposed methodology as given by Greenberg and incorporation from Subbarao's work on Tibeto-Burman typology.

The first chapter of the thesis begins by introducing the Rongmei people and its geographical distribution, population and literary etc. genetic classification of the Rongmei people are taken from Benedict/Shaffer. The datas for this thesis was collected only from the standard Rongmei spoken in Tamenglong.

Chapter two introduces some of the literatures of the Rongmei and brought out how much this language has been improved since then and how much more in-depth research are needed to be done. However, it may be noted that the literary works done on the Rongmei language needs to be categorize mostly under the cultural literature till date. Much of scientific method of linguistics research needs to be done.

Chapter three delves into the phonology of Rongmei. The sound systems of the Rongmei are discussed with respect to the differences and similarities with other related Tibeto-Burman languages. Vowels and Consonants - its occurrence in the Rongmei language are represented through examples where the comparisons with other TB languages are considered. In the study one significant result is the absence of contour tones. Vowel harmony is not clearly mark. Consonant clusters are mark so as to find out whether its diphthongs. Presence of short oral diphthongs is also found.

Chapter four discussed the morphological features of Rongmei (word class). Nouns, adjectives and verbs, whereby we find that like any other TB languages, Rongmei also follows the typological features similar to most TB languages. Rongmei is

agglutinative. Inflectional, where pronominal prefixes and nominal suffixes are present. In Rongmeis, masculine and feminine genders are clearly marked for all animate nouns. However, all inanimate nouns are considered as neuter gender. ECV are found in Rongmei though its usage is limited.

Chapter five is entirely committed to the typological features of Rongmei syntax. Syntactic analysis is done based on Greenberg, Subbarao and Comrie's works. Pragmatical approaches and analysis are taken into account to solve the variations and find out the surface order of the word order, noun phrase (NP) and verb phrase (VP). Rongmei follows SOV word-order. Rongmei exhibits free word order.

Other typological feature remains the same like most TB languages; genitive precedes the governing noun, IO precedes DO, adjectives markers in Rongmei can either precede or follow. Negation occurs post verbally in Rongmei. Auxiliary verb though it's limited is present and follows the MV. Another characteristic is the absence of relative pronoun, However, Rongmei exhibits externally relative clause but does not allow internally relative clause. From the above typological analysis/study, we can sum up that Rongmei too, more or less follows the typological characteristics like any other TB language.

### **6.3 Conclusions**

The present work does not claim to be the complete analysis of the typological characteristics of Rongmei. Hence, a detailed and proper analysis is required. In addition, much of research work needs to be done especially in the field of morphological areas. Overall, much work remains to be done. It is my hope, however, that this thesis has helped to point some of the next steps, and that the results reported here will be of help to future work aimed at achieving a deeper and more cross-linguistically informed understanding of the empirical and analytic underpinnings of Rongmei language structural typology in particular and the other Tibeto-Burman languages in general.

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# **TYPOLGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RONGMEI**

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Linguistics  
North Eastern Hill University, Shillong for the Fulfillment of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics

**Supervisor:**

**Prof. Juanita War**

**Scholar:**

**Guigongpou Gonmei**



**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS  
NORTH EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY  
SHILLONG  
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**To:**  
**My Beloved Mother**  
**&**  
**My Loving Family**

## DECLARATION

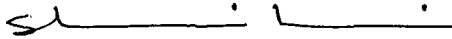
I, Guigongpou Gonmei, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me and that the content of this thesis did not form the basis of any award of any previous degree to me, and to the best of my knowledge to anybody else and that the thesis has not been submitted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

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



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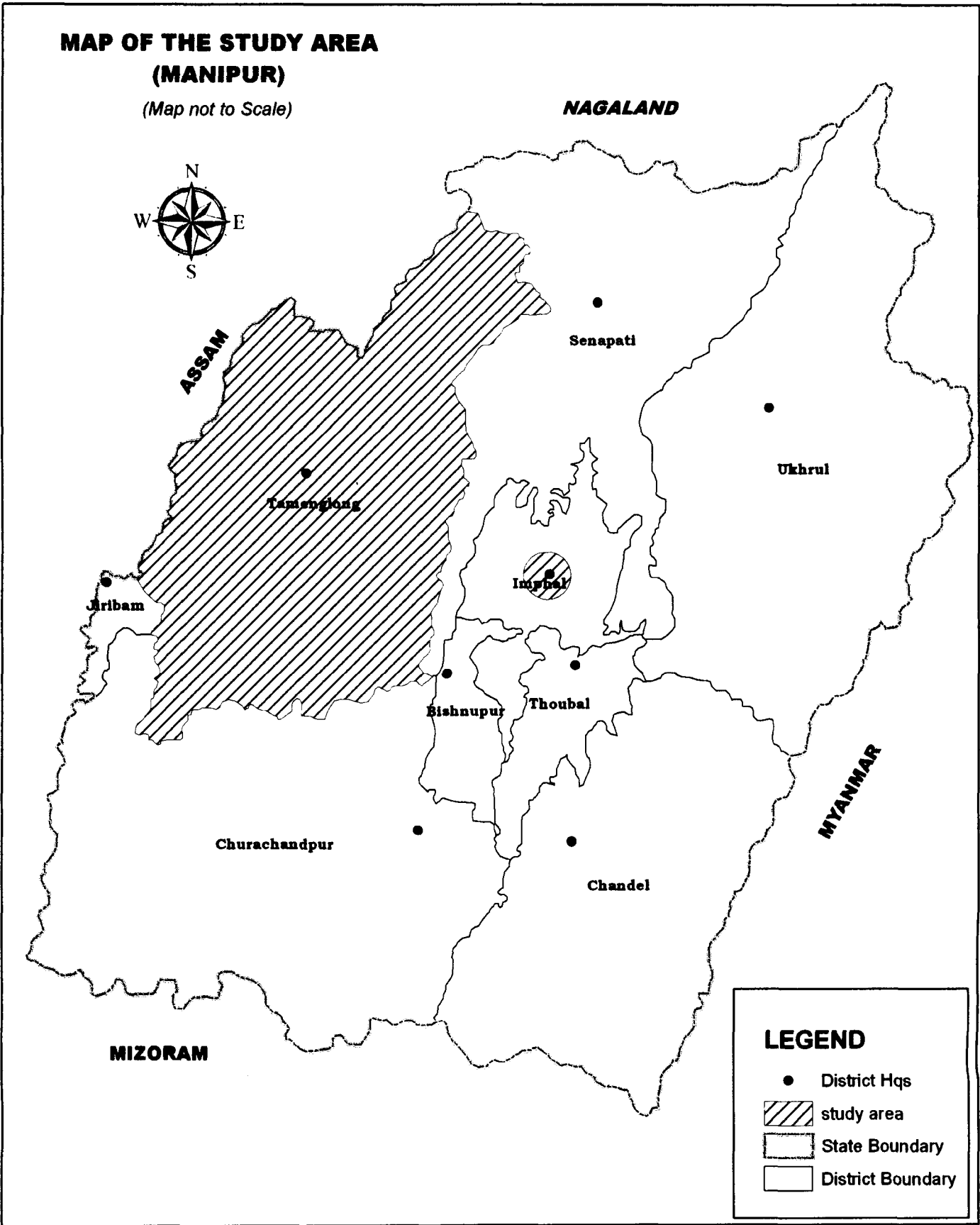
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## Abbreviations

ACC	:	Accusative Case
ABL	:	Ablative Case
ASP	:	Aspect
COMP	:	Comparison
DEF	:	Definitive
DET	:	Determiner
FUT	:	Future Tense
GEN	:	Genitive
IMP	:	Imperative Case
Impf	:	Imperfective Aspect
INST	:	Instrumental Case
LOC	:	Locative
NEG	:	Negation
NOM	:	Nominative Marker
NZR	:	Nominalizer
PL	:	Plural Marker
Perf	:	Perfective
PROG	:	Progressive
Pre	:	Present
Pst	:	Past
QMK	:	Question Marker
REQ	:	Request
SL	:	Singular
SUG	:	Suggestive
TB	:	Tibeto-Burman
1P	:	First Person
2P	:	Second Person
3P	:	Third Person

**MAP OF THE STUDY AREA  
(MANIPUR)**

(Map not to Scale)



**LEGEND**

- District Hqs
- ▨ study area
- State Boundary
- District Boundary

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## CHAPTER 1

### People and Culture, Land and Language

#### 1.1 Rongmei the people and Tribe:

Rongmei is one of the Naga sub-tribes and is considered as one of the biggest among the Nagas. Rongmei means '*Men from the South*'. Rongmei is also known as '*Kabui*' (a composite name of Rongmei and the Puimei given during the British colonial time) or '*Maruangmai*' Inruanghmai, but people prefer to call themselves as Rongmei (It is also to be noted that Puimei has a separate tribe identity now). However, how and when they are being given the name is not recorded.

Rongmei is an ethno-linguistic term that stands for both the tribe and the language. The Rongmei are tribals from Mongoloid stock. Their physical features are by and large similar to those of other tribals of North East India, and people of neighbouring countries in South-East Asia. They are well built with heights ranging from 5ft to 6ft. Rongmei are mostly fair in complexion though there are some exceptions. The nose is flattened at the nostrils and cheek bones are very prominent. They are said to have migrated from China<sup>1</sup> but the origin and migration of the Rongmei are shrouded in obscurity as there is no proper documentation with the absence of written documents or chronicles. However, it may be mentioned that through the oral traditions and folk stories and narration some writers opine that the Rongmei Nagas originated from central Asia and moved to Yunnan province of China then to southward place called 'Sinluang or Sinlung' in the south-western China. Reaching the coast (according to Sepou-Maram in the monograph "Naga National Movement"), they turned northwards again and reached *Makhel* where other Naga tribes such as Angamis, Chakhesang and Maos etc are present

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<sup>1</sup> See Dichamang pamei, 1991.

too. In fact, *Makhel* (now in Senapati District) is considered the originally home of the Nagas. The Zeliangrong ancestors (and some Nagas) further moved from the place crossing many mountains, taking temporary shelter wherever they could and came to a place where they were comparatively safe. They called the place *Ramtingkabin*. An oblong and craggy cave with considerable depth and sheer precipice on all sides provides the much needed safety and refuge to the indwellers. The canyon is rested between two ridges. It is said that nothing of the inside could be seen from outside and those of the outside could not be seen from the inside except the moon and the stars at night, and the sun during the day. After sometime, they moved to 'Chawang Phungning' and then to 'Makuilongdi' near Wilong in the present Senapati District of Manipur. It is believed that at one point of time the population grew to such an extent that it reaches 7777<sup>2</sup> households before the people dispersed or migrated due to the scarcity of land for jhumming. In some folk songs and stories the name Longdaimei is mentioned as the place from where the Zeliangrong (Rongmei) people are said to originate. The location of Longdaimei is still untraceable till now, perhaps because the name has been changed. It is conjectured that they came to Sinluang after Longdaimei. During this time the people faced much hardship due to the scarcity of food. Moreover, they were cultivators doing jhumming (shifting cultivation) which did not produce much.

### **1.2 Area and Geographical Features:**

Rongmei are spread over the three states of Manipur, Assam and Nagaland and in compact and contiguous territory which lies between 93'E and 94'E longitude<sup>3</sup> and 25'40'N latitude approximately. The total areas where the Rongmei settled and

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<sup>2</sup> See *dichamang pamei, opcit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

inhabited are about 10,000 to 12,000 sq.kms. In Manipur, the majority bulk of Rongmei populations live in Tamenglong district. However, in Senapati district also there are about 11 villages, and in the Imphal valley and surrounding areas, there are about 80-100 villages. In Nagaland, Rongmei are found in the Peren district and in some isolated places in Kohima and Dimapur. In Assam, Rongmei have settled in the Assam valley near Silchar district between Jiri River in the east and Digaly River in the west and Cachar Hills including Halflong town. They have been living in these areas from time immemorial.

The places where the Rongmei are settled are usually hilly terrains with irregular topography. Rongmei villages are usually located at the hill tops or on the slopes of the hills. It is believed that they did this to keep out enemies and have more vantage points. Rivers and lakes are a common sight in Rongmei areas though this has not been used to their advantage. Some of the rivers which flow through Rongmei areas are Barak (Ahuh), (biggest river in Manipur), Irang (Alang), Apah, Ijei (Agah), Makru (Makhu) etc. There are also several natural lakes in Rongmei areas. However, the more prominent ones are; Makoi Jeilad (Legendary lake with so many mythological stories behind it)<sup>4</sup>, Guiphop Jei (lakes of tortoise) etc. Climatic conditions in Rongmei areas are predominantly monsoon type. Most part of the year it rains, though there are some erratic behaviors in the patterns of the distribution of rain with each year. Sometimes the rainfall in a year is recorded at 3630mm annually. This monsoon usually starts at the month of May and goes on till September – October. Sometimes there are pre-monsoon rains starting from early April. Temperature ranges from 4.0°C to 30°C. Lightning, thunderstorms and hailstorms are a common phenomenon.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

### **1.3 Population**

There is no accurate documentation regarding the population of the Rongmei. The recorded population of the Rongmei tribe is still in a controversy. This is due to the widespread settlement of the Rongmei. According to the 1991 census, Rongmei has a population of about **68,925**(*Manipur and Nagaland*) where the male's population stood at **34,797** and females at around **34,128**. However, in the 2001 census Rongmei has increased to around **82,386**. Rongmei has over **195** villages in Manipur alone and at present an unofficial census is estimated at around **1, 80,000** Rongmei speakers other parts of North East India with about **60,000** in Manipur state alone.

### **1.4 Religion**

Religion can be abstractly defined as a human relationship with God, gods which can comprise of varied forms. It is something humans consider as sacred, pure, clean, spiritual and divine.

The Rongmei people were very much influenced by their concept of religion. Rongmei are religious people and they have a polytheistic (worship of many gods)<sup>6</sup> approach/practice regarding their concept about religion. Rongmei followed the tribal form of worship like Nature worship, belief in the Supernatural and Animism. Taboos, curse, superstitions also are part of their practiced as they are closely associated with nature. They believe in the mysterious powers associated with nature and natural forces like, storm and flood, diseases, fire, earthquake and other natural calamities. They also believe that there must be some strong forces behind that control the whole system of the living and the non-living. With these beliefs, they are certain of the Supreme Being who controls and exhibits all these things that in one way or the other affect or pattern their

lifestyles. Whereby, the concept of the single supreme God which they call '*Ragwang*' is created. It is being addressed as '*Tingkauh Ragwang*' out of reverence. Rongmei believe that He is the creator and sustainer of the universe.

Like other religions, in every significant festivities or occasions that they undertake, they always had certain rituals to invoke the blessings of God. Moreover, depending on the occasions and festivals they brought offerings to a certain deities related to that particular occasions. Domestic fowls are usually used for the offerings in these rituals. The offerings are carried out by the local priest known as '*Tingkuh*'. He will take the lead role in all the religious rituals concerning all the gods. Rongmei believes that the gods reside in various places like; rivers, mountains, rocks, and big trees etc therefore, the offerings are offered in these places.

The Rongmei do not have any special names for any of the gods that they thought exist. However, the various terms that the outsiders have given for such forms of worship and its practices are; heathen, savage, primitive and animistic or traditional. Some of the main basic features of the primal form of religion among the Rongmei are as follows;

- 1). Belief in the spiritual world of powers stronger and more powerful than human.
- 2). Concept of a single Supreme God above all powers.
- 3). Belief that the spirits of those who have died live on.
- 4). Use of rituals as means of communication between the world of the living and the dead.
- 5). Medicine men and priests play important roles in the society.

Rongmei beliefs in the spiritual world led them to have numerous spiritual deities. Some of these are; (a). *Imbiu-Rah* (malevolent spirit), who can harm the humans.

(b). *Ra-Gai* (benevolent spirit), Rongmei believe that these spirits are good and are helpful to humans. According to their belief these are the spirits who shower material prosperity on the people.

(c). *Bamboo-Ra* (Tutelary spirit), these are the spirits who safeguard and protect the village. They are believed to have their abode within the perimeter of the village so that bad or evil spirits will not get into the village. However, with the coming of Christianity all these forms of practices have taken a back seat and they are being addressed as 'primal' religions.

### **1.5 Traditions and Customary laws:**

Rongmei has a rich culture and tradition which form an integral part of each Rongmei individual. In Rongmei it is customary and considered as a must that the bridegroom pays for the bride price in kind in the forms of bulls, land or *Buanh* (paddy) which ranges between 80 measures to 200 measures. However, the ranges and amount will depend on the status of the bride i.e. whether she is a virgin or a widow or divorcee<sup>5</sup>. Bride's price can also be paid in installments if the bride's family agrees. The first installment is paid at the time of the engagement and the remaining paid later. When everything is done and cleared, the parent of the bride will kill a pig or boar, the size of 5 fists and the meat is divided equally, cooked and sent to the families of the groom along with fermented sticky rice beer. After which the groom's family invites their relatives along with the bride's negotiator (*Nouthanpou*) to have food together, but the majority of the share will go to the sister-in-law. Marriage ceremony is solemnized after the engagement and during the engagement if the girl's parents agree or accepts the proposal, the groom's family will hand over a hoe without blemish to the parents of the girl. This is

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<sup>5</sup> See Dichamang pamei, opcit.

called as '*Intanrou Loumei*' or '*Sinkham Loumei*'. No other party should break this engagement and those who do so are severely dealt with. Marriage is fixed usually on the first week of the new moon. So also divorce, adultery, and remarriage occur among the Rongmei.

Women in Rongmei society enjoy equal power and freedom as their male counterparts. A woman plays a very important role in the functioning of the family. Though the husbands are the head of the family, the wife's suggestions and proposals are taken too. In certain critical situations, the advices of the women are considered. In Rongmei society, women can also take part in public if they so desire. There are instances of women solving certain disputes and bringing peace to the society. Joint family system or practice is a common thing among the Rongmei. It is their belief that it brings unity, harmony and peace to the society.

However, strict adherences to these customary laws may not have been carried out with the changing of times. Moreover, with the rapid forces of modernization and development in technologies and the globalization, the traditions and the cultures that is very much a part of the Rongmei people are affected to certain extent. The traditional and the cultural lifestyles of the Rongmeis and their cultural values are compromised.

#### **1.6 Festivals:**

In Rongmei traditions, festivals are closely connected with their agricultural activities. The time and mode of the celebration of festivals are slightly different from one area to another which can be due to their agricultural timings and influences of their surroundings. Some important festivals of the Rongmei tribe on different occasions and celebrations are as follows;

a). ***Katoi-ngai***: Katoi is a kind of agricultural crop which is popularly known as sesame(*sesamum indicum*). This festival is observed when sesame and other winter crops are harvested. The festival usually is conducted in the month of November. Sesame seeds are used in the the preparation of various dishes but mostly curry. It is done to ensure good health and as part of the custom.

b). ***Gaan-Ingai***: This is a festival observed after the harvesting which falls on the month of October. Blowing of horn is the main part of the festival. It signifies the completion of the agricultural activities for the year. Moreover, it is believed that blowing of the horn in this festival signifies their coming out of the cave and to commemorate that day. Dances along with songs and the beating of drums and other traditional musical instruments are done. Instruments such as drums, flutes and stringed instruments, kept aside during the agricultural activities are taken out and used to the fullest. Dances are displayed in many ways and songs of carefree life are sung during this festival<sup>7</sup>. All in all it is a grand festival for the Rongmei. However, in modern times, traditional practices such as head hunting, barter system and so on have been stopped.

c). ***Chaga-ngai***: This festival is usually celebrated in the month of January - February. However, the timing of the festival differs from place to place. The purpose and meaning of the celebration is to enhance menfolk (exclusively for adolescent boys and men). Therefore it is called it as '*Rih-ngai*' meaning festival of war. Genna is declared and no stranger is allowed in the village and for anyone to enter the village during the festival. Food cooked by women is not taken and women are not touched during this festival. Fire from the household hearths is not used but fresh fire is made by a traditional method known as '*Mai-Lapmei*'. During this festival, men folk enjoy drinking, eating and telling

stories.

d). ***Laophunsuat***: this festival is observed in the month of March-April before the sowing of seeds. During this festival, the priest invokes the gods to grant prosperity to and to dispel all the unwanted elements from the village and other harmful things that will hinder the growth of food crops. Sacrifices of fowls are carried out during this festival.

e). ***Ear-Piercing Ceremony***: this is a unique ceremony when the ears of all the young children who have attained a certain age, are pierced. This ceremony is ritually initiated by an old woman with words of blessings to the child while the young men will do the actual piercing at both the ear lobes of the children. Usually ear-piercing is done during the Gaan-ngaih time. In case a child dies before his/her ears are pierced, the old women will put a black mark at the ear lobes of the death child so that he/she could enter the land of the dead.

f). ***Theih kanoimei***: It is a ceremony to mark the rituals for the dead, usually the last ritual. Rongmei believe that it is a customary rule for the family to perform certain rituals after a person dies. During Ganh-ngai the last rites for the dead are performed. It is believed that the soul or the spirit of the dead does not leave his earthly home till this final rite is done. This final rite came to be known as '*Theih kanoimei*'.

g). ***Malanmei***: This is another unique ceremony of the Rongmei customary rituals. Here the rich and the wealthy families will support their son(s) for over a given period, usually 3 to 6 months, the son(s) will be well fed with good foods and they are suppose to grow healthy and fat. At the end of a certain period there will be a parade to see who is the fattest. The fattest boy is the winner. After this the winner will be praised and blessed by an old man. This ritual is only for the boys and this is done to keep the young men active,

strong, healthy and to re-inforce renewed zeal and life to the young men.

### **1.7 Occupation:**

The main occupation of Rongmei is agricultural cultivation. They do jhumming and terrace cultivation. They practiced shifting cultivation (jhumming). In this method of cultivation, a plot of land was selected for jhumming and it was cut and cleared so that it will be ready for planting. The plot of the cultivation changes every year with a rotation of about 10-15 years. Food grown by Rongmei includes rice, maize, tea, potato, yam, banana oranges etc. However, the main crop is paddy.

Most of the Rongmei men are skilled craftsmen and in their spare time they do handicraft works. Small scale and cottage industries such as handicrafts made from bamboo and cane, pottery and black smithy are practiced. Womenfolk are known for their artistic weaving and colorful designs embroidered in the dresses. They spin out yarn from the indigenous cotton grown locally. Though they used primitive method, the creativity and the beautiful designs never run out, they produce beautiful and colourful traditional dresses with varied designs. The traditional looms are still used till date because of their handiness, low cost and convenience. The handicrafts works such as pottery and basket are still widely used even to this day though the amount and quantity of usage may have been reduced.

### **1.8 Food:**

Rongmei people loved feasts and festivals where they killed animals and celebrate together. Meat of any kind is their favorite dish. Almost all domestic animals such as cows, fowls, dogs, buffaloes etc which they reared are meant for food. However, they have simple food habits, they eat boiled rice and with simple curry of any vegetables.

Rice beer was very common and is flavoured with particular kinds of herbs. However, they also made spirited distilled alcoholic liquor known as 'Zouziu' which they consumed or are used sparingly. Yeast is used in making and preparation of the distilled alcohol. Smoking, chewing of tobacco leaf and sipping tobacco juice are also seen among the Rongmei though it is very rare. Beverages like tea and indigenous coffee are also taken in large quantity. Meat and fish are essential part of their food. Snails, frogs, prawns, crabs and wild birds are also common food items. Bamboo shoot is also very common among the Rongmei which they prepare and consume in different ways such as; fermented, dried as well as fresh. Maize, millet, sweet potatoes, yam, ginger, and chilly also constitute an important ingredient among the food items of the Rongmei. Fruits such as guava, jackfruit, banana, lemon, orange, pineapple, peach and papaya etc are popular among the Rongmei. Infact, they have large orchards or plantation fields for growing these fruits.

### **1.9 Dress and Ornaments**

Rongmei have a rich dress culture for both men and women. The traditional dresses of the Rongmei are very colourful and have wide varieties which represent the fun loving lifestyle of the Rongmei people.

Rongmei women wear a traditional mekhla call '*Pheisuai*' or '*tanina*' having different colors and which have a lot of varieties and they wear these around the waist and are tied on by a colourful scarf with fringes known as '*Bungkam*' or '*Kongkhak*'; womenfolk wear these on different occasions like festivals, funeral and dances. Older women use a kind of turban-like cloth called as '*pitin*' which they usually tie on their head to cover and contain their long hair. Other items such as, '*Into*' (bangles) '*Beih*'

(kind of necklace) '*Tobian*' (arm bangles) and '*Pikhim*' (head decorations) are also used by the Rongmei womenfolk.

The garments of the men folk are also very well decorated. They wear a piece of cloth called, '*Inthinoi*' to cover their privates and they wear ornaments for earrings and feathers attached in the head. Headgear, *Pikam*, armlet, earring and *dah-impanmei* etc are also worn by Rongmei men folk. Colourful dresses are worn both by men and women during dances. All young people are dancers as there are no such things as professionals' dancers nor is there any kind of professional dancing in the community. Some of the dancing costumes among the Rongmei women folk are;

- i) *Hiuphei*: a kind of *pheiso*(mekhla) striped with black and white colour and heavily embroidered.
- ii) *Bungkam*: a single long piece of decorated cloth used as sash or belt.
- iii) *Tangnamphei*: a single piece of cloth where the fringes are adorned with tassels of yellow outer bark of orchid plants. Goat hair which is dyed red is used along with the orchid bark for tasseling the fringes. This cloth is about 4ft long and 2ft wide. It is used by womenfolk to cover their breasts.

Ornaments worn by them include; necklaces made of beads and shells, brass armlets, bangles of brass (*intosh*, *tobian* etc). However all these forms of dressing have stopped except on traditional and cultural occasions because of the change of time and the Rongmei like any other tribe has taken up modern form of dressing.

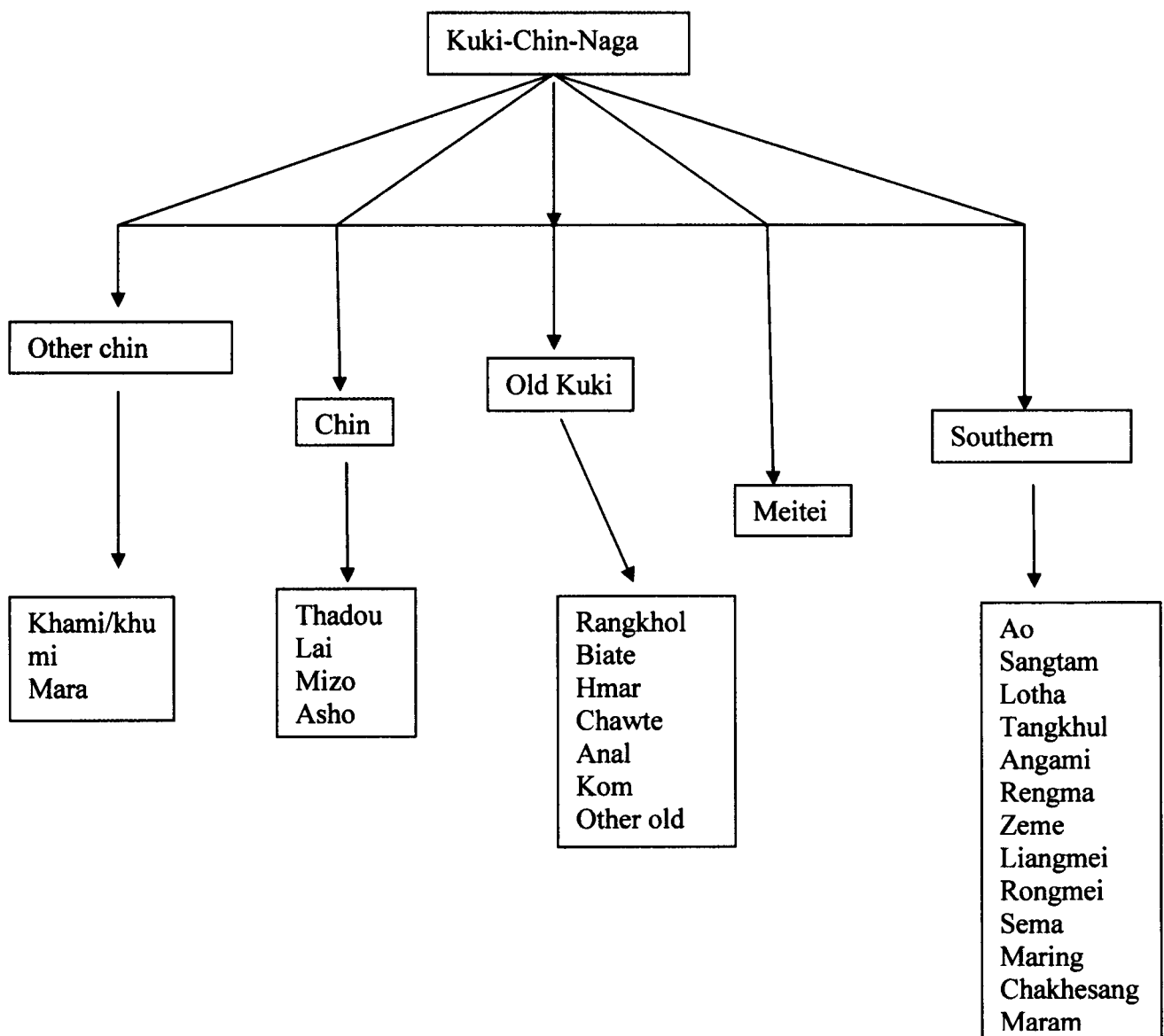
### **1.10 Education and Literacy**

Educationally, Rongmei are still lagging behind. Only about **50%** of the populations are literate; the males outnumber the females in terms of literacy percentage.

Moreover Rongmei is a language where work based on scientific modern linguistics is being done to improve or to bring mass awareness. Some of the books that have been published are ; *story books, pamphlets, journals and the Bible* etc; nothing on grammar or linguistic analysis of the language has been carried out. Therefore, Rongmei can be termed as '*a handicapped language*' (with regards to scientific linguistical works done). Development of Language are through *Magazines, Bible (1989), Radio programs* etc.

#### **1.11. Genetic and Language Classification:**

The Sino-Tibetan family consists of two branches: Sinitic, consisting of the Chinese language and other languages such as the; Bai language of the Yunnan province. The Tibeto-Burman family is one big language family and has several hundreds of languages. Linguistically, Rongmei belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family (*Sino-Tibetan*) but no proper classification has been given about Rongmei but they are assumed to fall under the *Kuki-Chin-Naga* sub-group (Bradley 1997). However, there are various classifications of Tibeto-Burman languages and thus, Rongmei is also interpreted and classified variedly. Rongmei is surrounded by different language groups and due to this reason Rongmei has many borrowed elements. Hmars, Kuki, Mao, Angami, Manipuri etc are some of the language neighbors of Rongmei.



**Fig 1: Classification of Kuki-Chin-Naga (Bradley 1997)**

Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese Speech Family

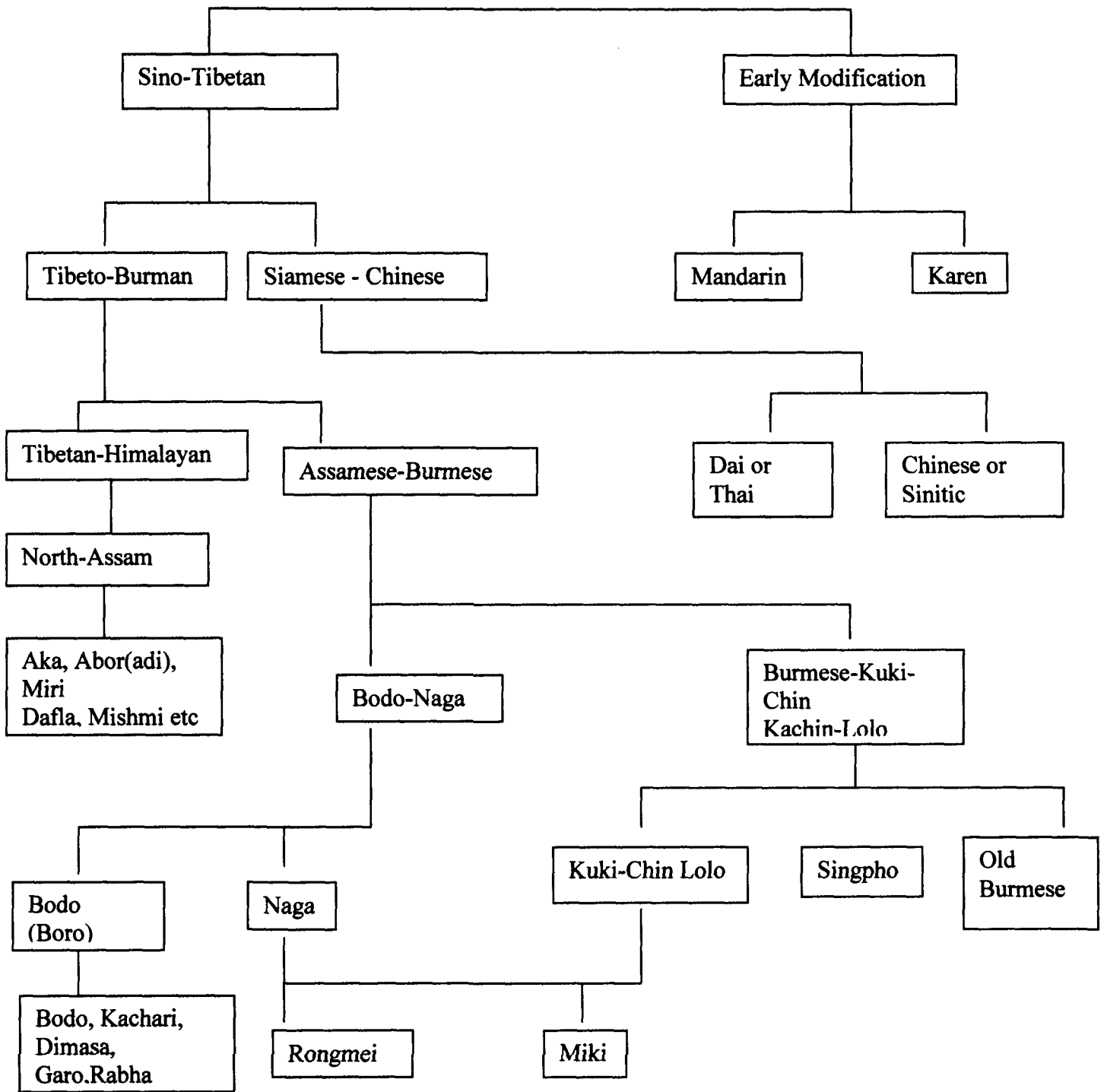


Fig 2: Classification of Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese Speech Family (Grierson, 1909-1928)



## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

*There is such a great variety of Tibeto-Burman languages and they represent so many different stages of development that it is not surprising to find them varying widely from each other, both lexically and grammatically. We can do no more than to try to indicate those features which are generally characteristics of the group as a whole or which are exemplified by a majority of its members.*

*'Linguistics is an empirical science. This means that there must be linguistic theories, and that these theories must seek to generate scientific explanations of some coherent and reasonably natural set of facts about objects in the real world. The objects that linguistic theories are about are human languages, and the facts that are to be explained by such theories are the essential attributes of such languages and their range of possible variation and change. Differences in subject matter are the only differences between theories and explanations of linguistics'.*

(Gerald Sender, 1975)

#### 2.1 Review of Rongmei Literature

The early works on Tibeto-Burman was collected and compiled in the Linguistic Survey of India (Grierson and Konow 1903-1928), of which three volumes (Vol.III, Parts 1, 2, 3) are devoted to TB languages. In the recorded volumes of the Linguistic Survey of India, "Kabui" or "Maruanghai" presently called as Rongmei language was also documented to some extent. As far as the written literature is concerned, most of the books are based on stories and myths, fables and tales, hymn books and the Bible. All

these books are written<sup>6</sup> with varied styles and interpretations. There is hardly any book which is fully dedicated to the grammar of Rongmei. Though there is a Rongmei Literature Society which takes care of almost all the publications, there are also some books mostly historical and cultural ones published by local authors. Some of the books and journals published on the Rongmei language are rare but they provide some information about the literature of Rongmei. Prof. Gangmumei one of the pioneers of Rongmei literature has expounded some of the historical facts regarding the Rongmei people. However, he fails to give a linguistic background of the Rongmei people. In one of his book, "*The history of Zeliangrong: from Makhel to Rani Gaidinliu (2004)*", he presents a clear account of the tribe and their background but it does not go beyond the history of the tribe. Other authors like Ramkhun, Makuga, etc., have given their own description regarding the Rongmei history and people. However, they too failed to give any grammatical description of the Rongmei language.

Elungkiebe (2004) in his book "*Learning Zeliangrong Dialects with English*" has given some of the basic word list with their meanings. He has also classified some of the parts of speech like, Noun, Pronoun, Adjectives and some basic sentences. Fr. Francis SDB(1991) has also given the meaning of some of the basic words in his book "*The Rongmei Dictionary*", but he too provides only the commonly used words and does not use any linguistically scientific method. Dichamang Pamei (1991) in his book '*Liberty to Captives*' provided a detailed account of the traditional as well as the customary practices and cultural representations of the Rongmei.

In the '*Linguistics survey of India*', G A. Greirson presented a brief grammatical sketch of Rongmei popularly called as '*Kabui Grammars*' but he does not go beyond

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<sup>6</sup> Rongmei Literature Society.

describing the consonantal and vocalic phonemes of the language. Linguistical works done on this language structure are not clear and are just a skeletal frame and no modern method of Linguistics studies has been used to describe this language. It is desirable to venture and to gain good ethno-graphic coverage of the Rongmei people and language. Rongmei or Kabui belongs to the western branch of the Kukish section of Burmic sub-division of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages (Shafer, 1955). According to Grierson (1909), Rongmei or the Kabui falls under the Naga-Bodo sub-group of the Tibeto-Burman family.

In the Linguistic Survey of India, vol-iii, part-ii, Rongmei (Kabui) are divided into two classes namely: 1) *Songbu*- who stays in the hills and 2) *Peoron*- who stays in the north east region of Songbu. (However, it may be mentioned that this terminology and reference do not exist anymore) Rongmei are term as the transitional language between Angami and the Bodo-group of languages<sup>7</sup>.

## 2.2 Reviews on Typology

It has been long suspected that some of the features of a language are more prone to change than others. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century linguists have gone from merely expressing this suspicion to making actual claims in more or less impressionistic ways, and only quite recently attempts have been made to actually quantify claims of stability.

As worthy representative of the earliest phase in this development, we may cite Sapir, who ventured the following well-known statement in his book, 'Language' (19...).

***'The general drift of language has its depths. At the surface the current is relatively fast. In certain features dialects drift apart rapidly. By that very fact these features betray themselves as less fundamental to the genius of the language than the more***

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<sup>7</sup> Grierson, 1903, 'Linguistic survey of India'.

***slowly modifiable features in which the dialects keep together long after they have grown to be mutually alien forms of speech***'. (Sapir 1970(1921): 172).

The Tibeto-Burman family of languages, considered by many to be a branch of a large Sino-Tibetan family, in terms of number of languages is the largest of any spoken in south Asia. About 300 of these languages are reported by Shafer (1955). The existence of the TB family was posited as early as the 1980s when it was noticed that many words in “*Written Tibetan*” (WT), attested since the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D., appeared cognate to forms in “*Written Burmese*” (WB), attested since the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. British colonial rulers and scholars in India and Burma began to study some of the dozens of little known “*tribal*” languages of the region that seem to be genetically related to the two great literary languages, Tibetan and Burmese.

***“The classifications of language in terms of those structural properties that are shared by virtue of common genetic origin or areal contact are known as the study of typology”***. (???)

Almost all languages have many similarities as well as variations and these typological classifications help in understanding the relationship when there are no evidence to establish the historical links to support the classification. Therefore, a typological classification system organizes languages into the similarities and differences in their structural types on the basis of phonology, syntax, and morphology rather than in terms of historical relationships. For example, languages that share the same structure are considered or categorized as of the same type.

Language typology is a particularly important part of Linguistics in the nineteenth century being characterized by a preoccupation with morphological structure.

Approaches to typology normally reflect contemporary interest in purely theoretical Linguistics. The 1950s were witness to a change within theoretical linguistics from an essentially morphology-based structuralism (as typified in the works of Hockett, Nida and Harris) to an increasing interest in syntax in the late 1950s after the publication of Chomsky's 'Syntactic Structures'. It is therefore, no coincidence that the move from morphology to syntax in typology should take place almost at the same time. In both theoretical and typological Linguistics it was quite clear that the grammar based almost entirely on morphological analysis was far from revealing and Greenberg in particular had taken morphological typology as far as it could go.

Typology is the classification of domain. In our understanding of the term it is synonymous with taxonomy. Language can be classified in terms of any of their structural characteristics, but the most successful typologies have been those that have attempted to establish broad classifications on the basis of a number of inter-related features. Greenberg's famous study, '*Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements*' (Greenberg 1963), has demonstrated that languages can be classified according to the basic order of subject, object and verb (SOV). This is a particularly successful typology since a number of other features can be predicted from the order of these three elements (SOV)<sup>8</sup>.

Classifying languages in terms of the order of subject, object and verb is useful precisely because the order of these elements tends to imply dozens of other features. For example, the order VSO implies, according to Greenberg's data, that the language has prepositions, adjectives following nouns, relative clauses following nouns and so on.

Thus, in short, Greenberg's hypothesis is that, the type label is revealing in that it

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<sup>8</sup> See Greenberg 1974, language Typology.

summarizes a range of characteristics. However, in all these, it is impossible to provide a strong, water tight explanation in linguistics to give a clear and vivid picture of the structures of the language thus far.

Lehmann (1978a: 4-5) claims that '*Typology is more revealing than taxonomy provided it is based on the analysis of patterns and principles which have been identified as central in language such as the structures of the simple sentence and its constituents*'. He compares the ideal linguistic typology with the taxonomy of plants produced by Linnaeus which he claims is based on characteristics physical features such as stamens and implies that the botanical classifications based on external characteristics is inferior. However, this comparison was criticized for its one-sided approach and for the injustice given to Linnaeus. Moreover, though the typological study of language is basically concerned with categorizing languages according to their structure; it is by no means the only type of classification that can be carried out.

Smith (1969), for example, distinguishes three bases for language classification – genetic, typological and areal. But he claims that these are not comparable approaches because:

*'...genetic classification is in reality no more than a hypothesis of historical relationship, based on the evidence of the other two modes of classification, which alone can really claim to be rigorous.'* (Smith opcit: p, 486).

We can in this regard agree with Smith that typological classification of a language is '*according to the structural characteristics of the language*', we feel justified in claiming that only typological classification is basic.

Interrelations in classifying the typological features have some connotations, for example, we can see that the areal as well as the genetic classification might well be thought of as merely an application of the results of typological analysis to attempt to account for *why* certain features are shared by two or more languages. Thus, a genetic classification claims that historical relationships is responsible for shared characteristics, and areal classification accounts for common features by positing diffusion through linguistic and other cultural contact. However, as can be clearly demonstrated from the field of Indo-European comparative linguistics, the sort of characteristics used to distinguish languages typologically is not necessarily the most suitable for establishing genetic relationships. For example, the modern Romance languages can be linked genetically to Latin, and they still retain the widespread lexical correspondences on the basis of which such affiliation has been claimed. Nevertheless, all these languages have been developed from a basic word order SOV in Latin to the present SVO order, and so would typologically be distinct within the Greenberg system.

Typologically, languages can be analyzed at all levels. At the morphological level, for example, they have commonly been categorized as largely isolating, inflecting or agglutinating, while at the phonological level they might be classified according to the range of vowels they make use of, or the shapes of systems that vowels form. However, it is at the syntactic level that the typology has borne the most fruit.

During the 19th century there was great interest in language typology but oddly enough this did not appear to have been coupled with an interest in universals, and it is only in the second half of the twentieth century that there has been any serious attempt to carry out typological and universals research in tandem.

Since typology is ostensibly concerned with classifying languages according to their differences, and universals with determining which features are common to all languages, such a reaction would not seem unreasonable. However, it is clear now that one important relationship between them is that of using the results of typological research to provide material for establishing language universals. (Chomsky, 1965).

Greenberg's Universals (1963):

***'If language X has feature A, then it will also have feature B'***

For example in his universal no.13;

***If the nominal object always precedes the verb, then verb forms subordinate to the main verb also precede it.***

One characteristic of Greenberg's principles is that the principles are sometimes qualified by terms such as: 'almost always', or 'with overwhelmingly more than chance frequency'<sup>9</sup>. In other words, a feature may be termed universal even though it is found in a very large number of languages but not means in all languages.

Bollinger 1968 provides a list of true syntactic universals and these include the following:

- i) All languages use nominal phrases and verbal phrase corresponding to the two major classes of noun and verb, and in all of them the number of nouns far exceeds the number of verbs. One can be fairly sure that the noun in one languages translates a noun in another***
- ii) All languages have ways of turning sentences into interrogatives, negatives and commands***
- iii) All languages show at least two forms of inter-action between verbal and nominal, typically 'intransitive' and 'transitive'.***

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<sup>9</sup> See Greenberg 1963, language universals.

Essentially, the aim of typological research is to establish those features which are very widespread, whether or not they are completely universal, and which illustrates the nature of human language and the limits within which languages can vary as arbitrary but conventionalized coding systems for human communication. Some features may be shaped by perceptual constraints and thus have something to say about the cognitive capacities of humans.

*'... The main task of linguistic theory must be to develop an account of linguistic universals'.* (Chomsky, 1965: 27-28).

Sapir (1922) proposed a significantly more articulated set of categories. He suggests that all languages represent basic concepts (the primary meanings of **nouns**, **verbs**, and **adjectives**). Languages fall into four types for Sapir, according to whether they allow expression of;

- i) Neither of these latter concepts,
- ii) Only derivational concepts
- iii) Only concrete relational concepts, or
- iv) Both of these concepts.

Sapir also suggests an independent dimension of morphological technique. He suggested four possibilities; - **isolation**, which identifies the word with the formative; **agglutination**, which involves simple juxtaposition of formatives; **fusion**, which involves multiple formatives without clear boundaries between them, and **symbolism**, involving internal modifications such as ablaut, consonant change, and suppletion. A third independent dimension is that of degree of synthesis, which distinguishes analytic, synthetic, and polysynthetic types along a more nearly continuous degree of complexity.

This framework seems to be more flexible, but however, there are no concrete and substantial values to put on any typological significance to the classification: nothing appears to follow from a language's place in it. Even though it can apply to many languages, it does not have any solid foundation to purge its roots in typological framework and hence, disapproved.

What the above comments demonstrate is that linguists concerned with cross-linguistics variation and generalization perhaps require some pre-conceptions about the structure of a particular language and about the nature of human language in general; since pre-conceptions are based on experience, however limited that experience maybe, it is to be expected that these are influenced by at least three factors:

- i) The language background of the linguist carrying out the investigation
- ii) The theoretical approach he adopts towards language
- iii) Extra-linguistic knowledge about the history of the language and people group(s) under consideration.

Much of the certainty with which we assign languages to the same areal or genetic groupings stems from extra linguistic knowledge. Unfortunately, not all languages are as well documented in their development like the Romance languages. But whatever the truth of the matter may be in such cases, it is clear that the only reliable facts are those resulting from a purely objective analysis of each language, without any supposition as to the reason why two or more languages may share particular features at any grammatical level. We should however be aware that, the facts resulting from such objective analysis may be tainted by the methodology used by the linguist conducting the analysis.

## **2.3. Brief Review of Typological Features**

### **2.3.1 Phonology:**

The study of speech sounds is subdivided into two related disciplines – Phonetics and Phonology. Both the terms came from the Greek word meaning ‘sound’ and there is a fair degree of overlap in what concerns the two subjects. Accordingly, the boundaries between Phonetics and Phonology are very difficult to draw as the disciplines rely on each other to a large extent, in the sense that phonological analyses have to be grounded in phonetic facts and phonetic facts have to be geared towards these capacities of the human tract which subserves language specifically (Ladefoged 1982. Catford 1977).

*Phonetics* deals with how speech sounds are actually made, transmitted and received, *Phonology* on the other hand, deals specially with the ways those sounds are transmitted into the individual languages. Phonology is, in effect, a sub-category of phonetics.

Phonetics is the study of all the sounds that the human voice is capable of creating whereas phonology is the study of a subset of these sounds that constitute language and meaning. In the case of this course, Received Pronunciation (RP) is the subset that is looked at in detail; of course, most of the principles that apply to the study of phonetics also apply to the study of phonology. In many instances, they are distinguishable from one another. However, the scope of these pages deals with phonetics only in as much as they are necessary for further understanding of the phonology of Received Pronunciation.

The study of sound system of languages and the universal properties associated and exhibited by them are thus considered as Phonology whereas, the study of the

physical properties and the physiological aspects of sound production and perception are considered as Phonetics.

Clark and Yallop (1990), has rightly stated that, “A Linguist, as a scientist, is interested in precisely these constituent processes and activities which are not the speaker’s focus of attention but which makes it possible for speakers to say what they mean.

In Phonetics and Phonology we analyse what goes on in everyday speaking, resolving the integrated complexity into its different aspects, breaking down the overall activity into its component details, explaining how the descriptive simplicity of the everyday is achieved. The analysis is neither better nor worse than the activity itself; it attempts to explain and explore.”

Saussure (1916) defines Phonetics as ‘the study of the evolution of sounds’ and the term phonology as the ‘physiology of sounds’. Saussure’s phonetics is not a synchronic study at all rather; it is the study of the historical evolution and change of sounds. Phonology for him is an aspect which is essentially based on the mechanism by which speakers realise the signs of their language in concrete acts of speaking.

Lass (1984), defines Phonology as “concerned with the function, behavior and organization of sounds as linguistic item” i.e. the sounds that are found in a particular language. Phonetics is “the study of sound themselves in the physical world”; the physical world being comprised of fields like physiology, anatomy, neurology and psychology of human beings’.

Phonetics is basically divided into three branches:

**Articulatory Phonetics**<sup>10</sup>: It studies how the speech sounds are articulated by the vocal organs and it is sometimes referred to as physiological phonetics because it is associated and involves the anatomy of the speech organs such as; mouth, tongue, lips and teeth etc.

**Acoustic Phonetics**: it studies the physical properties of speech sounds as transmitted between the mouth and ear.

**Auditory Phonetics**: it studies the perceptual responses to speech sounds, as mediated by the ear, auditory nerve and the brain.

In classification, the sounds, the vowels-consonants dichotomy is intuitively the most basic division. These two labels are probably the most familiar of all the terms used in the description of speech, but they nonetheless need to be used with great care, to avoid mixing up different kinds of definition.

In phonetics definition, vowels are distinguished from consonants in terms of how they are articulated in the vocal tract, or by a narrowing which is so marked that air cannot escape without producing audible friction. Vowels are sounds that have no such stricture: air escapes in a relatively unimpeded way through the mouth or nose. It is therefore, relatively easy to 'feel' the articulation of consonants: where as vowels, involving only slight movements of the tongue and lips, are difficult to locate in this way and are easier to distinguish on auditory grounds.

**Consonants**: Consonants are characterized according to the following articulatory features which are of two types namely;

**a).Manner of articulation**: the way consonants is articulated in various ways.

i). Plosives (oral stops): there is total or complete closure of both the oral and nasal cavities and then the sudden release of air produces these sounds such as; p, b, d, t, k, g.

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<sup>10</sup> See Ladegford 1982.

ii). Nasal stops or Nasals: closure of the oral cavity and the air escape through the nasal cavity whereby the sounds are produced through the nose. Sounds such as, m, n, are nasal sounds.

iii). Fricatives (spirant): there is continuous friction at the place of articulation. Examples are sounds such as, f, s,(voiceless) and v, z, (voiced).

iv). Affricate: an affricate begins like a plosive, but this release into a fricative rather than having a separate release of its own. 'ch', 'j' in English 'pf', 'ts' in German are such sounds.

v). Flaps and trills: A single tap is made by one articulator against another, where the active articulator; the tongue tip taps once against the alveolar ridge; the passive articulator. The active articulator taps rapidly against the passive articulator-typically the tongue tip against the alveolar ridge or the tongue back against the uvula. No closure is involved in the production of these sounds. The repeated taps of the tip of the tongue against the teeth or the back of the tongue against uvula result in the intermittent passage of air between the articulators. Examples; 'r', and 'l'.

vi). Semi-vowels: Semi-vowels are vowel-like in phonetic form but function as consonants. These sounds are also referred to as a type of *approximant*. Examples, sound such as; w, y.

**b). Place of Articulation<sup>11</sup>**: the place where an obstruction occurs in the vocal tract between active (moving) articulators and passive (stationary) articulators. Given below are the places of articulation;

i). Bilabial: lips acts as the articulator

ii). Labio-dental: between the lower lips and the upper teeth.

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<sup>11</sup> See David Crystal (1972).

- iii). Dental: between the front of the tongue and the upper teeth.
- iv). Alveolar: between the front of the tongue and the ridge behind the gums (the alveolus).
- v). Palatal: between the middle of the tongue and the hard palate.
- vi). Retroflex: in retroflexes, the tongue curls back so that the underside of the tongue touches the palate.
- vii). Velar: between the back of the tongue and the soft palate (velum).
- viii). Palato-alveolar: The blade (and sometimes the tip) of the tongue articulates with the alveolar ridge, with a simultaneous raising of the front of the tongue towards the hard palate.
- ix). Uvular: between the back of the tongue and the uvula (which hangs down in the back of the mouth).
- x). Pharyngeal; between the root of the tongue and the back of the throat (the Pharynx).
- xi). Glottal: articulated at the glottis.

**c). Phonation:** Phonation is a process of how the vocal cords vibrate during the production of speech sounds. If in the production of sounds if the vocal chords vibrate then the consonants is called as voiced sounds, whereas if the vocal does not vibrate, then it is called as voiceless sounds. It is universal that all vowels sounds are voiced. However, with very few exception in naïve American languages, this is the not the case in consonants. This vibration of the vocal cord or the Phonation process is measure by a process known as Voiced Onset Time (VOT). It indicates the timing of the phonation. One good example can be aspiration. Thus, a language can be distinguished between

aspirated and non-aspirated i.e. whether the consonants are aspirated or not in the production of actual speech.

Un-Voiced		Voiced	
unaspirated	aspirated	unaspirated	aspirated
<i>k</i>	<i>k<sup>h</sup></i>	<i>g</i>	<i>g<sup>h</sup></i>
<i>c</i>	<i>c<sup>h</sup></i>	<i>j</i>	<i>j<sup>h</sup></i>
<i>t</i>	<i>t<sup>h</sup></i>	<i>d</i>	<i>d<sup>h</sup></i>
<i>t</i>	<i>t<sup>h</sup></i>	<i>d</i>	<i>d<sup>h</sup></i>
<i>p</i>	<i>p<sup>h</sup></i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b<sup>h</sup></i>

Fig 3: Phonation Chart (Consonants).

Some of the typological universals of consonants will be given as follows;

- i). consonants varies from 6 to 95 (Xu has 95). However, the usual average number found in most languages is 22-23.*
- ii). All languages makes a distinction between labial and lingual articulation and very few language divide the lingual consonants into coronal and dorsal.*
- iii). Basic division is there between Obstruents and Sonorants and in some language, obstruents are not further divided but in most languages they are further divided into two (stops and fricatives) and three (adding fricatives to them).*
- iv). Most language divide sonorants into three; nasal, liquids and approximants.*
- v). Obstruents tends to be voiceless whereas, Sonorants tends to be voiced.*

**Vowel:** Vowels are characterized according to the following articulatory features;

a). Height: it refers to the vertical position of the tongue relative to either the roof of the mouth or the aperture of the jaw. In high vowels such as /i/ and /u/, the tongue is positioned high in the mouth, whereas in low vowels, such as /a/, the tongue is positioned low in the mouth. High vowels are called as closed and the low vowels as open vowels.

b). Backness: it refers to the horizontal tongue position during the articulation of a vowel relative to the back of the mouth. In front vowels, such as /i/, the tongue is positioned forward in the mouth, whereas in the back vowels, such as /u/, the tongue is positioned towards the back of the mouth.

c). Roundedness: it refers to whether the lips are rounded or not. In most of the language, roundedness is a reinforcing feature of mid to high back vowels, and not distinctive. Usually the higher the back vowels, the more rounded it becomes. However, some languages such as German and French treated roundedness and backness differently.

d). Nasals and oral vowels: in nasal vowels the air escapes through the nose (and also through the mouth). However, in oral vowels air escapes through the mouth only.

e). Phonation: distinguished between voiced and voiceless sounds i.e. the voicing of particular sounds. Voicing describes whether the vocal cords are vibrating during the articulation of a vowel. Most of the languages have only voiced vowels. But some Native American language has voiceless vowels such as, Cheyenne and Totonac. Some other types of phonation are; modal voice, creaky voice and breathy voice (murmured vowels). These are contrastively used in some language.

Some of the typological universals of Vowels will be given as follows;

*i). the number of phonemes varies from language to language.*

*ii). Most of the languages have a range between 20 and 35 phonemes.*

iii). *In most of the languages around the world, the number of vowels are much lesser than the number of consonants. Exception is found in Xavante language where there is equal number of vowels and consonants i.e. 13 each.*

iv). *No language has less than 3 vowels. Moroccan Arabic has exactly three vowels and no language has more than 46 vowels. Khmer has 46 vowels.*

v). *In languages with three vowels, there is always one high, one level and one low vowel.*

vi). *All languages makes a distinction between high and low vowels.*

vii). *All languages make a distinction between front and back vowels.*

viii). *Front vowels tends to be unrounded whereas, back vowels tends to be rounded. However, the exception is that the low back vowels sometimes which are not rounded.*

ix). *The number of vowels in a nasal vowel system is equal to or smaller than the number in the oral vowel system.*

### **Syllable:**

Some of the syllable related universals and typologies are as follows;

i). *all languages have syllables ending in a vowels (open syllables, no coda, (C) V), but not necessarily syllables ending in consonants (Closed syllable, coda, (C) VC).*

ii). *All languages has syllables with an initial consonant (onset, CV(C)), but not necessarily syllables without an initial consonant (no onset, V(C)).*

iii). *All languages that allow VC. Allow also CVC and V, as well as the universal CV.*

iv). *Consonant Clusters is another parameters along which language vary. Some language allows only two-consonant clusters, but not more than that. Exception can be found in Thai language.*

v). languages also vary in the extent to which they allow clustering of vowels into diphthongs and triphthong.

Types of sounds	Examples
Vowels	/i/, /eh/, /aa/, /uh/
Diphthongs	/iu/, /ay/, /ju/, /ei/
Semi-vowels	/w/, /l/, /y/
Nasals	/m/, /n/, /ŋ/
Unvoiced Fricatives	/s/, /f/, /sh/
Voiced fricatives	/v/, /th/, /z/
Voiced stops	/b/, /d/, /g/
Unvoiced stops	/p/, /t/, /k/

Fig 4: Chart of Speech sounds

### 2.3.2 Morphology:

Typology simply means the classification of languages into types. Crystal (1987) considers typology as the comparison of the formal similarities which exists between languages and an attempt to group languages into structural types, on the basis of phonology, grammar, or vocabulary, rather than in terms of any real or assumed historical relationship. Morphological typology (traditional typology) usually recognizes three canonical types of languages, Comrie (1985), however, postulates the presence of the fourth and he called it as polysynthetic.

Horne (1966) too states that *'the essence of classification of language into types was a four way division into; - isolating, agglutinating, inflecting and polysynthetic'*.

These are illustrated as below:

i) **Isolating**; - an isolating language is one in which all the words are invariable and syntactic relationships. Words are made up of one morpheme each and there is one-to-one correspondence between two morphemes. However in the case of compounding the morphemes may be presented differently. Many of the South-East Asian languages fall under this Isolating category.

For example, in Vietnamese,

*Com nau ngoai troi an rat nhat*

*Rice cook out sky eat very tasteless*

*'rice which is cooked in the open air is very tasteless'.*

ii) **Agglutinating**:- an agglutinating language is one where words do not change to show different morphological categories but the morphemes indicating each morphological category is segmentable from the adjacent morphemes. In short we can put it as separable affixes on verbs and other roots. However, all these combinations of morphemes form is only one lexical meaning and grammatical functions. Languages such as Turkish, Japanese, Armenian, and Eskimo are the variable examples which have this type of morpheme combinations.

Example, in Rongmei;

*ti tu- mai*

*CAUS eat -NOM*

*'cause to eat'.*

iii) **Fusional/ inflecting**: - morphemes are represented by affixes but it is usually impossible to determine precisely which part of an affixes represents which morpheme.

Inflectional languages are like the agglutinating languages, and unlike isolating languages, the words are polymorphemic. The morphemes which make up these polymorphemic words are fused together as strings. In the Latin example below, the *-am* ending on *puellam* (and the adjectives *bellam* that agrees with it) marks the noun as being a feminine singular in the accusative case. Similarly, it is impossible to segment *-o* on the verb *amo*, which represents first person singular, present active indicative

Example in Latin;

*Puellam bellam amo*

*Girl beautiful i-love*

*'I love the beautiful girl'*

iv) **Polysynthetic:** - greater uses of affixation, often involving incorporation of nouns and adverbs within the verbs.

Example in Greenlandic Eskimo;

*Silar -luk -ka -u -ssi -qa -lu -ni -lu*

*outside bad strongly be become have inf 3sg and*

*'and it becoming very apt to be very bad weather'.*

### 2.3.2.1 Case System:

In traditional grammar, the term *case* refers to inflectional marking. Case marks the relationship of a noun to a verb at the clause level or of a noun to a preposition or another noun at the phrase level. Case in traditional grammar, therefore, is viewed primarily in morphological perspective.

Hockett (1958), also states that *cases are inflected forms for nouns which fit them for participation in key constructions relative to verbs*. He further states that many case

systems include also specific categories of other kinds. The terms ‘inflection’ and ‘declension’ are explained by the same metaphor (Lyon 1968). Lyon further explains that it was the Stoics who gave to the word ‘case’ the more particular sense that it has since borne in grammatical terminology. Case was the most important of the inflectional categories to the noun, as tense was the most important of inflectional categories to the verb.

Blake (1991) also defines case as “*a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads*”. The verb is taken to be the head of the clause, since it largely determines what dependents may be present.

Case is therefore, a grammatical category which establishes a relation that a noun or pronoun has with some other word in a sentence or a phrase. Rongmei has seven case markers. Among them *nominative, genitive and locative case* endings are not obligatory sometimes; they can be dropped or deleted<sup>12</sup>. The case markers/endings present in Rongmei are:-

- |                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Nominative   | {-mai}                  |
| 2. Accusative   | {-ta}                   |
| 3. Genitive     | {-tuaŋ}, {-khaŋ}        |
| 4. Locative     | {-khou}, {-tun}         |
| 5. Instrumental | {-ruai}                 |
| 6. Ablative     | {-khouruai}, {-tunruai} |
| 7. Associative  | {-khatni}, {-kənai?}    |

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<sup>12</sup> See Blake (1991).

### 2.3.3 Syntax:

Syntax is the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in a particular language (L). Syntactic investigation of a language L has its goal the construction of a grammar that can be viewed as a device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language under analysis. The fundamental aim in the linguistic analysis of a language is to separate the grammatical sequences which are the sentences of the given language from the ungrammatical sequences which are not sentences of the given language and to study the grammatical structure of the grammatical sequences.

The central notion in linguistic theory is that of “linguistics levels”. A linguistic level, such as phonemics, morphology, phrase structure, is essentially a set of descriptive devices that are made available for the constructions of grammar; it constitutes a certain method for representing utterances. The change in emphasis from morphology to syntax in typological studies can be placed at the beginning of the 1960s in as much as 1961 was the date of the Dobbs Ferry conference on linguistics universals.

The study of typology and universals are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and the ostensible preoccupation of this conference with syntactic universals tends to disguise the facts that a sine qua non of establishing the implicational universals put forward by Greenberg was a concern with the ways in which languages vary syntactically.

Thus, Greenberg’s universal 2;

***“In languages with preposition, the genitive almost always follows the governing noun, while in languages with postpositions it almost always precedes”.*** (Greenberg 1963:78).

Greenberg's universal 3;

***“Languages with dominant VSO order are always prepositional”*** (ibid).

Both imply that the languages on which the universals are based have been subjected to a syntactic typological analysis in terms of what Greenberg calls *‘the order of meaningful elements’*.

## CHAPTER 3

### Phonological Typology of Rongmei

#### 3.1 Introduction:

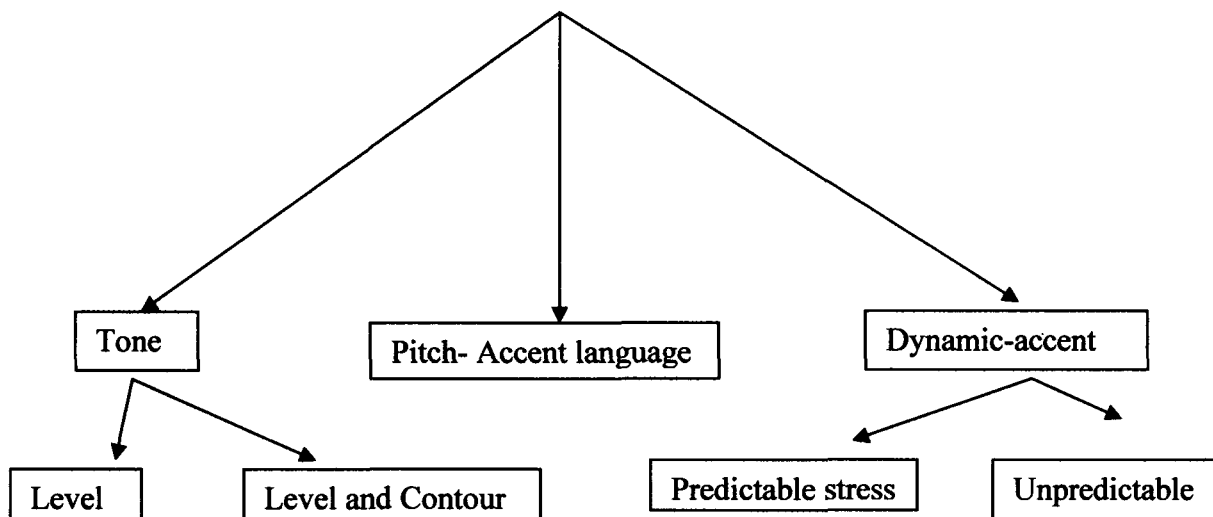
*Phonology is the scientific study of sound system and its analysis and phonetic is the actual representation of speech sound. The most prominent and noteworthy phonological features of the Tibeto-Burman languages in general is their use of tones to convey phonemic distinction. These tones are not observed with equal rigour in every member languages, in many Himalayan languages, they are in fact hardly noticeable while so little is known about the phonetic properties of many Tibeto-Burman languages that it is difficult to come to any hard and fast conclusions. However, it should be noted at the outset that not all languages in the Sino-Tibetan family are tonal. (J.P. Evans, 2008).*

In typological classification of phonology, much effort has been devoted to types of arrangement of phonemes. Languages around the world with different language families have different representations of vowels. For examples, Arabic dialects have triangular system of vowels, whereas, Latin has simple 5 vowel system and English having 9 vowel systems (Marina, 2007)<sup>13</sup>. Moreover in the classification of languages, vowels systems maybe classified for degrees of openness and looseness. Whereby, we can get the distinctive position of each vowel in these categories i.e. loose and open. Other phonological features for use in the typological classification of language are the role of, quality, juncture and the syllabic structure. The number of phonemes preceding the syllabic peak may be noted and compared. However, with the amount of varieties and

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<sup>13</sup> See Marina (2007).

the number of these languages (Tibeto-Burman), it is not possible to establish one set of typological characteristics shared by all the Tibeto-Burman languages.

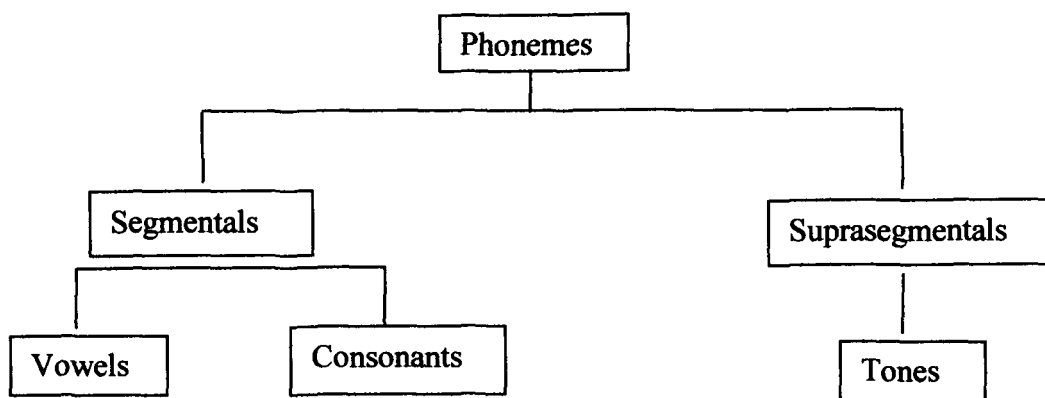


**Fig 5: Chart of Phonological Typology (Marina, 2007)**

### **3.2 Phonemic inventory of Rongmei:**

Rongmei like any other Tibeto-Burman language is quite rich in phonemic inventory. The Rongmei phonological system consists of; vowels, consonants, diphthongs and tone. The balance of the phonological structure has to do with the inter-relationship of these elements and systems with one another-the way in which they are combined to form syllables and phrase groups. The sound system of Rongmei consists of twenty one consonants and six vowels under segmental features, and three tones; high, mid, and low.

The phonemic system of Rongmei is made up of twenty six (26) segmental phonemes which includes; six vowels or vocalic phonemes (a, i, e, o, u, ə,ɔ) and twenty one consonantal sounds (b, c<sup>h</sup>, d, g, h,s k, k<sup>h</sup>, l, m, n, ŋ, p, p<sup>h</sup>, r, s, t, t<sup>h</sup>, w, z ʔ).



**Fig 6: Phoneme chart of Rongmei**

### **3.2.1 The Consonantal System:**

Consonants are sounds made by a closure or narrowing in the vocal tract so that the airflow is completely blocked or so restricted that audible friction is produced.

Consonants sounds are described and classified according to five major criteria;

- (i) The point of articulation, where the articulators make a stricture in the vocal tract.
- (ii) The manner of articulation i.e. how the stricture is made in the vocal tract
- (iii) The passive and active articulators. The active articulator is the one which move during the production of speech sounds, and the passive articulator is fixed.
- (iv) The states of the vocal cords i.e. open or close.
- (v) The source of airstream i.e. lungs.

In Rongmei, the consonantal system makes use of the distinction between aspirated and unaspirated, voiced and voiceless in the case of stops and fricative. The other manner of articulation in which consonants are found to occur are nasal, affricative, trill, lateral and semi-vowel. Rongmei has 20 consonantal sounds. They are; b, c<sup>h</sup>, d, g, k, k<sup>h</sup>, l, m, n, p, p<sup>h</sup>, t, t<sup>h</sup>, h, r, s, ŋ, w, z,ʔ. They are found to occur in six places of articulation- bilabial, dental, alveolar, palatal, velar and glottal. The description of their occurrence in different places of articulation is given in the table below:

<b>Phonetic table</b>											
<b>Consonants - Rongmei</b>											
<b>Place of articulation</b>	<b>Bilabial</b>		<b>Labio-dental</b>		<b>Alveolar</b>		<b>Post-alveolar</b>		<b>Velar</b>		<b>Glottal</b>
<b>Manner of articulation</b>	<b>Voiceless</b>	<b>voiced</b>	<b>Voiceless</b>	<b>voiced</b>	<b>Voiceless</b>	<b>voiced</b>	<b>Voiceless</b>	<b>voiced</b>	<b>Voiceless</b>	<b>voiced</b>	
<b>Stop(-asp)</b>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>					<i>k</i>	<i>g</i>	ʔ
<b>Stop(+asp)</b>	<i>p<sup>h</sup></i>		<i>t<sup>h</sup></i>					<i>c<sup>h</sup></i>	<i>k<sup>h</sup></i>		
<b>Nasal</b>	<i>m</i>				<i>n</i>				<i>ŋ</i>		
<b>Trill</b>						<i>r</i>					
<b>Fricatives</b>					<i>s</i>			<i>z</i>		<i>h</i>	
<b>Affricates</b>											
<b>Approximant</b>				<i>w</i>							
<b>Lateral</b>						<i>l</i>					

**NOTE: wherever symbols appears in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant**

**Fig 7: Table: Consonantal Chart of Rongmei**

**Consonants will be described in the following ways.**

- a. Place of articulation (bilabial, alveolar etc.)
- b. Manners of articulation (stops, flaps etc.)
- c. Phonation process (voiced /voiceless)
- d. Aspiration.

All these will be combined to give a brief description of the sounds.

**3.2.1 Description of Consonants:**

**Stops:** There is complete blockage (occlusion) of both the oral and nasal cavities. Stop (plosive) sounds are therefore produced when a complete closure in the vocal tract is suddenly released; the air pressure which had built up behind the closure rushes out with an explosive sound. (p, t, k, g, b, d) are such sounds.

Rongmei uses five kinds of stops i.e. *bilabial, dental, palatal, velar and glottal*. The voiceless stops occurring in the final position are released and sometimes may appear to be aspirated. However, this has not been treated as allophones since this aspiration disappears when taken in the context of sentences. In all, there are seven phonemic stops in the inventory. The voiced stops are also treated as different phoneme of their respective phonemes though some irregularity may be seen in its occurrence.

/p/     /p/ is the voiceless bilabial stop and occurs in the initial, medial and final positions.

Initial:	/piŋ/	‘fear’
	/pak/	‘run’
	/peŋ/	‘shelves’
Medial:	/munpuaŋ/	‘flower’

	/kapi/	‘head’
	/maipui/	‘woman’
Final:	/kap/	‘cries’
	/tiap/	‘cut (with scissor)’
	/k <sup>h</sup> ap/	‘to pay penalty’

/p<sup>h</sup>/ /p<sup>h</sup>/ is a voiceless bilabial aspirate stop and is found to occur in the initial and medial positions only.

Initial:	/p <sup>h</sup> ei/	‘cloth’
	/p <sup>h</sup> uŋ/	‘carry’
	/p <sup>h</sup> uan/	‘lung’
Medial:	/koip <sup>h</sup> un/	‘plot of land’
	/kəp <sup>h</sup> ian/	‘discuss’
	/kaphun/	‘stocks’

/t/ /t/ is a voiceless dental unaspirated stop and occurs in the initial, medial and final positions.

Initial:	/tiŋ/	‘rain’
	/tam/	‘saliva’
	/tim/	‘wet’
Medial:	/katin/	‘edge’
	/kətun/	‘to push’
	/intiaŋ/	‘ant’
Final:	/k <sup>h</sup> ət/	‘one’
	/tat/	‘go’

/kabut/ 'mount'

/t<sup>h</sup>/ /t<sup>h</sup>/ is voiceless aspirate dental stop and occurs in the initial and medial positions.

Initial:	/t <sup>h</sup> iŋ/	'wood'
	/t <sup>h</sup> eŋ/	'to hang'
	t <sup>h</sup> un/	'bamboo soots'
Medial:	/kathiak/	'style/ design'
	/kat <sup>h</sup> an/	'new'
	/kathuk/	'depth'

/c<sup>h</sup>/ /c<sup>h</sup>/ is voiceless alveolar stop and found in the initial and medial positions.

Initial:	/c <sup>h</sup> ei/	'sticks'
	/c <sup>h</sup> o/	'tea'
	/c <sup>h</sup> un/	'mind/thought'
Medial:	/kachuŋ/	'middle'
	/kac <sup>h</sup> ak/	'jump'
	/kəc <sup>h</sup> ek/	'gold'

/k/ /k/ is voiceless velar unaspirated stop and occurs in the initial, medial and final positions.

Initial:	/koi/	'house'
	/kuŋ/	'orchids'
	/ku/	'climb/go up'
Medial:	/napkuak/	'plate'
	/nukuarŋ/	'nose'
	/c <sup>h</sup> əkiu/	'nine'

Final:	/ruak/	‘throat’
	/pak/	‘run’
	/puak/	‘blast’

/k<sup>h</sup>/ /k<sup>h</sup>/ is a voiceless velar aspirated stop and can occur in the initial and medial positions.

Initial:	/k <sup>h</sup> un/	‘hole’
	/k <sup>h</sup> iaŋ /	‘sour’
	/k <sup>h</sup> o/	‘fish’
Medial:	/ak <sup>h</sup> at/	‘one’
	/moik <sup>h</sup> ou/	‘smoke’

/ʔ/ /ʔ/ is glottal stop and occurs only at the syllable or word boundary and does not form any minimal pair with other phonemes. It is one of the prominent typological features of the Tibeto-Burman family. In Rongmei, glottal stops occur in the medial and final positions of a word.

Medial:	/choʔmai/	‘fitting’
	/goʔdui/	‘medicinal juice’
Final:	/kakuiʔ/	‘female’
	/giʔ/	‘skin’

/b/ /b/ is a voiced bilabial stop and occurs in the initial, medial and final positions of a word.

Initial:	/bam/	‘bench/seat’
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	/buŋ/	‘stomach’
	/bui/	‘spears’
Medial:	/kabam/	‘foundation’
	/kəbaŋ/	‘under’
	/imbuai/	‘soft’
Final:	/dab/	‘smashes’
	/kab/	‘calves’

*/d/* */d/* is voiced dental stop and is found to occur in the initial, medial and final positions of a word.

Initial:	/diŋ/	‘stand’
	/deŋ/	‘make wall (block)’
	/diaŋ/	‘punch’
Medial:	/kadui/	‘juice’
	/kadat/	‘opposite’
	/indeŋ/	‘slant’
Final:	/bəd/	‘boils’
	/təd/	‘goes’
	/kad/	‘offer’

*/g/* */g/* is voiced aspirated velar stop and is found to occur in the initial and medial positions only.

Initial:	/gun/	‘snow’
	/gut/	‘enter’

	/gu/	‘ginger’
Medial:	/kagui/	‘circle/ring’
	/kagan/	‘time’
	/kagum/	‘lid’

**3.2.1.2 Minimal Pairs Showing Contrastive Sounds:** a pair of word distinguished by a single phoneme. Example, /tip/ and /pip/ in English.

/p/ ~ /k/	/pak/	‘run’	:	/kak/	‘cut’
	/c <sup>h</sup> ap/	‘to squeeze’	:	/c <sup>h</sup> ak/	‘count’
/p/ ~ /t/	/piŋ/	‘fear’	:	/tiŋ/	‘rain’
	/əpu/	‘my father’	:	/ətu/	‘my necklace’
/t/ ~ /k/	/tam/	‘saliva’	:	/kam/	‘dim’
	/tuŋ/	‘to support’	:	/kuŋ/	‘orchid’
/p/ ~ /p <sup>h</sup> /	/pak/	‘run’	:	/p <sup>h</sup> ak/	‘to break’
	/peŋ/	‘platform’	:	/p <sup>h</sup> eŋ/	‘look/observe’
/k/ ~ /k <sup>h</sup> /	/keŋ/	‘bells’	:	/k <sup>h</sup> eŋ/	‘challenge’
	/kap/	‘cry’	:	/k <sup>h</sup> ap/	‘penalty’
	/kuŋ/	‘care’	:	/k <sup>h</sup> uŋ/	‘sturdy’
/t/ ~ /t <sup>h</sup> /	/taŋ/	‘reach’	:	/t <sup>h</sup> aŋ/	‘kind of trap’
	/tuŋ/	‘rainy season’	:	/t <sup>h</sup> uŋ/	‘bamboo shoots’
/p/ ~ /b/	/pui/	‘mother’	:	/bui/	‘spears’
	/paŋ/	‘collapse’	:	/baŋ/	‘tie’
/t/ ~ /d/	/tuŋ/	‘will’	:	/duŋ/	‘soak’
	/taŋ/	‘hard’	:	/daŋ/	‘clearing by cutting’

	/tam/	‘chutney’	:	/dam/	‘create’
	/taŋ/	‘reach’	:	/duŋ/	‘sit’
/p/ ~ /d/	/pi/	‘head’	:	/di/	‘stamp’
	/pui/	‘mother’	:	dui/	‘liquid’
	/puan/	‘dress’	:	/duan/	‘build’
	/piŋ/	‘afraid’	:	//diŋ/	‘stand/block’
/k/ ~ /g/	/kon/	‘cross’	:	/gon/	‘bright/light’
	/kan/	‘save’	:	/gan/	‘discard/curry’
	/kun/	‘intendly’	:	/gun/	‘snow’

**3.2.1.3 Nasals:** In the articulation of normal speech sounds, there is blockage of the oral cavity and the air passes through the nose (m, n, ŋ). Nasal sounds however are produced with the soft palate lowered allowing the air to pass simultaneously through the nasal cavity and the oral cavity.

All languages have nasals sounds (exception: language on Bougainville island).

Nasalization in Rongmei is not phonemic. There are three nasals sounds in Rongmei: /m/ the bilabial nasal, /n/ the alveolar nasal and /ŋ/ the velar nasal. All the three can occur in all positions i.e., initial, medial and final position.

/m/	Initial:	/meŋ/	‘picture’
		/mun/	‘flower’
	Medial:	/kəmaŋ/	‘tiger’
		/simaŋ/	‘house fly’
		/kəmun/	‘tip/edge’

	Final:	/sam/	‘fly’
		/sum/	‘console’
		/nam/	‘to smell’
/n/	Initial:	/nuŋ/	‘melt’
		/naŋ/	‘you’
		/nim/	‘catch’
		/nui/	‘laugh’
	Medial:	/kənei/	‘two’
		/kəniu/	‘they’
		/thiŋnui/	‘leaves’
	Final:	/min/	‘ripe’
		/t <sup>h</sup> an/	‘ask’
/ŋ/	Initial:	/ŋaŋ/	‘lean’
		/ŋona? /	‘baby’
	Medial:	/t <sup>h</sup> iŋbaŋ/	‘tree’
		/kəŋum’/	‘back’
		/pəŋu/	‘five’
	Final:	/luŋ/	‘live’
		/duŋ/	‘sit’
		/siaŋ/	‘curse’

**3.2.1.3.1 Minimal pairs showing Contrastive nasals sound:** the following pairs of words are distinguished by a single phoneme.

/m/ ~ /n/    /maŋ/        :    /naŋ/        ‘dream, you’

	/zam/	:	/zan/	‘wound, name/meat’
	/pam/	:	/pan/	‘friend, kick’
/n/ ~ /ŋ/	/nan/	:	/ŋan/	‘you, lean’
	/pun/	:	/puŋ/	‘fall, watch’
/m/ ~ /ŋ/	/sam/	:	/saŋ/	‘fly, struggle’
	/rim/	:	/riŋ/	‘absorb/leak, live’

**3.2.1.4 Fricatives:** There is continuous frication at the place of articulation (f, s,) which is voiceless, and (v, z,) which are voiced. Most of the languages have fricatives, though many have only /s/. Rongmei has /z/ /h/ and /s/ sounds.

/s/     /s/ is a voiceless alveolar fricative and 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 this channel with friction. In Rongmei it occurs in the initial and medial positions of the word.

Initial:	/sun/	‘squeeze’
	/sum/	‘console’
	/si/	‘dog’
Medial:	/asu/	‘boils/blisters’
	/asan/	‘deer’

/z/     /z/ is the voiced alveolar fricative and can occur in the initial and medial positions.

Initial:	/zuk/	‘generations’
	/zi/	‘sleeping place’
	/zan/	‘name’

Medial:	/kəzun/	‘of urine’
	/kəzam/	‘wounds’

/h/ /h/ is a voiceless velar or glottal fricative and can occur in the initial and medial positiona of a word.

Initial:	/hu/	‘teeth’
	/heŋ/	‘red’
	/hun/	‘to fan/throw’
Medial:	/kəhiu/	‘hair/fur’
	/kəhiaŋ/	‘wheel’
	/kəhu/	‘front’

**3.2.1.5 Contrasts:** The relation between sounds or forms which have or distinguish different meanings in a specific context. For example in German, /t/ and /d/ contrast at the beginning of the word such as /tank/ ‘tank’ and /dank/ ‘thanks’ in German. In Rongmei Contrastive pairs can be seen in the following;

/s/ ~ /z/	/su/	:	/zu/	‘pain, fetch’
	/kəsan/	:	/kəzan/	‘his fate, his name’
/h/ ~ /z/	/hu/	:	/zu/	‘poison, fetch’
	/heŋ/	:	/zeŋ/	‘red, day’
/h/ ~ /s/	/hui/	:	/sui/	‘stitch, follow’
	/hun/	:	/sun/	‘blow’ ‘squeeze’
/l/ ~ /r/	/kəliŋ/	:	/kəriŋ/	‘original, live one’
	/kalun/	:	/karu/	‘looks’ ‘above’

**3.2.1.6 Flap and Trills:** Consonants in which one articulator strikes the other with a gliding motion. It can also be described as a single tap is made by one articulator against another, where the active articulator the tip of the tongue taps once against the alveolar ridge; which is the passive articulator. In the production of a trill an active articulator taps rapidly against the passive articulator-typically the tongue tip against the alveolar ridge or the tongue back against the uvula. No closure is involved in the production of these sounds. The repeated taps of the tip of the tongue against the teeth or the back of the tongue against the uvula result in the intermittent passage of air between the articulators.

For example in Spanish /r/ of /pero/ =/pefo/.

/r/      /r/ is the alveolar flap and in Rongmei it occurs in the initial and medial positions of a word.

Initial:	/reŋ/	‘to fence’
	/rim/	‘absorb/leak’
	/ru/	‘ten’
Medial:	/kəro/	‘sounds’
	/phuairio/	‘grass, meadow’
	/c <sup>h</sup> əruaŋ/	‘social’

**3.2.1.7 Lateral:** In the production of a lateral, though the centre of the oral tract is closed owing to a contact between the active and the passive articulators at some point in the vocal tract, the air escapes from the sides of the contact. This is possible because the rims of the tongue are lowered. Since the air can pass continuously the sound produced is a continual one, that is, there is no obstruction to the passage of air.

/l/      /l/ is the alveolar lateral and occurs in the initial and medial positions.

Initial:	/lu/	‘songs’
	/luŋ/	‘live’
	/luɑŋ/	‘to flow’
Medial:	/kaluŋ/	‘inside’
	/təliam/	‘raft’
	/kəluŋ/	‘looks’

**3.2.1.8 Continuants/ semi-vowels:** Another kind or manner of articulation is known as semi-vowel. Semi-vowels are vowel-like in phonetic form but function as consonants. Some phoneticians refer to this sound as a type of *approximant*.

/w/ /w/ is the bilabial continuant/semi-vowel and occurs in the medial position only.

Medial:	/phwan/	‘lung’
	/phwaŋ/	‘float’

**3.2.1.9 Aspiration:** aspirated sounds are plosives whose release is followed closely and audibly by a short period in which the vocal cord is not vibrating. Thus, for example in English /t/ ‘tea’ is usually aspirated in its articulation; in phonetic notation [t<sup>h</sup>i].

All voiceless stops in Rongmei with the exception of glottal stop have an aspirated counterpart. In Rongmei, there are three aspirated sounds. They are; voiceless dental stops /t<sup>h</sup>/, bilabial voiceless stops /p<sup>h</sup>/ and velar voiceless stops /k<sup>h</sup>/ . It can also be noted that in Rongmei, the voicing of the vowel sounds are delayed by the process of aspiration which can be the phonotactic process called Voiced Onset Time (VOT).

An aspirated sound in Rongmei occurs only in the initial and the medial positions but never in the final position. Following are the minimal pairs for some of these voiceless aspirated sounds in Rongmei:

/p/ ~ /p<sup>h</sup>/:

Initial Position

/Pei/ ‘throw/flung’ : /p<sup>h</sup>ei/ ‘cloth’

/pon/ ‘pestle’ : /p<sup>h</sup>on/ ‘view’

/pun/ ‘watch’ : /p<sup>h</sup>un/ ‘carry’

Medial Position

/kapen/ ‘outside/outdoor’ : /kap<sup>h</sup>en/ ‘fluffy decorative straps’

/t/ ~ /t<sup>h</sup>

Initial position

/tiŋ/ ‘rain’ : /t<sup>h</sup>iŋ/ ‘wood’

/tau/ ‘rock’ : /t<sup>h</sup>au/ ‘oil’

/tian/ ‘wet’ : /t<sup>h</sup>im/ ‘insert/stuff’

/tun/ ‘rainy season’ : /t<sup>h</sup>un/ ‘bamboo shoot’

Medial position:

/katiŋ/ ‘back of a body’ : /kathiŋ/ ‘stalk/woody branch’

/k/ ~ /k<sup>h</sup>/

Initial position

/keŋ/ ‘bell’ : /k<sup>h</sup>en/ ‘challenge’

/kam/ ‘strapped’ : /k<sup>h</sup>am/ ‘claim’

Medial position:

/kakun/ ‘corner’ : /kak<sup>h</sup>un/ ‘pit’

/kakan/ ‘dried things’ : /kak<sup>h</sup>aŋ/ ‘for him’

### 3.2.1.10 Voiced- Voiceless Distinction

There are two voiced stops in Rongmei; /b/ and /d/. There are no voiced dental and velar stops in Rongmei. However, nasals, trills/flaps, fricatives and lateral approximant each has a voiced-voiceless pair. The voiced-voiceless variants are distinct phonemes in Rongmei. Following are the list of minimal pairs demonstrating these distinctions;

/ban/	‘slung on the shoulder’	:	/pan/	‘kick’
/dam/	‘create’	:	/tam/	‘divide/chutney/saliva’
/ku/	‘climb’	:	/gu/	‘ginger’

Most of the consonants in Rongmei cannot appear in all positions except where it is indicated. This implies that consonants in Rongmei have a certain patterns in its distribution. Sounds like /ŋ/ which is a velar nasals are very common features shared by almost all the languages of the north-east especially Tibeto-Burman and this is one typological feature shared by Rongmei too, and this nasals, /n, ŋ/ can appear in word final position or final syllable position. However, their voiceless counterpart cannot.

It is interesting to note that /ŋ/ is pronounced singly by most of the languages of the north-east (Emeneau, 1954). Fricatives and affricates cannot appear in word final positions. All voiceless unaspirated stops however can appear in word final position. Stops in word final position in Rongmei are never released, moreover, without release there cannot be aspiration. Moreover, it is to be noted that in Rongmei, there is no contrast between dental and retroflex sounds and word final and syllable position are treated with equal status. However, the presence of a whole series of bilabial, dental and

velar sounds along with oral and nasals stops, fricatives, laterals and approximants are very common (Grierson,1933), and this is one of the phonological features of Rongmei.

### 3.2.2 Vowels:

Vowels can be defined in terms of both phonetics and phonology. Phonetically, Vowels are sounds which are produced without the constriction in the air passage and the air flows out of the mouth freely and the sounds are relatively loud and strong. Moreover, Vowels are those sounds which are produced with an open vocal tract and there is no constriction of air and the air releases freely. If the air escapes freely and solely through the mouth, then it is oral sound. However, if some air escapes through the nose, whereby, producing certain distinct sound through the nose, then it is a nasal sound.

In the typological discussion of vowel system, usually a distinction is made between the ‘Peripheral’ and ‘Interior’ vowel (Crothers, 1978). Rongmei has seven vocalic phonemes consisting of six peripheral vowels; /i/, /e/, /a/, /u/, /o/ and /ɔ/, whereas, there is only one interior vowel which is /ə/.

<i>i</i>		<i>u</i>
<i>e</i>		<i>o</i>
	<i>ə</i>	<i>ɔ</i>
<i>a</i>		

**Fig 8: Chart/table of Peripheral and Interior Vowels**

All these vowels can be classified again according to the tongue height; High, Mid and Low. Rongmei does not have nasal vowels. However, vowels are nasalized when nasals consonants are adjacent to the vowels. Vowels can also be viewed and defined from the phonological point of view. In phonological terms, vowels are those units that can function as the nucleus of a syllable.

All the vowels in Rongmei are voiced.

	<i>Front</i>		<i>Central</i>	<i>Back</i>
<i>High</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>i</i>		
	<i>Close</i>			<i>u</i>
<i>High-mid</i>	<i>Open</i>			
	<i>Close</i>			<i>o</i>
<i>Mid</i>	<i>open</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ə*</i>	
	<i>Close</i>			<i>ɔ</i>
<i>Lower-mid</i>	<i>open</i>			
	<i>Close</i>			
<i>Low</i>	<i>open</i>	<i>a</i>		
	<i>close</i>			

**Fig 9: Vowels chart of Rongmei:**

The vowels sounds in Rongmei like any other standard language will be described in the following three ways:

- a). **Body of the tongue:** the body if the tongue can be divided into front, central and back of the tongue which can also be considered as the contrast position.
- b). **Height of the tongue:** the height of the tongue can be high, mid and low (high, mid, and low).

c). **Position of the lips:** the lips can be rounded or unrounded.

The vowels chart in Rongmei is clearly marked or divided into rows and columns like the consonant chart.

Vowels in Rongmei will be categorised under the following positions namely:

1. High,
2. Mid,
3. Low.

Vowels in Rongmei occur in almost all the positions except a few restrictions which will be discussed while dealing with the phonemic contrast and the allophonic distribution. The phonemic contrast is shown in all possible environments on the basis of minimal pairs.

Rongmei has seven vocalic phonemes in its inventory. They are a, i, e, o, u, ə, ɔ.

All these seven phonemic vowels (a, i, e, o, u, ə, ɔ) have allophones which occur in different environment influenced by tone. Length of the vowels is not phonemic in Rongmei but it is the phonetic property of the vowels.

### **3.2.2.1 Distribution of vowels found in Rongmei:**

/i/ /i/ is a high, front and unrounded vowel. /i/ is articulated behind the cardinal high close front vowel between the close and the half-close position. The lips are spread when /i/ is produced and occurs in the initial, medial and final positions.

Initial:	/inri/	‘axe’
Medial:	/tim/	‘wet’
	/tiŋ/	‘rain’

Final:	/chi/	‘lips
	/ki/	‘kidney’
	/nui/	‘laugh’

/e/ /e/ is the front, mid, unrounded vowel. /e/ is articulated between the half open and half close position. The lips are spread when /e/ is produced; it occurs only in the medial and final positions. An expression -e which is an agreement maker of a sentence is found in the initial position only.

Medial:	/t <sup>h</sup> ɛŋ/	‘hang’
	/nɛŋ/	‘thigh’
Final:	/nde/	‘sarcastic’

/a/ /a/ is the low, *central unrounded* vowel. The central vowel /a/ is articulated between the half open and the open position but slightly more closely to the half open position and occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial:	/ak <sup>h</sup> ɛŋmai/	‘bears’
Medial:	/lan/	‘wealth’
	/zam/	‘wounds’

/ə/ /ə/ is a central, mid, unrounded vowel. This central vowel is articulated with the tongue half raised and the lips are slightly rounded. /ə/ is found to occur in the medial position only.

Medial:	/kənam/	‘back/above’
	/kəgan/	‘time’

/o/ /o/ is the higher-mid, back, rounded vowel. The back vowel /o/ is articulated between the half close and the half open positions. The lips are rounded when /o/ is articulated and

occurs only in the medial and final positions. In the initial position /o/ occurs as an address term or an expression of surprise.

Medial:	/pon/	‘mill’
	/bon/	‘hand’
Final:	/pao/	‘debt’
	/bonpo/	‘palm’
	/puŋmo/	‘pumpkin’

/ɔ/ /ɔ/ is a back, lower-mid, rounded vowel. There is a slight lip rounding in the articulation of this vowel. The lower-mid vowel /ɔ/ is articulated between the half close and the open position and the tongue is slightly pulled backwards, it occurs only in the final position.

Final:	/khɔ/	‘jaw’
	/gɔ/	‘crab’

/u/ /u/ is a back, high, rounded vowel. The back vowel /u/ is articulated below the cardinal high close back vowel. Lips are rounded when the back vowel /u/ is produced and it can occur in the medial and final position of a word.

Medial:	/nchuŋ /	‘centre’
	/thun/	‘bamboo shoot’
	/mun/	‘edge/flower’
Final:	/su/	‘boar’
	/hu/	‘teeth’
	/ntu/	‘necklace’

### 3.2.2.2 Vowel Length:

There are four short-long vowels in Rongmei. They are lexically distinguished. Moreover they are extremely contrastive. Vowel length is not only distinct in closed syllables but in open syllables too. Some of the long forms of vowels found in Rongmei are: *i*, *o*, *a* and *u*.

Examples:

/i:/	/giʔ/	‘skin’	/gi:/	‘Feed’
/a:/	/naʔ/	‘child’	/naʔ/	‘near/ low’
/o:/	/po/	‘read’	/po:/	‘Palm’
/u:/	/chu/	‘stain’	/chu:/	‘Heard’

### 3.2.2.3 Vowel Contrasts:

High front unrounded vowel /i/ and low central unrounded vowel /a/;

/i/ ~ /a/	/hiʔ/	/naʔ/
	‘ship’	‘near’

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

/i/ ~ /u/	/ti/	/gu/
	‘give’	‘ginger’

The high front unrounded vowel /i/ and mid unrounded vowel /e/;

/i/ ~ /e/	/ki/	/nde/
	‘kidney:	sarcastic’

High back vowel /u/ and low central unrounded vowel /a/;

/u/ ~ /a/	/ɲum/	/ɲam/
	‘back’	‘power’

The mid-low, back rounded vowel /ɔ/ and mid, back rounded vowel /o/.

/ɔ/~/o/	/k <sup>h</sup> ɔ/	/lo/
	‘jaws’	‘navel’

**3.2.3 Some of the Universals of John Crothers** (opcit.) regarding the vowels in Tibeto-Burman are compared with Rongmei;

**Universals 1:** ‘All languages have /i, a, u/’. Rongmei follows this universal.

**Universals 2:** ‘All languages with four or more vowels have /i/ or /ε/. Rongmei follows this pattern too.

**Universals 3:** ‘Languages with five or more vowels have /ε/’. They generally also have /ɔ/. This is not true in the case of Rongmei. Rongmei does not have /ε/ but has /ɔ/.

**Universals 4:** ‘Languages with six or more vowels have /ɔ/ and also either /i/ or /e/’. This is also true because Rongmei has all the three vowels /i/, /e/ and /ɔ/.

**Universals 5:** ‘Languages with seven or more vowels have /e/ and /o/, or /i/ and /ə/’. All these vowels are found in Rongmei and therefore, Rongmei follows this universal too.

**Universals 9:** ‘The number of height distinctions in a system is typically equal to or greater than the number of back distinctions’. This is applicable in case of Rongmei.

**Universals 11:** ‘the number of vowels in the Interior column cannot exceed the number of vowels in the front and the back column (peripheral, low column excluded)’. Rongmei follows this universal.

**Universals 12:** the number of height distinctions in the front vowels is equal to or greater than the number in the back vowels’. This universal is not applicable in case of Rongmei since Rongmei has two distinctions in the front vowels i.e./i/ and /e/ and three distinctions

in the back /u/, /o/ and /ɔ/. Rongmei therefore shared some typological vowel features of TB as seen in Universals 1 to 12.

#### **3.2.4 Diphthongs:**

Some vowels are represented as sequences of symbols because of the tongue/lips move from one position to another. Such vowels are called Diphthongs.

A diphthong therefore is a sequence of vowels  $V_1V_2$  in a syllable which are pronounced at the same time as a single vowel. Thus it effectively consist of two half vowels, the first of which undergoes a rapid transition into the other.

In a diphthong, one of the vowel segments is more prominent than the other, according to the prominence received. One of the members of the vowel sequence making up a diphthong will always dominate over the other. If the dominant member is the first vowel of the sequence as in English [ai], then we speak of *Falling diphthong*. However, in many case we find diphthong of the form [ia] where the dominant member is the second vowel of the sequence; such are called *Rising diphthongs*.

Diphthongs are also called *gliding vowels*. It is a vowel sound consisting of a deliberate, i.e., intentional gliding, organs of the speech starting in the position in the one vowel and immediately moving in the direction of another vowel. It consists of a single syllable, i.e., the vowel-glide must be performed with a single impulse of the breath; if there is more than one impulse of breath, the ear perceives two syllables.

Rongmei has 10 short unstressed oral diphthongs. The following diphthongs are found in Rongmei: iu, ui, ua, ei, au, ia, ai, oi, ou, eu, etc.

### 3.2.4.1 Distribution of diphthongs in Rongmei:

Most of the diphthongs in Rongmei are found to occur only in medial (iu, ui, ua, ei, oi, ia, eu) and final position of the word (iu, ui, eu, oi, ou, ai, au).

Medial:	/iu/	/liuc <sup>h</sup> i/	‘spinster’
	/ui/	/duiriaŋ/	‘pipe’
	/ua/	/puan/	‘clothes’
	/ei/	/meiri/	‘track of footprints’
	/oi/	/kəloimai/	‘change’
	/ia/	/t <sup>h</sup> iakriak/	‘ethics/style’
	/eu/	/seumai/	‘rust’
Final:	/iu/	/miu/	‘black’
		/liu/	‘buy’
	/ui/	/lui/	‘like/similar’
		/dui/	‘water’
	/au/	/tau/	‘burn/step on’
		/sau/	‘grinding’
	/ou/	/nou/	‘wife’
		/ŋou/	‘forest’
	/ai/	/mai/	‘person’
	/əu/	/səu/	‘wash’
	/eu/	/theu/	‘oil/rise’
	/oi/	/moi/	‘fire’

**3.2.5 Triphthongs:** triphthongs refers to a type of vowel where there are two noticeable changes in quality during a syllable, as in a common pronunciation such as ‘fire’ and ‘tower’ in English. Some of the triphthongs found in Rongmei are as follows;

/ruai/	‘by’
/duai/	‘spell’
/khuai/	‘pick’
/riaŋ/	‘kind of tree’
/luaei/	‘jungle creepers used as ropes’

### **3.2.6 Consonant Clusters:**

The term consonant cluster refers to the combination or sequences of two or more consonants- $C_1C_2$  within a syllable (intra-syllabic) or utterance of two or more consonant sounds at a time. It differs from consonant sequence which is beyond syllable. Usually, a distinction is made between consonant clusters and consonant sequences. For example, the sequence of /t/ and /r/ in the word ‘true’ is a cluster and the combination of /m/ and /b/ in the word ‘bamboo’ is a sequence and not cluster.

Rongmei does not allow consonant clusters within the syllable but it allows across syllabic boundary. We find a maximum of two consonant sequences in Rongmei.

In Rongmei, sequence formation is very common. Thus, according to the syllabic structure of this language, whenever two consonants sequences occur, the syllable breaks at the medial position i.e. between two consonants. However, in most of the language, usually mono-syllabic words are taken into consideration to find out consonants clusters, but in Rongmei, since there is no clusters formation found in mono-syllabic words, bi-syllabic words are examined.

Rongmei does not have final consonants clusters/sequence but the word medial and initial clusters are found. Two consonant sequences of the following pairs are found to exist in Rongmei. They are initials sequence/clusters: */nk/, /mb/, /nt/ and /nr/*; medial sequence: */kt/, /kd/, /kl/ and /np/*. We can see here that in Rongmei most of the initial sequence is combined with a nasals sound. However in the medial position, the combinations are different.

In most of the Tibeto-Burman language, the absence of initial, medial and final clusters or sequence can be considered as one of the typological characteristics feature. Rongmei does not share this feature; however, there is absence of three sequences in Rongmei across syllabic boundary.

Example of the consonant sequences occurring across syllabic boundary found in Rongmei is given below:

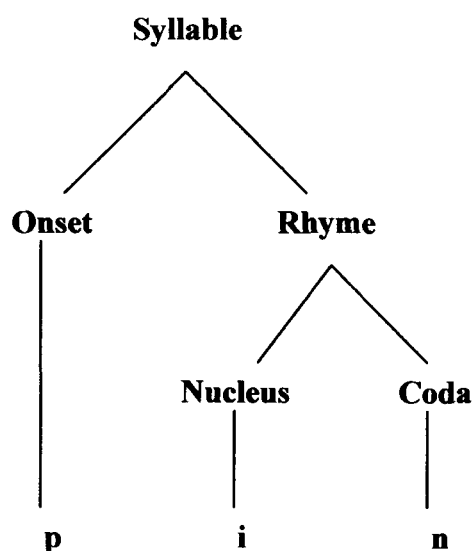
Initial:	<i>/nkhuoŋdon/</i>	‘drumstick’
	<i>/mbut/</i>	‘ashes’
	<i>/ntan/</i>	‘iron’
	<i>/nrui/</i>	‘snake’
	<i>/nkampai/</i>	‘kinds of edible tree beans’
Medial:	<i>/ miktɨət /</i>	‘blind’
	<i>/jikdui/</i>	‘dew’
	<i>/tinpuanjɨŋ/</i>	‘storm’
	<i>/guaklu/</i>	‘male pig’

From the above examples, we can see that Rongmei does exhibit consonants clusters across syllable boundary only.

However, in the initial clusters we can see that, most of the consonantal sounds are nasals followed by plosives sounds /k/, /b/, /t/, and flap sound /r/. Interestingly, in the medial position the combinations are quite different where the pattern of clusters is not uniform.

### 3.3 Syllable

A sequence of phonemes with one peak of sonority is called a syllable. A syllable may be also defined as a maximum pulse of initiator activity bounded by momentary retardation of the initiator, either self – imposed, or more usually, imposed by a consonant type of articulatory stricture. However, syllable can be seen both from the phonetics and the phonological points of view (Crystal 1987).



**Fig 10: Syllable Structure of Pin.**

In a phonetics, some have attempted to identify syllables on the basis of amount of articulatory effort needed to produce them. According to Stetson (1892-1950), each syllable corresponds to an increase in air pressure, air from the lung being released as a series of chest pulses (Crystal, p, 164).

In terms of acoustics, syllables are defined as, each syllable contains one and only one peak of acoustic energy or intensity (loudness).

Phonological view of the syllable focuses on the sound combination in a language to produce typical sequences. Two classes of sounds are established: sounds that can occur on their own, or are at the centre of the syllable (V), and those that cannot occur on their own (C).

At the phonemic level, we can divide syllables into three types according to their place of occurrence: *initial*, *medial* and *final syllables*. The initial, medial and final syllables can further be sub grouped into two types.

(i) *Open syllable*.

(ii) *Closed syllable*

A syllable may consist of three parts. The first part or the beginning is called '*onset*' (syllable initial), the middle one '*peak*' (nucleus) and the last sound '*coda*' (syllable final). It may consist of only peak or may be onset and peak or onset, peak and coda.

A syllable is a unit of sound composed of

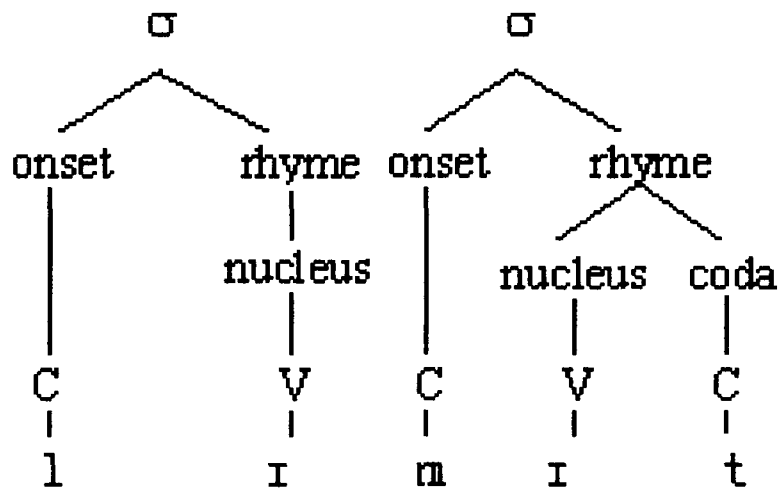
- a central peak of sonority (usually a vowel), and
- the consonants that cluster around this central peak.

Syllable structure, which is the combination of allowable segments and typical sound sequences, is language specific.

Parts	Description	Optionality
Onset	Initial segment of a syllable	Optional
Rhyme	Core of a syllable, consisting of a nucleus and coda (see below)	Obligatory
– Nucleus	Central segment of a syllable	Obligatory
– Coda	Closing segment of a syllable	Optional

**Fig 11: Syllable Table**

Here is an example of the syllable structure of the English word *limit*<sup>14</sup>



**Fig 12: Syllabification of the word ‘limit’ in English**

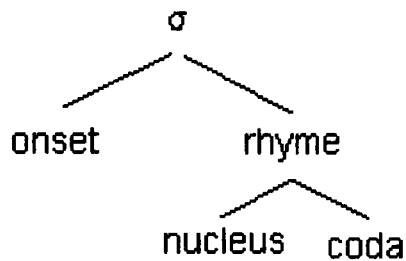
<sup>14</sup> Source from the internet.

Here are some kinds of syllables:

<b>Kind</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example</b>
Heavy	Has a branching rhyme. All syllables with a branching nucleus (long vowels) are considered heavy. Some languages treat syllables with a short vowel (nucleus followed by a consonant (coda) as heavy.	CV:C, CVCC, CVC
Light	Has a non-branching rhyme (short vowel). Some languages treat syllables with a short vowel(nucleus) followed by a consonant (coda) as light.	CV, CVC
Closed	Ends with a consonant coda.	CVC, CVCC, VC
Open	Has no final consonant	CV

**Fig 13: Table of types of syllables**

Diagram of a syllable:



A syllable can also be said to have an optional onset followed by an obligatory rhyme. The rhyme is further divided into the nucleus and the coda. The onset is defined as any consonant(s) preceding the nucleus. The nucleus is the central segment of the syllable. The coda is made up of any consonant(s) following the nucleus. Therefore the rhyme comprises of the obligatory nucleus and any consonant(s) following it. The rhyme is also called the core, the nucleus and the peak of the syllable. A rhyme whose nucleus is made up of any nucleus followed by one or more consonants is said to be closed and a syllable whose rhyme is made up of a nucleus is said to be open.

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

### 3.3.1 Syllabic Structure in Rongmei:

A syllable in Rongmei is consists of a nucleus with or without an onset and with or without a coda. The nucleus or peak is always a vowel. Mono-syllabicity is one of the important typological features of Tibeto-Burman languages. In most of the Tibeto-Burman language, words are mono-syllabic. Rongmei does not fully conform to these

patterns i.e. though most of the root words in Rongmei are mono-syllabic, few instances of bi-syllabic words may be found. Moreover with the process of compounding, syllabic patterns in Rongmei can be extended or increase.

Rongmei syllable system consists of the following six patterns:

Types of syllables can also be identified on the basis of the total number of syllables in a word.

**Monosyllables:**

V	/a/	‘I’ POSS
	/e/	‘AGR’
CV	/lu/	‘song’
	/su/	‘pain’
CVV	/liu/	‘buy’
	/c <sup>h</sup> iu/	‘easy’
CVC	/sum/	‘console’
	/tam/	‘saliva’
CVVC	/suaŋ/	‘boil’
	/guaŋ/	‘crawl’
CCVC	/k <sup>h</sup> waŋ/	‘time/clock’

Being an agglutinative language, compounding is a common process of word formation and words up to 4 syllables occur frequently. In Rongmei words up to nine syllables are also found though not very frequent. Below are examples where a period (\$) marks the syllable boundary. The examples are not exhaustive but will show some of the possible syllabifications.

**Disyllables:**

V\$CVC	/əmik/	‘my eye’
V\$CVV	/əzai/	‘my blood’
CV\$CVVC	/kariak/	‘customs’
CV\$CVV	/c <sup>h</sup> əkɪu/	‘nine’
CVC\$CVC	/tiŋkum/	‘year’

**Trisyllables:**

CV\$CV\$CVC	/kərapei/	‘old lady’
CV\$CVVC\$CVVC	/kəgwaŋriaŋ/	‘neck’
CV\$CVC\$CVC	/kəbonzɔŋ/	‘finger’
CV\$CV\$CVC	/tiŋmikpum/	‘daily’

**Tetrasyllables:**

CV\$CVC\$CVC\$CV	/kərakrakk <sup>h</sup> ou/	‘sometimes/occasional’
CV\$CVC\$CV\$CVV	/kəməntukmai/	‘sharp’
CVV\$CVC\$CV\$CVC	/p <sup>h</sup> aik <sup>h</sup> ətək <sup>h</sup> ət/	‘one hundred and One’

**Pentasyllables:**

CVV\$CVC\$CV\$CV\$CVV	/p <sup>h</sup> aik <sup>h</sup> ətəpəŋu/	‘one hundred and five’
CVV\$CVC\$CV\$CV\$CVC	/p <sup>h</sup> aik <sup>h</sup> ətək <sup>h</sup> ərɪk/	‘one hundred and six’

### **Hexasyllables:**

CVV\$CV\$CVV\$CV\$C\$VCVC     /p<sup>h</sup>aipədeinə-c<sup>h</sup>əruk/    ‘four hundred and  
forty’

In Rongmei, words can consist up to nine syllables. But this is possible only if compound words and affixation are taken into consideration. However, the syllabic pattern CV and CVC shape seems to be the most frequent.

In other language families, consonants can function as syllabic elements (Allen 1963), but in Tibeto-Burman, most of the syllabic functions are carried by the vowels and thus, Rongmei like any other Tibeto-Burman languages follows this pattern.

### **3.4 Suprasegmentals**

#### **3.4.1 Tone**

Tone refers to a distinctive pitch level of a syllable. Pike was the first linguist who discuss tone to certain extend. Pike considers a language as tonal if; having significant, contrastive, but relative pitch on each syllable<sup>15</sup>. Many of the Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in north east India are tonal languages (Pike, 1948:3). In most of the Tibeto-Burman languages different words are distinguished from each other by means of tones.

There are two types of tone. They are:

- a). Registered Tones, and
- b). Contour Tones.

Registered tones are single kind of tone at one level. They are three different kinds-

- (i). High or rising tone,
- (ii). Low or falling tone and,

---

<sup>15</sup> See Pike (1948).

(iii). Medial or level tone.

Contour tones are fluctuating tones. They are of two types:

(i). Rising-falling, and

(ii). Falling-rising.

To date there have been various overviews of the characteristics of Tibeto-Burman tone systems (e.g., Matisoff, 1999; Weidert, 1987; Yip, 2002). The Sino-Tibetan language family which include (Tibeto-burman) comprised approximately 250 to 300 languages (Matisoff, 2003). Therefore it is not surprising to say that languages in this family range from having many tonal contrasts and variations to none. Moreover, with such variety, it is more than impossible to establish a concrete a set of shared typological characteristics of tone in the Tibeto-Burman languages (Matisoff, opcit.). However, one cannot deny the fact that most of the Tibeto-Burman languages of the north east India are tonal though the pitch distinctions may vary from language to language.

#### **3.4.1.1 Tones in Rongmei:**

Tone is one of the typological characteristics features of Tibeto-Burman languages. Tonal system of Rongmei is very simple but it plays an important role in this language by changing the pitch of the vowels and thus, creating a change in the meaning of the word.

Ian Maddieson (1978) in his Universals (1) of tone states that;

***“A language may contrast upto five levels of tone, but not more”<sup>16</sup>.***

There are only three registered tone in Rongmei. They are;

(i) high or rising tone;

(ii) low or falling tone; and

(iii) Medial or level tone.

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<sup>16</sup> See Maddieson, I. (1978).

Thus, we can agree with Ian Maddieson that, Rongmei too conforms to this universal of tone.

**High or Rising Tone:** High tone is utter or pronounced with high pitch or with the rise in the level of the pitch.

/géi/	‘many’
/ŋaáa/	‘baby’
/mbút/	‘ashes’
/inrúi/	‘snake’
/tiŋ/	‘swollen’

**Low or Falling Tone:** Low tone is pronounced with the low descent of pitch sound.

/ši/	‘sand’
/zèi/	‘lake/pool’
/bǐ/	‘mud’
/đi/	‘hammering’
/bàm/	‘seat’

Ian Maddieson’s Universals 2 of tone states that;

***“Phonetically central tones are unmarked, extreme tones are highly marked”.***

**Medial or Level Tone:** level or mid tone is utter or pronounced with equal distribution of sounds between the high tone and the low tone i.e. a pitch that is slightly lower than the high pitch and higher than the low pitch. It is unmarked.

/san/	‘fate’
-------	--------

/dui/	‘water’
/cheŋ/	‘road’
/kərim/	‘smell’
/ro/	‘sound’

### 3.4.1.2 Phonemic tones in Rongmei

Tone is phonemic in Rongmei. The falling and rising of tone leads to change in meanings. Some of the examples with different tones having different meanings are shown below.

<u>High tone</u>	<u>Medial tone</u>	<u>Low tone</u>
/si/ ‘carry’	/si/ ‘dog’	/si/ ‘sand’
/hu/ ‘poison’	/hu/ ‘front’	/hu/ ‘teeth’
/mun/ ‘won’	/mun/ ‘edge’	/mun/ ‘flower’

### 3.5.2 Tone Sandhi:

Rongmei exhibits tone Sandhi. When two morphemes are joined or compounded together to form a new word, tone Sandhi takes place. Consider the following statement;

*A good tone language should have all tone in all possible syllable types* (Maddieson, 1978, opcit). Certain restriction in syllable shows that the language does not have a pure tone.

According to the theory of Tonogenesis<sup>17</sup>, tone developed from the loss or acquisition of segment either a consonant or a vowel that causes the change in tone. Tonogenesis can therefore, be defines as ‘ *the processes whereby certain phonetic features may determine automatic pitch change in the syllable which in turn in course of time become phonologically relevant*’ (Henderson, 1982:1).

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<sup>17</sup> See Henderson (1982).

### 3.5 Phonological processes

Almost in every existing languages of the world, one segment of one morpheme may affect or interfere in another segment of another morpheme. According to Schane (1983), 'when morphemes are combined to form words, the segments of neighbouring become juxtaposed and sometimes undergo change. Change can 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 vowels'.

Two types of phonological processes are found in Rongmei; Deletion and Insertion.

3.1 Deletion: deletion is the dropping or removal of a particular sound and is indicated by  $\emptyset$ , the null symbol and can be represented as;

SAY  $\longrightarrow$  S $\emptyset$ Y, therefore, the phonological rules can be stated as;

A  $\longrightarrow$   $\emptyset$ /X  $\longrightarrow$  Y. whenever two vowels occur together or when there is a

combination of sonorant and a vowel in colloquial Rongmei, due to certain grammatical

processes, phonological changes occur. In Rongmei when this happened, vowel deletion

occurs in certain environments. Vowel deletion can be defines as the processes by which

one vowel is deleted in the presence of another vowels because of phonological processes

in certain environments where the vowels are affected.

## CHAPTER 4

### Morphological Typology of Rongmei

*Morphology is a branch of grammar which deals with the structure or forms of a word. It is the study of word formation. Words are made up of meaningful units called morphemes. Morphemes are of different types- lexical and grammatical morphemes, free and bound morphemes, inflectional and derivational morphemes, etc. words are made of roots, root and affixes etc.*

#### 4.1 Morphological typology

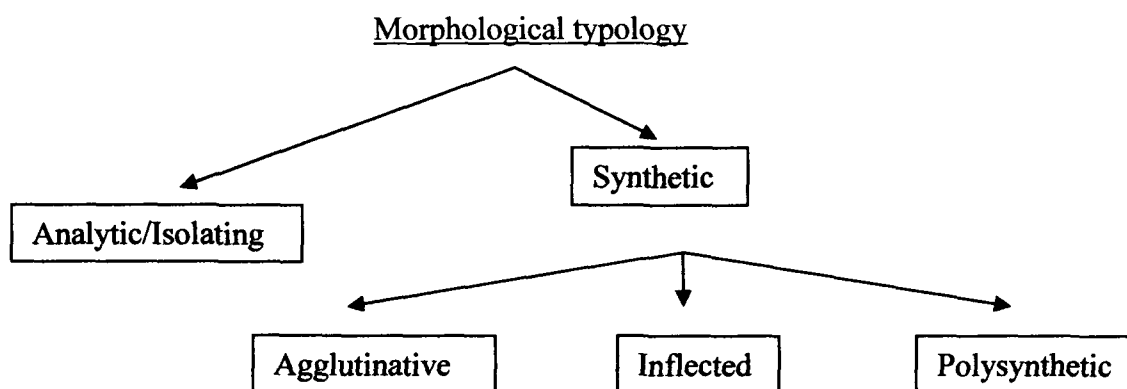
The first systematically developed theory of linguistics typology was in relation to morphological typology, i.e. the ways in which individual morphemes are combined into words in different languages.

Morphology typology groups languages into four types namely;

1. **Isolating/Analytic:** languages in which words tend to consist of only one morpheme. Most of these languages are found in east and south-east Asia (Chinese, Vietnamese etc.) as well as Africa (Yoruba). These languages have no inflection and the most limited one uses word-formation processes.
2. **Agglutinative/Synthetic:** A language in which a word tends to have or consists of more than one morpheme. For examples, English, Latin, Greek and Sanskrit are highly synthetic. All these languages have plenty of inflection, derivation and compounding.
3. **Fusional:** languages where two or more morphemes are fused together like agglutinating languages. However, affixes tend to fuse together where separation of these morphemes (mostly bounds morphemes) from each other is impossible or difficult (e.g. Spanish).

4. **Polysynthetic or incorporating:** these types of languages are sometimes termed as highly synthetic language. Here, the combinations of the morphemes are complex and multi-affix words can be constructed or form. (e.g. Sora).

“Basically, a typology is not much of value unless it predicts things about the various types of languages...Now,...a typology in terms of isolating, agglutinative and fusional does not (seem to) correlate with anything else in the morphology at all... The value of the typology *qua* typology is thus very much in doubt” (Bauer, 1988:170).



**Fig 14: Typological Tree of Morphology**

Rongmei falls under the second group that is the agglutinative language, where there are combinations of two or more morphemes to form meaningful utterances. For example take the word such as;

pak+ tat +kan + mai      ‘runaway’  
 run go pst perf.

Agglutinative example:

edi – m-      in      ayak – kab – lar – I      yok – tu  
 cat – mine – of      foot – cover – PL –his      NEG – existent – was  
 ‘my cat had no shoes’.

Here the words are formed by joining morphemes together. Each morpheme typically represents one unit of meaning. The words are long with rich affixation, but fortunately with transparent structure. In other words, the morphology is highly regular. Grammatical relationships are marked by morphemes.

The above example can be represented as that of a good compound where there are combinations of more than one morphemes. However, there are few other criticisms regarding the universals of typology such as;

“... nothing much seems to follow from this classification: it has never been shown, for example, that languages with agglutinative properties share other features of a non-accidental sort that are not shared with non-agglutinating languages as well. For these reasons, the traditional terms do not seem to constitute any significant typology” (Anderson, 1985:10).

#### **4.2 Roots:**

A form which cannot be further analyzable either in terms of derivational or inflectional morphology is known as Root. It is that part of a word that remains when all inflectional and derivational affixes have been removed. A root is the basic part always present in a lexeme. Every morpheme is either free or bound. Free morpheme is also referred to as roots. In Rongmei, root may be free or bound.

##### **4.2.1 Free Roots:**

A morpheme is free if it is able to stand or appear as word by itself. Some of the non-segmental free roots words are given below.

Examples: -	/zou/	‘monkey’
	/tiŋ/	‘rain’

/mai/	‘person’
/baŋ/	‘tie’
/ntiaŋ/	‘pillar/ants’

#### 4.2.2 Bound roots:

Roots which cannot stand alone without the help of affixes or other morphemes are called bound roots. In Rongmei, roots are mostly of bound types. Bound root may be further divided into two types;

- i) Nominal Bound Roots, and
- ii) Verbal Bound Roots.

**4.2.2.1. Nominal Bound Roots:** In Rongmei, nominal bound roots are found in all kinship terms, body parts (birds, animals, human being etc) and other noun forms. Some of them are shown below.

##### i) Kinship terms:

/-pu/	‘father’
/-pui/	‘mother’
/-pou/	‘grand father’
/-naiʔ/	‘aunt (father’s sister)’
/-tou/	‘grand child’

To all these kinship terms the pronominal markers such as- {ə-}-first person, {nəŋ-}-second person and {kə-}-third person pronominal and proper nouns (name of a person) can be prefixed to give a complete sense/ meaning of a word.

Examples:

/a-pu/	‘my father’
--------	-------------

/naŋ-pui/	‘your mother’
/ka-pou/	‘his/her grandfather’

**ii) Body parts;**

Examples:

/-pi/	‘head’
/-bon/	‘hand’
/-ŋeŋ/	‘chest’

With Pronominal

/a-pi/	‘my head’
/a-bon/	‘my hand’
/a-ŋeŋ/	‘my chest’
/ka-pi/	‘his head’
/ka-bon/	‘his hand’
/ka-ŋeŋ/	‘his chest’

**iii) Other Nouns:**

Most of the nouns in Rongmei are bound roots. Generally the noun or nominal marker-[ka-] is found prefixed to some nouns.

Examples:

/kaleu/ or /-leu/	‘field’
/kakoi/ or /-koi	‘house’

The nominal marker [ka-] can be replaced by the pronominal markers [a-] first person, [naŋ-]-second person and [ka]-third person pronominal which gives the meaning as belonging to the 1<sup>st</sup> person, 2<sup>nd</sup> person and 3<sup>rd</sup> person.

Examples:

/aleu/			‘my field’
/naŋkoi/			‘your house’
/kap <sup>h</sup> ei/			‘his shawl’
/ak <sup>h</sup> uan/			‘my voice’

**4.2.2.2. Verbal Bound Roots:** All verbal roots are bound roots. They are more numerous than the nominal ones. In Rongmei, the nominal bound roots are prefixed by pronominal markers or by [ka-] which gives a general noun form. Whereas the verbal bound roots are suffixed by the nominalizer – [-mai] to give a complete sense/meaning of a word.

Examples:

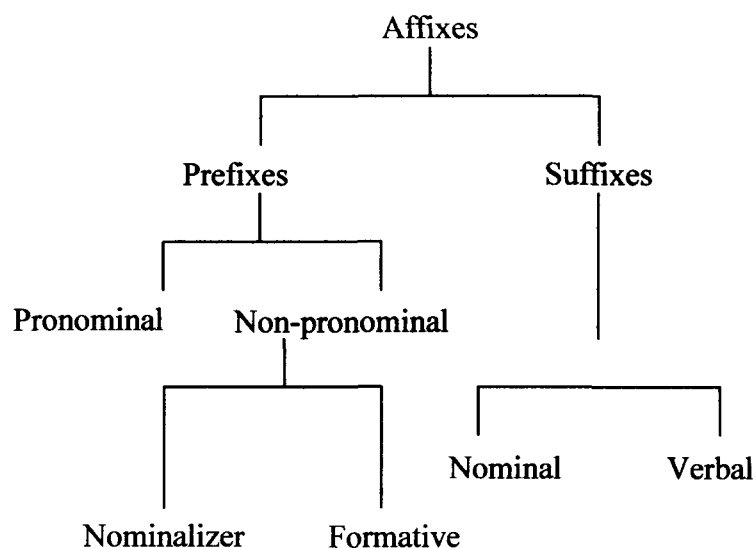
/təd-/	or	/tədmai/	‘go’
/tu-/	or	/tumai/	‘eat’
/gwaŋ-/	or	/gwaŋmai/	‘come’
/keu-/	or	/keumai/	‘call’

Here the suffix [-mai] is a nominalizer but the word formed by suffixation of [-mai] to the verbal root cannot be treated as noun.

### **4.3. Affixes:**

Affixes are bound morphemes which can only occur attached to a root, stem or word. In Rongmei, there are only prefixes and suffixes and has no infix. In Rongmei which is an agglutinative language, affixes are very important as they take part in the formation of various words and in deriving several word classes- namely; verb, noun, adjective and adverb. Besides this, they are used in forming several sentence types- such as declarative, negative, interrogative and imperative sentences.

The two types of affixes are discussed below one by one.



**Fig 15: Chart of affixes**

#### **4.3.1. Prefixes:**

Prefixes are limited in number as compared to suffixes, and they are used in word class formation. Rongmei has only pronominal prefixes.

##### **4.3.1.1 Pronominal Prefixes:**

There are three pronominal prefixes with meaning of possessiveness or genitive meaning or 3Poss.Pronominal prefixes found in Rongmei:

They are;

1p	a-(tuaŋ)-	first person (1p)	‘mine’
2p	naŋ-(tuaŋ)-	second person (2p)	‘your’
3p	ka-(tuaŋ)-	third person (3p)	‘his/hers’

Following are the examples where the pronominal prefixes like [ka-], [a-], [naŋ-] form a word by prefixing it to the root or stem.

/koi/	‘house’
/a-koi/	‘my house’
/naŋ-koi/	‘your house’
/ka-koi/	‘his house’
/zeu/	‘face’
/a-zeu/	‘my face’
/naŋ-zeu/	‘your face’
/ka-zeu/	‘his face’
/pi/	‘head’
/ka-pi/	‘his head’
/a-pi/	‘my head’
/naŋ-pi/	‘your head’
/bon/	‘hand’
/a-bon/	‘my hand’
/naŋ-bon/	‘your hand’
/kə-bon/	‘his hand’
/mik/	‘eye’
/a-mik/	‘my eye’
/naŋ-mik/	‘your eye’
/ka-mik/	‘his eye’
/nam/	‘village’

/a-nam/	‘my village’
/naŋ-nam/	‘your village’
/ka-nam/	‘his village’

#### 4.3.1.2 Non-Pronominal Prefixes:

Non-pronominal prefixes can be further divided into nominalizing prefixes and formative prefixes.

Rongmei has one nominalizing prefix [karam-], which when prefixed to the verbal root nominalizes the root.

Follow are the examples;

/tu/	‘eat’	/karamtu/	‘mode/nature of his eating’
/jaŋ/	‘drink’	/karamjaŋ/	‘mode/nature of his drinking’
/pak/	‘run’	/karampak/	‘mode/nature of his running’
/tad/	‘go/walk’	/karamtad/	‘mode/nature of his going/walking’
/kap/	‘cry’	/karamkap/	‘mode/nature of his crying’

This nominalizing prefix [karam-] can also be prefixed to the adjective to nominalize the word.

Examples:

/dai/	‘big’	/karamdai/	‘the degree of bigness’
/keu/	‘high’	/karamkeu/	‘the degree of highness (its height)’
/gai/	‘good’	/karamgai/	‘the degree of goodness’
/si/	‘bad’	/karamsi/	‘the degree of badness’
/tan/	‘strong’	/karamtán/	‘the degree of strongness’

/heŋ/ 'red'                      /karamheŋ/                      'the degree of redness'

A formative prefix [ka-] is found to occur in most of the noun form such as- body parts and others. Some of the examples where [ka-] is prefixed to form meaningful words are given below.

/-pi/	'head'	/kapi/	'head'
/-bon/	'hand'	/kabon/	'hand'
/-tan/	'leg'	/katan/	'leg'
/-mik/	'eye'	/kamik'	'eye'
/-nukuan/	'ear'	/kanukuan/	'ear'
/-leu/	'field'	/kaleu/	'field'

#### **4.3.2. Suffixes**

Suffixes in Rongmei are numerous and they play an important role. For example, various sentence types can be constructed by the suffixation of respective markers and various suffixes can be added one after another by which the meaning is also added to it. The suffixes can be grouped into- nominal and verbal suffixes.

##### **4.3.2.1 Nominal Suffixes**

Suffixes which can be added to a noun only are grouped as nominal suffixes. Under the nominal suffixes, there are five categories of suffixes namely; case suffixes, number suffixes, gender suffixes, conjunct/connectives suffixes and interrogatives suffixes.

##### **4.3.2.2 Case suffixes**

The traditional term of case is fundamentally a name for the entire class of relational categories to noun inflection. As the formal reflection of all of the roles played by nouns

in larger structures, this is a large and somewhat homogeneous set. We can generally divide case categories into grammatical or *direct* case (marking syntactic functions such as ‘subject’ and ‘object’ determined primarily by structural position) and oblique cases (marking a range of functions, including but not limited to spatial or local ones, with more independent semantic content and less dependent on structural role) (Anderson 1985).

Blake (1991) defines case as “a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads”. The verb is taken to be the head of the clause, since it largely determines what dependents may be present.

Hockett (1958), also states that cases are inflected forms for nouns which fit them for participation in key constructions relative to verbs. He further states that many case systems include also specific categories of other kinds.

Heagemann (1991) made a distinction of case theory between the morphological case and abstract case. According to Heagemann, morphological case is the overt case form which is marked in the morphology of words. Three types of overt case, i.e. nominative, objective and genitive are marked in the case of *he*, *him* and *his* in the morphology of the personal pronouns in English. However, in the case of lexical pronouns in English, only the genitive case is marked overtly in the morphology of the word as in ‘*Tom’s book*’.

Case is a grammatical category which establishes a relation that a noun or pronoun has with some other word in a sentence or a phrase. Rongmei has seven case markers. Among them *nominative, genitive and locative case* ending are not obligatory sometimes, they can be dropped or deleted. The case markers/endings present in

Rongmei are:-

i). Nominative	{-mai}
ii). Accusative	{-ta}
iii). Genitive	{-tuaŋ}, {-khaŋ}
iv). Locative	{-khou}, {-tun}
v). Instrumental	{-ruai}
vi). Ablative	{-khouruai}, {-tunruai}
vii). Associative	{-khatni}, {-kənai?}

***i). Nominative Case***

The nominative case is used to mark the subject of a sentence. In Rongmei, the subject takes a case ending [-mai] and it is not obligatory.

Examples;

1. kamai jane-ta kuŋ-ŋe

He-NOM. Jane-ACC care-Pre Perf ASP

‘He cares for Jane’.

2. kamai si-ta bai-e

He-NOM dog-ACC hit- Pre Perf ASP

‘He hit the dog’.

3. naŋruai c<sup>h</sup>əbuaŋ-tei k<sup>h</sup>iu -o

you-NOM cup-DET wash-COMM/REQ

‘You wash the cup’.

4. oi ruai thomas-ta tian lo-khaŋ thou-lou-ye

I-NOM thomas-ACC bread take- NOM send- ASP

‘I sent Thomas to collect the bread’

### **ii). Accusative Case**

Accusative case is used to mark the object of a verb. It is expressed by adding case ending {-ta} to the object (noun or pronoun) of a sentence.

Some examples are as follows;

a-ta (1p)-ACC

naŋ-ta (2p)-ACC

ka-ta (3p)-ACC

jon-ta john-ACC

si-ta dog-ACC

koi-ta house-ACC

[Noun/pronoun]+ta [noun/pronoun]-ACC

5. i ka-ta hou -e

I he-ACC see-Pst Perf ASP

‘I have seen him’

6. naŋpui naŋ-ta keu-bam-me

Your mother you-ACC call-PROG-ASP

‘Your mother is calling you’

### **iii). Genitive Case**

Rongmei has two genitive markers- {-tuaŋ} and {-khaŋ}. The basic function of the genitive is to indicate the relationship between two substantives. It is expressed by adding case ending {-tuaŋ} and {-khaŋ} to the object of a sentence. The case ending {-tuaŋ} is used to indicate the ownership/ possessor of an object whereas the case ending {-khaŋ} is used to denote the beneficiary of an object.

Examples;

/a-tuaŋ/ (1p)-GEN (mine)

/a-tuaŋ lairik/ 'my book'

/naŋ-tuaŋ/ (2p)-GEN (yours)

/naŋ-tuaŋ k<sup>h</sup>eu/ 'your bag'

/ka-tuaŋ/ (3p)-GEN (his/hers)

/jon-tuaŋ puan/ 'John's dress'

7. Hai-ei a-tuaŋ che -e  
This-DET 1p-GEN paper-Pst ASP  
'This was my paper'

8. Hei-tei nanŋtuaŋ beŋ-ŋe  
That-DET you-GEN knife-Pre ASP  
'That's your knife'

/akhaŋ/ (1p)-GEN (for me)

/naŋkhaŋ/ (1p)-GEN (for you)

/kakraŋ/ (2p)-GEN (for him/her)

9. kamei ka-kandi -khaŋ niŋ -ŋe  
He his country-GEN thoughts-Pst ASP  
'He had thoughts for his country'

10. Hei-pui che-hei lily-khaŋ-ŋe  
This- NOM paper-DET lily-GEN-Pst ASP  
'This paper was for lily'

*iv). Locative Case*

Rongmei has two locative case markers- [-khou], [-tun]. The case ending [-khou] is suffixed to pronominal and proper noun (name of a person) and usually occurs together with other locative case ending. The other locative case ending [-tun] is suffixed to certain post-position, determiners and proper nouns to indicate the position/location of an object, event and time.

Examples:

/karu-khou/	on-LOC
/kabaŋ-khou/	under-LOC
/kaluŋ-khou/	inside-LOC
/kapeŋ-khou/	outside/beside-LOC
/kadeŋ-khou/	beside / side-LOC
/karu-tun/	upside – LOC
/kabaŋ-tun/	downside-LOC

11. lauthuan      khuaŋ      paŋu-khou  
Morning      hour/time      five-LOC  
'At 5 O'clock in the morning'

12. tiŋzin      ka-koi      khou  
Evening      3ps-house      LOC  
'At his house in the evening'

/koi-khou /	house-LOC	'at home'
/leu-tun /	field-LOC	'at the field'
/ka-k <sup>h</sup> ou/	he-LOC	'with him'

/akhou/	me-LOC	'with me'
/nanj <sup>h</sup> ou/	you-LOC	'with you'
/jonk <sup>h</sup> ou/	john-LOC	'with John'
/apuk <sup>h</sup> ou/	my father-LOC	'to/with my father'
/silonkhou/	Shillong-LOC	'at Shillong'
/delikhou/	delhi-LOC	'at Delhi'.

**v). Instrumental Case**

The instrumental case marker [-ruai] which is homophonous to nominative marker is used to expressed the instrumentality of an object with which an action of a verb is performed.

The primary function of this marker is to indicate the instrument that the agent uses while carrying out an activity. It is expressed by the addition of case-ending [-ruai] to the object.

Examples:

/benruai/	knife-INST	'with knife'
/duiruai/	water-INST	'by water'
/hiruai/	boat- INST	'by boat'
/guairuai/	cow- INST	'by cow'
/siruai/	dog- INST	'by the dog'

13. oi    beŋ-ruai    inriaŋ    dou-e  
I      axe-INST    bamboo    cut Pst ASP  
'I cut the bamboo with a knife'

14. kamei beŋ-ruai gannui lim -me  
 He knife-INST vegetable cut- Pre Perf ASP  
 ‘He cuts vegetables with a knife’
15. Lily pencil-ruai chithi hi -e  
 Lily pencil-INST letter write-Pst ASP  
 ‘Lily wrote a letter with a pencil’s
16. kaniu ka-ta teu-ruai dat -re  
 They 3p-ACC stone-INST throw-Pst ASP  
 ‘They throw her with stone’
17. apu a -ta chei-ruai bai-e  
 (1p)-Father (1p)-ACC stick-INST beat -Pst Perf ASP  
 ‘My father beats me with a stick’

**vi). Ablative Case**

The ablative case is the case of separation from source. The case-ending [-khouruai, -tunruai] is added/suffixed to the object to expressed separation, expulsion and direction of movement from one to another.

Examples:

/ə-k <sup>h</sup> ouruai/	(1p)-LOC-Abl	‘from me’
/nəŋ-k <sup>h</sup> ouruai/	(2p)-LOC-Abl	‘from you’
/ka-k <sup>h</sup> ouruai/	(3p)-LOC-Abl	‘from him/her’
/jon-k <sup>h</sup> ouruai/	john-LOC-Abl	‘from John’
/koi-khouruai/	house-Abl	‘from house’
/ka-rutunruai/	up-Abl	‘from upside’

/ka-baŋtunruai/	down-Abl	‘from downside’
/khou-teiruai/	that-Abl	‘from there’
/hei-khouruai/	here-Abl	‘from here’
/tabuitun-ruai/	where-Abl	‘from where?’

**vii). Associative Case**

The associative case marker in Rongmei [[-khatni] and [kanai] are used to denote that the action has been performed in conjunction with another.

Examples:

18.   jon-kanai     ka-si  
       John-Assoc   (3p)-dog  
       ‘John and his dog’
19.   apui-kanai         apu  
       (1p)-mother-Assoc   (1p)-father  
       ‘My mother and my father’
20.   apou-kanai                     apei  
       (1p)-grand father—Assoc   (1p)-grand mother  
       ‘My Grandfather and my grandmother’
21.   rose kanai         seu  
       rose-Assoc         thorn  
       ‘rose and thorn’
22.   si kanai         guak  
       dog-Assoc         pig  
       ‘Dog and pig’

### 4.3.2.3 Verbal suffixes

In agglutinative language the number of verbal suffixes is more than that of the nominal suffixes. This shows one of the true characteristics of Rongmei being an agglutinative language and Rongmei exhibiting a typological feature of TB. Verbal suffixes found in Rongmei are such as namely, aspect, mood suffixes.

### 4.3.2.4 Aspectual suffixes:

In Rongmei instead of discussing tense, it would be more appropriate to discuss aspect. Aspect is defined in the Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics as; 'the verbal categories that distinguish the status of events, etc. in relation to specific period of time, as opposed to their simple location in the past, present or the future'. Aspectual categories are very varied and since both aspects and tense are both defined by reference to time, a clear distinction, where it exists, will be drawn by formal criteria. Moreover, it is quite difficult to separate aspects marked by inflections or auxiliaries from the inherent lexical properties of verb. An event or situation in Rongmei can be divided into four aspects unit namely;

**4.3.2.4.1 Simple aspect:** it expresses simple habitual expression of event and truth. In Rongmei the markers for this are; *ye, re, ɲe* etc. examples;

23. kamei nap suanj ɲe  
he/she rice cook Pst ASP  
'he/she cooked rice'

Here the nasal sounds [ŋ] influenced the adjacent semi-vowel [y] thereby, the later sound becoming a nasalized sound [ɲ].

24. maru skul tun tat re

maru school LOC go ASP

‘maru goes to school’

**4.3.2.4.2 Progressive Aspects:** this indicates the progress in action. In Rongmei this is indicated by, ‘bamme’, i.e.PROG ASP.

Examples;

25. jon leirik po bam me

John book read PROG ASP

‘john is reading a book’.

26. kamei lu suan bam me

She song sing PROG ASP

‘she is singing’.

**4.3.2.4.3 Perfect aspects:** this is denoted by, [kan], [taŋ] in Rongmei. Take for examples;

27. kaniu nap tu taŋ khe

They food eat Pst Perf ASP

‘they had eaten food already’

28. kamei film jeu kan the

She movie watch Pst Perf ASP

‘she had seen the movie’

From the above examples we can see that in Rongmei the speaker is very sure of the action being done or completed. Moreover, Rongmei also has a constructions where both the indicators i.e.[taŋ] and [kan] occurs together along with [the] which is a SFM.

Examples;

29. kamei nap tu taŋ kan the  
 He rice eat Pst Perf ASP  
 ‘he had taken the food already’
30. kaniu masters luai taŋ kan the  
 3PL masters finished Pst Perf ASP  
 ‘they had already finished their masters’.

**4.3.2.4 Unrealised aspects:** in Rongmei this type of aspects’ markers is used to indicate or describes an action that is yet to take place. The marker is [puni] and is usually attached to the verbs.

Examples;

31. oi koi tun tat puni  
 1p house LOC go Fut ASP  
 ‘I will be going home’
32. aseɪ kaniu ngin tat puni  
 today they tavel go fut ASP  
 ‘today they will travel’
33. mary guan puni ye  
 mary come fut ASP  
 ‘mary will come’



**4.3.2.5 Negative suffixes:** a word that contradicts the positive sentence in a normal construction. In Rongmei the marker is [mak].

Consider the following examples in Rongmei;

37. oi tat ŋam mak ge  
1p go can NEG ASP  
'I cannot go'
38. jon tu ŋam mak ge  
John eat can NEG ASP  
'*john cannot eat*'
39. kaniu guan ŋe ki kamei guan mak ge  
they come ASP but she come NEG ASP  
'they came but she did not come'.

From the above examples we can see that in Rongmei the marker is actually a verbal modifier which simply negates the sentences. However, there are no negative prefixes like in English such as, in-, un-, dis-, etc.

**4.3.2.6 Adverbial suffix:** Adverb is a word that modifies or enhances the verb. In Rongmei the marker for this are, [na] and [ŋa]. it can be either added to action as well as stative verbs. [na] is added to actions verbs whereas, [ŋa] is added to stative verbs. However, sometimes their occurrences are not rigid.

Consider the following examples;

Action verbs;

- [nui] 'laugh' [nui-na] 'with laughter'  
[keu] 'shout' [keu-na] 'with shouting'  
[suan] 'sing' [suan-na] 'with singing'  
[kap] 'cry' [kap-na] 'with crying'

Stative verbs;

[njeŋ] ‘slow’ [njeŋ-ŋa] ‘slowly’

[ŋaŋ] ‘lean’ [ŋaŋ-ŋa] ‘with leaning’

[luaŋ] ‘roll’ [luaŋ-ŋa] ‘by rolling’.

There are peculiar adverbial suffixes that force the verbal root to reduplicate like, [kariu-riu], [kachin-karo] and [tip-tip] etc. However, they are not as productive as one expects.

Let us consider the following examples;

40. kaniu Kachin-karo bam -me

They noisy REDP PROG ASP

‘they are very noisy’

41. khoutei kariu-riu bam - me

LOC Choas PROG ASP

‘there is chaos there’

42. kamei sin tip-tip be

She holds tightly ASP

‘she holds tightly’

In Rongmei all these adverbial suffixes are not systematically ordered. Moreover, their places of occurrences are to some extent, not universally followed.

**4.3.2.7 Nominalizing suffix:** the nominalizing suffix in Rongmei is [mai]. It is added immediately to the verbal root.

Consider the following examples;

Root

with nominalizing suffix

[tu] ‘eat’

[tu-mai] ‘to eat’

[zip] ‘sleep’                      [zip-mai] ‘to sleep’

[thui] ‘push’                      [thui-mai] ‘to push’

[diŋ] ‘stand’                      [diŋ-mai] ‘to stand’

[pak] ‘run’                      [pak-mai] ‘to run’

**4.3.3 Moods:** there is no hard and fast rules that bifurcate moods and modality, it can be quoted as the two sides of the same coin. Grammatical category distinguishing modality (category covering indications either of a kind of speech act or of the degree of certainty with which something is said), originally, an inflectional category of verbs. For example in English constructions, the sentence, and ‘he left at once’ (declarative) differs from ‘leave at once’ (imperative).

Therefore, we can define mood as a grammatical category in specific languages and modality as a notional category which subsumes it.

In Rongmei this is indicated by these markers;[niŋ],[ni] which represents a wishful thinking and [khuni],[nu] which represents the possibility. It occurs post verbally.

Examples;

34.    oi nap    stu-ni ye  
         1p food eat-MOD  
         ‘I want to eat food’

35.    kamei koi    -ta niŋ ɲe  
         she home-ACC MOD  
         ‘she misses home’

36.    kaniu tat khuni nu ye  
         they go MOD1 MOD2

‘they might go’.

However, it is to be noted that the modality marker [khuni] cannot occur alone without [nu], whereas, [nu] can represent alone the mood of the speaker(s). In most of the cases the modals markers are followed immediately by aspect.

#### **4.4 Nouns**

A noun functions as a subject, object or complement of a verb in syntactic construction. However, in morphology, it takes grammatical categories of number, gender and case and can be preceded by prepositions in most languages. In Rongmei nouns can be divided into three main types namely,

- i) Basic nouns
- ii) Compound nouns and,
- iii) Derived nouns

##### **4.4.1 Basic Nouns**

Nouns in Rongmei may be defined as a class of words that can be followed by the markers for the categories of genders, numbers and cases, while the pronouns can be followed by the plural markers and case markers. Basic noun can be either mono-morphemic or poly-morphemic in Rongmei.

Examples

[mun]	‘flower’
[ngon]	‘boy’
[mansei]	‘man’
[si:]	‘dog’
[siniaŋ]	‘sand’

[kamaŋ]	‘tiger’
[abothai]	‘mango’
[chakheŋ]	‘mosquito’

#### 4.4.2 Compound nouns:

In Rongmei Compound nouns are formed by prefixing a free morpheme to another free morpheme. Therefore, the compound noun functions as a single noun. One stem functions as an attribute and the other stem functions as the head of the compound.

##### 4.4.2.1 Noun and Noun

Noun	+ Noun	
/dui/ ‘water’	/riang/ ‘rope’	/dui-riang/ ‘pipes’
/ganerŋ/ ‘mustard’	/theu/ ‘oil’	/ganerŋ-theu/ ‘mustard oil’
/guai/ ‘cow’	/koi/ ‘house’	/guai-koi/ ‘cowshed’
/naʔ/ ‘baby’	/bam/ ‘place’	/naʔ-bam/ ‘womb’
/bon/ ‘hand’	/juŋ/ ‘finger’	/ bon-juŋ/ ‘finger’
/phai/ ‘leg’	/juŋ/ ‘finger’	/phai-juŋ/ ‘toe’
/mai/ ‘fire’	/thin/ ‘liver’	/mai-thin/ ‘charcoal’

##### 4.1.2.2 Noun and Adjective

/nteu/ ‘stone’	/miumei/ ‘black’	s /nteu-miumei / ‘coal’
/guak/ ‘pig’	/daime/ ‘big/large’	/guak-daime/ ‘big pig’
/inrui/ ‘snake’	/diak/ ‘green’	/rui-diak/ ‘a type of green snake’
/che/ ‘paper’	/mphuanmei/ ‘white’	/che-impghanmei/ ‘white paper’
/asio/ ‘soya bean’	/khui/ ‘fermented’	/asio-khui/ ‘fermented soya’
/dui/ ‘water’	/lum/ ‘hot’	/dui-lum/ ‘warm water’

### 4.2.3 Noun and Verb

/dui/ 'water'	/jaŋmei/ 'to drink'	/dui-jaŋmei/ 'drinking water'
/dui/ 'waer'	/minmei/ 'cook'	/dui-minmei/ 'boiled water'
/tiŋ/ 'rain'	/riu/ 'dropping'	/tiŋ-riumei/ 'raining'
/nap/ 'food'	/tumei/ 'eat'	/nap-tumei/ 'eating'

### 4.5 Gender

According to Hockett's definition (1958:231), genders are classes of nouns reflected in the behaviour of the associated word. A language may have two or more genders, but the classification frequently corresponds to a real world distinction of sex (logical gender), At least in part, but often it does not fully classify the gender category.

Gender distinction in Rongmei is determined by the natural recognition of sex, that is, gender is one of the typological features of Tibeto-Burman languages shared by Rongmei.

On the basis of semantic-morphological criteria, nouns are primarily classified into two classes.

- 1) Animate
- 2) Inanimate.

Both human and non human nouns are differentiated for masculine and feminine genders.

It is to be noted that in Rongmei all inanimate nouns are considered as neuters.

In Rongmei there are different gender markers for both masculine and feminine though it may not be fully expressed. In case of (-human), (+animate) nouns, the words 'ci', kalu' are used to denote the masculine whereas the word 'kui', noi' are used to denote feminine.

Examples:

guai	'cattle'
guai+chi	'bull'
guai+kui	'cow'
si	'dog'
si+kui	'bitch'
si+lu/kalu	'male dog'

But let us take the case of human nouns. In human the masculine gender is denoted by the words like 'pu' (man/father), ingon (boy/male) whereas for feminine the words are pui(lady/mother) tuna(girl/female). However it is to be noted here again that gender markings especially in humans are not clearly presented but are abstract or covert.

There are various ways of expressing gender in Rongmei and this will be shown as follows;

a) To differentiate between this two gender the following nouns are lexically marked as masculine and feminine as in this kinship terms;

Examples;

<u>Masculine</u>	<u>Feminine</u>
kagon 'husband'	kanou 'wife'
ingon chabuan 'bachelor'	tuna chabuan 'maid/young girl'
pu father'	pui 'mother'
pou uncle'	nei 'aunty'
pou 'grandfather'	pei 'grandmother'.

#### 4.6 Quantifiers:

In Rongmei the quantifiers such as- /asek/, /geinganrap/, /katitna/ etc...And they follow the head nouns.

54. abothoi geinganrap

Mangoes many

‘Many mangoes’

55. loi asek

Pots few

‘Few pots’

56. mansei katitna

People few

‘few people’

It is interesting to note that in Rongmei, the words for ‘few’ and ‘little’ are almost the same in their semantic interpretations.

#### 4.7 Pronouns

Pronouns have been used in grammatical classifications of words to refer to a closed set of lexical items which can substitute for noun, or a noun phrase. Syntacticians prefer to call a pronoun as anaphors. Anaphors are linguistics units that refer to objects that have been introduced into discourse i.e. they express a partial or total identity between what is being denoted and what has already been identified. Take for examples in English, ‘I told Mary to open the cupboard and she did it’.here the words ‘she’ and ‘did it’ are referred to as anaphors, their interpretations from their antecedents ‘mary’ and

‘open the cupboard’ respectively. In Rongmei Pronouns are divided into five types namely;

- i). Personal pronoun
- ii). Possesive pronoun
- iii). Demonstrative pronoun
- iv). Reflexive pronoun
- v). Interrogatives pronoun.

#### 4.7.1 Personal pronouns:

The personal pronominal system in Rongmei distinguishes three persons namely, First person, Second person, and Third person and three numbers. However, there is dual system of pronouns but no honorific, and gender is not distinguished. The first person singular pronoun is [oi] ‘I’ and the plural form is [aniu] ‘we’. There is also the dual first person pronoun [ane] ‘we two’. The second person singular pronoun is [naŋ] ‘you’ and the plural form is [naŋniu] ‘you all’ and the dual form is [naŋnei] ‘you two’. The third personal pronouns is [kamei] ‘he/she’ and the plural form is [kaniu] ‘they/them’ and the dual form is [kanei] ‘they two’. Thus we can represent this and consider the personal pronouns from the given table.

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Dual</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> person</b>	<i>oi</i>	<i>a-nei</i>	<i>a-niu</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> person</b>	<i>naŋ</i>	<i>Naŋ-nei</i>	<i>Naŋ-niu</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>	<i>kamei</i>	<i>Ka-nei</i>	<i>Ka-niu</i>

**Fig 16: Table of Personal Pronouns in Rongmei**

#### 4.7.2 Possessive pronouns

A possessive pronoun indicates that the pronoun is acting as the marker of possession and defines who owns a particular object or person. Possessive pronoun in Rongmei is formed by the suffixation of [tuaŋ] which is the possessive marker to the Personal Pronouns as in Fig.6. Consider the following table below;

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Dual</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> person</b>	<i>a- tuaŋ</i>	<b>anei- tuaŋ</b>	<b>aniu- tuaŋ</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> person</b>	<b>naŋ- tuaŋ</b>	<b>Naŋ-nei- tuaŋ</b>	<b>Naŋ-niu- tuaŋ</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>	<b>ka- tuaŋ</b>	<b>Ka-nei- tuaŋ</b>	<b>Ka-niu- tuaŋ</b>

**Fig 17: Table of Possessive Pronouns in Rongmei.**

**4.7.3 Demonstrative pronouns:** demonstrative pronouns system in Rongmei distinguishes two determiners namely, [hei] which is ‘approximate’ and [heitei] which is the ‘distal’. The demonstrative [hei] denotes the person or object being spoken to or is near or currently present in the context of the verbal conversation. Whereas the demonstrative pronoun [heitei] denotes or indicates something not present in the context and time of that speech.

Examples

57. hei mun

DET flower

‘This flower’

58.   hei pu  
       DET man  
       ‘this man’
59.   heitei laguəŋ wo  
       DET bring IMP  
       ‘bring that’
60.   heitei la pat kan wo  
       DET take IMP  
       ‘take that out’

In sentences 59 and 60 above, the pronouns in its actual representations is more like an imperative /wo/ which is also in the sentence final position. Rongmei, exhibits split<sup>18</sup> or dual determiners. Consider the following examples;

61.   hei   pu   tei  
       DET man DET  
       ‘that man’
62.   hei   mun nun   tei  
       DET flower PL DET  
       ‘those flowers’

It is to be noted that there is no morphological difference between demonstrative pronouns and demonstrative noun attributes in Rongmei.

#### **4.7.4 Reflexive pronouns**

Reflexive pronoun is used in grammatical description to refer to a construction where the subject and the object relate to the same entity. Reflexive pronouns in Rongmei

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<sup>18</sup> Rongmei exhibits split determiners in case of demonstratives in certain environment.

are derived by prefixing the word [-rona] meaning ‘self’ to the personal pronouns [a-], [naŋ-] and [ka-]. Consider the following examples from the table below;

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Dual</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> person</b>	<i>a- rona</i>	<i>anei- rona</i>	<i>aniu- rona</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> person</b>	<i>naŋ- rona</i>	<i>naŋnei- rona</i>	<i>naŋniu- rona</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>	<i>ka- rona</i>	<i>kanei- rona</i>	<i>kaniu- rona</i>

**Fig 18: Table of Reflexive Pronouns in Rongmei.**

#### **4.7.5 Interrogatives pronouns**

The interrogative pronouns in Rongmei are, [thou] meaning ‘who, whom’, and [tabui] meaning ‘what’ and ‘which’. The former usually denotes human and the later denotes non-human.

Consider the following examples:

63. t<sup>h</sup>ou -ta jeu bam to/cho?

INTR acc look PROG QM

‘whom are you looking at?’

64. naŋ hei-pankhou thou ta kaheu na cho?

You DET PL INTR acc Like QM

‘who do you like among them’

In Rongmei these pronouns [thou] and [tabui] do not undergo any morphophonemic changes, when the case markers are added. Consider the following illustration;

[thou] ‘who/whom’

[tabui] 'what/which'

They can be case marked with case markers such as, [tuɑŋ] which is possessive, [tun] meaning 'locative' and [khouruai] which is 'ablative'.

Examples

65. t<sup>h</sup>ou tuɑŋ?

Who POSS

'whose?'

66. tabui tun ?

What LOC

'where?'

67. tabui khouruai?

What ABL

'where from?'

#### 4.8 Verbs

Verbs in Rongmei can be defined as roots which can take the morphemes for tenses, aspects and moods. Verbs are not marked for persons, numbers and genders in Rongmei. Root verbs may be divided into two according to their structures namely; (i) simple verbs and (ii) derived/complex verbs. Most of the simple root verbs are monosyllabic while the derived forms are formed so to say through compounding. Verbs in Rongmei are either transitive or intransitive.

Structure of roots verbs in Rongmei:

**4.8.1 Simple root verbs:** simple root consists of a root and also with absolutely nothing else attached to it. Simple roots in Rongmei are free morphemes, that is, they can stand independently on their own in larger constructions.

tat	‘go’
nui	‘laugh’
sam	‘fly’

**4.8.2 Transitive and intransitive verbs:** there are no separate markers for transitive and intransitive verbs in Rongmei. Transitive verbs are those which can take a direct object whereas intransitive are those which cannot take direct object but can have an indirect object.

<u>Transitive</u>		<u>Intransitive</u>	
tu	eat	nui	‘laugh’
zang	‘drink’	zip	‘sleep’
ti	‘gives’	dings	‘stand’

**4.8.3 Compound verbs:**

Compound verbs are formed by combining two or more root morphemes together, which can be represented as main verbs and auxiliary verbs.

**4.8.3.1 Explicator compound verbs**

An explicator compound verb is a morphological construction of two verbs V1 +V2, where the first verb is the predicating verb and the second verb an explicator which modifies the meaning of directionality. The combination of V1+V2 becomes one lexeme.

The V2 is not the predicating verbs because it does not give the main meaning, main meaning is supplied by V1. The V2 is lexicalized and operated as a bound morpheme because on its own, it does not give the same meaning. (Abbi, 1990).

Rongmei has a small amount of explicator verbs usage which forms as a closed set of verb functioning as explicators. Like any other Tibeto-Burman languages V1V2 sequences in Rongmei cannot be altered and V2 cannot take the tense markers.

Examples:

73. oi apple kaguaina ta tu-ngam-pari the  
 I apple all -ACC eat- ECV Pst ASP  
 ‘I ate up all the apples’

**4.8.3.2 Conjunct verbs:** a conjunct verb is a sequence constituted of a noun+verb or an adjective+verb.

Examples:

ton khang	‘to do’
ton ton khang	‘to work’

**4.8.3.3 Causative:** causative in Rongmei is morphologically marked. it is formed by adding the ‘ti’ meaning ‘give’ to the verb root whether the verb is transitive or intransitive.

Examples:

Non-causative	causative
hou ‘see’	ti-hou
tu ‘eat’	ti-tu
nui ‘laugh’	ti-nui

zang 'drink'

ti-zang

**4.8.4 Auxiliary verbs:** auxiliary verb are a small set of verbs subordinate to the main lexical verb, which help to make distinctions in mood, aspects and tense etc. In Rongmei there are two types of auxiliary verbs (i) main auxiliary and (ii) modal auxiliary.

**4.8.4.1 Main auxiliary verb:** expresses the meaning of 'be' and 'have'. It functions as a copula in non-verbal predicates and uses obligatorily in locative predicates, past tense and in stative sense of possessions.

Examples:

74. kamei koi khou bamme  
He house -LOC PROG ASP  
'He is at his house'

75. oi doctor khuan ne  
I<sub>p</sub> doctor 'be' Pst ASP  
'I was a doctor'.

**4.9.4.2 Modal auxiliary verbs:** diu 'can' and khuni 'might/may' are the modal auxiliaries in Rongmei and they are in bound form.

Examples:

76. oi tat -diu e  
I go MOD -PRE  
'I can go'

77. anei k<sup>h</sup>outei tat k<sup>h</sup>uni nu e  
We there go MOD-ASP  
'We may go there'

## CHAPTER 5

### Syntactical Typology of Rongmei

#### 5.1 Introduction:

*Syntax is the study of grammatical relations between words and other units within the sentence. Syntax and morphology have separate functions but they are closely associated in its usage in the formation of a grammatical sentence.*

*“Syntax is the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in a particular language. Syntactic investigation of a given language has as its goal the construction of a grammar that can be viewed as a device of some sort for producing the sentences of a language under analysis. One function of the theory is to provide a general method for selecting a grammar for each language, given a corpus of sentences of this language. The fundamental aim in the linguistics analysis of a language L is to separate the grammatical sequences which are the sentences of L from the ungrammatical sequences which are not sentences of L. the grammar of L will thus be the device that generates all of the grammatical sequences of L and none of the ungrammatical ones”*  
(Chomsky 1995, p13)

#### 5.2 Basic Word order

Word order has been at the centre of many discussions of correlations between languages features, and Greenberg (1963, opcit) showed that the order found in a number of constructions correlated with the basic order of SOV. Thus, based on Greenberg’s framework there arises the notion of word order type. Greenberg demonstrated that there are correlations between various features of ordering.

For example, in his universal 2 he states;

‘In languages with post positions, the genitive almost always precedes’.

Greenberg (1966) examined a number of logically independent word order parameters, including in particular Word order in most of the Tibeto-Burman languages have the basic word order of SOV (subject, object and verb), however at the clause level and phrase level it varies in the pattern of order. Word orders in different languages are not always fixed. In some cases, even in the written form, word order tends to shift. In English for example, the word order is SVO, and it shows variations in word order patterning in certain constructions.

Greenberg also states that a vast majority of languages have several variant orders but a single dominant one. Logically, there are six possible orders; SVO, SOV, VSO, VOS, OSV, and OVS. Of these six, however, only three normally occur as dominant orders. According to Greenberg SVO and VSO are the only word orders capable of being the dominant ones. The three which do not occur at all, or at least are excessively rare, are VOS, OSV, and OVS. In support to Greenberg’s statement, Steele (1978) also states that ‘most languages allow variations on their basic word order’. In fact Greenberg paves way to the discussion of word order in various languages of the world in his Word Order universals. The variation in word order is not only in case of Rongmei alone, but almost all languages of the world encounter these variations. Moreover, it can be seen through the notable work of the prominent scholars in the field, like Greenberg, Hale etc.

Hale (1992) state that ' In general, I concur with this characterization of Warlpiri word-order, though I do not agree with the implication that a so-called' "Pragmatically ordered language necessarily lacks a basic word order. Papago, I maintain, shows that the

correlation implied here cannot be correct Papago has a basic word order yet it seems to qualify as a "Practically by ordered language". And, of course, there is no necessary correlation between pragmatic ordering and the lack of a basic word order'.

Swartz and Hale seem to justify their arguments that a pragmatically ordered language does not necessary lack a basic word-order.

Rongmei exhibits SOV as the basic word-order in the unmarked pattern which can be fully justified in sentences with structure clause as given above.

The normal word order of the Tibeto-Burman languages is of SOV<sup>19</sup> and like any other Tibeto-Burman languages, Rongmei also shares this syntactic features of the family i.e. the normal order of word in a marked sentence is SOV.

The following sentences show the order of words in Rongmei.

78) oi nap tu ye

I rice eat-Pre ASP

'I eat rice'.

79) naŋ a-ta hou ye

You me-ACC saw- Pst ASP

'You saw me'

80) guai phoirio tu ye

Cow grass eat-Perf ASP

'Cow eats grass'

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<sup>19</sup> Greenberg (1966).

From these given examples we can know that SOV are the most common type of word order in Rongmei but there are also some other word order like SVO, VSO etc which means to say that Rongmei language also exhibits flexibility. To be clear we can observe from the given examples;

81) kamei a-k<sup>h</sup>aŋ lairik ti ye

She 1p-NOM book give Pre ASP

(S O1-O2 V)

‘she give the book to me’

82) kamei lairik ak<sup>h</sup>aŋ ti ye

She book to-NOM give-Pst ASP

(S O2-O1 V)

‘she gave me a book’.

We can see from the above examples that the occurrence of the object can be interchanged which shows that Rongmei has a relatively free word order. Thus, Rongmei as a Tibeto-Burman language represents the patterns as explain by Zograph (1982) which states that;

***‘The normal word order in the Tibeto-Burman sentence is SOV-Subject, Object and Predicate, though this is not always the case and everywhere it does not follows’.***

It could be mention here that in case of the verbs which do not take a direct object i.e. intransitive, the order of the sentences is S+V as exemplified in the following sentences;

(S+V)

83) oi tat bam me

I go-Prog ASP

‘I am going’.

84) Naŋ nui bam me

You laugh-Prog ASP

‘You are laughing’

85) Kaniu guaŋ puni

They come-Fut

‘They will come’.

The above sentences show/s that the consistencies of (S+V) and (V) in the final position in Rongmei are clearly noticed.

### 5.2.1 Order of Indirect-Direct object

In rongmei the *indirect object (IO) precedes the direct object (DO) in the unmarked word order.*

Example: tom roi ros khaŋ mun ti ye

tom NOM IO DAT DO give+pst

‘Tom gave flowers to rose’

### 5.2.2 Genitive

If a language has post positions, Greenberg’s universal states that genitive precedes the governing noun. Likewise, *in Rongmei, the genitive precedes the governing (head) noun.* In rongmei the genitive marker is ‘tuaŋ’ and there is an agreement between possessive and genitive markers.

Examples: sita tuaŋ

Sita GEN

‘Sita’s’

Possessive marker in rongmei is also indicated by ‘tuaŋ’.

Ram tuaŋ si

Ram POSS dog

‘Ram’s Dog’

### 5.2.3 Post-position

Just like the entire verb-final languages, *Rongmei also has postpositions which follow the noun*. Canonical structures:

NP-PP.

Examples: deli khou

Deli LOC

‘at delhi’

### 5.2.4 Negation

The word ‘negation’ comes from the latin word ‘Negatio’ meaning ‘Denial’. It is a grammatical term for the process that results in changing a positive (affirmative) sentence into a negative one. Negation in natural language is very different from and much more complicated than negation in logic or mathematics. According to the encyclopedia of language and linguistics vol. 5, the linguistics operation of negation consists in denying the truth value of the negated sentence or of a part of a sentence by applying a negation to a sentence like;

‘Bill likes to work’ = ‘bill does not like to work’

i.e [it is not true that [john likes to work]].

*In Rongmei, the negative markers is ‘-mak’ meaning ‘does not’ and occurs post verbally which is however, suffix to the verb ‘to be’.*

oi guan mak ge

1stP MV NEG

‘I won’t come’.

Rongmei also exhibits negative participles such as ‘zat’ which is prefix to the NEG MKR ‘mak’ meaning ‘never’ as in;

Examples: kamei guan zat mak ge

3<sup>rd</sup>P come never NEG S.M

‘she never came’.

### **5.2.5 Comparision**

In rongmei like any other TB languages, *the marker of comparisions follows the Standard of Comparision*. Comparison marker in rongmei is ‘suan’ and standard marker is ‘ran’

Examples: tom sita suan keu ranne

Tom sita MKR COMP tall STD COMP

‘tom is taller than sita’

### **5.2.6 Adjectives**

Adjectives in Rongmei are derived from the verbs by adding the derivational suffixes such as [mai] to the static verbs. These types of suffixes can be found in most of the Tibeto-Burman languages. Therefore Rongmei being a language of this family/group shares typologically similar features. The following are the adjectives in Rongmei which express the inherent states such as, quality, quantity, colour, and taste etc.

1. Adjectives of quality:
2. Adjectives of quantity
3. Adjectives of taste
4. Adjectives of colour
5. Adjectives of dimension

Adjectives in Rongmei usually follow the head noun they qualify and it is also one of the characteristics of SOV languages as observed by Greenberg;

Language Universal 5: “if a language has a dominant SOV word order and the genitive follows the governing noun, then adjectives likewise follow the head noun”.

Example;

68. ingon tanmei

Man strong

‘Strong man’

69. tuna hougaimei

Girl beautiful

‘Beautiful girl’

Adjectives do not undergo change for gender, however, the case markers and plural markers are attached to the adjectives, not to the head nouns.

Example;

70. guai-chi hengmai

Bull-(GEN) red

‘Red bull’

71. ka-sam sengmai

Her hair long

‘Her long hair’

72. ka-sam sengmai

His hair long

‘His long hair’

### 5.2.7 Classifiers

Classifiers are generally rich in Tibeto-Burman languages, Rongmei being a language of this group makes use of the Classifiers for denoting the semantic classification of the referent on the basis of the qualities of the noun, that is, its physical shape, size, state etc. classifiers in this language are predominantly of mono-syllabic structure. They occur with numerals and the classifiers precede the numerals. Classifiers usually follow the nouns.

Following are the classifiers of Rongmei:

i) Human nouns take the classifiers /gan/.

43. gan khat

‘One man’

44. gan kanei

‘Two men’

Example from others:

45. ingon gan-kanei

Men Class -two

‘two men’.

ii) Nouns denoting (-human, +animate) take the classifiers /a-/

46. si a-khat

Dog class-one

‘one dog’

iii) Nouns denoting plants trees etc. take the classifiers /a-/

47. t<sup>h</sup>iŋbaŋ a-k<sup>h</sup>at

Tree class-one

‘one tree’

iv) Nouns denoting long things take the classifier /seŋ/.

48. pen seŋmei

Pen class-long

‘Long pen’

v) Nouns denoting big things take the classifiers /doi/

49. si doimei

Dog class-big

‘Big dog’

50. guaic<sup>h</sup>i doimei

Bull class-big

‘big bull’

It is to be noted that in Rongmei there are lots of other nouns which does not take classifiers.

(Given some examples).

51. bu padei

Month four

‘four month’

52. napkuak pañuh

Plates five

‘five plates’

53. gari charuk

Vehicles six

‘six vehicles’

### **5.3 Noun Phrase**

A noun phrase is that element in a sentence which functions as the subject, object and complement in post positional phrase.

The noun phrase in Rongmei may consist of a head noun and one or more attributives which precedes or follows the head noun. It may be of the following types-

i).The attributive noun phrase

ii).The co-ordinate noun phrase, and

iii).The appositive noun phrase.

In Rongmei noun phrase consists of the head noun which may be used by one or more modifiers. Generally, modifiers may be an adjective, possessive, a numeral or quantifier. Consider the following examples; (N+ADJ)

119) ingon tanmei

Man strong

‘strong man’

120) koi doimei

House big

‘big house’

121) si miumei

Dog black

'black dog'

When the head noun is modified by an adjective and a quantifier, word order is that, the head noun is followed by the adjective, and followed by the quantifier as exemplified below;

122) ingon daimei kanai (N+ADJ+QUANTF)

Man big twos

'two big man'

123) koi thiammei kanai

House small two

'two small houses'

When the numeral is present in the noun phrase then the plural marker can both be used.

Considered the following examples;

124) tuna kalungaime i nun

Girl beautiful PL

'Beautiful girl'

125) tuna kalungaime i padeih

Girl beautiful four

'four beautiful girl'

It is to be noted here that the modifiers following the head noun is reversed under certain conditions. If the noun is followed by postposition to express the case, the modifiers gets preposition as shown below:

126) keumai ingon ta (ADJ+(N+CASE))

Tall man-ACC

‘to tall man’

127) keumai ingon khouroi

Tall man-Ablative

‘from tall man’

128) keumai ingon tuan

Tall man-POSS

‘of tall man’

In the case of possessive, the modifier precedes the head noun. The order is possessive+noun phrase, as shown in the following examples;

129) a-tuan lairik

Me POSS book

‘my book’

130) ka -tuan gari

He POSS vehicle

‘his vehicle’

131) aniu- tuan thingban

We+POSS tree

‘our trees’.

### 5.3.1 The attributive noun phrase

An attributive noun phrase is made up of a head noun and one or more attributes that may precede or follow the head noun.

In the ‘noun + attributive’ construction of this language, the attributes that follows may be an adjective, a verbal adjective, a classifier, a numeral, a quantifier or a demonstrative.

For examples:-

132. mun            hougai-mei  
flower            beautiful  
‘beautiful flower’

133. napkuak        bak            kan-mei        tei  
plate            break        PERF-NZR    DET  
‘the plate that broke’

134. ntumei        gan-    panguhs  
girl            Class five  
‘five girls’

135. jiukui        daimei            ak<sup>hət</sup>    nai- ye  
she goat    big            one    Pre ASP  
‘There is one big she goat’

136. kaniu    gan    padei            siloŋ            tat    kan    -ne  
they    CL    four            shillong        go    PERF    ASP  
‘four of them went to shillong’

137. kaniu meiguaina khou-tei bamme  
 they all there-DET PROG ASP

‘All of them are there’

An attribute noun phrase in which the attributes precede the head noun is invariably a genitival phrase. This is composed of a head noun preceded by a noun substantive or pronoun in genitive relationship with the head noun.

Example:

138. naŋ -napú ‘your son’  
 2P+son

139. john tuaŋ-si ‘John’s dog’  
 John GENdog

140. naŋ-kai ‘your house’  
 2P+house

141. meri gon ‘mary’s husband’  
 Meri gon

142. a- niu- tuaŋ ‘our’s’  
 1p+PL+GEN

143. tom (tuaŋ) lu ‘tom’s song’  
 Tom (GEN) song

There may be more than one noun in genitival relationship preceding the head noun as in the following examples.

144. a- pu- tuaŋ ophis ‘my father’s office’  
 1P+father+GEN office

145. a- chailu- tuaŋ pammei      ‘my sister’s friend’  
       1P+sister+GEN friend
146. a-pammei –tuaŋ -kai      ‘my friend’s house’  
       1P+friend+GEN house

A noun phrase may also contain attributes which precede and attribute which follow at the same time. For example-

147. a-tuaŋ nri gaimei  
       My      axe      good  
       ‘My good axe’
148. a-guai-(kui)      daime  
       my cow(+FEM)      big  
       ‘My big cow’

### 5.3.2 Coordinate noun phrase

Coordinate noun phrase are formed by joining two or more nouns phrases. These head nouns are linked by a coordinator which may be consider as a connective or adjunctive. In Rongmei ‘**khatni**’ acts as a connective and ‘**rammak-gethei**’ functions as a disjunctive. Consider the following examples;

149. ingonmei khatni tumei  
       Boy      and      girl  
       ‘boy and girl’.
150. kamei khatni naŋ  
       He and you  
       ‘he and you’.

151. tuna hougaimai khatni ingon  
Girl beautiful and boy  
'Beautiful girl and boy'

Disjunctive '**ramakgethei**'.

152. sian ramakgethei nap  
Money or rice  
'money or rice'
153. guaichi ramakgethei guaikui  
Bull or cow  
'bull or cow'.
154. dui ramakgethei inteu  
Water or stone  
'water or stone'.

#### **5.4 Verb phrase**

Verb phrase may consist of a verb (V) + a noun phrase (NP). The verb phrase in English and other Indo-Aryan/ Indo-European languages has different structure, since the whole phrase can carry information about Mood, Tense, Voice, Modality and Aspects unlike the noun phrase (NP). Verb phrase has two functional parts;

- 1). The Auxiliary, a grammatical morpheme carrying information about Mood, Tense, Voice, Modality and Aspects.
- 2). The Main Verb, a lexical morpheme carrying its lexical information (usually an inflection).

Verb phrase in Rongmei may consist of a lexical verb or a 'be' verb which must obligatorily be present, and there are some other optional elements such as adverbs which generally precede the verb. There are simple sentences in which the verb phrase consists of only if a verb as in the following examples.

155. oi tu ye

I<sub>p</sub> eat- ASP.MKR

'I eat'

156. nang guaŋ puni

You come-FUT

'you will come'

157. aniu po bam me

We read-PROG-ASP

'we are reading'

158. inruai sam me

Birds fly- ASP

'bird flies'.

When the VP takes two NPs, the first NP is the direct object and the second an indirect object i. e. the NP function as direct object is obligatory element as exemplified below.

159. oi ka-k<sup>h</sup>aŋ lairik ti ye

I he DAT book givePst ASP

'I gave him a book'

160. kamei Ram k<sup>h</sup>aŋ c<sup>h</sup>i<sup>t</sup>hi hi ye

She ram\_DAT. Letter write-Pst ASP

‘she wrote a letter to Ram’

161. kamei daulanei a-k<sup>h</sup>aŋ sian ti ye

She yesterday 1p-DAT money give-Pst ASP

‘She gave me a pen yesterday’.

162. kamei aniuk<sup>h</sup>aŋ si lian lou puni

He we-DAT dog show -FUT

‘he will show a Dog to us’.

It is to be noted that the post-verbal elements formed in Rongmei consists of the aspect marker, the modal, future marker(which is marked for future only) and the ergative marker as shown below;

163. oi tat bam me

I go-PROG ASP

‘I am going’

164. kamei tu taŋ khe

She eat-Pst ASP

‘she has eaten’

165. oi ton tei ton nu ye

I work-ACC/DET do-MOOD-ASP

‘I can do the work’

166. injianlouna tat ro

Pol- goes IMP-MKR

‘Please go’.

In the verb phrase consisting of verb and adverb, the adverb precedes the verb as shown in the following examples;

167. oi khouhei bamme

I LOC-here PROG ASP

‘I am here’

168. nan khoutei bamme

You LOC-there PROG ASP

‘You are there’

169. kamei khouhei guan puni

She LOC-here come-FUT

‘She will come here’

170. sam delhi tun daulanei tei tat kan ne

Sam delhi-LOC yesterday-ACC go Pst ASP

‘sam went to delhi yesterday’

171. kaniu intau nan ta hou kanne

They now you ACC see-Pst ASP

‘They have seen you just now’.

172. rei rei na gut ro

Silent-silent IMP

‘Come silently’.

173. nan katumma guan o

You quickly come-IMP

‘You come quickly’.

Therefore the underlying structure of the verb phrase in Rongmei may be presented as;

VP (ADV) - (NP1-case) - (NP2-case) V

#### 5.4.1 Subordination

There are three basic forms of clausal subordination in Rongmei;

- 1). Subordinate clauses are formed by post posing the particle and participle of the root verb.
- 2). Complement clauses are introduced by zero complementizer,
- 3). Adverbial clause is formed by using subordinators.

#### 5.4.2 Conditional clause

Conditional clause in Rongmei is introduced by post position conditional particle ‘-ethei’ i.e. ‘if’ to the root verb. -ethei does not occur in isolation, it is always bound to verbs. In case of showing conditional elements, the conditional clause precedes the conclusion without any exception. Thus, the use of conditional clause in Rongmei is a characteristic feature of an SOV language as observed by Greenberg.

**“In conditional statements, the conditional clause precedes the conclusion as the normal order in all languages”**

Consider the following examples;

174. kamei ti ethei oi tu puni

He give-cond. I eat FUT

‘If he gives I will eat’

175. oi tat rethei kamei guaŋ puni

I go-cond. She come-FUT

‘If I go she will come’.

From the above examples, it is clear that –ethei occurs in the post verbal position or at the end of the clause. It never occurs adjacent to the subject as evident in the ungrammaticality of the subject.

It is also to be noted here that the use of -ethei is obligatory, i. e. we cannot delete it, the result would be an ungrammatical sentence. Consider the following examples;

176. oi ti naŋ tu puni

I give you eat FUT

177. kamei guaŋ oi tat puni

He come I go-FUT

178. naŋ guaŋ oi tat ni tuhamme

You come I go FUT-Neg.

### 5.4.3 Relative clause

Relative clause in Rongmei is introduced by the particle in which the relative clause always precedes the head noun with no relative pronoun. In other words, Rongmei exhibits externally headed relative clause where the relativised nouns occur to the right of the clause. Relativisation in Tibeto-Burman language differs from that of indo-aryan languages where the relative clause is introduced by the relative pronoun.

Consider the following examples;

The head NP which is relativised is in the subject position;

179. k<sup>h</sup>ouhei guan mei ingon tei a-pammei ye

Here come partl- boy/man my friend ASP

‘the boy who came here is my friend’.

180. miumei amieona tei a-tuan ye

Black partl- cat ACC POSS ASP

‘the black cat is mine’.

181. nan ti mei pen tei amon the

You give partl- pen lost ASP

‘the pen which you gave is lost’.

The head NP which is relativised is in the subject position;

182. oi roi chithi timei pu ta hou ye

I DAT letter give man ACC see ASP

‘I saw the man who gave me the letter’.

183. k<sup>h</sup>ouhei luyme pu ta kamei thai ye

Here live partl- man ACC he know ASP

‘he knows the man who lives here’.

We can see from the above examples that the relative clause never occur after the relativised noun in which the relativised noun is the object subject position.

It can be stated that the relativised noun is in the object position when the causative marker ‘ti’ is added to the relativised noun.

Consider the following examples;

184. pak tat mei ingon tei nim tou ye

Run partl- man catch -ASP

‘the man who runaway is caught’.

185. kamei roi kasiamei hi tei akhaŋ ti o

He NOM make- Part Boat i-DAT gives IMP

‘give me the boat which he made’.

In Rongmei the relativised NP or the embedded NP cannot be deleted that is both are used obligatorily as is clear from the ungrammatically of the following sentences.

186. naŋ roi ti mei kuaŋ tei oi suman the

You NOM give Partl- watch ACC I lost ASP

‘I lost the watch which you gave’

Rongmei does not allow the internally headed relative clause construction which contains the relative nouns. Consider the following examples;

187. pen mphaŋmei pu a-koi khou guaŋ e

pen get-Partl boy/man POSS house LOC come ASP

‘the boy/man who got the pen came to my house’

188. hougai-mei tunapui tei a-pammei ye

Beautiful-partl lady ACC POSS Friend ASP

‘the woman who is beautiful is my friend’.

It is important to note that the relative participle and its relativised noun cannot be separated from each other as shown in the following examples;

189. oi timei khuaj tei naj suman ne

I give Partl watch you lost ASP

'you lost the pen which I gave'.

190. Hougaimei tunapui tei a-pammei ye

Beautiful partl lady ACC POSS Friend ASP

'The woman who is beautiful is my friend'.

It is clear from the above given examples that Rongmei does not follow the real/other Tibeto-Burman relative clause construction in which the relative clause is expressed by the participle, but not the relative pronoun. Being a Tibeto-Burman language Rongmei has no relative pronoun. The absence of relative pronoun is one of the important features of Tibeto-Burman languages. Thus, the relative clause construction in dimasa can classify under the participle type;

#### **5.4.4 Complement clause**

The complement clause in Rongmei is not introduced by any overt complementizer that is, there is zero complementizer associated with each clause. Consider the following examples;

191. kabuj deb be tumei kamei sa ye

COMP. he hungry PST he say ASP

'he said (that) he was hungry'.

192. mary neu ye tumei kamei thai ye

COMP. ill PRE he knows ASP

'he knows that mary is ill'.

193. cham noi bo tuna ɔi ka-ta than ne

COMP. news Exist. QM I he ACC Ask ASP

'I ask him (that) is there news'

We see that in Rongmei complement can be indicative, interrogative and imperative as no overt complementizer is associated.

### 5.5 Types of Sentence

Sentences may be viewed essentially as the combinations of nouns and verbs. viz. the combinations of a verb with one or more nouns. Therefore sentences can be simply classified as the ways of arranging nouns and verbs in a myriad of ways so as to create different experience with words which are expressed in various combinations with their subordinates. It has probably not been apparent that for any language a limited number of patterns of sentence structure occur. Thus, that is to say that it is possible to make a generalization about the types of sentence patterns that occurs in the given set of any language. Sentence in Rongmei usually contains a noun phrase as the subject and a predicate phrase which is a predication of the subject. A predicate phrase may be a noun phrase or a verb phrase or may contain both. A predicate phrase alone may constitute a sentence. The subject with its adjuncts is followed by the direct object, the indirect object and the verb, the adverb either precede or follow the verb.

The surface order of a sentence in Rongmei would be:

Sentence → Subject + Predicate

Sentence → ± Sub ± IO ± DO ± V

Following are the illustrated examples of sentences in Rongmei;

86) oi ka-ta hou e

Ipsg 3psg acc saw Pst ASP

“I saw her”

87) hei a-tuan car ye

Dems 1prsg Gen car Pre ASP

“This is my car”

88) john bas-khouroi skul tat re

john bus+Abl school go Pst ASP

‘john goes to school by bus’

89) lairik tebəl rukhou nai ye

book table on+LOC exist Pre ASP

‘The book is on the table’

As we see from the above examples, the sentence may have only one noun which directly involved in performing the action, it may also contain two or three nouns which may directly or indirectly involved in the event. Hence the sentence may be intransitive, transitive or ditransitive.

Traditionally, a distinction has always been made between ‘transitive’ and intransitive’ sentences. Transitive sentences have more than one noun that is directly involved in the event, the second noun usually refers to the undergoer in an action, and for example “the goalkeeper caught the ball whereas, intransitive sentences have only one noun directly involved in the event. The doer of the action, For example ‘the tree is falling’. The third noun or ‘ditransitive’ sentence refers to the recipient of the action involved; for example, ‘the shopkeeper sent the customer a bill’.

Let’s consider the following sentences;

## Examples

90. aleu-nun palup bamme  
child+PL play Pre PROG ASP

‘The children are playing’

91. mpuan aliu bam -me  
Wind blow PRG Pre ASP

‘The wind is blowing’

92. kamei jip kan the  
he sleep Perf ASP

‘He slept’

93. kamei guan ni-tuham-me  
She come ?- NEG ASP

‘she will not come’

In a transitive sentence, more than one noun (thing) is directly involved in the event (action). Here the first noun refers to the doer of the action and the second noun refers to the undergoer of an action. When the third noun is present in the sentence, it is a ditransitive sentence and the third noun here are the recipient or the beneficiary involved in the action.

Let’s consider the following examples of transitive and ditransitive sentences in Rongmei.

94. mary epal tu- we  
Mary apple eat Pre ASP

‘mary eats apple’

95. tom           skul-tun      tat      kan   ne  
       Tom           skul-LOC   go      Pst   ASP  
       'tom went to school'
96. bada   lu                   suan-   -ne  
       bada   song               sing    Pre ASP  
       'bada sings a song'
97. john   a-khaŋ lairik   ti      lou   -ye  
       john   1P+ACC      book   give   PERF   ASP  
       'john gave me a book'
98. jane   john-ta           əlem                   ncham lou   -ye  
       jane   john+ACC      dance                teach   PERF   ASP  
       'jane teaches john a dance'

In Languages like Rongmei which has a case system, all the events and actions are identifiable by their case markings. For example, the first noun.i.e.the one occurring alone in the intransitive sentences and the 'doer' in transitive ones, are the nominative case, and the second noun is in the accusative case and the third in the dative case.

Stative and equative types of sentences are also found in Rongmei. These types of the two sentences are characterized by the presence of the verb '*be*' as in English. In Rongmei the stative sentences may consist of one noun and an adjective which describe the noun. And the verb '*be*' which is an auxiliary may or may not present in the sentence. In an equative sentence there is an equational relationship between two nouns, the order sometimes can be reversible as in the examples; 'the leaves are brown' (Stative) 'harry is the ships' doctor' 'the ship's doctor is Harry' (Equative).

Following are the examples of stative and equative sentence types found in Rongmei:-

99. john kapum keu- -we  
John physique/body high NOM  
'john is tall'

100. t<sup>h</sup>iqnui mou -ye  
leaves brown ASP  
'The leaves are brown'

101. k<sup>h</sup>ouriq-pang dai -ye  
animal PL big ASP  
'The animals are huge (big)'

102. kamei əpui suanrei-ye  
he+DET my mother sister ASP  
'she is my mother sister'.

103. john-hei a-chai pammei-ye  
john+DET my brother friend ASP  
'John is my brother's friend'

In the above sections/ paragraph, we have discuss/characterized sentences as a combinations of a verb and one or more nouns, which in turn have associated with the modifier(e.g. adjectives and so on.) and linked to the verb by relational device (case inflection or preposition). Sentences were distinguished by type according to the number of nouns determined by the verb and their relationships to the verb and in some cases to each other.

The sentences may also be classified as simple, compound and complex sentences.

### 5.5.1 Simple Sentence:

Sentences can be classified as the arrangements of words where there is the combination of nouns and verbs.i.e. The combination of a verb with one or more nouns.

A simple sentence consists of one main clause in the surface phrase structure.

Examples in Rongmei:-

104. hei si

Det dog

‘this dog’

105. nanjan t<sup>h</sup>ou cho?

2P+name who QMK

‘What is your name?’

106. kamei hougai -ye

she beautiful Pre ASP

‘She is beautiful’

107. kamei lu suan bamme

she song sing PROG ASP

‘She is singing a song’

108. mun nai ye

Flower PRE PROG ASP

‘there is a flower’

### 5.5.2 Compound sentences:

A compound sentence is composed of two or more independent or main clause connected either by the conjunctive coordinators or the disjunctive coordinators.

Examples in Rongmei:

109. oi lu suan ye kumma kamei alem -me  
i song sing NOM and he dance Pst ASP  
'I sing a song and he dance'
110. kanou kanaí kagan lau tat kan ne  
Wife and husband field go PERF ASP  
'Husband and wife went to the field'
111. apu kanaí apui Deli-khou bamme  
my father and my mother Delhi+LOC PROG ASP  
'My father and my mother are in Delhi'
112. apao ramakgethei apei khou guan puni  
my grandfather or my grandmother here come FUT  
'My grandfather or my grandmother will come here'
113. nan tu- tho kummakgethei oi tu puni  
you play-REQ or else i eat ASP  
'You eat or else I will eat'

### 5.5.3 Complex Sentences:

In any given sentences, the verbs are always considered or regarded as the central element which determine how many nouns may be present in a sentence including any non-substitutable relational items (case inflections and prepositions). The function of the verb as the determining element in a sentence derives from a 'dependency' view of

sentence structure. A complex sentence is built up of a main clause preceded by one or more sub-ordinate clauses.

Examples in Rongmei:

114. naŋ palup sini oi palup lag-ge  
 you play even if i play NEG SUFF  
 ‘Even if you play I will not play’

115. kamei sarem-me tumei kamei thai -ye  
 she lie NOM that he know Pre ASP  
 ‘he know that she is lying’

116. khou guaŋmei pu-tei əpammei- -ye  
 here come+ man+DET my friend Pre ASP  
 ‘One who comes here is my friend’

117. kamei tat kan-mei -ta oi kaheu -ye  
 he go PERF NZR ACC i want Pre ASP  
 ‘I want him to go away’

118. oi deli-khou bam-khou ka-ta hou-we  
 i delhi+LOC exist+LOC 3P+ACC see Pst ASP  
 ‘I saw him while I was in delhi’

It is now possible to say that, the intransitive sentence opens up a subject and predicate slot, the ditransitive sentence opens up a subject slot, two object slots and predicate slots and so on. Thus, we can summarize the structure of the sentence types that we have discussed as follow.

Intransitive → subject + Predicate

Transitive → subject + object + predicate

Ditransitive → subject + Object + Object + predicate

Stative/Equative → subject + complement + Predicate

The surface order of sentence in Rongmei may be given as:

Sentence → ± subject ± IO ± DO ± verb

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Findings and Conclusions**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary and conclusion to the works presented in the preceding chapters of this thesis.

As we know typology represents an approach to the study of linguistics structure that differs in certain important respects from the generative and functionalist approaches (Wascow, this volume; Van Valin, this volume), although it is closer in spirit to the latter (Croft, 2008). Typology is comparative in nature. The goals of typology and historical linguistics are quite different, however, although the results of each are essential to the other. Typology examines a broad sample of languages in order to discover universals of language structure and propose explanations of those language universals. Thus, due to this reason, typology is linked to language universals.

Typology in the linguistic sense is more than a classification of how languages differ in their structure. It leads to certain generalization that constrains how much languages can vary; those generalizations are universals. However, one cannot simply generalize the whole concept from a mere perspective without truly analyzing a language datas.

In a strictker sense, typology for tht matter brings about certain changes to the scenario of language studies where the principles and parameters of language are exclusively considered.

## **6.2 Summary and findings**

This section will summarize the preceding chapters of this thesis. Moreover, many aspects and points from the preceding chapters will be reconsidered for further studies.

In chapter one, the rongmei people are introduced and their cultural and traditional history are presented. In this chapter, the language affiliation of the rongmei is also highlighted. Linguistic classification of the rongmei is also view as from the perspective of different linguists indirectly. Rongmei as we know now belongs to the Tibeto-burman family which falls or is categorized under the Kuki-Chin-Naga sub-group. Rongmei as spoken in the present area of study, i.e. Tamenglong ae specifically observed and certain typological traits are found which are given in the following chapters' summarization. Rongmei language due to its geographical distribution has certain dialects which however, are not work upon in this present study. Rongmei stood for both the tribe and the language, therby the term 'ethnolinguistics is being used. Rongmei are influenced to some extend by the various languages that are present in its vicinity, especially, Manipuri (Meitei), the lingua franca of Manipur state. Many borrowed elements can be found from this language which is the dominant language.

Rongmei as we ccan see are very rich in its cultural and traditional practices which are to some extend practiced till date. The originality of these values however, is lost with the passing of time. Rather, it will be noteworthy that rongmei in its present state (especially the language uses are rapidly adopting various means to adhere to the changing patterns of the societal socialization of time with other language.

In chapter two, literatures of rongmei are reviewed along with both the grammar and existing literatures both by the native and outside authors. Rongmei literatures are mainly, the historical recordings and story telling books that narrates tell-tale of the rongmei culture and traditions. Moreover, almost all the books that r published are religious books and historical books. Grammatical works done on the rongmei are very few and limited, except for the works done by Grierson ‘Linguistic Survey of India-Tibeto-Burman language’ and Fr. Francis (catholic priest) ‘a rongmei dictionary’, which gives a skeletal grammatical framework of the rongmei language. Moreover, their works are very limited and which are not accurate.

Chapter two also reviews the typological frameworks of a language as given by various authors like Comrie, Greenberg, Nida, Hockett, Chomsky etc. All these authors have their say in their own terms and definition. However, the cross-linguistic differences in the typological analyses found may be attributed to differences in the analysis of the word-ordering patterns among the different groups of morphological inflectional languages and the non-inflectional languages.

Moreover, typologically languages are studied with the intentions to find out the varied differences and language specified features. In short we can term it as the studies of language types.

Chapter three deals with the phonology of Rongmei and discussion of phonology of Rongmei are made binging out the differences and similarities of the sound systems and sound structures among the related languages. In the analysis of the sound systems of Rongmei showed the existence of the aspirated voiceless palatal stop. In Rongmei, Consonants are voiced and voiceless-aspirated are found in manner of articulation.

Consonants in Rongmei occur in almost all the position. However, consonants occurring in the medial positions are rare and can be marked, whereas, in rongmei no voiced plosive sounds occurs in the final position of the words. An aspirated stop does not occur in rongmei except for the nasals sounds which can occur in the syllable final position. Vowels in rongmei can occur in all the positions except the central-mid vowel /ə/. We found that rongmei has three tones which are all register tones. No contour tones are found in rongmei. The distributions of these tones are such that they are found to occur in almost all the syllable positions. Tones are phonemic in rongmei. In rongmei all the diphthongs glides to the high position in open syllables. More of open syllables are found than closed syllables in rongmei. In rongmei consonants clusters are not specifically found, however, consonants sequences are found. In rongmei almost all syllable types are found. A syllable that begins with vowels lacks onsets in rongmei. Therefore, rongmei onsets comprise only one consonant.

Chapter four discusses the morphological typology of Rongmei. Root, both free and bound with its types and affixes, both prefixes and suffixes are studied. In rongmei, infix is not found. Under nouns, gender is discussed. In Rongmei, there is no gender marker for inanimate nouns. However, animate nouns can be separated as +human and – human, where there is clear distinction between the two. Through out the analyses we found out the verb form of Rongmei can point out that [mak] negating the verb also negating the sentence in negative sentences (it follows the verb).

In chapter five different approaches were employed in the study of syntactical typology and word order of rongmei. Pragmatically and syntactically studies of word order are helpful for analyzing the word order variations of rongmei. Conclusion can be

drawn that rongmei has maintained the basic word order, in spite of showing other word orders in certain situation.

As we observed from this chapter, Rongmei is an SOV word ordering language. Rongmei also exhibits the feature of ‘pragmatically ordered language’. The discussion of pro-drop theory in this work, also help in support the basic word order of Rongmei.

Chapter five also discusses the phrase structure; verb phrase and noun phrase are taken into consideration. In the study of verb phrase, auxiliaries within the phrase have been discussed and different types of verbs like serial verb are analyzed.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

A number of issues emerge from this study as interesting topics for further research. The present work does not claim to be the complete typological analysis of Rongmei. Hence, a detailed and proper analysis is required. Also much of research work needs to be done especially in the field of morphological and syntactic areas. On the whole, much work remains to be done. It is my hope, however, that this thesis has helped to point some of the next steps, and that the results reported here will be of help to future work aimed at achieving a deeper and more cross-linguistically informed understanding of the empirical and analytic frameworks of Rongmei structure in particular and the other Tibeto-Burman languages in general.

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