

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE KOKBOROK LANGUAGE

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The aim of this paper is to present a brief description of the structure of Kokborok, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the state of Tripura in the northeastern part of India. It is generally believed that there are more than fifteen hundred languages spoken in the South-Asian subcontinent and as is well-known, they belong to four genetically different language families: Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman and Mon-Khmer and Munda. Rarely does one find such a conglomeration of languages in one 'area' and coupled with intense bilingualism and multilingualism that has been in existence in the subcontinent for thousands of years, the study of the syntax of these languages becomes much more fascinating. Though languages look different at the surface level, they share a common Universal Grammar (UG) and the parameters (features) they differ in are very limited in number. By Universal Grammar (UG) we mean is that all the languages of the world which are around 6000 in number share certain features that are common to the syntax (grammar) of all the languages. Thus, Kokborok too shares a number of features of the languages of the world. In this paper we shall discuss the structure of Kokborok and shall show that while Kokborok shares a number of features with the other languages of the Indian subcontinent, it also is distinct in its own way in some limited features.

Kokborok belongs to the Bodo subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman language family. The Tibeto-Burman language family is a subfamily of the Sino-Tibetan language family, and is one of the largest language families of the world. Some of the other languages of the Tibeto-Burman language family include Boro, Rabha, Manipuri, Mizo, Hmar, Angmi, Sema, Ao etc.

It is spoken by approximately eight lakhs 8,54,023 people in India and 105,000 in Bangladesh (Wikipedia) and has thirteen different dialects among which Debbarma, Riang, Halam and Tipra are the numerically the largest groups. Debbarma dialect is spoken by the members of the royal family and has been the medium of communication with the rest of the Tripuri public for the long time.

Hence, Debburma dialect is considered as the standard dialect of Kokborok. This dialect itself has variation depending on the area it is spoken.

The data for the present study were collected in the year 2002-2003 at the Department of Linguistics, University of Delhi. The main language consultants were Reverend Naphurai Jamatia, Mr. Binoy Debburma and Mr. Sanjeeb Debburma.

The verb in Kokborok it occurs in the final position (SOV). The following examples are illustrative:

English

(1) Akung bought a book. (SVO)

Kokborok (SOV)

(2)

|         |        |      |             |
|---------|--------|------|-------------|
| akung   | Laisi  | pai- | Kha         |
| Akung   | book   | buy  | past        |
| Subject | Object | Verb | (Auxiliary) |

'Akung bought a book.'

The same is the order of elements in (3) in Hindi-Urdu.

Hindi-Urdu (SOV)

(3)

|           |        |          |             |
|-----------|--------|----------|-------------|
| akung ne  | Kitaab | khariid- | ii          |
| Akung-erg | book   | Buy      | past        |
| Subject   | Object | Verb     | (Auxiliary) |

'Akung bought a book.'

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However, it is not the case that the verb occurs as the last or final element in a sentence. Let us consider (4) and (5).

In (4) the verb *Ing* 'become' and *kha* 'the past tense marker' occur in the final position. The verb in (5) has the meaning of 'become'.

(4)

akung      kOIOk      Ing-      kha

Akung      Tall      Become      pst

'Akung became tall.'

In contrast, in (5) the verb *Ing* 'be' and *kha* 'the past tense marker' occur in the middle position of a sentence. Such occurrence results in a different meaning. *Ing* in (5) has the meaning of 'be' and not 'become'.

(5)

akung      Ing-      kha      kOIOk

Akung      become      pst      Tall

'Akung was tall.'

Thus, the verb *Ing* in (4) indicates a *process*. That is, a change from one state to another while the verb *Ing* in (5) indicates a *state*. The important point that is to be noted is that differences in word order may exhibit differences in meaning in certain specific cases.

In Hindi-Urdu too sometimes differences in word order might show a difference in meaning.

Hindi-Urdu

(6)

Vah      Kaam      Se      Gayaa

He      Work      due to      Went

'He went out on some job.'

(7)

|     |       |      |           |
|-----|-------|------|-----------|
| Vah | Gayaa | kaam | Se        |
| He  | Went  | work | with/from |

'He will lose.'

(8) *kaam se* (2007)

The issue that needs to be resolved is whether the postposition *se* 'due to, with, from' imparts the same meaning in the above two sentences. We leave this issue open.

We will now present a brief discussion of the phonology of Kokborok.

## PHONOLOGY

At the level of phonology, Kokborok exhibits a contrast between the front vowels [i] and [e] and the rounded back vowels [u] and [o]. It also has the stops [p], [t] and [k] and their voiced counterparts [b], [d] and [g]. However, there is no word ending in [t] in Kokborok. Amongst its other features are:

(i) **ASPIRATION**: is phonemic in the language as seen from the example below.

Example:

(1). *kOtOr* 'big' : *kOthOr* 'ice'.

Thus, the sound *t* contrasts with the sound *th* and hence, there are in contrast.

(ii) **Tone**: Unlike the other languages the subcontinent of the Dravidian, Munda and Indo-Aryan (except Punjabi), and as in most of the Tibeto-Burman languages, tone is phonemic in Kokborok. By this we mean that a difference in tone will impart a difference in meaning. For example:

Example:

(2).a) *klai*- 'do'

b) *kl'ai*-fall.

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(3). a) *kang*- classifier for book, cloth, paper etc.

b) *k'ang*-thirst for any liquid

(4) a) *kai'* - 'marry'

b) *kai* (low tone) – classifier

(5) a) *cu'k* – fit

b) *cuk-mung* –height (low tone on u)

(iii) **VOICING**: The next point of consideration is that a voiceless sound such as /k/ becomes /g/ when it is followed by a postposition which is voiced.

4. a) *nOk* 'house'

b) *nOk - O* → *nOgO*

house in 'in the house'

This may be stated as a rule as in (A).

(A)

Rule 1: [-voice] → [+voice] / (V) \_V .

The capital letter V in (5) stands for a vowel and the symbol → indicates 'changes to'.

(iv) **VOWEL HARMONY**: Kokborok exhibits vowel harmony just as some other South Asian languages do. The adjectivalizer (that is the prefix that indicates that something is an adjective) in Kokborok starts with the consonant /k/ and is followed by a different vowel depending upon the vowel of the verbal stem.

(5) a). *kO- tOr* and *kO-bOr*  
adjr big adjr mad

(5) b) *kI - thIng* and *kI-ca:ng*  
ajr raw adjr cold

(5) c). *ku- tung* and *ku- phung*  
 adjr hot adjr fat

(5)d.) *ku- ha:m*  
 adjr good

While in (5a) [O] in the adjectivalizer (*kO-*) occurs when it is followed by a mid-back vowel in the adjectival stem, in (5b) [ʌ] occurs in the adjectivalizer (*kʌ-*) when it is followed by a central vowel in the adjectival stem and in (5c) [u] in the adjectivalizer (*ku-*) occurs when it is followed by a high back vowel in the adjectival stem. The *a* in *ka-* in (5d) is the base and it does not change.

(v) **RETROFLEX SOUNDS:** There are no retroflex sounds in Kokborok.

(vi) **SOUNDS IN FREE VARIATION:** Kokborok does not differentiate between /*ph*/ and /*f*/ and they are in free variation.

## MORPHOLOGY

Kokborok is an isolating language where each morpheme is seen to constitute meaning independently. Kokborok has fascinating word formation strategies for the formation of compounds. Some of these are given below:

**3.1.NOUNS:** We give below the formation of certain nominal compounds.

Examples

(i) *ha:m - ya:* = *ha:mya:*  
 good not 'patient'

(ii). *kasa - nai - rok* = *kasanairok*  
 go- ag mkr pl mkr 'people who go' (literally: "goers")

(iii) *man- kuk- nai* = *mankuknai*

*can- sup mkr ag mkr* 'the one who does it best' /the person who has the best ability (literally: \**can-er* where the word *can* has modal interpretation of capability).

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(iv) Nouns that are formed with *(bi)-thai* ('fruit') as the base:

a) *thai-lik* = 'banana' ('heavy fruit')

fruit heavy

b) *thai-pOm* = 'jackfruit' (literally: "fruit that is swollen")

fruit swollen

c) *thai-cuk* = 'mango' (literally: "high fruit" as *cuk* means 'high')

(v) Nominalizers /Agentives

Example:

I a) *khIsIp*      b) *khIsIp - naic*      c) *khIsIp - mung- rOk*

run                      run - agt mkr                      run      nozr      pl mkr

run (VERB) 'runner' (NOUN)                      'runs' (as in 100 runs)(NOUN)

II a) *rIsa:p*                      b) *rIsa:p - nai*                      c) *rIsa:p - mung -rOk*

sing (VERB)                      sing      agt mkr                      sing      nozr      pl mkr

'sing'(v)                      'sings'                      'singers' (NOUN)

(vi) Kinship Terms.

a) *ani* + *phayung* = *anphayung* ('my brother')

my                      brother

b) *nIni* + *phayung* = *nInpahyung* ('your brother')

your                      brother

c) *bOni* + *phayung* = *bUphayung* ('his/her brother')

his/her                      brother

In example (a) and (b), the second vowel /i/ is deleted when followed by the noun *phayung* ("brother"). In example (c), the genitive marker *-ni* is deleted and due to vowel harmony the /o/ changes to /u/.

### (vii) Proper Names

a) *khum* + *pui* + *ti* = *Khumpuiti* (lit 'a flower girl')

flower a type of [+fem]

b) *wak* + *khi* + *rai* = 'Wakhurai (lit. 'swine')

swine dung [+male]

Names such as (b) above are given, as the Tripuris believe that such names ward off the evil eye.

## 3.2 PRONOUNS

### (i) Genitive

a) *ang* + *ni* = *ani* 'my'

I (nom) gen

b) *nIng* + *ni* = *nini* 'your'

you gen

c) *bO* + *ni* = *bOni* 'his/her'

he, she gen

### (ii) Plural

*ang - cIng*

I we

*nIng + rOk* → *nOrOk*.

you pl mkr you (pl)

*bO + rOk* → *bOrOk*.

he, she pl mkr plural

In the above examples the phoneme /-ng/ is deleted when followed by /-ni/, the genitive marker. In (b) the /I/ of /nI-/ changes to /i/ and becomes /ni-/

## 3.3 VERBS

(i) *man - lai* = *malai* 'meet' (literally: 'meet-plural marker')

gen pl mkr



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(ii) *ha:m – jak* = *hamjak* 'love' (literally: to be emotionally good)

good em pred

(iii) *ca – jak* = *cajak* 'like' (*ca* also means 'eat')

like em pred

(iv) *joli – jak* = *joli jak* 'angry'

anger em pred

### 3.4 ADVERBS

(i) *tlrlk- tlrlk – khe* = 'slowly'

slow slow advr

(ii) *kObOk- hai- khe* = 'madly'

mad manner advr

### 3.5 ADJECTIVES

(i) *nai + thOk* = *naithOk* ('beautiful')

see tasty

(ii) *(bu)kung – (ku)cuk* = *kungcuk* ('proud')

nose high

(iii) *blkha- kuphur* = *blkhakuphur* 'happy' (lit. "white (pure) hearted")

heart white

(iv) *pailai – ya:* = *pailaiya:* 'busy'

work (N) neg

(v) *tang + li – tOng + nai* = hardworking people

do cpm+prog agentive mkr

### 3.6 CONJUNCTION

i). *ta:m -ni- hln -khe*

what gen quot advr

'because'

It is interesting to see the correspondence between Kokborok and Telugu, in the formation of the expression "because"

Telugu:

*enduku- anTee ==* "because"

why conditional form of the Quotative.

### 3.7 KINSHIP TERMS

The kinship terms in Kokborok have a few highly idiosyncratic features that are shown below.

The kinship terms usually have a pronominal prefix just as in many Tibeto-Burman languages. It is impolite to refer to someone as just 'mother' or 'father'.

|                    |                   |                     |             |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| a) (i) <i>a-ma</i> | 'my mother'       | (iv) <i>ang-hik</i> | 'my wife'   |
| (ii) <i>nl-ma</i>  | 'your mother'     | (v) <i>ni-hik</i>   | 'your wife' |
| (ii) <i>bu-ma</i>  | 'his /her mother' | (vi) <i>bi-hik</i>  | 'his wife'  |

Kinship terms of reference / address display an inherent hierarchy dependent on the relation between the speaker and the referent.

|                          |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| b) (i) <i>ba:yi-kOtO</i> | 'the first elder sister'   |
| (ii) <i>ba:yi-cikAn</i>  | 'the second elder sister'  |
| (iii) <i>monayi-kOtO</i> | 'the first younger sister' |

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(iv) *monayi-cikAn* 'the second younger sister'

Affection is often conveyed by semantic reduplication

c) *monayi-cikAn-buru:l*

younger younger girl

'young(est) sister'

In some Tibeto-Burman languages, the order of N-Adj (noun-adjective) is found

d) (i) *ba:yi-kOtO*

sister eldest

'eldest sister'

(ii) *da:ra:-kOtO*

brother eldest

'eldest brother'

## SECTION 4: SYNTACTIC FEATURES

4.1. The auxiliary verb always follows the main verb as in many verb-final languages.

1.

Akung thang- Ii tOng- O

Akung go prog Be pres

'Akung is going.'

4.2. This language has postpositions just as in the other verb-final languages.

2.

akung khumati- bai malai- kha

Akung Khumati with meet pst

'Akung met with Khumti.'

4.3 The indirect object precedes the direct object in the unmarked word order. Thus, the order is: S IO DO V<sub>ditransitive</sub>

3.

akung khumati- nO laisi rI- kha

Akung Khumati dat book give Pst

'Akung gave a book to Khumti.'

4.4 The indirect object marker is *nO* and the accusative marker too is *nO*. Both of them can overtly occur in the same sentence.

4.

Ning a-nO Laisi kaha: m- nO rI- Ja

You I-acc Book good- acc give- pol. Mkr

'You give me the good book.'

4.5 The genitive *ni* (*of* of English) precedes the head noun.

5.

a- ni phayungn miya- hOr- O Phai kha

I of brother Last night at Come pst .

'My brother came last night.'

4.6 The time adverb *tini* 'today' can occur to the left or right of the subject as in other SOV languages.

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6 a)

tini akung khumti- nO nuu- kha

today Akung Khumti acc see pst

*'Akung saw Khumti today'*

6 b)

Akung tini khumti- nO nuu- kha

Akung today Khumti acc see pst

*'Akung saw Khumti today.'*

4.7 Adjectives, demonstratives and numerals precede nominals in many verb-final languages. But in Kokborok, **modifiers follow nominals.**

**Canonical structure:** Noun-Adjective

7.

dolOk kO- thOk

vegetable adjr. Taste

*'Tasty vegetable.'*

4.8 The **marker of comparison** (*ni slai* 'than') follows the **standard of comparison.**

8 a) Comparative construction

wakhiti punkhiray- Ni slai kOlOk

Wakhiti punkhiray Gen Comp mkr tall

*'Wakhiti is taller than Punkhiray'*

## 8 b) Superlative construction

|         |       |    |       |     |          |       |         |
|---------|-------|----|-------|-----|----------|-------|---------|
| wakhiti | clas- | O  | jOtO- | ni- | slai     | kOlOk | kuk     |
| wakhiti | class | in | All   | gen | Comp mkr | tall  | Sup mkr |

*Wakhiti is tallest among all in the class'*

4.9. **Postposed Complementizers:** The complementizer (*hIn-li* 'that') that links the main clause and the subordinate clause occurs to the right of the subordinate clause.

9.

|        |           |      |     |       |      |     |
|--------|-----------|------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| khumti | naithOk   | hIn- | Ii  | akung | sa-  | kha |
| Khumti | beautiful | Say  | cpm | Akung | told | pst |

*'Akung said that khumti is beautiful.'*

Here, *hIn-* means 'say' and *Ii* is the conjunctive participle marker. *hIn-li* is called a quotative (for example *bole* in Bangla)

4.10. **The order of Time and Place Adverbs**

The time adverb (T) *tini* 'today' precedes the place adverb (P) *kami-O* 'village in'. hence the order is T-P.

10.

|       |         |    |       |         |     |      |     |
|-------|---------|----|-------|---------|-----|------|-----|
| tini  | kami-   | O  | Akung | khumti- | nO  | nuu- | kha |
| today | village | in | Akung | Khumti  | acc | see  | pst |

*'Akung saw Khumti today in the village.'*

4.11. **Question words** occur in the same position as the element that is being questioned. Though question words can be scrambled, there is no obligatory Question –word movement like in English.

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11.

### 11 a) Questioning the subject

|      |       |      |     |          |     |
|------|-------|------|-----|----------|-----|
| sabO | laisi | pai- | kha | de       |     |
| who  | book  | Buy  | pst | Y/n ques | mkr |

*'Who bought the book?'*

### 11 b) Questioning the direct object

|      |       |     |      |     |  |
|------|-------|-----|------|-----|--|
| ning | tamo- | nO  | pai- | kha |  |
| you  | what  | Acc | buy  | pst |  |

*'What did you buy?'*

## 4.12 Anaphors: Reflexives and reciprocals

Kokborok has both complex reflexive form and the simple reflexives form

a) *sak -nO- sak*  
self- acc-self

b).*sak-nO.*  
self-acc

Complex form:

12 a.

|            |      |    |     |      |     |      |      |     |
|------------|------|----|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|
| mang-      | nug- | O  | Ang | sak- | nO- | sak  | nuk- | kha |
| Appearance | look | in | I   | self | acc | self | see  | pst |

*'I saw myself in the mirror.'*

Simple form:

12b.

|            |      |    |     |      |     |      |     |
|------------|------|----|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
| mang-      | nug- | O  | Ang | sak- | nO  | nuk- | kha |
| appearance | look | in | I   | self | acc | see  | pst |

*'I saw myself in the mirror.'*

#### 4.13: VARIATION:

Word order at sentential level appears to be 'free' in Kokborok. For example, the same sentence can be said in different word orders.

13 a) S IO DO  $V_{ditransitive}$  [indirect object comes before direct object]

|       |          |     |       |      |     |
|-------|----------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| akung | khumati- | nO  | laisi | rI-  | kha |
| Akung | Khumati  | dat | book  | give | pst |

*'Akung gave a book to Khumti.'*

13 b) S DO IO  $V_{ditransitive}$  [direct object comes before indirect object]

|       |       |         |     |      |     |
|-------|-------|---------|-----|------|-----|
| akung | laisi | khumti- | nO  | rI-  | kha |
| Akung | book  | Khumti  | dat | give | pst |

*'Akung gave the book to Khumti.'*

13 c) IO S DO  $V_{ditransitive}$

|         |     |       |       |      |     |
|---------|-----|-------|-------|------|-----|
| khumti- | nO  | akung | Laisi | rI-  | kha |
| khumti  | dat | akung | Book  | give | pst |

*'To Khumti, Akung gave the book.'*



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### 13 d) DO S IO V<sub>ditransitive</sub>

laisi akung Khumti- nO rI- kha  
book Akung Khumti acc give pst

'The book, Akung gave to Khumti.'

### 13 e) IO DO S V<sub>ditransitive</sub>

khumti- nO laisi Akung rI- kha  
khumti dat book Akung give pst

'Akung gave the book to Khumti.'

### 13 f)\*S V IO DO

akung rI- kha khumti- nO laisi  
Akung give pst Khumti acc book

'Akung gave the book to Khumti.'

However, word order in the following sentence(g) is not permitted and it is ungrammatical. Hence, we have marked it with a \*.

### 13 g) \*S V DO IO

akung rI- kha Laisi khumti- nO  
Akung give pst Book khumti dat

'Akung gave the book to Khumti.'

## 4.14: *yes-no* (Polarity) Question Formation:

In *yes-no* questions, part of the verb is reduplicated (copied) and the *yes-no* question marker *de* occurs after the first part of the verb. For the sake of

convenience, we label the first part of the verb as verb 1 and the second part as verb 2. Thus, the verb *nuk* 'see' has the form *nu* 'see1' and *nuk* 'see2'. Thus in an *yes-no* question the verb will have the form: in the following examples *nu* 'see1'-*de* 'yes-no question marker' -*nuk* 'see2'

14 a.

|             |                |            |             |           |            |            |             |            |
|-------------|----------------|------------|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| <i>ning</i> | <i>khOrOk-</i> | <i>sa-</i> | <i>slk-</i> | <i>nO</i> | <i>nu-</i> | <i>de-</i> | <i>nuk-</i> | <i>kha</i> |
| You         | class          | one-       | person-     | acc       | see1-      | y/n q mkr- | see2-       | past       |
|             | +human-        |            |             |           |            |            |             |            |

'Did you see anybody?'

Some further examples are illustrative:

14 b.

|           |           |           |           |           |             |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| <i>nI</i> | <i>ca</i> | <i>De</i> | <i>ca</i> | <i>nO</i> | <i>(ba)</i> |
| Yo        | eat1      | q mkr     | eat 2     | emph mkr  | q emph      |
| u         |           |           |           |           |             |

'Will you eat?'

14 c.

|           |           |             |           |             |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| <i>nl</i> | <i>de</i> | <i>nIng</i> | <i>nO</i> | <i>(ba)</i> |
| drink     | q mkr     | drink       | Emph      | emph        |

'Will (you) drink?'

Incidentally the word *nIng* is identical for 'you' and 'drink' in Kokborok.

The verb *man* 'can' is a modal auxiliary.

14 d.

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*jesaphanO O holong- n tisai man-*  
anybody this stone- acc lift can-  
pres

'Anybody can lift this stone.'

In Kokborok the modal *man* too can occur as an independent element in *yes-no* questions and hence, has a reduplicated form.

14 e.

*[ma- De man- nO nIng ning- li*  
*man]*  
can1ss y/n q mkr can2- e mph You drink- prog mkr

'Can/(is it possible that) you drink?'

14 f. *man* 'can' can also occur independently in an answer to an *yes/no*-question.

*man- O*  
*can- Pres*

'Can' (lit. 'Yes, I can')

Kokborok is the only South Asian language that we know of that has this type of *yes-no* question formation where the main verb is *reduplicated* and the modal *man* "can" behaves like a verb.

### 4.15 ORDER OF INDIRECT OBJECT AND DIRECT OBJECT

Recall that in the unmarked order the indirect object precedes the direct object (DO) in Kokborok.

Example:

15 a)

*ning a-nO laisi kaha: m- nO rI- ja*  
 you I-acc book good- acc give- pol. mkr

'You give me the good book.'

15 b)

*Khumti bO- Ni kicIng akung- nO khumbar- sa rI- kha*  
 Khumti she- Gen Friend Akung- acc flower- one give- pst  
 mkr

'Khumti give a flower to Akung who is her friend.'

#### 4.16 POSTPOSITIONS

An implicational universal of Greenberg (1966) states that all verb-final languages have postpositions that follow the noun. Persian the only exception which has both prepositions as well as postpositions.

##### Angami

16 a)

miza Gi  
 table On

'On the table.'

16 b)

*songphang saka- O*  
 table on- Loc

'On the table.'

#### 4.17. POSTPOSITIONS

In verb-final languages there are only postpositions (except in Persian) and while verb-medial languages such as English have prepositions. For example the dative postposition *nO* follows the noun in Kokborok as in *khumti- nO* 'to Khumti' while the preposition *to* in English precedes. However, it is interesting to note that the locative *bising-ni* 'inside -of ' precedes the noun as in (17 a).

17 a.

*bising- ni kOthOl*

inside gen Room

'inside the room'

In contrast in Hindi-Urdu or Telugu for example the order is in the reverse.

17 b. Hindi-Urdu (IA

*kamre ke andar*

room of inside

"inside the room"

17 c. Telugu (DR)

*Example: gadi loopala*

'room inside'

'inside the room'

Terms of Address:

In this context, it is worth mentioning about the terms of address in verb final languages. They normally follow the referent whereas in Kokborok they precede the noun.

For example:

17 d. Bengali:

Example: *sanjib-da*

Sanjib - address term.

'Brother Sanjib'

17 e. Telugu:

Example: *naayuD u anna*

Nayudu - brother

'Brother Nayudu'

In contrast, in Kokborok the order is as in English.

17 f. *da/ata-* Sanjib

'brother Sanjib'

#### 4.18 VARIOUS CASE MARKERS

1) **Form:** The following are the various case markers attested in Kokborok:

##### A) NOMINATIVE- $\emptyset$

|         |         |         |     |          |      |       |         |
|---------|---------|---------|-----|----------|------|-------|---------|
| An      | thalik- | rOk-    | nO  | se       | ham- | jag-  | O       |
| I (nom) | banana- | pl mkr- | acc | emph mkr | like | empre | prs mkr |

'I like banana'

##### B) ACCUSATIVE-*nO*, $\emptyset$

|       |          |     |      |     |
|-------|----------|-----|------|-----|
| akung | khumati- | nO  | nuu- | kha |
| akung | khumti   | Acc | see  | pst |

'Akung saw Khumati.'

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### C) DATIVE -nO

|         |           |         |           |     |           |      |         |
|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|-----|-----------|------|---------|
| tOkhiti | wakhirai- | nO      | khumbars- | sa- |           | rI-  | kha     |
| tokiti  | wakhirai  | dat mkr | flower-   | One | cc<br>mkr | give | pst mkr |

'Tokhiti gave a flower to Wakhirai'

### D) INSTRUMENTAL- bai

|       |       |             |         |     |         |      |
|-------|-------|-------------|---------|-----|---------|------|
| akung | sensa | thaipom-    | nO      | ra- | kha     | bai  |
| akung | knife | jackfruit - | acc mkr | cut | pst mkr | with |

'Akung cut the jackfruit with a knife'

### E) ABLATIVE - ni

|      |        |     |       |        |      |      |         |
|------|--------|-----|-------|--------|------|------|---------|
| nIng | ta:mO- | ni- | bagli | yemen- | Ni   | fai  | kha     |
| You  | what   | gen | For   | yemen  | from | come | pst.mkr |

'Why did you come from Yemen?'

### F) LOCATIVE -O

|       |        |         |      |         |        |     |     |
|-------|--------|---------|------|---------|--------|-----|-----|
| akung | khumti | No      | nuk- | Kha     | ma:t-  | O-  | nO  |
| akung | khumti | acc.mkr | see- | pst.mkr | field- | loc | dat |

'Akung saw Khumti in the field.'

G) COMITATIVE – *bai*

43.

An    bai-    pal            hathai    rOg-    O    thang-    nai-  
g

I        with    together    Will    pl.mkr    Loc    go        noz

rOk    Ingkha    ani    jaiti-        rOk

Pl        pst.mkr    my    relative-    pl mkr

‘The people with whom I went to the hills are my relatives’.

H) GENITIVE – *ni*

*kami-        O-        Okhra*

village-    loc-    gen

‘The chief of the village’.

I) OBJECT OF COMPARISON - *ma*, - *kuk*

a) *kuthuk*  
deepest’

b) *kuthuk –ma–* ‘deeper’

c) *kuthuk –kuk-*

‘deep’

deep comp mkr

deep sup mkr

## 4.19. POSITION OF THE GENITIVE

In a language with postpositions the genitive preceding the head noun is a prediction made by the implicational universal for verb final languages. Kokborok too has the genitive preceding the head noun as in:



## The Structure of the Kokborok Language

19 a)

*Akung- ni laisi*  
Akung gen book

'Akung's book.'

19 b)

*blsln- ni kOthOl*  
inside of room

'Room's inside.'

The genitive postposition occurs with the subject denote postposition just as in Hindi.

19 c.

Ani takhuk- kOk simi se tOng- O bukhuk- rOg- ya:  
i(gen brother- pl. only emph have- pres sister- pl. neg  
mkr mkr mkr

'I only have brothers and not sisters.'

### 4.20 COMPARISION

While most South Asian languages use a postposition (comparable to *than* in English) in comparative and superlative construction, some Tibeto-Burman languages such as Angami, Sema and Hmar do have a bound morpheme too as a marker of comparison. For example in Hmar, *saang* is 'tall', *saang-lem* is 'taller' is and *saang-tak* is 'tallest'. Kokborok too has a postposition as well as a bound

marker of comparison *kuk* for the superlative degree. The follow examples are illustrative:

20 a)

|                |                    |           |             |              |
|----------------|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| <i>wakhiti</i> | <i>pungkhirai-</i> | <i>ni</i> | <i>slai</i> | <i>kOlOk</i> |
| Wakhiti        | pungkhirai-        | gen.      | than        | tall         |

'Wakhiti is taller than Pungkhirai.'

20 b)

|                |              |          |              |           |             |               |            |
|----------------|--------------|----------|--------------|-----------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| <i>wakhiti</i> | <i>klas-</i> | <i>O</i> | <i>jOtO-</i> | <i>ni</i> | <i>slai</i> | <i>kOlOk-</i> | <i>kuk</i> |
| Wakhiti        | class        | in       | all-         | gen       | than        | tall-         | sup. mkr.  |

'Wakhiti is the tallest in the class.'

It is interesting to note that the superlative marker, which normally occurs with adjectives also, occurs with the modal *man* 'can' and is followed by the nominalizer *nai* in comparative constructions.

20 c)

|                |             |             |             |               |           |            |             |          |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|------------|-------------|----------|
| <i>khOrOk-</i> | <i>nli-</i> | <i>ni</i>   | <i>bere</i> | <i>khar-</i>  | <i>li</i> | <i>man</i> | <i>kuk-</i> | <i>O</i> |
| classifier     | two-        | gen         | amongst     | run-          | cpm       | can        | sup. mkr    |          |
| <i>Nai</i>     | <i>bO</i>   | <i>pai-</i> | <i>kha-</i> | <i>sikang</i> |           |            |             |          |
| noz            | he          | finish      | pst mkr     | first         |           |            |             |          |

'The better of the two won the race.'

Note the occurrence of the adverb *sikang* 'first' to the right of the verb. Such occurrence to the right is not found in Dravidian or Indo-Aryan or Munda languages while it is found in Mizo, a Tibeto-Burman language.

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Another example of the occurrence of the comparative and superlative marker is given below

**Example:**

*20 Kuthuk-ma* – ‘deeper’ (see example (20 b) for details).

### 4.21 ADVERBS

#### 21 a) ADVERB OF MANNER

|    |         |      |     |     |        |         |
|----|---------|------|-----|-----|--------|---------|
| bO | dakti – | nO   | ca- | li  | pai-   | kha     |
| He | fast    | advr | eat | cpm | finish | pst mkr |

‘He finished eating quickly’.

*pai* literally means ‘buy’. It appears like a self- benefactive marker. Telugu, a Dravidian language, has *kon* ‘buy’ as a self-benefactive marker.

21 b) **ADVERB OF DEGREE:** The adverb *sokhjak* occurs to the right of the verb.

|            |              |                |
|------------|--------------|----------------|
| <i>ang</i> | <i>jugal</i> | <i>sokhjak</i> |
| I          | prepare      | fully          |

‘I am fully prepared’

[Note: In Mizo too an adverb of manner can occur to the right of the verb.]

## 4.22 COMPLEMENTI ZER

Just as in all Dravidian and Tibeto-Burman languages and in some Indo-Aryan languages, in Kokbork too a post-sentential complementizer (labeled as the quotative, which is a form of the verb *to say*) follows the subordinate clause.

### FUNCTIONS OF COMPLEMENTIZER:

22 a)

|      |             |         |     |        |       |       |
|------|-------------|---------|-----|--------|-------|-------|
| Ang  | kok nok bar | khina-  | kha | khumti | nok   | kIcak |
| I    | rumour      | hear-   | pst | Khumti | house | red   |
| pai- | hin-        | li      |     |        |       |       |
| buy- | past        | say-cpm |     |        |       |       |

'I heard the rumour that Khumti brought a red house'.

22 b)

|          |           |       |            |      |        |     |      |
|----------|-----------|-------|------------|------|--------|-----|------|
| selen-   | sa-       | nO    | bupha      | bini | cerai- | nO  | ca-  |
| servant- | pol. mkr- | acc   | the father | his  | child- | acc | eat- |
| ri-      | di        | hinli | sa-        | kha  |        |     |      |
| caus mkr | imp mkr   | quot  | say-       | Past |        |     |      |

'The father asked the servant to feed his son'.

Various functions of the Quotative such as a purposive marker, reason adverbial marker, a marker for naming / labelling and occurrence with onomatopoeic expressions etc (ref. Emeneau 1956, Kachru 1979, Kuiper 1967, Sridhar 1990 and Subbarao *et al* 1989).

## The Structure of the Kokborok Language

22 c)

Ang kebO -nO tini hOr- O -phai nai  
pI anyone- cmph today night- adv.mkr come- fut. mkr  
hin- li matOn  
quotative doubt

'I doubt if anyone will come tonight.'

An interesting case of occurrence of the quotative is attested with adversative predicates in Kokborok as in example (22 c)

The various functions of the quotative are as follows:

### AS A PURPOSIVE MARKER

22 d)

Ang Khumti nO nai- na hin Ii phai- kha  
I khumti- acc see- inf quot come- pst.mkr

'I came in order to see Khumti.'

### AS A REASON MARKER:

22 e)

*khumti ler- Ii phai- kha nIn- Ii*  
khumti Late cpm come- pst.mkr say- cpm

'Akung got angry because Khumti came late'.

### FOR NAMING /LABELLING

22 f)

*bO- nO khumti hIn jag*  
she- acc khumti say- pass

'A person named Khumti'.

## IN THE FORMATION OF CONJUNCTIONS

22 g)

|           |              |            |            |             |            |             |            |
|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| <i>bO</i> | <i>kOnOr</i> | <i>li-</i> | <i>ya:</i> | <i>tam-</i> | <i>ni-</i> | <i>hIn-</i> | <i>khe</i> |
| He        | Move         | neg        | neg        | what        | gen        | say         | def.mkr    |

|              |            |            |  |            |             |             |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|--|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| <i>khebO</i> | <i>bO-</i> | <i>nO</i>  |  | <i>dum</i> | <i>khak</i> | <i>li-</i>  | <i>ya:</i> |
| Any          | He         | split quan |  | push       | separate    | neg.cpm mkr | neg        |

'He did not move because nobody pushed him'.

### 4.23 NOUN MODIFICATION

Noun modification, as a comprehensive topic, can be discussed in term of adjectives, determiners, relative clauses numerals and quantifier. Each of these is discussed briefly below:

#### (i) ADJECTIVES

While the adjective in Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages always precedes the head noun, in Tibeto-Burman languages the adjectives may precede or follow the noun and it is language specific. In Kokborok the adjective follows the head noun

23 a)

*laisi kaha:m*

book Good

'Good book'.

23 b)

*dara: kOtO kOlOk*

brother eldest Tall

'Tall eldest brother'.

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The nature of the adjective in Kokborok is dependent on the verb because the former is derived from the latter. The adjective almost invariably has a prefix with [k] and a vowel which undergoes harmony with the following verb—a trait discussed in the earlier. That the adjective is a derived form of the verb is proved by the fact that it takes tense markers.

23 c)

*khumti ku- Phung*

**Khumti adjr- Fat**

'fat Khumti'

23 d)

*khumti ku- phung – ing- nai*

**khumti adjr- Eat become fut mkr**

'Khumti became fat'

### (ii) DETERMINERS

Just as In Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages, the determiner precedes the head noun in this language also. In some other languages of the Tibeto –Burman family (example Angami) the determiner follows the head noun (Subbarao ms.)

23 e)

*A blrl ang- bai ma(n)- lai- kha*

**that girl I with get- pl.mkr pst mkr**

'That girl met me'

23 f)

*O laisi khe OrO tOng- O*  
 this look def.mkr here be- pst.mkr

'This book is here'

### Angami

Example: *themie hau*

man this

'This man'

Split determiners are not found in Kokborok .

### 4.24. RELATIVE CLAUSES

Relativization – the process in which there is a noun phrase in the main clause and a corresponding relative pronoun identical with the head noun in the subordinate clauses– manifests itself in Indo –Aryan and Dravidian language either as full clauses or the participial. While the former is not found in this language, the latter is used to modify noun phrases in almost all positions in subject direct, object indirect, object oblique objects etc.

24 a)

|               |                |                |                |             |             |             |              |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| <i>akung-</i> | <i>Ni</i>      | <i>hanOk-</i>  | <i>Jik</i>     | <i>a</i>    | <i>blri</i> | <i>nai-</i> | <i>thok</i>  |
| <i>akung-</i> | <i>Gen</i>     | <i>younger</i> | <i>Fem.mkr</i> | <i>That</i> | <i>girl</i> | <i>see</i>  | <i>tasty</i> |
|               |                | <i>sister</i>  |                |             |             |             |              |
| <i>Tci</i>    | <i>Okti-</i>   | <i>ginang</i>  | <i>anO</i>     | <i>man-</i> | <i>lai-</i> | <i>kha</i>  |              |
| <i>And</i>    | <i>wisdom-</i> | <i>Rich</i>    | <i>me</i>      | <i>get-</i> | <i>pl</i>   | <i>pst</i>  |              |
|               |                |                |                |             | <i>mkr</i>  | <i>mkr.</i> |              |

'That beautiful and intelligent girl who is Akung's sister met me'



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24 b)

|     |      |          |        |       |       |          |     |
|-----|------|----------|--------|-------|-------|----------|-----|
| bO  | a    | Belum    | gap    | kIcak | tong- | mani-    | no  |
| He  | that | Balloon  | colour | red   | be    | pst mkr- | acc |
| Ano | rI-  | Kha      |        |       |       |          |     |
| Me  | Give | pst. Mkr |        |       |       |          |     |

He gave (that) balloon which was red in colour’.

24 c)

|         |       |         |       |     |     |     |    |
|---------|-------|---------|-------|-----|-----|-----|----|
| jesa-   | phanO | Dakti   | khar- | Ii- | man | khe | bO |
| whoever | mpi   | Fast    | run   | cpm | can | DET | he |
| sOkat   | man-  | Nai     |       |     |     |     |    |
| Prize   | get   | fut mkr |       |     |     |     |    |

‘Whoever runs fast gets the prize’.

### 4.25. NUMERALS

The numerals in Kokborok follow the head noun and if the numeral has a classifier, the numeral will come after the classifier.

25 a)

|       |          |         |      |        |           |      |      |
|-------|----------|---------|------|--------|-----------|------|------|
| Ani   | kieing   | khOrOk- | nli- | rOk    | miya      | phrO | ani  |
| My    | friend   | Class   | Two  | pl.mkr | yesterday | time | Igen |
| Nok   | phai-kha |         |      |        |           |      |      |
| house | Came     |         |      |        |           |      |      |

‘Two of my friends came to my house yesterday’

It is important to note the occurrence of the genitive with the ordinal as in (b)

25 b)

|         |          |         |           |          |           |         |     |
|---------|----------|---------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|-----|
| bari-   | Ni       | malai   | sika:ng   | Ni       | bupha:ng- | nO      | ani |
| garden- | gen. mkr | amongst | first-    | gen. mkr | tree-     | acc.mkr | I   |
| tan-    | Na       | mucung- | O         |          |           |         |     |
| cut-    | Inf      | want-   | pres. mkr |          |           |         |     |

'I want to cut the first tree in the garden'.

25 c)

|      |        |      |       |     |       |       |      |        |
|------|--------|------|-------|-----|-------|-------|------|--------|
| kOk- | rIng-  | si-  | mung- | Ni  | laisi | kang- | ba-  | rOk    |
| word | Wisdom | Know | noz   | gen | book  | cl-   | five | pl mkr |

<sup>13</sup>'The five book of linguistics'

#### 4.26. QUANTIFIERS.

The different instantiations of quantifiers, which may precede (26a) or follow the head noun (26b) are illustrated in the following examples. The existence of *nO* with almost all the quantifiers of these (subjects) NPs prompts their analysis as split quantifiers. A verbal quantifier is also found in example (a) below:

26a)

|      |       |         |      |        |         |       |           |
|------|-------|---------|------|--------|---------|-------|-----------|
| O    | nOk-  | Ni      | jOtO | bIrli- | rOk-    | nO    | nai-thok  |
| this | house | gen.mkr | all  | woman  | pl. mkr | split | beautiful |

|        |             |       |      |
|--------|-------------|-------|------|
| maman- | nO          | tong- | O    |
| All    | verbal quan | be-   | pres |

'All the women of this house are beautiful'

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26 b)

O nOk- ni bIrIi- rOk- (ni-bere) mOjOmO- naith  
this house gen woman pl.mkr of among majority Split

'Majority of the women of this house are beautiful'

26 c)

O nOk- ni bIrIi- rOk ni bere baksa nai-  
this House gen woman pl of among some see  
thok- tong  
tasty Be

'Some of the women of this house are beautiful'.

26 d)

O nOk- ni bIrIi rOk klBangma- nO naithok tong  
this House gen woman pl splitQ1 splitQ2 beautiful be

'Many of the women of this house are beautiful'

It is important to note that the classifier is also reduplicated in some constructions (although optionally) to impart a quantificational interpretation.

26 e)

O nOk- ni bIrIi- khOrQk sa khOrOk sa jOtO- nO  
- -  
Thi house gen woman Class one class on all splitq  
s - e splitQ1 2

'Each (and every) woman of this house is beautiful'.

## 4.27 NEGATIVE AND THE NEGATIVE POLARITY ITEMS (NPI)

The negative occurs post-verbally in Tibeto-Burman and Dravidian languages while in Indo- Aryan its occurrence may be preverbal. In Kokborok, the negative marker is *ya:* and it occurs post verbally. *glak* is also a negative marker in this language (while being a future marker too along with *nai* was in *pai nai/glak* will buy')

Further, the negative from of the past and the present tense seems to be homophonous which is striking

27 a)

*ca- li ya: glak*

Eat prog mkr neg neg

'Is/was not eating'

An important feature of the negative in Kokborok is that it allows for verbal ellipsis as in (27 b) and the negative can stand on its own.

27 b)

*akung khumti nO bu: kha meri- nO- ya:*

akung khumti acc. mkr hit pst mkr mary acc mkr neg

'Akung hit Khumti and did not hit Mary'.

27 c)

*meri- nO bu: li- ya: akung khumti- nO*

mary- acc mkr hit neg emph neg akung khumti acc. mkr

*simi bu:*

only hit

'Akung did not hit Mary but Khumti.'

Some further examples are given below:

## The Structure of the Kokborok Language

27 d)

- |                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| (i) <i>ca - kha</i> | ii) <i>ca- li - ya:</i> |
| eat pst mkr         | eat neg emph neg        |
| 'ate'               | 'did not eat'           |

27 e)

- |                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| i) <i>khuktang-kha</i> | ii) <i>khuktang-li-ya:</i> |
| read pst mkr           | read neg emph neg          |
| "read"                 | ' did not read'            |

27 f)

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| i) <i>tOng - kha</i> | b) <i>tong-li-ya</i> |
| live -pst mkr        | live neg emph neg    |
| 'lived / stayed'     | 'did not live/stay'  |

The position of negative imperative marker *-ta-* is preverbal in a sentence.

27 g)

- |                         |             |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| chen/ Ihin ta           | hIn di      |
| never never neg imp mkr | say imp mkr |
| 'Never say 'no''        |             |

28 h)

- |                              |                       |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ano tIili nIng ta-           | wa:na- ja- di         |
| I(acc) about you neg imp mkr | worry pol mkr imp mkr |
| Do not worry about me.'      |                       |

Further, the negative marker can combine with words to form common nouns such as a patient as in (27 i) or with adjectives to form antonyms as in (27 j)

27 i)

ha:m- ya: kIthang- kho

Good Neg mkr Alive yet

'The patient is as yet alive'

27 j)

akung- ni cerai blkha kuphur ya:/ gInang ya

Akung gen mkr child heart white neg mkr rich neg mkr

ginang kIrli

Rich poor

'Akung's child is not happy (i.e. unhappy)'

Kokborok is interesting from the perspective of facilitating semantic interpretation as in(j), *gInang ya:* which literally means 'rich not' imparts negative meaning. The simple juxtaposition of antonyms imparts a negative interpretation to the sentence.

#### 4.28. NEGATIVE POLARITY ITEMS (NPI)

Most of the languages of the world have expressions called negative polarity items, which require the presence or occurrence of the negative in a sentence. Alternatively, they can occur in an *yes-no* question. If the negative is not present in that specific sentence or if the sentence is not a *yes-no* question, the sentence is ungrammatical. For example, in English the expressions *yet* and *abhi tak* 'until now' in Hindi are negative polarity items because they require the presence of *not* in English and *nahiiN* 'not' in Hindi-Urdu. (See Rajesh Kumar 2005 for a detailed study of the negative polarity items in Hindi.)

For example:

**English:**

(28 a) Our guests have **not** arrived yet.

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### Hindi-Urdu

(28 b) hamare mehmaan abhii tak nahiiN pahunce

our guests yet not arrived

'Our guests haven't arrived yet.'

If *not* were not present in (28a ) and *nahiiN* 'not' in (28 b), ungrammatical sentences result.

English: (28 c) \* Our guests have arrived yet.

Hindi : (28 d) \* hamaare mehmaan abhiitak pahunce

our guests yet arrived

Thus in English and Hindi-Urdu adverbs such as *yet* and *abhi tak* are NPIs.

The negative polarity items occur in yes-no questions as in (28 e) and (28 f)

English:

28 e. Have the guests come yet?

Hindi:

28 f.

kyaa mehmaan abhii tak nahii~ aayee

y/n q mkr Guests until now Not came

'Didn't the guests come yet?'

Kokborok too has negative polarity items. *ble* in (28 g) is an example.

Kokborok

28 g)

Ang thang- jak – ya : Ble

I go pst neg at all(NPI)

'I did not go at all'

An interesting feature to be noticed here is that the reduplication of the verb that occurs in *yes-no* questions also occurs in Kokborok with sentences involving NPIs.

28 f)

ang tha se thang ya : Ble

I go1 emph mkr go2 neg NPI

'I did not go at all.'

Another instance of the NPI is *kho* 'yet' and it can occur in sentences with negative as well as questions.

28 g)

cerai- rOk nOg- O sOg Ii-

child pl mkr house Loc reach cpm

Ii- ya: khO

neg emph mkr Neg yet (NPI)

'the children have not reached home yet'.



28 h.

|                |            |            |           |             |            |           |           |       |
|----------------|------------|------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| tang-          | nOg        | O          | nOrOk     | bOrOk-      | ni         | bere      | kebO      | nO    |
| work           | house      | loc        | you       | person-     | of         | among     | anyone-   | split |
| <i>malalai</i> | <i>nai</i> | <i>kho</i> | <i>de</i> | <i>ba/*</i> | <i>kho</i> | <i>ba</i> | <i>de</i> |       |
| meet           | fut        | NPI        | y/n q mkr | emph        | NPI        | emph      | y/n q mkr | mkr   |

Can you be meeting anyone of them in the office?’

#### 4.29. THE NON-NOMINATIVE SUBJECT CONSTRUCTION

In the Non-Nominative Subject construction, a syntactic phenomenon found mostly in Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages the subject may be dative, genitive case-marked. Tibeto-Burman languages such as Mizo, Hmar, Thadou, Tenyidie (aka, Angami), Sema, Konyak, Ao do not have such a construction. Many languages such as Boro, Dimasa, Kokbork, Mising, Rabha that have been in contact with a superstrate language such as Assamese or Bangla have this construction which could possibly be due to contact. Manipuri too has this construction which could be an indigenous construction.

An example of sentence in which the subject is genitive case-marked is given below.

Kokborok (TB)

|      |         |     |          |              |      |
|------|---------|-----|----------|--------------|------|
| 29 a | kOrmati | ni  | bOkhOrOk | sā-          | O    |
|      | Kormati | gen | head     | pain (verb)- | Pres |

‘Kormati has a headache.’

Note that in Bangla and Assamese too the subject is genitive case-marked in such cases.

## Assamese (IA)

29 b. tar khOng uthi- sil  
 he/she.gen anger (nom) rise.cpm- pst

'He/she is angry.'

(Subbarao, ms.)

To express physical ailments in both Bangla and Kokborok

The occurrence of the genitive with the subject to express physical mental states is due to plausible influence of Bangla on the substrate language Kokborok.

In both Kokborok and Bangla the subject is genitive case-marked when physical ailments are expressed.

## Kokborok (TB)

29 c. a- ni kOngrai tOng- O  
 I- gen cold be- Pres

'I have a cold.'

## Bangla (IA)

29 d. amar ThanDa lege- che  
 I.gen cold feel- pres

'I have a cold.'

(Subbarao, ms.)

To express kinship relationship, Kokborok employs a genitive case-marked subject just as many Indo-Aryan languages do.

In Kokborok (TB), the genitive occurs with the logical subject when a kinship relationship is expressed just as in Bangla. However, "if the classifier is not present with the possessed entity, the verb *tOng* 'be' must be overtly present as in (29e), and if the [+ human] classifier is present, then the occurrence of the verb *tOng* 'be' is optional as in (29f)." (Subbarao ms.) [The sentence numbers do not reflect the numbers in the original ms. in the quote and they have been changed in the quote.]

## The Structure of the Kokborok Language

### Kokborok (TB)

29 e. ni- ni thakhuk bl.slk tOng

you- gen brothers how many Be

'How many brothers do you have?'

29 f. ni- ni thakhuk khOrOk bl.slk (tOng)

you- gen brothers cl [+ human] how many be

'How many brothers do you have?'

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this paper we attempted to provide a brief sketch of the grammatical features of Kokborok and as can be seen, Kokborok language shares a number of features with the other Indian languages.

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This paper was originally written for the *Journal of Tripura Studies* and to reach a wider audience, a limited linguistic terminology has been used in this paper.

### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|        |                           |           |                    |
|--------|---------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1,2,3: | first/second/third person | acc:      | accusative         |
| adjr:  | adjectivalizer            | adv:      | adverbs            |
| advr:  | adverbializer             | agr:      | agreement          |
| caus:  | causative                 | cl:       | classifier         |
| comp:  | complementizer            | comp mkr: | comparative marker |

|       |                                |         |                     |
|-------|--------------------------------|---------|---------------------|
| cpm:  | conjunctive participial marker | dat:    | dative              |
| decl: | declarative                    | def:    | definite            |
| det:  | determiner                     | detr:   | detransitivizer     |
| dm:   | deictic marker                 | do:     | direct object       |
| dub:  | dubitative                     | empred: | emotional predicate |
| emph: | emphatic                       | epen:   | epenthetic vowel    |
| fem:  | feminine                       | fut:    | future              |
| imp:  | imperative                     | inch:   | inchoative          |
| io:   | indirect object                | loc:    | locative            |
| asc:  | masculine                      | mkr:    | marker              |
| neut: | neuter                         | nom:    | nominative          |
| noz:  | nominalizer                    | obj:    | object              |
| perf: | perfect                        | pl:     | plural              |
| pres: | present                        | prog:   | P rogressive        |
| pron: | pronominal                     | pst:    | past                |
| q:    | question                       | quot:   | quotative           |
| sx:   | suffix                         | sg:     | singular            |
| sub:  | subject                        | tr:     | transitive          |

a)  $ang - nO = anO$

I acc me

## The Structure of the Kokborok Language

b)

|            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| <i>anO</i> | <i>nO</i> |
| I (acc)    | Emph      |

‘Only me.’

c)

|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| <i>abunO -</i> | <i>nO</i> |
| <i>abuno -</i> | acc       |

d)

|                |             |           |
|----------------|-------------|-----------|
| <i>abuno-</i>  | <i>nO -</i> | <i>nO</i> |
| <i>abuno -</i> | acc-        | emph.     |

d) will be allowed only with special emphasis sentences like (6) below:

e)

|               |                |             |             |                |               |            |                  |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|------------|------------------|
| <i>khumti</i> | <i>abunO-</i>  | <i>nO -</i> | <i>nO -</i> | <i>kai-/</i>   | <i>jak -/</i> | <i>Kha</i> | <i>wakhirai-</i> |
| <i>Khumti</i> | <i>abuno -</i> | acc -       | emph        | <i>marry -</i> | em pred       | pst mkr    | <i>wakhirai-</i> |
| <i>nO</i>     | <i>kai -</i>   | <i>jak-</i> | <i>ya:</i>  |                |               |            |                  |
| Acc           | <i>marry-</i>  | em pred     | Neg         |                |               |            |                  |

‘Khumti married only Akuno and not Wakhirai’

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