Kin Numeratives in Monsang

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Abstract

Kin numeratives (KN) are terms that list the birth-order of children. Monsang has a characteristic Kin Numerative (KN) naming system. The KN are non-numerical in type. Similar KN naming system of non-numerical type are also found in Anal, Lamkang, Maring, Moyon, and in the languages of southern Tangkhul villages namely Khasung, Nambashi, Sorbung, and Sorte. In this paper, the Kin Numerative (KN) naming system in Monsang, with some notes on related systems in the other languages of Manipur, is described.

Keywords: Kin Numeratives, Numerical KN, Non-numerical KN, Monsang, Manipur.

Introduction

Monsang is a Tibeto-Burman language and one of the smallest Scheduled Tribes of Manipur. The people are known by the autonym 'Sirti'. There are only six villages with a total population of 2130 (Census of India, 2001), all located within Chandel District of Manipur.

Chandel District lies to the South-eastern region of Manipur, bordering Myanmar, and is host to the largest number of ethnic communities, viz. Anal, Aimol, Chothe, Kom, Lamkang, Maring, Mate, Monsang, Moyon, Tarao, Thadou and Zou. The speakers of these communities use Meiteilon or Manipuri to communicate with each other. They use Roman alphabet for writing but orthography is still an issue for most of them.

In this paper, I attempt to describe the Kin Numerative (KN) naming system in Monsang, with some notes on related systems in other languages of Manipur.

Kin Numeratives

Kin Numeratives (KN) may be defined as terms employed in listing the birth-order of children. The KN naming system can be divided into two types: i. Numerical KN system. ii. Non-Numerical KN system.

In Numerical KN system, KN are based on numerals. This type is a characteristic feature of the Chinese nomenclature, and is also known as Chinese KN. The Chinese KN have been found borrowed either directly or indirectly by various Thai languages (Siamese, Shan, etc.), Austro-asiatic (Palaung), and Tibeto-Burman languages (Lisu, Lolopho, White Karen, Kachin and Nung) (Benedict, Paul K. 'Chinese and Thai Kin Numeratives'. Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol.65, No.1 (Jan.-Mar., 1945), pp.33-37).

The Non-Numerical KN system, as the name suggested, is not based on numerals. It is found in the Tibeto-Burman languages of Anal, Lamkang, Monsang, and Moyon; in Maring and the Southern Tangkhul villages of Khasung, Nambashi, Sorbung, Sorte, etc.

KN in Monsang

Monsang has sets of masculine and feminine KN of non-numerical type, suffixed with markers. The series extends through "5th" and bears no relation to the native numerals. This can be clearly discerned in the tables 1 & 2 below:

	Masculine	Feminine
1st born	/mo-ti/	/ti-n^{w}u/
2nd born	/ko-ti/	/to-n^{w}u/
3rd born	/be-ti/	/saŋ-n^{w}u/
4th born	/aŋ-ti/	/pe-n^{w}u/
5th born	/t^{h}um-pa/	/t^{h}um-n^{w}u/

Table 1. KN series of Monsang

One	/iŋkʰe/
Two	/nn̥ə/
Three	/ntʰum/
Four	/minlə/
Five	/roŋa/

Table 2. Numerals of Monsang (1-5).

In Table 1, it can be seen that the KN for masculine are suffixed with the marker /-ti/ (derived from the word /siti/ meaning 'progeny') except for the 5th born which is suffixed with the male marker /-pa/. The KN for the feminine are all suffixed with the female marker /-nʷu/.

In case there are more than five male or female siblings in a single family, the KN series for both masculine and feminine are repeated but are marked with a suffix /-nuʔ/ (Table 3).

	Masculine	Feminine
6th born	/mo-nuʔ/	/ti-nuʔ/
7th born	/ko-nuʔ/	/to-nuʔ/
8th born	/be-nuʔ/	/saŋ-nuʔ/
9th born	/aŋ-nuʔ/	/pe-nuʔ/
10th born	/tʰum-nuʔ/	/thum-nuʔ/

Table 3. KN series (repeating) of Monsang

Usage of KN in Monsang

The KN are employed in addressing persons. As a general rule, seniors (excluding grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts of blood relation) are addressed with the appropriate KN omitting the suffixes whereas, juniors are addressed either with the KN and the suffixes together or with a reduplicated form of the KN as /mo-mo/, /ti-ti/, etc.

Seniors are never addressed by name, but should the need arise; it must be always preceded by the appropriate KN. For juniors, it is acceptable to address them by name also. In addition to the above, the KN are also suffixed to the appropriate kin terms of uncles and aunts of blood relation. The following tables (4-7) given below illustrate the usages of KN in Monsang.

Ego to seniors (excluding Uncles of blood relation)	Ego to juniors
/mo/	/mo-ti/ or /mo-mo/
/ko/	/ko-ti/ or /ko-ko/
/be/	/be-ti/ or /be-be/
/aŋ/	/aŋ-ti/ or /aŋ-aŋ/
/t^{h}um/	/t^{h}um-pa/ or /t^{h}um-t^{h}um/

Table 4. KN as address terms to male persons.

Ego to seniors (excluding Aunts of blood relation)	Ego to juniors
/ti/	/ti-n^{w}u/ or /ti-ti/
/to/	/to-n^{w}u/ or /to-to/
/saŋ/	/saŋ-n^{w}u/ or /saŋ-saŋ/
/pe/	/pe-n^{w}u/ or /pe-pe/
/t^{h}um/	/t^{h}um-n^{w}u/ or /t^{h}um-t^{h}um/

Table 5. KN as address terms to female persons.

Ego to Paternal Uncles	Ego to Maternal Uncles
/pa-p^{w}u/	/apu-mo/
/pa-ko/	/apu-ko/
/pa-be/	/apu-be/
/pa-aŋ/	/apu-aŋ/
/pa-t^{h}um/	/apu-t^{h}um/

Table 6. KN as address terms to Uncles of blood relation.

Note: The suffix /-p^{w}u/ is a marker indicating "big/ oldest".

Ego to Paternal Aunts	Ego to Maternal Aunts
/ani-p^{w}u/ or / ani-upa/	/na-p^{w}u/
/ani-to/	/na-to/
/ani-saŋ/	/na-saŋ/
/ani-pe/	/na-pe/
/ani-t^{h}um/	/na-t^{h}um/

Table 7. KN as address terms to Aunts of blood relation.

KN in Other Languages of Manipur

As mentioned earlier, similar KN of Non-Numerical system is also found in the languages of Anal, Lamkang, Maring and Moyon of Chandel District. In Ukhrul District, it is found in the Southern Tangkhul languages of Khasung, Nambashi, Sorbung and Sorte.

A rough map of Manipur showing the regions where these languages are spoken is given below as well as data on KN of Anal, Maring (Mongmi variety), and Sorbung are provided.

Figure 1. Map of Manipur showing the regions where KN is found (Not to scale). S = Southern Tangkhul languages; M = Maring; X = Anal, Lamkang, Monsang and Moyon.

	Masculine	Feminine
1st born	/mo-p^{w}u/	/k^{h}i-nu/
2nd born	/ko-p^{w}u/	/to-nu/
3rd born	/be-p^{w}u/	/saŋ-nu/
4th born	/aŋ-p^{w}u/	/pe-nu/
5th born	/t^{h}um-pa/	/t^{h}um-nu/

Table 8. KN of Anal
(Data provided by Ws. Handny Anal (46 yrs) of Toupokpi village, presently residing at Liwachangning, Chandel)

	Masculine	Feminine
1st born	/mo-ba/	/te-nu/
2nd born	/ko-ba/	/to-nu/
3rd born	/pi-ba/	/pe-nu/
4th born	/me-ba/	/saŋ-nu/
5th born	/tʰam-ba/	/tʰam-nu/
6th born	/tolkʰam/	/tolkʰam/

Table 9. KN of Maring (Mongmi variety)

Data provided by Th. Motontin (54 yrs) of Narum village, presently residing at Liwachangning, Chandel.

	Masculine	Feminine
1st born	/mo-pa/	/te-nu/
2nd born	/ko-pa/	/to-nu/
3rd born	/mi-pa/	/saŋ-nu/
4th born	/tʰom-pa/	/pe-nu/
5th born	/zom-pa/	/zom-nu/
6th born	/lau-pa/	/tʰom-nu/

Table 10. KN of Sorbung

Data provided by Gobin (42 yrs) of Sorbung village, presently residing at Kapaam, Chandel.

Conclusion

KN of Non-Numerical type is a characteristic feature of Monsang and other languages of Manipur viz., Anal, Lamkang, Maring, Moyon, Khasung, Nambashi, Sorbung, and Sorte. The KN are employed for addressing persons, and to distinguish the addressee from others. This shared feature is absent in other Tibeto-Burman languages of Manipur, and merits further research to determine whether they form a subgroup with one another.

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References

Benedict, Paul K. (1945). 'Chinese and Thai Kin Numeratives'. *Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol.65, No.1 (Jan.-Mar., 1945), pp. 33-37.*

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