



## The Influence of Christianity and Missionary Education on Kokborok Literacy

Dr. Pritilata Debbarma<sup>1\*</sup>, Nelson Debbarma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Ex – Guest Faculty, Department of Kokborok, Tripura University, Tripura, India, 799022, <sup>2</sup>Member, Kokborok Translation Team, Tripura University, Tripura, India, 799022

Email: prtilatadebbarma@gmail.com

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17922150>

### ARTICLE DETAILS

**Research Paper**

**Accepted:** 21-11-2025

**Published:** 10-12-2025

#### **Keywords:**

*Kokborok, Missionary Education, Roman Script, Literacy, Christianity, Baptist, Tripura*

### ABSTRACT

This journal explores the role of Christianity and missionary education in shaping the literacy landscape of the Kokborok-speaking communities in Tripura. It traces the historical arrival of Christian missionaries, particularly the Baptist missions from the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society since 1938, and their pivotal role in introducing formal education and written forms of Kokborok using the Roman script. The study evaluates how missionary-led schools fostered literacy among tribal populations, emphasized mother-tongue instruction, and contributed to gender-inclusive education. It also draws comparisons with the Garo language community, where similar patterns of mission-led linguistic development emerged. Despite the positive impact on literacy, the legacy of missionary education intersects with contemporary debates on script standardization and language policy. Through historical records, interviews, and policy reviews, the journal argues that missionary influence continues to shape cultural identity and language politics among Kokborok speakers.

### 1. Introduction

Kokborok, the language of the Tripuri people in Tripura, belongs to the Bodo–Garo sub-group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. For centuries, it remained an oral language,



passed down through generations via storytelling, songs, proverbs, folk songs, folk tales, lullabies, and rituals. It was not until the early 20th century that Kokborok began to develop a structured literary form, largely due to the arrival of Christian missionaries. These missionaries, especially those associated with the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society, played a pioneering role in introducing written Kokborok using the Roman script and establishing schools in tribal-dominated areas.

Before the spread of missionary education, formal schooling in Tripura was minimal among the tribal population. Most indigenous communities had little or no access to structured education, and the prevailing systems often excluded instruction in local languages. Not only Kokborok, but many other tribal languages were also underdeveloped and not encouraged for use in formal domains—this was the reality for languages such as Mizo, Garo, and others. The missionaries, however, emphasized mother-tongue literacy, which made education more accessible and culturally relevant to local communities. Their efforts laid the groundwork for widespread literacy among the Tripuri people and introduced reading and writing in Kokborok for the first time.

Missionary-run schools not only provided basic literacy but also trained early indigenous educators, fostered translations of religious texts such as the Bible, and promoted the use of Kokborok in both religious and educational settings. These initiatives significantly contributed to raising literacy levels in tribal regions. In particular, the inclusive nature of missionary education encouraged female participation, which had historically been limited.

Today, Tripura ranks among the most literate states in India, and the early foundation laid by missionary education is an important—though often understated—part of this progress. While the state government has since expanded public schooling, the historical role of Christianity in fostering Kokborok literacy remains central to understanding the language's development.

This journal explores the influence of Christianity and missionary education on Kokborok literacy by focusing on five key areas: the historical arrival and activities of missionaries; the role of Roman script in promoting written Kokborok; the structure and outreach of missionary-led education; a comparative lens with the Garo language community; and the contemporary challenges surrounding script choice and educational policy. By drawing from historical accounts, community insights, and recent policy developments, this study aims to demonstrate how Christianity has shaped not only the linguistic but also the cultural and intellectual landscape of the Kokborok-speaking population.

## **2. Historical Background of Christianity in Tripura**



## 2.1 Early Encounters and Missionary Arrival

The earliest recorded Christian influence in Tripura dates back to the mid-19th century, but significant missionary activity began with the arrival of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society (NZBMS) in November 1938, during the early 20th century. These missionaries focused their efforts on the hill-dwelling tribal communities, particularly the Tripuri people, who at the time had minimal access to formal education and limited contact with written languages. The missionaries viewed education not only as a tool for religious conversion but also as a means of social upliftment and empowerment.

From the beginning, it must be mentioned that during the time of Rev. M. J. Eade, there was only one Baptist church in Agartala, Tripura. There were only a few Baptist Christian members scattered across the state, belonging to various tribes such as the Garos, Mizos, Darlongs, Reangs, and Tripuris, most of whom lived far from Agartala. In order to bring all the Christians under one umbrella, the Baptist Christian Union of Tripura (BCU/TBCU) was formed at the first Assembly Meeting held at Lakhilunga Tea Estate on the 3rd and 4th of December 1938. The meeting was convened by Rev. M. J. Eade, the first missionary to settle in Tripura.

The first major Baptist outreach occurred in 1938 in the village of Darchawi (present-day North Tripura) among the Darlong tribe, which later became a focal point of evangelical and educational work. The establishment of churches was often accompanied by the founding of schools, where Kokborok was used for instruction and religious teaching. These early initiatives laid the groundwork for a sustained relationship between Christianity and the development of literacy in Tripura's tribal belt.

## 2.2 Role of Baptist Missions

The Baptist missionaries were central to the Christianization of the Tripuri people and instrumental in fostering literacy in their native language. They introduced the **Roman script** to represent Kokborok, a significant departure from the Bengali script used in administrative and formal domains. Their linguistic efforts included the translation of hymns, catechisms, and parts of the Bible into Kokborok.

### 2.2.(a) St. Paul School

The New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society established St. Paul School in 1943 with the aim of educating tribal students belonging to the minority Christian communities of interior villages in Tripura. The school had a humble beginning with just 12 boys and 2 girls. From its inception until 1964, it was administered by the NZBMS. In 1964, the general administration of the school was handed over to the



Tripura Baptist Christian Union (TBCU). The school initially operated as a Bengali-medium institution but switched to English medium in 1971. It is affiliated with the Council for the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (CISCE) and now offers classes up to the 12th grade, having been upgraded several times over the years. Kokborok language instruction also began in this school, and it was the first to introduce Kokborok under the CISCE Board.

### **2.2.(b) New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society (NZBMS): Pioneer for Kokborok Teaching**

The Baptist Mission served as a pioneering force, like a light bearer, in teaching both children and adults in the villages by providing Kokborok books in Roman script, Bible stories, and kerosene lamps for evening study. They regularly preached the Gospel in the Kokborok language in churches and conducted Sunday classes for children every week.

In 1965, the Bible School evolved into the Tripura Theological School. Between 1961 and 1965, another missionary, Miss Hazel Drew, made valuable contributions to the development of this institution.

In addition to religious instruction, the Baptist missions offered a holistic education that included arithmetic, basic health practices, and moral training. These missions emphasized the importance of mother-tongue learning, which not only increased school attendance but also improved retention rates and strengthened community support.

### **2.2.(c) Translation of the New Testament into Kokborok in Roman Script**

The translation of the New Testament into Kokborok in Roman script was a landmark achievement, demonstrating the feasibility of using an indigenous language for complex written communication. It validated Kokborok as a literary language and laid the foundation for later secular publications.

The history of Bible translation into Kokborok is marked by two major milestones:

- **The publication of the New Testament in 1976, and**
- **The publication of the full Bible in 2013,**

both produced by the Bible Society of India.

## **2.3 Expansion and Educational Infrastructure**

Throughout the mid-20th century, the missionary educational network expanded across the hilly regions of Tripura. Dozens of village schools were established under the aegis of church bodies, including the Tripura Baptist Christian Union (TBCU), which remains one of the largest religious organizations in the



state. These schools often doubled as community centres, offering adult education, literacy classes for women, and training for local pastors and teachers.

These missionary schools provided the first experience of formal education for many Tripuri children. In contrast to government schools, which largely used Bengali, the use of Kokborok in missionary institutions fostered both cultural pride and greater accessibility. By focusing on community involvement and local languages, these schools created a culturally responsive educational model long before such frameworks were formally recognized in policy.

The missionaries also recognized the need for theological education alongside secular education. In the early stages, many teachers, village doctors, pastors, and church workers had only completed Class II or Class III. Therefore, it became necessary to provide them with special theological training. As a result, the first plans for short-term Bible Schools were developed under the leadership of Rev. M. J. Eade in 1940. He was assisted by Rev. B. N. Eade, who would travel from Chandpur (in East Bengal) from time to time to conduct classes. The course typically lasted two or three weeks. In the early stages, the program focused on foundational biblical knowledge and practical ministry training for grassroots Christian workers.

## **2.4 Interactions with the State and Other Communities**

Despite their grassroots success, missionary schools sometimes faced resistance from the state and from segments of the non-tribal Bengali-speaking population. The use of Roman script and Christian content was occasionally viewed with suspicion by state authorities and Hindu nationalist groups, who promoted Bengali as the language of instruction and administration.

Nonetheless, by the time Tripura was merged into the Indian Union and granted statehood in 1972, the missionary educational model had already proven effective in increasing literacy among the indigenous population. While later government policies leaned toward standardizing education through Bengali, the foundation laid by missionary work had created a robust literacy base among the Tripuri tribes.

The relationship between Christian institutions and the state has remained complex—characterized by periods of cooperation, tension, and negotiation. Still, the contributions of missionary education to the development of Kokborok literacy are widely acknowledged, particularly in areas where alternative schooling was previously unavailable.

## **3. Missionary Education and the Promotion of Kokborok Literacy**



### **3.1 Establishment of Schools and Literacy Initiatives**

**3.1.(a)** The New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society established a school in 1943 with the aim of educating tribal students belonging to the minority Christian communities in the interior villages of Tripura. The school had a humble beginning with 12 boys and 2 girls. From its inception until 1964, it was administered by the NZBMS. In 1964, the general administration of the school was handed over to the Tripura Baptist Christian Union (TBCU). The school was initially a Bengali-medium institution and later switched to English medium in 1971. It is affiliated with the Council for the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (CISCE) and offers classes up to the 12th grade, having been upgraded multiple times over the years. The Kokborok language was also introduced in this school, making it the first to offer Kokborok under the CISCE Board.

The foundational work of Christian missionaries in Tripura extended far beyond evangelism. Education was central to their mission, and the establishment of schools became the primary vehicle for both spiritual and intellectual development. From the late 1930s onward, mission schools were strategically set up in tribal villages such as Darchawi, Twidu, and Khamting—regions where state infrastructure was virtually absent. These schools introduced formal literacy to Kokborok-speaking populations, often for the first time.

The curriculum initially focused on basic reading and writing, arithmetic, moral education, and Christian religious studies. A significant feature of this educational model was the use of Kokborok as the medium of instruction. This greatly facilitated learning for first-generation students who would otherwise have struggled in Bengali-medium government schools.

Missionaries also organized adult education programs, particularly for older women and community elders who had never received formal schooling. Night classes and village literacy circles helped foster a culture of learning that extended beyond the school compound, strengthening Kokborok's presence in both home and church settings. The Baptist missionaries provided Kokborok books, slates and chalk, as well as kerosene lamps, allowing adults to study after completing a full day's work in the paddy fields.

### **3.1.(b) Key Milestones in Kokborok Bible Translation and the Language's Literary Development**

The history of Bible translation into the Kokborok language is a significant milestone in the language's literary development, primarily driven by the Bible Society of India (BSI) and the Tripura Baptist Christian Union (TBCU).



- **Publication of the New Testament (1976):** The New Testament, titled *Smai Kwtal*, was published in 1976 by the Bible Society of India, marking a major advancement for Kokborok literature. Rev. B. K. Smith, his wife Shirley Smith, and Ramesh Debbarma—who assisted in the process—were the primary translators of this initial edition.
- **Adoption of the Roman Script:** The use of the Roman script for the translation had significant cultural and political implications, demonstrating the growing importance and influence of indigenous language rights in the region.
- **Publication of the Complete Bible (2013):** The translation of the Old Testament continued for several decades. The full Holy Bible, titled *Baibel Kwthar*, was published for the first time by the Bible Society of India on May 19, 2013.
- **Translation Team for the Full Bible:** The later translation team included Rev. Jong Bahadur Debbarma, Rev. Anil Debbarma, Rev. Nilmani Debbarma, and Mr. Mark Debbarma (son of Rev. Jong Bahadur Debbarma).
- **Impact on Kokborok Literary and Cultural Development:** The availability of the Bible in the native Kokborok language became a cornerstone in the development of Kokborok literature. It significantly contributed to both the cultural renaissance and the growth of the Christian community among the Borok people, who now possess a vibrant and expanding literary tradition.

### 3.2 The Role of the Roman Script

The introduction of the Roman script by missionaries was a pivotal moment in the history of Kokborok literacy. Missionaries opted for the Roman script because it was familiar to them, flexible for linguistic adaptation, and consistent with the orthographic practices already used for other mission-influenced languages such as Garo, Mizo, and Lotha. The Roman script allowed Kokborok to be written phonetically with minimal modifications, making it accessible for both learners and teachers.

The Tripuri Christians and Kokborok-speaking communities are deeply indebted to Rev. B. K. Smith, who played a central role in translating the New Testament into the Kokborok language. He was assisted in this work by Ramesh Debbarma and Jong Bahadur Debbarma (now a retired pastor). The Kokborok New Testament, *Smai Kwtal*, greatly contributed to the growth of Christianity among the Tripuri people as well as to the development of Kokborok literature.



Before this translation, the Tripuri people had very few significant written works in their own language. The use of the Roman script in the New Testament attracted many educated Tripuris, who believed that Christianity and Kokborok literature would foster social and cultural progress. The Roman script also enabled Kokborok to be pronounced accurately and read easily, further encouraging literacy and acceptance among the community.

The use of Roman script also enabled the creation of early printed materials such as hymnals, primers, catechisms, and later, portions of the Bible. These texts became the first standardized written forms of Kokborok. Over time, the Roman script became strongly associated with Christianity and education in tribal regions.

However, this script choice also planted the seeds for future controversy. While Roman was effective in early missionary education, later state institutions promoted Bengali script for administrative and political alignment. This duality led to fragmentation in Kokborok literacy and script preferences—a challenge that persists today.

### 3.3 Curriculum and Language Development

Beyond literacy, missionaries contributed significantly to the early curriculum design for Kokborok-medium instruction. These materials emphasized moral teachings, community values, and biblical stories, often localized to fit tribal cultural contexts. The pedagogical approach was interactive and oral-heavy, incorporating storytelling, singing, and role-play to make education more accessible.

One of the key linguistic contributions was the development of standardized orthographic conventions for Kokborok in Roman script. While no centralized linguistic authority existed at the time, missionary-published materials gradually formed a de facto standard. For instance, the consistent use of “ng” to represent the velar nasal /ŋ/ and vowel combinations like “ai” and “ua” became widespread through such texts.

The missionaries also trained early local writers and translators, helping to create the first generation of literate Kokborok speakers who could then contribute to language development.

### 3.4 Training of Indigenous Educators

A major innovation of missionary education was the training of indigenous teachers and preachers, many of whom later became community leaders, social workers, and educators in their own right. This training



was often informal at first—consisting of scriptural study and teaching methodology—but gradually developed into a system of teacher mentorship under the supervision of missionary staff.

These local educators played a crucial role in expanding Kokborok literacy, as they were better equipped to teach in culturally relevant ways and communicate effectively with students. The model also ensured that educational development was sustainable beyond the physical presence of foreign missionaries.

Some of the earliest local Kokborok authors and literacy champions, including figures such as Rev. Rabindra Debbarma and Rev. B.K. Debbarma, were products of missionary mentorship. Their subsequent roles in education, translation, and church leadership further amplified Kokborok's reach.

### 3.5 Impact on Gender and Literacy

Missionary education had a particularly strong influence on female literacy, which had been extremely low prior to these interventions. Unlike many traditional systems that limited education to boys, missionaries actively recruited girls into schools and organized women's Bible study classes and literacy groups.

This early emphasis on gender-inclusive education had far-reaching effects. It promoted more balanced family literacy, enabled women to take part in church and community leadership, and laid the foundation for their broader participation in public life. The formation of the Tripura Baptist Women Society (TBWS) further strengthened this movement, playing a vital role in encouraging women's leadership across the predominantly tribal villages of Tripura.

The inclusive ethos of missionary education also fostered a relatively egalitarian learning environment, where Kokborok became the language of both the pulpit and the classroom, reinforcing its legitimacy across age and gender divides.

## 4. Challenges and Controversies Surrounding Script and State Policy

### 4.1 The Script Controversy: Roman vs. Bengali

One of the most persistent challenges in the development of Kokborok literacy has been the conflict over script choice. While missionaries successfully introduced the Roman script, subsequent government policies promoted the Bengali script, creating a deep division in Kokborok orthography. This script duality has impacted everything from textbook production and public signage to examination formats and teacher training.



Proponents of the Roman script argue that it aligns with the linguistic structure of Kokborok, facilitates digital use, and maintains continuity with early missionary texts. On the other hand, supporters of the Bengali script, mostly from state educational departments, view it as a practical solution given the administrative and regional dominance of Bengali in Tripura.

This script divide is not merely technical but deeply political and cultural. Tribal communities often associate the Roman script with indigenous identity and cultural assertion, while the imposition of Bengali script is seen as a form of linguistic assimilation. As a result, the debate over script has become a symbol of broader ethnic and political tensions in Tripura.

#### 4.2 Political Dimensions of Language Planning

The script issue reflects deeper questions of language planning and political representation in Tripura. While Kokborok was recognized as an official language of the state in 1979, implementation of this status has been uneven. Successive governments have oscillated between support for Roman and Bengali scripts, often influenced by changing political alliances and communal pressures.

Language policy decisions, such as the choice of script for official Kokborok examinations or the language of instruction in schools, have triggered protests and mobilizations. Tribal advocacy groups such as the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) and TIPRA Motha have repeatedly demanded the full recognition and institutionalization of Roman-script Kokborok, framing it as a question of indigenous self-determination.

The lack of a consistent language policy has hindered the development of standardized Kokborok curricula, teacher training modules, and examination systems. This inconsistency affects students, educators, and administrator's alike, creating confusion and inefficiencies across the educational system.

#### 4.3 Educational Implications

The dual-script environment poses serious challenges to the education system. Schools under the state board are primarily required to use the Bengali script for Kokborok, while many mission-run and Autonomous District Council schools continue to use the Roman script. This inconsistency results in learning difficulties, especially when students transition between institutions or appear for state-level examinations.

Furthermore, there has long been a shortage of Kokborok learning materials in both scripts—though the scarcity is more pronounced in Roman. Earlier, most state-sponsored textbooks were available only in



the Bengali script. However, in recent years, a new generation of young writers has emerged who produce Kokborok materials in the Roman script, increasing accessibility. Because of this, many students in English-medium schools find it easier to read Kokborok in Roman script than in Bengali script. The continued use of Bengali-script textbooks can therefore alienate students who grow up reading Kokborok in Roman at home, in church, or in community settings.

Educators also face significant challenges, as many are trained in only one script. Ideally, teachers should be proficient in both scripts to effectively support students and navigate the ongoing script controversy. This is particularly important because older Kokborok literature—especially valuable early works—exists primarily in the Bengali script and preserves many original Kokborok words. Without proper training, variation in script competence leads to inconsistency in teaching quality and affects the accuracy of student assessment.

#### **4.4 The Script Matter Problem for the Kokborok Language**

The script controversy surrounding the Kokborok language in Tripura is a decades-old issue involving the choice between the Roman and Bengali scripts. A permanent solution has not yet been reached, though recent developments have seen the government take steps toward addressing the problem, including temporarily allowing both scripts in board examinations.

##### **• The Core of the Problem**

Kokborok, an official language of Tripura and the mother tongue of a large portion of the tribal population, originally had its own indigenous script known as *Koloma*. However, this script fell out of use and was eventually replaced by Bengali and Hindi script traditions, as reflected in historical records such as *The Rajmala*. These scripts were used so that the language would be readable and understandable to Indo-Aryan communities.

For decades, there has been significant debate over which script—Roman or Bengali—should be adopted officially for education, administration, and literature.

##### **• Academic Hardship**

The absence of a uniform, officially recognized script creates considerable academic challenges. Students often face uncertainty about which script will be allowed in board examinations conducted by the Tripura Board of Secondary Education (TBSE) and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). This inconsistency affects preparation, assessment fairness, and overall academic performance.



#### 4.5 Current Status and Proposed Solutions

The script issue is a sensitive political and cultural matter and addressing it remains a key demand of indigenous political bodies such as TIPRA Motha.

- **Temporary Solutions:**

Owing to strong student protests and sustained political pressure, the Government of Tripura and TBSE have recently permitted students to write Kokborok examination papers in either the Roman or Bengali script.

- **Government Action:**

The current Chief Minister, Prof. Dr. Manik Saha, has publicly acknowledged the issue and assured that a permanent resolution will be reached. In early 2024, the government formed a three-member committee to study the feasibility and implications of formally requesting the CBSE to adopt the Roman script for Kokborok examinations.

- **Ongoing Demands:**

Student bodies and indigenous organizations continue to demand a permanent adoption of the Roman script, pointing out that although students may answer in either script, question papers are often provided only in Bengali script—creating an unfair disadvantage for students educated primarily in Roman script.

They argue that since Kokborok question papers at the college and university level are offered in both Roman and Bengali, the same practice should be followed in TBSE and CBSE schools to ensure fairness and academic inclusivity.

- **Summary:**

The “script matter problem” remains unresolved and is currently in a transitional phase. While dual-script usage in examinations provides temporary relief, political, linguistic, and academic stakeholders are still working toward a permanent and mutually acceptable official script for Kokborok.

#### 4.6 Literacy and Language Standardization Issues

Another major challenge is the absence of a centralized linguistic authority to oversee the standardization of Kokborok. Unlike Manipuri, which has an official grammar and script authority, Kokborok remains



fragmented in both its written form and institutional support. The variations in spelling, grammar, and pronunciation found across different regions further complicate the task of standardization.

Without a common standard, it is difficult to produce comprehensive dictionaries, digital tools, or academic resources. Efforts by organizations such as the Kokborok Sahitya Sabha and Kokborok Tei Hukumu Mission have made some progress in developing Roman-script orthographies and literary works, but state-level endorsement remains limited.

Standardization is critical not only for education but also for administration, media, and digital integration. As more content migrates online, the lack of uniformity in Kokborok script and spelling impedes searchability, content generation, and access.

#### **4.7 Resistance, Revival, and Community Initiatives**

Despite these institutional challenges, community-led efforts to preserve and promote Kokborok in the Roman script have intensified in recent years. Churches, NGOs, and cultural organizations have continued to publish Kokborok books, calendars, and educational materials in Roman script. Sunday schools and community literacy programs also help reinforce Kokborok literacy at the grassroots level.

There is also a growing youth-led digital movement to use Kokborok online, particularly on social media platforms. Many young creators prefer the Roman script for its ease of typing and familiarity. This revival of Kokborok in the digital sphere represents a grassroots push toward script normalization from below, even as top-down policy remains unsettled.

Efforts to revive and institutionalize Kokborok literacy have also found support in autonomous bodies like the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), which has promoted Kokborok-medium education using Roman script in its jurisdiction. However, without full state alignment, these efforts remain limited in reach and impact.

### **5. Conclusion**

The historical and contemporary influence of Christianity and missionary education on Kokborok literacy reveals a compelling intersection of faith, language, and identity. The introduction of the Roman script, along with foundational schooling initiatives by Baptist missionaries, transformed Kokborok from an oral tradition into a written medium with enduring educational and cultural significance. These early efforts not only enhanced literacy among the Tripuri people but also cultivated a generation of indigenous educators, writers, and leaders who carried forward the language's intellectual legacy.



While missionary education promoted accessibility, inclusivity, and the use of the mother tongue, the evolution of Kokborok literacy has since become entangled in a web of political, linguistic, and administrative tensions. The long-standing script debate—Roman versus Bengali—has hindered the full institutionalization of Kokborok in public education and governance. This divide has educational consequences, particularly for students navigating a dual-script environment, and it impedes the development of unified learning resources, teacher training, and examination systems.

Nevertheless, community-led efforts remain a powerful force in sustaining and revitalizing Kokborok literacy. From church publications and autonomous council schools to digital youth initiatives, there is a growing grassroots momentum in favour of Roman-script Kokborok. These movements reflect not only a linguistic preference but also an assertion of cultural autonomy and historical continuity with missionary beginnings.

The story of Kokborok literacy is, ultimately, a story of negotiation—between tradition and modernity, community and state, religion and policy. Recognizing and supporting the foundational role played by missionary education, while aligning contemporary educational policy with the lived experiences of Kokborok speakers, is essential for preserving linguistic justice in Tripura. A coherent script policy, culturally responsive curriculum design, and inclusive language planning can help ensure that Kokborok continues to thrive—not just as a relic of the past, but as a living language of learning, identity, and pride.

## References

1. Burling, R. (1998). *The Tibeto-Burman languages of Northeast India*. Pacific Linguistics.
2. Debbarma, P. (2004). *A descriptive grammar of Kokborok*. Tripura University Press.
3. Debbarma, R. K. (n.d.). *Kokborok Kokmakwtal*. Upajati Gabesana Kendra, Government of Tripura.
4. Debnath, R. (2014). *Kokborok – Language origin & development*. Language Wing, Education Department of TTAADC.
5. Jacquesson, F. (2008). *A Kokborok grammar*. Kokborok Tei Hukumu Mission.
6. Kharkongor, K. S. (1993). *The Garo language: Its phonology and grammar*. NEHU Press.
7. Roy, S. (2010). Language planning and policy in Tripura: A study of Kokborok. *International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics*, 39(2), 187–204.
8. Sarma, B. (2012). Comparative study of Bodo-Garo languages. *Linguistic Research Journal*, 4(1), 45–67.
9. Tripura State Language Policy. (2018). Department of Language, Government of Tripura.



10. Tripura Tribal Welfare Department. (2024). *Status report on multilingual education in Tripura*. Government of Tripura.
11. Zimik, M. (2020). Script choices and identity among the tribal communities in Northeast India. *Language and Society Quarterly*, 12(1), 55–74.
12. Tripura Baptist Christian Union (TBCU). (n.d.). *History and contributions to education*. Agartala: Church Archives.
13. Debbarma, S. (2024). *Origin and growth of Christianity in Tripura, with special reference to the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society, 1938–1988*. EBH Publishers (Eastern Book House).