Botanical descriptions include:

(1) *Leiron* (Flower language), written somewhere between 1697-1709, a description in verse of the many flowers that grow in Manipur.
(2) *Hidaklon*, a list of medicinal herbs and the ailments these can cure.

Other genres include allegories such as *Numit Kappa* (Shooting the sun) which is reproduced with interlinear translation in Hodson (1908), travel accounts, astrological works and a guide to the possible pitfalls of life and how to avoid them entitled *Langlol* (A series of snares). N. Khelchandra Singh (1964: 3) mentions family genealogies kept by individual households generically called *Yumdaba* (Of the house).

The medieval period of Meithei literature is marked by the strong influence of medieval Bengali literature. Meithei poets wrote in Bengali, which at this period was the official language of Manipur and the medium of instruction in schools. Stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were translated into Meithei. Works in Meithei were mainly records of military expeditions, such as *Takhel Ngamba* (Success against Takhel) and *Samjok Ngamba* (Success against Samjok). These are accounts of wars between Manipur and Burma and Manipur and Tripura during the rule of Charairongba and his son Garibniwaj, who ruled over Manipur between 1709–1748.

In the Modern period, poetry and the novel were developed as literary forms. Before the 1940s poetry was strictly metrical and the content was derived from Meithei folk songs, traditional legends and Hindu mythology. Epic poems were popular; for example, H. Angaghal Singh's thirty-four thousand line rendition of the legend of the hero Khamba and the princess Thoibi called *The Khamba-Thoibi Sheireng*. Several historically based romantic novels were written between 1930 and 1940. *Labanga Lata* by Kh. Chaoba Singh is the story of romance between a princess and a soilder set in 1500s. *Jahera* by H. Angaghal Singh is the love-story of a young Hindu man and Muslim woman. In mid and late 20th century up to twenty-eight Meithei language newspapers and magazines provide a platform for literary critics and essayists. From the mid 18th century to date, translations in Sanskrit (e.g. *Mahabharata*, *Gita Govinda*), Bengali (e.g. the works of Rabindranath Tagore), Hindi (e.g. the works of Premchand) and English (e.g. the works of William Shakespeare and George Bernard Shaw) to Meithei make up a large portion of literary publication. Such translations are seen as an important venture that goes "a long way in ensuring confidence in the capacity of the Manipuri language in expressing complex moods, lofty imaginations and rich thoughts." (Roy 1984: 57).

Appendix III
Meithei writing systems

Meithei is written in either the Meithei Mayek or Bengali script. The accepted date for the earliest use of Meithei Mayek is between the 11th and 12th centuries (Ch. Manihar Singh 1984: 23). In the classification of scripts provided by K. S. Singh and Manoharan (1993: 26–29), Meithei Mayek is part of the Tibetan group of scripts, which originated from the Gupta Brahmi script. The original Brahmi script was modified to accommodate the phonemic distinctions of Meithei.

Like other Brahmi scripts, Meithei Mayek is syllabic. Each vowel has two representations: an independent grapheme at the beginning of a word and a diacritic off of the consonant it combines with to form a syllable when it occurs elsewhere. See Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Vowel graphemes in Meithei Mayek


| ə | a | i | i |
| u | ú | e | o |

When tone is taken into consideration, there are twelve contrastive vowel sounds in Meithei. As seen in Table 1, it is possible to represent the differences between high and low tone *i* and *u* but no way of indicating distinctions between *a* and *ó*, *a* and *ú*, *e* and *é* and *o* and *ó*.

In contemporary versions of Meithei Mayek, tone distinctions are often in-dicated with conventions currently in use in writing Meithei in the Bengali script. For example, the distinction between high and low tone *a, e, ə, o* can be indicated before *ŋ* by using a distinct syllable final grapheme for *ŋ* before the high tone vowel. This is illustrated in (1).

(1)

kaŋ 'chariot'   káŋ 'mosquito'
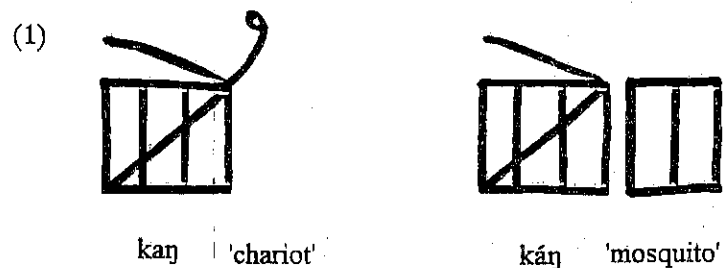
It is not clear how, or if, tone distinctions in other environments are signalled. In examples provided to me by Th. Harimohon Singh, minimal tone pairs such as *ta-* 'fall' and *tá-* 'hear' cannot be distinguished in writing.

Table 2. Non-syllable initial vowels in Meithei Mayek with the shape *kV*

ka   ki   kí   ku

kú   ke   ko
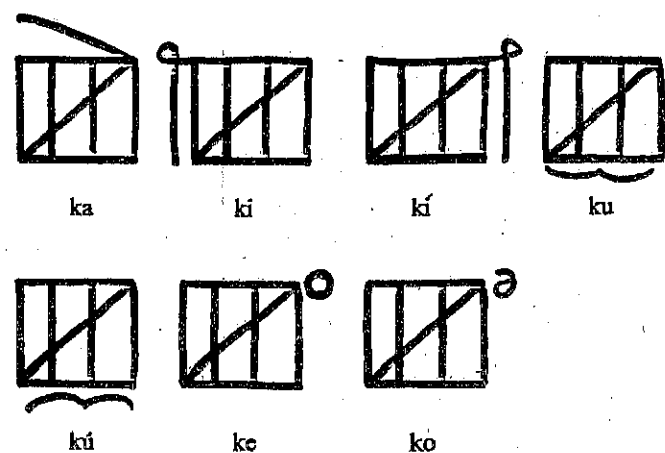
Diphthongs in initial position are represented by a juxtaposition of a glide and a vowel and, as was the case with vowels, not all relevant tone distinctions are represented. Graphemes for diphthongs in initial position and the diacri-

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tics used with consonants are illustrated in Table 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3. Syllable initial diphthongs in Meitei Mayek

əy   əw
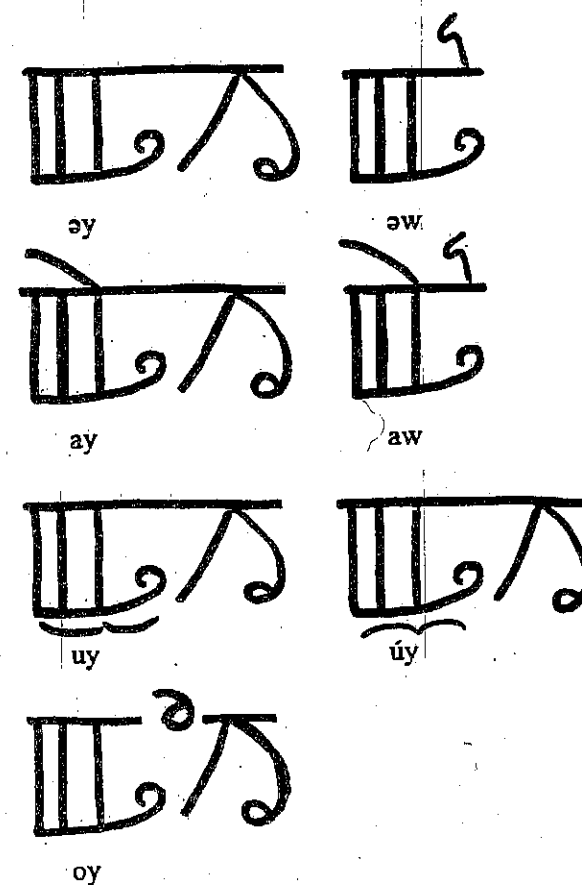
ay   aw

uy   úy

oy

Table 4. Non-syllable initial diphthongs in Meithei Mayek illustrated with [k]
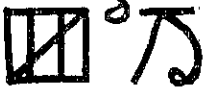
Table 5. Consonant graphemes in Meithei Mayek

kəy 'tiger'		kə́y 'grain, barn'		
kəw 'call'		kə́w 'short'		
kay 'shame' OR	kay 'shame'	kə́y 'break'		
kaw 'forget'	OR	kaw 'forget'		
ká̰w 'kick'	OR	ká̰w 'kick'		
kuy 'long'		kúy 'distant past'		
koy 'roam'	OR	koy 'roam'		
kóy 'garden'	OR	kóy 'garden'		

kə	khə	gə	ghə	-ŋə
čə	čhə	jə	jhə	ɲə
ʈə	ʈhə	ɖə	ɖhə	ɳə
tə	thə	də	dhə	nə
pə	phə	bə	bhə	mə
yə	rə	lə	wə	šə
ṣə	sə	hə	ksə	
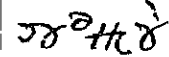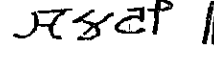
Consonants have two representations, a grapheme for syllable initial position and a grapheme for non-initial position. Syllable initial consonant graphemes are given in Table 5. Note that the consonant is read as a combination of the consonant and a schwa. Syllable final consonant graphemes are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Syllable final consonant graphemes in Meithei Mayek
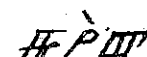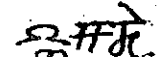
p	m	w	t
n	l	y	k

I provide a sample of handwritten Meithei Mayek in (2) which illustrates a marginally different style of the script (note the graphemes for [y] and [n]). Explanation of different styles of Meithei Mayek is given in Tensuba (1993). A longer example of the Meithei Mayek, with interlinear and free translation in English, can be found in Grierson (1903–1928: 32–39).
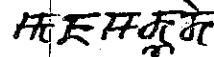
(2) Sample of Meithei in Meithei Mayek from a personal narrative by Th. Harimohon Singh. The script sample and transliteration were provided by the narrator.
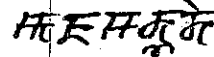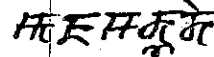
Tómbə	*kəkčiŋdə*	*čáⁱli*
Tomba	to Kaching	went

Tomba went to Kakching.
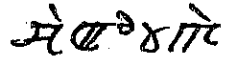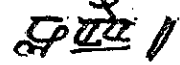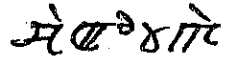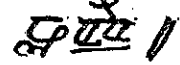
məhák	*mamagi*	*yumdə*	*thuŋŋi*
he	his uncle's	to house	arrived

He arrived at his maternal uncle's house.
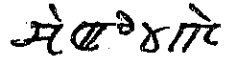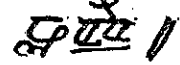
məhákⁿə	*məphəmdudə*	*māⁿági*
he	at that place	of his uncle

məčá	*čawbəgə*	*únnəy*
small	with Cawba	meets

There he meets his uncle's son Chaoba.

məbayni	*háwminnəbəni*
two of them	grow together

ꯑꯣꯖꯥꯅ   ꯃꯈꯣꯌꯕꯨ   ꯂꯥꯏꯔꯤꯛ   ꯇꯥꯛꯄꯤ

ojana   *makhoybu*   *layrik*   *takpi*
teacher   them   book   teaches

The teacher conducts their lessons.

ꯆꯥꯎꯕ   ꯌꯥꯝꯅ   ꯑꯐꯕ   ꯑꯉꯥꯡꯅꯤ

čawba   *yamna*   *aphaba*   *aŋŋáŋni*
Chaoba   very   good   child is

Chaoba is a great kid.

ꯃꯍꯛ   ꯃꯊꯧꯗ   ꯌꯥꯝꯅ

mahak   *mathawda*   *yamna*
he   about duties   very

ꯄꯨꯛꯅꯤꯡ   ꯆꯪꯅꯤ

púknín   *čaŋŋi*
extremely   enters

He is extremely sincere in carrying out his responsibilities.

ꯃꯈꯣꯌ   ꯑꯅꯤ   ꯆꯥꯛ   ꯆꯥꯃꯤꯟꯅꯩ

makhoy   *ani*   *čăk*   *čáminnay*
they   two   food   eat together

The two of them eat together.

ꯃꯈꯣꯌꯅ   ꯁꯪꯒꯣꯝ   ꯌꯥꯝꯅ

makhoyna   *saŋgom*   *yamna*
they   milk   very

ꯍꯥꯎꯅ   ꯆꯥꯌ

hawna   *čáy*
tasty   drink

They drink milk with great appreciation.

ꯆꯥꯛ   ꯆꯥꯕ   ꯂꯣꯏꯔꯒ

čăk   *čába*   *layraga*
food   to eat   having done

ꯏꯁꯩ   ꯇꯝꯃꯤ

isay   *tammi*
song   learn

After having eaten, they move on to their music lesson.

ꯆꯥꯎꯕꯗꯤ   ꯏꯁꯩ   ꯁꯥꯛꯄ

Cawbadi   *isay*   *sakpa*
Chaoba   song   to sing

yamnə   *pammi*
very   likes
Chaoba enjoys singing a lot.

madi   *məkhónsu*   *phəy*
he   also voice   is good
He also has a good voice.

madi   *ojabu*   *yamnə*
he   teacher   very

lunə   *niŋŋi*   *ojabu*
deeply   loves   teacher

laygumnə   *khəlli*
like a god   thinks
He is extremely fond of his teacher, he thinks of his teacher as a god.

With the adoption of Hinduism in the 18th century, the Bengali alphabet became popular for the writing of Meithei, and from the 19th century onward the use of Meithei Mayek for all genres of writing declined. Grierson cites Damant (n.d.) who stated that Meithei Mayek had for the most part been replaced by the Bengali script and that few Meitheis could read it. In the 1990s, there has been a popular interest in reviving the use of Meithei Mayek. This interest is linked closely with the desire to maintain a cultural and political identity separate from the Indo-Aryan culture which dominates Northern India. Today many young people under the age of 20 can read and write in Meithei Mayek since it is now taught in schools between the 6th and 8th grades (N. Promodini Devi 1989: 1); however, textbooks and most written media still use the Bengali script.

The Bengali alphabet that is used for Meithei developed from the Proto-Bengali script, which is a Northern Brahmi Gupta script of the Kutila group. My discussion of the Bengali writing system is based primarily on five sources: (1) The introduction to N. Khelchandra Singh's 1964 dictionary which explains the spelling conventions recommended by the Spelling Committee of the Education Standing Committee of Meithei in 1934 (translated for me by Th. Harimohon Singh.); (2) a 1986 paper entitled "*Tone in Meithei Orthography*" by Sushila Ningthongjam which lists the inadequacies of these spelling conventions as well as official revisions made to these conventions in 1964; (3) comments by Th. Harimohon Singh about current spelling practices; (4) spellings checked in the Friends' English to Meithei Dictionary (1986) and (5) a chapter in W. Tomchou Singh (1986) on Meithei writing systems. Examples are taken from these sources.

Like other Brahmi scripts, vowels have two representations depending on whether the vowel is in syllable initial or non-initial position. Table 7 consists of the syllable initial vowel graphemes traditionally listed for Meithei in the alphabetical order of Bengali.

Table 7. Word initial vowels in the Bengali Alphabet

অ	আ	ই	ঈ	উ	ঊ	এ	ও
ə	a	i	í	u	ú	e	o

Note that there are graphemes to represent distinctions between *i* and *í* and *u* and *ú*. This is illustrated in the spelling of *in-* 'follow' as in (3a) and *ín-* 'push'

as in (3b). However, the use of these graphemes to indicate tone is not universally followed. Some writers prefer to use the short vowels in conjunction with a diacritic (a forward slash) under the consonant following a high tone vowel. The lack of this diacritic is used to indicate a low tone vowel. Thus 'follow' is spelt as in (3a) and 'push' as in (3c) in the Friends' dictionary. Similarly, Friends' spells *ut-* 'ash' as in (3d) and *út-* 'camel' as in (3e). An alternate system is to represent the consonant following a high tone vowel with a retroflex equivalent. W. Tomchou Singh uses this system: thus he spells *út-* 'ash' as in (3e) and *ut-* 'camel' as in (3f).

(3) a.   ইন   *in-*   'follow'   b.   ইন   *ín*   'push'

    c.   ইন্   *ín-*   'push'   d.   উট   *ut-*   'ash'

    e.   উট্   *út-*   'camel'   f.   উৎ   *út-*   'camel'

As can be seen in Table 7, there are no graphemes for initial *ə́*, *á*, *é* and *ó*. This does not cause much of a problem since only *ó* occurs in word initial position. Words with high and low tone *o* are written the same way.

  Non-syllable initial vowel graphemes for vowels are illustrated in Table 8. In this position there is no grapheme for schwa since a consonant that occurs without a vowel diacritic is read as the consonant plus schwa. There are no conventions to indicate high tone *ə́*, *á*, *é*, *ó* in open syllables. In closed syllables, a diacritic (a back slash) is placed underneath the coda consonant after a high tone vowel. According to Th. Harimohon Singh, this diacritic is often omitted, but students are not penalized for this infraction of the rules as long they omit it consistently. In dictionaries, syllables with the high tone vowels *ə́*, *á*, *é*, *ó* are -- or should be, according to a resolution of the Meithei Spelling Committee -- underlined. This rule is followed by N. Khelchandra Singh but I have not seen it implemented in any of the other dictionaries in (see References). The distinctions for high and low *i* are not always observed so that the same spelling for the minimal tone pairs *thi-* 'search' and *thí-* 'ugly' and *pu-* 'carry' and *pú-* 'borrow' can be found. In English transliterations, long vowels represent high tone except in the case of [a] and [ə] where *a* represents [ə] and *ā* represents [a]. [ə́] and [á] are represented by underlining the syllables in which the vowels occur: thus *man* [mə́n-] 'old', *mān* [mán-] 'greedy' (N. Khelchandra Singh 1964a). The distinction between high and low tone vowels can be indicated before *ŋ* by using distinct graphemes for *ŋ* after low and high tone vowels. This convention may be combined with or be supplanted by other conventions to indicate the tone of a vowel. For example, the nasal grapheme

can be repeated to indicate a high tone vowel. See Table 9.

Table 8. Vowels in non-initial position in the Bengali alphabet

vowel	example	gloss	spelling
i	*thi-*	'search'	খি
í	*thí-*	'be ugly'	খী
e	*cen-*	'take along'	চেন
é	*cén-*	'run'	চেন্
ə	*kəm-*	'fade'	কম
ə́	*kə́m-*	'behead'	কম্
a	*ta-*	'fall'	তা
á	*ta-*	'hear'	তা
u	*pu-*	'carry'	পু
ú	*pú-*	'borrow'	পূ
o	*lon-*	'boil'	লোন
ó	*lón-*	'embroider'	লোন্

Table 9. Spellings of words with a velar nasal

vowel	example	gloss	spelling	alternate spelling
ə	*khəŋ-*	'know'	খঙ	
ə́	*khə́ŋ-*	'startle'	খং	খঙ্
i	*iŋkhon*	'garden'	ইওখোন	
í	*íŋ-*	'be cold'	ইং	ইঙ্
i	*tíŋ-*	'be straight'	তিঙ	
í	*tíŋ-*	'soak'	তিং	তিঙ্
u	*úŋ-*	'be shown'	উঙ	
ú	*úŋ-*	'whirl'	উং	উঙ্
í	*síŋ-*	'firewood'	শিং	শিঙ্, শিঙঙ

The diphthongs *ay*, *oy*, and *aw* are represented as vowel-vowel sequences when the syllable carries low tone and as vowel-glide sequences when the syllable carries high tone. Correspondingly, English transliterations of Meithei diphthongs can be found as vowel-vowel and vowel-glide sequences. Syllables with *əw* and *əy* are written with diacritics and are not distinguished from high tone equivalents. Examples are given in Table 10.

Consonant graphemes are listed in Table 11. These may occur independently (where they are read as the consonant and schwa) or with a vowel diacritic. Alphabet charts of Meithei include all of the graphemes found in the Bengali alphabet, including symbols which Meithei does not need; for example, the graphemes for the palatal nasal ([ɲ]) and retroflex nasal ([ɳ]) are listed but never used.

Table 10. Representation of diphthongs in the Bengali script

diphthong	represented as	example	gloss	spelling
ay	a + i	*kay-*	'take out'	কাই
áy	a + y	*káy-*	'break'	কায়
oy	o + i	*koy-*	'look after'	কোই
óy	o + y	*kóy-*	'roam'	কোয়
aw	a + u	*kaw-*	'forget'	কাউ
áw	a + o	*káw-*	'kick'	কাও
əw	ৌ	*kəw-*	'call'	কৌ
ə́w	ৌ	*kə́w-*	'short'	কৌ
əy	ৈ + y	*ləy-*	'flower'	লেই
ə́y	ৈ + y	*lə́y-*	'buy'	লেই

As explained in Chapter 2, /čʰ/ is pronounced as [šʰ] or [s] and individual pronunciation is used as a guide to spelling words with /čʰ/. Thus, variable spellings are found for *səm* 'hair' as (4a,b) and for the word *sa* 'animal' as in (4c,d). Th. Harimohon Singh reports that people above forty have a greater tendency to spell native words as in (4b) but younger people spell it as in (4a).

(4)	a.	শম	*səm*	'hair'	b.	সম	*səm*	'hair'
	c.	শা	*sa*	'animal'	d.	সা	*sa*	'animal'
	e.	টাটা	*ṭaṭa*	'Tata'	f.	তাতা	*ṭaṭa*	'Tata'
	g.	প্লট	*plet*	'plate'	h.	প্লং	*plet*	'plate'
	h.	ছাত্র	*čhatra*	'student'	i.	শাত্র	*šhatra*	'student'

Table 11. Consonant graphemes in the Bengali alphabet

ক	থ	গ	ঘ	ঙ
kə	khə	gə	ghə	ŋə
চ	ছ	জ	ঝ	ঞ
čə	čhə	jə	jhə	ɲə
ট	ঠ	ড	ঢ	ণ
ʈə	ʈhə	ɖə	ɖhə	ɳə
ত	থ	দ	ধ	ন
tə	thə	də	dhə	nə
প	ফ	ব	ভ	ম
pə	phə	bə	bhə	mə
য	র	ল	ব	শ
yə	rə	lə	wə	šə
ষ	স	হ	ক্ষ	
ʂə	sə	hə	ksə	

The spelling conventions call for the borrowed words to be spelt as they are pronounced in the originating language. Thus borrowed words which contain retroflex [ʈ, ʈʰ, ɖ, ɖʰ] should be spelt as retroflex. However these are pronounced as alveolar, and often spelt as pronounced. Thus the name of the trucking company *Tata* may be spelt as in (4e) or (4f). Also, there seem to be no clear conventions for spelling English borrowings: the word for 'plate' [*plet*] is usually spelt as in (4g) but since it can pronounced with a final retroflex as in Indian English, it may be spelt with a retroflex as in (4h) (Tomchou Singh 1986: 55). Borrowed words that have a voiceless aspirated affricate in the original language are spelt with [čʰ] as in (4h) but pronounced as [šʰ] and often spelt with [šʰ] as in (4i).

The representation of consonant clusters is illustrated in Tables 12–14. Not all writers utilize complex graphemes in Meithei writing, but represent clusters as by sequences of the appropriate consonant graphemes.

Table 12. Representation of consonant clusters with /n/

cluster /grapheme		word	gloss	spelling
tn	/ ত্র	rətnə	'rare stone'	রত্ন
sn	/ স্ন	snan	'bathing'	স্নান
gn	/ গ্ন	sugnu	'a place'	শুগ্নু

Table 13. Representation of consonant clusters with /w/ and /y/

cluster /grapheme	word	gloss	spelling
kw / কৃ	kwak	'crow'	ক্বাক্
gw / গৃ	gwala	'milkman'	গ্বালা
thw / খৃ	məthway	'inheritance'	মখ্বাই
dw / দৃ	dwari	'his life'	দ্বারি
py / প্য	pyari	'lover'	প্যারী
bhy / ভ্য	əbhyas	'practice'	অভ্যাস
dhy / ধ্য	dhyan	'wealth'	ধ্যান
ky / ক্য	kyamgəy	'a place'	ক্যাম
khy / খ্য	sənəkhya	'a surname'	সনথ্যা
gy / জ্ঞ	gyan	'knowledge'	জ্ঞান/গ্যান
sy / স্য	syam	'a name'	স্যাম
my / ম্য	myaw	'purring of a cat'	ম্যাও
ty / ত্য	ətya	'sky'	আত্যা
ny / ন্য	nyay	'justice'	ন্যাই
ŋy / ঙ্য	ŋyaw	'purring of cat'	ঙ্যাও
jy / জ্য	səzya	'bed'	সজ্যা

Table 14. Representation of consonant clusters with /r/ and /l/

cluster /grapheme	word	gloss	spelling
pr / প	prəp	'quickly'	প্রপ্
phr / থ	phreŋ	'mode of flapping'	থ্রং
br / ব্র	kabrəŋ	'silk'	কাব্রং
bhr / ভ	bhrəm	'forgetfulness'	ভ্রম্
tr / এ	troŋ troŋ	'sound of running water'	ত্রেং ত্রেং
thr / থ	thrəŋ thrəŋ	'sound of kicking'	থ্রং থ্রং
dr / দ্র	drəm	'oil container'	দ্রম্
dhr / ধ	dhrəŋ dhrəŋ	'sound made by drums	ধ্রং ধ্রং
khr / খ	lukhra	'a widow'	লুখ্রা
gr / গ্র	grəhə	'planet'	গ্রহ/গ্রহ
mr / ম্র	ləymram	'name of place'	লৈম্রাম্
nr / নর	nrisinghə	'incarnation of Vishnu'	নরসিংহ
sr / শ্র	ləysrəm	'a clan name'	লাইশ্রম্
jr / গ্র	həygərəŋ	'knife'	হৈ গ্রাং
pl / প্ল	plet	'plate'	প্লট
kl / ক্ল	kliŋ	'a formula'	ক্লিং

Although there is a great body of Meithei work written in the Bengali script, difficulties in standardization persist with regard to the indication of tone, the quality of word final vowels, and the representation of geminate consonants and consonant clusters. I will briefly review each of these problem areas.

Contradictory transcriptions of tone in otherwise reliable sources arise from the fact that traditional high and low tone labels refer to falling and rising tone, respectively. Some writers, such as N. Khelchandra Singh (1964a), transcribe the initial pitch of a word whereas others, such as Ningthongjam (1986), transcribe the final pitch of a word. Thus, Khelchandra transcribes the word 'reach' as *théŋ* with a high tone and 'be late' as *theŋ*; Ningthongjam (1986) transcribes these with low and high tone respectively. N. Khelchandra Singh, however, transcribes the word 'tiger' as *kə́y* with a high tone and 'granary' as *kəy* with a low tone; Ningthongjam transcribes these as low and high tone, respectively.

A second problem in the spelling of tone is that the conventions require high tone to be indicated only on phonologically high tone and not phonetic higher pitch. This convention can sometimes be ignored when intonation or tone sandhi rules affect underlying tone. For example, Ningthongjam points out that final vowels in demonstratives and demonstrative adverbs should be spelt as low tone: *məsi* 'this', *əsi* 'this', *ədu* 'that', *mədu* 'that' and *əsuk* 'that much' but that these sound like a high tone in certain positions. A final problem in the spelling of tone is the convention, described in Ningthongjam (1986), that all nominal suffixes be spelt with high tone while prefixes and verbal suffixes be spelt as low tone. This convention, while allowing for uniformity, takes neither morphological or phonetic reality into account. For example, as pointed out by N. Khelchandra Singh, the tone of any suffix *-pi*, regardless of the meaning (productive feminine marker, frozen as in feminine forms of names like *Tombi* [tombí] or *Chaobi* [cawbí], *-pi* related to the benefactive found in Tibetan, in such Meithei forms as *ləmbí* 'path' and *khubí* 'thumb'), must be written with a low tone vowel even if it is high. A similar problem occurs with verbal suffixes. Although most are unspecified for tone, the nonhypothetical suffix *í-* does carry high tone. Thus there is a contrast between words like *čárəmmi* 'completed eating (and then came here)' and *čárəmmi* 'was eating (when (I) went there)'. This contrast is not indicated in the spelling system.

As noted in Chapter 2, vowels lower in word final position. Thus *ə* is realized as *a*. The spelling system attempts to reflect this fact by stipulating that in word final position *ə* should be written as *a*, but in nonfinal position should be *ə*. Thus the same morpheme may have two different spellings: for example, the dative suffix *-tə* is spelled as [də] in /məŋóndəsu/ 'to him also' but as [da] in /məŋóndə/ 'to him'. Ningthongjam points out that this rule can be confusing since it applies only to phonetically lowered vowels. Underlyingly low vowels always remain low: thus the spelling of 'moon' remains constant in *tha* 'moon' and *thadə* 'to the moon'.

A general problem with clusters is that some writers use complex graphemes
and others represent clusters with the ....

spelt as a combination of the graphemes in (5a) and (5b). Thus a word like *nuŋŋaybə* 'to be happy' should be spelt as in (5c); however, it is sometimes also spelt as in (5d) or (5e).

(5) a.   ঙ

    b.   ৎ

    c.   নুংঙায়বা   *nuŋŋaybə*   'happy'

    d.   নুঙঙায়বা   *nuŋŋaybə*   'happy'

    e.   নুঙায়বা   *nuŋŋaybə*   'happy'

(6) is a sample of Meithei written in the Bengali script from a personal narrative by Th. Harimohon Singh.

(6)   ঐ   ঙরং   ইমান্নবা   অমগী   লুহোংবা   অমা   চৎলি
     əy   *ŋərəŋ*   *imánənbə*   *əməgi*   *luhóŋbə*   *əmə*   *čə́tli*
     I   yesterday   my friend   of one   wedding   one   went
Yesterday I went to my friend's wedding.

লুহোংবদু   শ্নায়দা   নত্তে   বাবগায়দনি
luhóŋbədu   *šwə́ydə*   *nətte*   *wabəgaydəni*
to that wedding   close by   not   it was far
That wedding was not close by, it was far away.

বাবগায়   হায়বসি   ইম্‌থালদগী   কিঃ মিঃ
wabəgay   *háybəsi*   *imphaldəgi*   *k.m.*
was far   that   from Imphal   kilometers

য়াংথাইঁ   মুক   চৎলগা   লৈবা   মথমনি
yaŋkhə́y   *muk*   *čə́tləgə*   *ləybə*   *məphəmni*
fifty   once   for going   to be   that place is
That faraway place I was going to was fifty kilometers away from Imphal.