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Languages and Peoples of the Eastern Himalayan Region (LPEHR)

Structural features of words of the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages of Northeast India

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discuss word structure of the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages spoken in the Northeastern states of India. These languages fall under the Tibeto-Burman sub-family of the Sino-Tibetan language family. There are linguistic affinities on the level of word structures among these languages. Their basic vocabulary is mostly monosyllabic. Monosyllabic words (that are free morphemes) are joined together as constituents to derive new words or to form compound words. This is a common feature in the word formation process of these languages. These languages do not possess infixes. Inflectional or derivational words are formed by adding a prefix or suffix(es). Suffixes may be added one after another in a system to refer meaning. These are the common salient features that occur in the process of word formation among these languages and which are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Word structure, Boro-Garo

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Structural features of words of the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages of Northeast India

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1 Introduction

The Northeast (NE) region of India is a cluster of eight states. It is a linguistic hub comprising languages belonging to the Indo-Aryan, Austroasiatic, Tai-Kadai and Tibeto-Burman (TB) groups. Among the groups, the languages belonging to TB are spread out throughout the region. Despite this, these languages are not occupying a prominent position in the region. The reasons are many. Language shift is one of them: many native speakers at present are giving up their own languages and shifting to other dominant Aryan languages of the region minimizing the numbers of native speakers and pushing the respective languages towards endangerment.

Every language has its own structure and character. Likewise, the languages belonging to a particular group show similarities and dissimilarities. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze word structures of five languages Boro (Bodo), Garo, Rabha, Dimasa, Kokborok and tries to find out the similarities and dissimilarities. Benedict (1972: 6) has brought these languages under the Boro-Garo branch of TB in Northeast India. Chatterji (1998: 46) observed that the Boros who first settled in the Brahmaputra valley slowly moved to North Bengal in the west. They are spread out up to Jhapa in Nepal. According to Meche and Kiryu (2012: xiii), the Boros are identified by different names in different areas. In Assam, they are known as Boro, Mech in West Bengal and Meche in Nepal. Today, the majority of Boro peoples are scattered in five districts (Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri and Tamulpur) of the Bodoland Territorial Council, presently called BTR (Bodoland Territorial Region) in the northern valley of the Brahmaputra River in Assam. With respect to tone, it is observed that Boro language speakers are using two distinct tones: high and low-level. The written language is based on the Western Boro Dialect (language spoken in Kokrajhar district in western Assam).

The origin and connotation of the word Garo are still a matter of controversy. Marak (2000: 4) opines that the people known as the Garos by outsiders like to introduce themselves as 'A.chik' or 'Mande'. Marak (2000: Preparatory note) also mentions that the Garos are concentrated in A.chik

A.song (Garoland), Mymensing in Bangladesh and in Assam valley north of Garoland. Chatterji (1998: 41) opined that the Garos migrated to their present place from Tibet in the north. Today, the Garos are concentrated in five Garo hills districts of Meghalaya. They are also thinly scattered in Tripura. Marak (2000: 2-3) identified twelve sub-tribes among the Garos, each of them having their own dialect with very little cultural differences, with the exception of the Me.gam dialect. The Garo language has no tone. Instead, they use a glottal stop (known in Garo as Raka). Presently, they are using the A-we dialect as a standard variety. The speakers of this dialect are concentrated in the northernmost part of the Garo Hills and in Assam.

Rabha (2002: 1) says that in the bygone days, the Rabhas used to call themselves Raba not Rabha. Until today, the Rabhas in remote areas of Assam call themselves Raba. They are spread out through the Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang districts in Assam as well as in some pocket areas of the state. They are found in the Garo hills and Khasi hills of Meghalaya and in West Bengal as well. Rabha (2002: 2) notes that the Rabhas have a total of eight groups identified by various names like Pati, Rangdani, Maitari, Totla, Hana etc. Among these eight groups, many have lost their native language and are embracing Assamese as their first language. Rabha Hakacham (2003: 1) named the Assamese language spoken by the Rabhas as Rabhamese or Rabha-Assamese language. Presently, Rangdani, Maitari and Kocha group peoples are retaining their language with two distinct tones, high and low-level, and are using the Rangdani dialect for all writing purposes.

Bhattacharya (1991) includes one article on the Dimasa language that focuses on the name Dimasa. This name came to them after their coming to Dimapur. Prior to that, they introduced themselves as Bodosa. According to Bordoloi et al. (1987: 36), today, the Dimasas have their basic concentrations in the autonomous hills districts of Assam. Singha (2007: 4) has mentioned four major dialects of the Dimasas: Hasao, Hawar, Dembra and Dizuwa. Among these dialects, Hasao is more widespread and used as standard variety. The Dimasa language also has two distinct tones: high and low-level. Hasao dialect speakers are concentrated in the North Cachar Hills District of Assam.

Different scholars identified the Kokborok language by different names in different times. Chatterji (1998: 130) identified them by the name Tipra or Mrung. Choudhury (2007: 10) has mentioned them as Kokborok. Choudhury (2007: 9) states that Kokborok means language or speech of man. The speakers of this language are concentrated in Tripura. Besides, they are also spread out in some areas of Bangladesh. Choudhury (2007: 22) observed different dialect varieties in this language. Among the dialects, Puran Tripuri spoken by Debbarma community is being recognized as a standard variety for all writing purposes. It has two distinct tones: high and low-level.

Among the five TB languages Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok, population wise the Boro language has the greatest number of speakers and the Dimasa language has the smallest number of speakers as per the government of India Census Report of 2011.

2 Objectives

This paper attempts to analyse the structural features of words of the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages. The affinity and difference in case of word structure among these five languages will be the main highlight of this study. This is examined in the lexical and morphological structure. Thus, it aims to ascertain a common structural pattern in lexical categories among these languages. These languages have an ancestral common origin, so they show many identical features and non-identical characteristics are few in number. To find out common structural

patterns of word structure, the following word categories have been taken into account for discussion: kinship terms, human body parts, bird names, animal names, adjectives and compound nouns. Similarities and dissimilarities of words will be listed at the end of each section.

3 Method of analysis

This study chiefly demands a structural approach as well as a comparative method for the linguistic analysis of word structure of the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages, spoken in the Northeast region of India. The analysis in this paper is based on data gathered from primary and secondary sources available in the form of published documents and from field data collected from speakers from these linguistic communities by the authors. For this purpose, three native speakers from the respective languages, each speaking the standard variety, have been selected. Additionally, one standard dictionary from each language has been chosen as a resource. Most speakers that were consulted for this study are multilingual. Accordingly, dictionaries chosen from all five languages are bilingual and multilingual, which helped the researchers considerably to collect required data as secondary evidence. In data collection from the informants, importance is given to vocabularies of different varieties that are useful for this analysis.

For the Boro language, data have been collected from three informants one each from Kokrajhar, Chirang and Baksa districts and a standard dictionary, Bodo-English-Hindi Dictionary (1996) published by Bodo Sahitya Sabha, was additionally chosen as a resource. The selected informants are Nathan Basumatary, Pratima Brahma and Mandira Basumatary, all speaking the standard variety. For the Garo language, three peoples, one each from Guwahati, North Salmara and Dudhnoi, were selected for gathering data. They are Sudhir K. Sangma, Manoranjan R. Marak and Felimina R. Marak respectively. A Garo dictionary Ku.bidik (2000) by Harendra W. Marak was selected as an additional resource for the purpose. For the Rabha language, information was gathered from three informants from Rabha dominated areas of Rungchai, Baida in Goalpara and Phatamati in Meghalaya. They are Prakash Rabha, Charumohan Rabha and Khagen Hato. Khúrangnala (Rabha-English Dictionary, 2000) by U. V. Jose was taken as handbook. The Dimasa language data was collected from three informants residing in Guwahati and as an additional resource, Dimasa Grauren (August 2005) by Nirupama Hagjer was consulted. The informants are Naomi Garlosa, Anupama Khemprai and Ratan Bathari. For data on the Kokborok language, three people residing in Agartala were selected. Accordingly, as additional resource, the dictionary Kak-Kuthumma (1987) edited by Prabhas C. Dhar and published by the Tribal Research Institute, Agartala, was used. The informants are Nanda Kumar Debbarma, Sabita Debbarma and Polen Debbarma, all speaking the standard variety. The data collection job for this work began in 1999 when the researchers were doing a comparative study on Boro and Garo, and Boro and Rabha languages respectively related to their PhD research. The Dimasa and Kokborok language data were collected from 2003 onwards while compiling different study materials and reference books for undergraduate and postgraduate courses under different universities in Assam. Accordingly, some data were gathered from elicitation and some from natural discourse during meetings with the native speakers from time to time. In data collection, pens and notebooks were used along with very short clips of audio recordings when it was felt necessary. However, these are not sufficient for preserving in an electronic database.

4 Previous research

Prior to this study, a comparative study on word structure was not conducted by anybody else altogether on the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages of Northeast India. However, some researchers carried out a comparative study on any two languages among these five. Basumatary (2014) has done a comparative study on the Boro and Rabha languages, which attempts to find out affinities and structural features of both languages. Chainary (2005) has also done a comparative study on the Boro-Garo languages. Brahma (2013) has completed her PhD research on Boro and Dimasa languages. Rabha Hakacham (2000) has done a comparative analysis on the Bodo group of languages of Northeast India. He focused primarily on the basic features of word structure. The study reveals that these languages definitely have common typological features and characteristics.

Some researchers have also done a descriptive analysis of the Bodo group of languages. Among them, Bhattacharya (1977) and Burling (1961, 2004) are the most prominent researchers in this field. Bhattacharya's 'A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language' is an outcome of field research that analyses phonology, morphology and syntactic structure of the Boro language. Burling (1961) has done extensive work on the grammar of Garo language. The grammar book titled 'A Garo Grammar' is a structural linguistic analysis that gives glimpses of the Garo language. One prominent research work has been done by Burling (2004) on the dialect of Garo language, popularly called Mandi and spoken in Bangladesh, that gives a detailed description of the language. Rabha Hakacham (2003) has done a descriptive analysis of different linguistic levels, phonology and morphology in particular, of the Rabha language. A few works have been done on the Dimasa language by linguists of Northeast India. For example, Singha (2007) has investigated phonological and morphological features of the Dimasa language. Pai (Karapurkar) (1976) has done a descriptive grammar on Kokborok language, which is a result of field investigation. Choudhury (2008, 2010) has also done prominent work on Kokborok grammar and phonology, which provide a basic description of the language. With regard to linguistic studies of the languages of the Bodo group of Northeast India, a few linguists from foreign soils have also carried out significant studies on the prototype of these languages. After Benedict (1972), Matisoff (2003) is one who has thoroughly investigated the prototype of Tibeto-Burman word structure. In the light of this significant study, there is a scope of study to initiate a comparative approach for investigating the word structure of the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages. In this study, the approach adopted by Matisoff has been recognized as an instructive key.

5 Research findings

A few scholars and researchers have completed their studies on Boro-Garo group of languages, and many are continuing their studies. However, the study of these languages has still a long way to go. In this regard, this study will open a path to carry out further research on the subject.

In kinship terminology in Boro, Garo, Dimasa and Kokborok languages, the personal pronominal prefix (singular and non-honorific forms) plays a great role. In the Rabha language, the suffix *-bra* plays a pivotal role.

Category prefixes take a lead role in the formation of different body parts and body parts related words in all five languages: a category prefix comprising of a single vowel phoneme is directly attached to the bound base.

Bird names start with *dau-*, *dɔ̃ɔ-*, *tɔ-*, *dao-*, or *tɔk-*, and animal names with *mV-*, *mat-*, *mat-*, *mV-*, or *mV-* in the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages respectively. Bird and animal names without these prefixes are non-native to these languages. NN and NV combinations are found in bird and animal names of some of these languages.

In all the languages, adjectives are derived from verbs by using a prefix or suffix. The major adjective formation prefixes are *gV-*, *kV-*, and *pV-* in the Boro, Garo, Dimasa and Kokborok languages. In the Rabha language, the suffix *-kai* is used instead of a prefix.

Compound nouns are formed by combining NN, NV, VN, NAdj and AdjN.

6 Word structure of kinship terminology

Kinship terms of the Boro-Garo group are not a hundred percent similar to each other. Though some similarities are found between some languages, other language/languages have different characteristics. These differences have grown after separation of these languages long before today. Chainary and Basumatary (2011: 20) have opined that the structure of kinship terms in the Boro, Garo, Dimasa and Kokborok languages show a high degree of similarity to each other, but not to the Rabha language. This group of languages uses bound base kinship terms, which never appear in isolation. Bhattacharya (1977: 111) mentioned how different personal pronominal prefixes are added to the bound base to represent ‘my, your, his/her’ in the Boro language. The structure of kinship terms in the Boro, Garo, Dimasa and Kokborok languages comprises of one personal pronominal prefix (singular) and a bound base/bases. The personal pronominal prefixes (plural) and personal pronominal prefixes (honorific) never combine with the bound base.¹

Language		Kinship Terms		Combined Formation	Meaning
		Pronoun	Bound Base		
Boro	1 st person	<i>aŋ</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>ap^ha</i>	‘my father’
	2 nd person	<i>nunŋ</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>nunŋp^ha~nump^ha</i>	‘your father’
	3 rd person	<i>bi</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>bip^ha</i>	‘his/her father’
Garo	1 st person	<i>aŋa</i>	<i>pa</i>	<i>apa</i>	‘my father’
	2 nd person	<i>na`a</i>	<i>pa</i>	<i>naŋ`pa</i>	‘your father’
	3 rd person	<i>bia</i>	<i>pa</i>	<i>bipa</i>	‘his/her father’
Dimasa	1 st person	<i>aŋ</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>ap^ha</i>	‘my father’
	2 nd person	<i>niŋ~nunŋ</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>niŋp^ha~nunp^ha</i>	‘your father’
	3 rd person	<i>bɔ~bu</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>bɔp^ha~bup^ha</i>	‘his/her father’
Kokborok	1 st person	<i>aŋ</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>ap^ha</i>	‘my father’
	2 nd person	<i>nunŋ</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>nunŋp^ha</i>	‘your father’
	3 rd person	<i>bɔ</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>bɔp^ha~bup^ha</i>	‘his/her father’

Table 1. Structure of kinship terms²

¹ Among the five languages taken for discussion, the honorific form of personal pronoun is available only in the Boro language. It is used with the second and third person of the personal pronoun (singular and plural).

² The researchers prepared all the tables included in this paper.

Table 1 shows the accompanying of a personal pronominal prefix (singular) with the bound base in all four languages. As mentioned above, plural forms are never accompanied by the bound base. However, based on context, sometimes a singular form represents a plural meaning.³ There is no direct alternative for English terms like ‘mother, father, brother, sister’ etc. in these languages as the kinship terms are always accompanied by personal pronominal prefixes as shown in Table 1 above. The personal pronominal prefix and bound base are combined to represent the possessive terms ‘my, your and his/her’. Bhattacharya (1977: 111) pointed out that in adding personal pronominal prefixes to the bound base, the first person may turn to *a~am*, the second person to *num~nuŋ~nu*, and the third person to *bi~p^hi*. Bhattacharya’s comment was especially on the Boro language. Based on the above table, similarities and dissimilarities among the four languages are as follows:

Similarities

- i. The vowel phoneme [a] of the first person pronominal prefix *aŋ~aŋa* ‘1SG’ in the Boro, Garo, Dimasa and Kokborok languages is directly attached to bound base kinship terms *p^ha* and *pa* ‘father’;
- ii. The second person pronominal prefix *nuŋ*, *niŋ~nuŋ*, and *nuŋ* are also directly attached to the bound base kinship terms *p^ha* ‘father’ in the Boro, Dimasa and Kokborok languages;
- iii. The third person pronominal prefix *bi*, *bɔ~bu* and *bɔ* is also directly attached to *p^ha* ‘father’ in Boro, Dimasa and Kokborok languages;
- iv. The pronominal prefix and the bound base kinship term are monosyllabic in the Boro, Dimasa and Kokborok languages.

Dissimilarities

- i. All personal pronominal prefixes in the Garo language are disyllabic while they are monosyllabic in the Boro, Dimasa and Kokborok languages;
- ii. In the Boro, Dimasa and Kokborok languages, the first and second person pronominal prefix end with a consonant and the third person with vowel, while in the Garo language all three personal pronominal prefixes end with the vowel [a];
- iii. The last vowel [a] of the personal pronominal prefixes in the Garo language is automatically dropped when attached with the bound base kinship terms;
- iv. The velar nasal [ŋ] of the second person pronominal prefix *nuŋ* in Boro changes to bilabial nasal [m] when attached with the bound base *p^ha* ‘father’;
- v. In the Garo language, velar nasal [ŋ] appears before the glottal stop when the second person pronominal prefix is attached to the bound base kinship term;
- vi. In attaching the third person pronominal prefix *bɔ* to the bound base kinship term *p^ha* ‘father’ in the Kokborok language, sometimes both are added unaltered and sometimes the [ɔ] vowel of pronominal prefix changes to [u].

Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok all belong to the Boro-Garo group. Despite belonging to the same group, the formation of kinship terms in Rabha language is not similar to the

³ How a singular word represents plural meaning in the Boro-Garo group will be clear from one Boro language example. If someone asks a child about his/her father, s/he will ask *nump^haya* (your father is) *bobeyao* (where)? i.e. ‘Where is your (singular) father?’ If the same is enquired among the siblings, the person will utter the same question without any difference of singular or plural and it will be understood that s/he is asking about the father of the children.

Boro, Garo, Dimasa and Kokborok languages. The Rabha language has independent kinship terms to represent ‘father, mother, grandfather, grandmother’ and these are used in direct addressing, which is absent in the other four languages. The terms in Rabha language are *baba*, *aya*, *juju*, and *budi~bidi* respectively. Rabha (2002: 84) elucidates that in introducing a person to someone, personal pronominal prefixes are not used. Instead, the suffix *-bra~bara* is used with addressing terms as definitives, as illustrated in Table 2.

Kinship Terms	Suffix	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>dada</i>	<i>bra~bara</i>	<i>dadabra~dadabara</i>	‘one’s elder brother’
<i>bibi</i>	<i>bra~bara</i>	<i>bibibra~bibibara</i>	‘one’s elder sister’
<i>mama</i>	<i>bra~bara</i>	<i>mamabra~mamabara</i>	‘one’s maternal uncle’
<i>p^hɔzɔŋ</i>	<i>bra~bara</i>	<i>p^hɔzɔŋbra~p^hɔzɔŋbara</i>	‘one’s younger brother’
<i>mɔmɔ</i>	<i>bra~bara</i>	<i>mɔmɔbra~mɔmɔbara</i>	‘one’s younger sister’
<i>gimi</i>	<i>bra~bara</i>	<i>gimibra~gimibara</i>	‘one’s brother-in-law’

Table 2. Structure of kinship terms in Rabha (1)

Similar to the other languages discussed above, in the Rabha language, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronominal prefixes are attached to the kinship terms. Rabha Hakacham (2010: 38) mentions that the personal pronouns used are 1st person plural *chiŋ* ‘we’, 2nd person singular *naŋ* ‘you’ and 3rd person singular *u* ‘s/he’. The 1st person pronominal prefix *aŋ* ‘I’ is used with limited kinship terms. When 1st and 2nd person pronominal prefix is used with kinship terms, it takes the genitive marker *-ni* partially, i.e. the [i] of *-ni* is used in between the 1st and 2nd person singular form and the kinship term, but the 3rd person always takes the full genitive marker *-ni*, as is shown in Table 3 below.

Person	Kinship Term		Combined Formation	Meaning
	Pronoun	Kinship Term		
1 st Person	<i>chiŋ</i>	<i>baba</i>	<i>chiŋbaba</i>	‘our father’
2 nd Person	<i>naŋ</i>	<i>baba</i>	<i>naŋbaba</i>	‘your father’
1 st Person	<i>chiŋ</i>	<i>bibi</i>	<i>chiŋbibi</i>	‘our elder sister’
2 nd Person	<i>naŋ</i>	<i>bibi</i>	<i>naŋbibi</i>	‘your elder sister’
1 st Person	<i>aŋ-ni>aŋi</i>	<i>umba</i>	<i>aŋiumba</i>	‘my husband’
2 nd Person	<i>naŋ-ni>naŋi</i>	<i>umba</i>	<i>naŋiumba</i>	‘your husband’
3 rd Person	<i>u-ni</i>	<i>umba</i>	<i>uniumba</i>	‘her husband’
1 st Person	<i>aŋ-ni>aŋi</i>	<i>michik</i>	<i>aŋimichik</i>	‘my wife’
2 nd Person	<i>naŋ-ni>naŋi</i>	<i>michik</i>	<i>naŋimichik</i>	‘your wife’
3 rd Person	<i>u-ni</i>	<i>michik</i>	<i>unimichik</i>	‘his wife’

Table 3. Structure of kinship terms in Rabha (2)

The kinship terms of the Rabha language mentioned in Table 2 and Table 3 show that the language has four different types of structures:

- It has independent kinship terms used in direct addressing;
- A definite denoting suffix *bra~bara* is used with independent addressing terms when introducing someone to somebody;

- iii. The 1st person plural and 2nd person singular pronominal prefixes are used unaltered with the kinship terms;
- iv. Some kinship terms take both a personal pronominal prefix and genitive marker. The genitive marker is attached partially with the 1st and 2nd person and in full form with the 3rd person.

7 Category prefixes relating to human body parts⁴

The term category prefix is used for any morpheme free or bound that denotes a particular species, implements, human limbs etc. The Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages have different category prefixes added to free morphemes or a bound base/bases.

7.1 Body parts in Boro

Body parts in the Boro language generally comprises of one category prefix and one bound base. Some body parts have more than one bound base attached with the category prefix. Category prefixes used with body parts are *a-*, *mV-*, *k^hV-*, *u-* and *bV-*.

7.1.1 Human limbs in Boro

In the Boro language, human limbs like hands, legs and their related body parts are formed using the category prefix *a-*. Bhattacharya (1977: 114) has termed it the general nominalizing prefix. In human limb related words in the Boro language, the prefix *a-* is directly added to one or more than one bound base/bases, as illustrated in Table 4.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>a-</i>	<i>k^hai</i>		<i>ak^hai</i>	'hand'
<i>a-</i>	<i>t^hiŋ</i>		<i>at^hiŋ</i>	'leg'
<i>a-</i>	<i>si</i>		<i>asi</i>	'finger'
<i>a-</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>asima</i>	'thumb'
<i>a-</i>	<i>p^ha</i>		<i>ap^ha</i>	'palm of hand/sole'
<i>a-</i>	<i>dui</i>		<i>adui</i>	'calf of leg'
<i>a-</i>	<i>grum</i>		<i>agrum</i>	'ankle'

Table 4. Hand and leg related words in Boro

Table 4 shows the combination of category prefix and bound base/bases. It is not only the main limbs hands and legs; their sub-parts are also formed by using the same category prefix.

⁴ Robbins Burling uses the term category prefix in the book *The Language of the Modhupur Mandi (Garo)* (Vol. I, Grammar) when he was discussing the Mandi (Garo) language of Bangladesh. As the term and structure shown by him is very much common to Boro, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages, this term has been borrowed from his book.

Non-human body part words related to hands and legs also use the category prefix *a-* in the Boro language. Such words are *a-gan* ‘footprint’, *a-p^ha-k^hi* ‘dust of sole of foot’, *a-san* ‘bracelet’, *a-si-t^ham* ‘ring’. The word *agan* comprises of the category prefix *a-* and the bound base *gan*, *ap^hak^hi* comprises of the category prefix *a-*, the bound base *p^ha* and the noun *k^hi* ‘stool’, *asan* comprises of the category prefix *a-* and the bound base *san*, and *a-si-t^ham* comprises of the category prefix *a-*, the bound base *si* and the verb *t^ham* ‘to paste’.⁵ Some idiomatic phrases are also formed using hands, legs and their related body parts. These are *ak^hai asira* ‘thief’ (lit. ‘hand’+ ‘careless’), *ap^hak^hi sula* ‘to become inferior/to become slave’ (lit. ‘dust of sole of foot’ + ‘to lick’), *agan galan* ‘to become famous’ (lit. ‘footprint’ + ‘to keep and go away’). Another word formed using the category prefix *a-* is *a-p^han* ‘the down (leg) side of the bed/mountain valley’.

7.1.2 Eye related words in Boro

In the Boro language, where the category prefix *a-* is used with hands, legs and its related words, the category prefix *mV-* is used with the eyes. The prefix *mV-* is not only used for denoting eyes but also for denoting eye related words. When *mV-* is combined with the bound base, the vowel of the category prefix assimilates with the vowel of the bound base or turns into another vowel, as is shown in Table 5 below.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>mV-</i>	<i>gɔn</i>	<i>mɔgɔn~megɔn</i> ⁶	‘eye’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sugur</i>	<i>musugur</i>	‘eyebrow’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sram</i>	<i>musram</i>	‘eyelid’

Table 5. Eye related words in Boro

The word *mɔgɔn~megɔn* ‘eye’ is alternatively used in different dialect areas. In the word *mɔgɔn*, the schwa of the category prefix is similar to the vowel of the bound base but in the other example, *megɔn*, the schwa of the category prefix is taking the form of a full vowel [e]. Taking the form of [e] is purely lexical and not based on a phonological rule. The same is happening in the third example *musram* where the schwa of the category prefix is taking the form of a full vowel, a high back unrounded vowel [u]. On the other hand, in the second example *musugur*, the schwa of the category prefix is assimilating with the vowel of the bound base, turning into [u].

Besides with the eyes and their surrounding parts, *mV-* is also used with some eye related words like the way of looking using the eyes, for example *mV-bai* > *mu**u**bai* ‘blink of eye/corner of eye’ and *mV-blaw* > *mu**u**blaw* ‘looking in a hurry’.

⁵ The word representing ‘to paste’ in the Boro language is *t^hab*. When it is attached to *a-si*, the [b] of *t^hab* changes to [m] and becomes *t^ham*. [b] and [m] both are voiced bilabials and can easily interchange. However, besides *a-si*, *t^ham* is used as *t^hab* when attached to other verbs like *ba-t^hab* ‘to hold tightly’ (lit. ‘(to bring on back’ + ‘to paste’), *nar-t^hab* ‘to press tightly’ (lit. ‘to press’ + ‘to paste’), *su-t^hab* ‘to stitch tightly’ (lit. ‘to stitch’ + ‘to paste’) etc.

⁶ The variation of *ɔ~e* is based on dialects of Boro language: *ɔ* is used in the Eastern and Southern Boro Dialects and *e* in the Western Boro Dialect. This dialect division is mentioned in Phukan Basumatary’s (2005) book *An Introduction to the Boro Language*.

7.1.3 Head, mouth, hair and ear related words in Boro

The category prefix *k^hV-* is used in the Boro language with head, mouth, hair and ear - the body parts situated above the neck. Examples are provided below in Table 6.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>k^hV-</i>	<i>rɔ</i>	<i>k^hɔrɔ</i>	'head'
<i>k^hV-</i>	<i>ga</i>	<i>k^hɔga~k^huga</i>	'mouth'
<i>k^hV-</i>	<i>nai</i>	<i>k^henai~k^hanai</i>	'hair'
<i>k^hV-</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>k^hɔma~k^hama~k^huma</i>	'ear'

Table 6. Head, mouth, hair, ear related words in Boro

In the above given examples, V of the category prefix *k^hV-* is not remaining same everywhere, it is changing from word to word. In the word *k^hɔrɔ* 'head', V is assimilating to the vowel of the bound base. Among the remaining three words, in *k^hanai* 'hair' and *k^hama* 'ear', V is assimilating to the vowel of the bound base. In the other word forms, *k^hɔga~k^huga* 'mouth', *k^henai* 'hair' and *k^hɔma~k^huma* 'ear', V is not assimilating. The changing of V to [ɔ], [u], [e], [ɔ] and [u] in these words is purely lexical.

Besides denoting body parts, the category prefix *k^hV-* is also used to represent the sounds produced by using the body parts. One such word is *k^hV-ran* (*k^hɔran~k^huran~k^huuran*) 'voice/news'. Voice/news is produced by using the mouth and structurally it comprises of one category prefix and one bound base.

7.1.4 Belly and navel related words in Boro

The category prefix *u-* is used to derive belly and navel representing words in Boro language. Only two words, one related to belly and one related to navel is formed by using this prefix. This prefix comprises of a single vowel and it is directly attached to the bound base.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>u-</i>	<i>dui</i>	<i>udui</i>	'belly'
<i>u-</i>	<i>t^humai</i>	<i>ut^humai</i>	'navel'

Table 7. Belly and navel related words in Boro

7.1.5 Skin and inner body part related words in Boro

The category prefixes *a-*, *mV-*, *k^hV-*, *u-* mentioned above are used to derive external parts of the human body whereas *bV-* is used to derive some body parts situated inside the human body, especially the stomach as well as to represent the skin of the human body.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>bV-</i>	<i>k^ha</i>	<i>bik^ha</i>	‘liver’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>bibu</i>	‘intestine’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>k^hluu</i>	<i>bik^hluu</i>	‘gall’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>t^hui</i>	<i>bit^hui</i>	‘thick blood’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>gur</i>	<i>bigur</i>	‘skin’

Table 8. Skin and inner body parts in Boro

Among the five body parts mentioned above, the first four are internal and the last one is external. In all these examples, the V of the category prefix *bV-* is taking the form of a high front vowel [i] and is added directly to the bound base.

7.1.6 Summary of body parts in Boro

In all, the body parts of the Boro language discussed above show the use of category prefixes *a-*, *mV-*, *k^hV-*, *u-*, and *bV-*. All category prefixes and most bound bases are monosyllabic, the combination of both forming a disyllabic word and a very limited number of words have a trisyllabic structure. However, none of the body part words crosses the boundary of trisyllabic. When a single vowel phoneme is used as category prefix, it is attached unaltered to the bound base but when a category prefix comprising of one consonant and one vowel is attached to a bound base, some changes occur in the vowel of the prefix.

7.2 Body parts in Garo

Body parts in the Garo language are formed by using a category prefix with a bound base. Among the category prefixes, some have independent meaning and some do not. Here, five category prefixes from the Garo language have been selected for discussion. Among these five, *mik-*, *ku-* and *bV-* are without independent meanings whereas *zak-* and *za'a-* do have independent meanings, representing ‘hand’ and ‘leg’ respectively.

7.2.1 Face and eye related words in Garo

In the Garo language, face and eye denoting body parts are formed by using the category prefix *mik-* with the bound base. The words formed by using *mik-* are very limited in number and when it is added with the bound base, no addition or deletion of phoneme/phonemes takes place.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>mik-</i>	<i>kaŋ</i>	<i>mikkaŋ</i>	‘face’
<i>mik-</i>	<i>rɔn</i>	<i>mikrɔn</i>	‘eye’
<i>mik-</i>	<i>gil</i>	<i>mikgil</i>	‘eyelid’

Table 9. Face and eye related words in Garo

In the Garo language, when geminate consonants occur in a word, these are always counted in two different syllables. Though both are commonly spelled, the arresting consonant is always unaspirated and the releasing consonant is aspirated. Besides the face and eye representing words mentioned above, the Garo language also has a few eye related words (non-body parts) that take *mik-* as a prefix, for example *mik-chi* (water) ‘tear’, and *mik-ki* (stool) ‘eye-excreta’. Both words are formed with the combination of one category prefix and one noun.

7.2.2 Mouth and lip related words in Garo

In the Garo language, the category prefix *ku-* is used with a limited number of bound bases to represent ‘mouth’ and ‘lip’. The category prefix *ku-* is always combined with the bound base without any phonological change.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>ku-</i>	<i>sik</i>	<i>ku'sik</i>	‘mouth’
<i>ku-</i>	<i>chil</i>	<i>ku'chil</i>	‘lip’

Table 10. Mouth and lips related words in Garo

The Garo language also has non-body part representing words formed by using the category prefix *ku-*, for example *ku'-raŋ* ‘voice’, and *ku'-chi* ‘saliva’. In these two examples, formed by combining the category prefix *ku-*, *raŋ* is a bound base without independent meaning and *chi* is a noun representing ‘water’. Voice and saliva come out from the mouth and therefore these two words have been formed by using the category prefix *ku-* to establish their relation to the mouth. Two other mouth related words that also use the category prefix *ku-* in the Garo language are *ku'-dima* ‘to kiss’, and *ku'-mɔŋa* ‘to discuss’. Both are verb category words formed by combining one category prefix and one bound base.

7.2.3 Hand and its related words in Garo

The Garo language has different hand related words formed by using the word *zak-* ‘hand/arm’ as a category prefix. During addition of this prefix to the bound base all remain phonologically intact.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>zak-</i>	<i>sku</i>	<i>zaksku</i>	‘elbow’
<i>zak-</i>	<i>pa</i>	<i>zakpa</i>	‘palm of the hand’
<i>zak-</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>zaksi</i>	‘finger’
<i>zak-</i>	<i>skil</i>	<i>zakskil</i>	‘fingernails’
<i>zak-</i>	<i>ra</i>	<i>zakra</i>	‘right hand’

Table 11. Hand and its related words in Garo

The element *zak-* is not only used in forming hand related noun words. It is also used in forming verb and adjective words in the Garo language, for example *zakmilɔŋ* ‘naked of a bracelet’

(an adjective word consisting of *zak* ‘hand’, *-mil’a* ‘to fall down’, and *-ɔŋ’a* ‘to become/to happen’), and *zakzipa* ‘to wave’ (a verb word consisting of *zak* ‘hand’ and *-zipa* ‘to propel’). The word *zakmilɔŋ* ‘naked of a bracelet’ is formed by combining one noun and two verb words. In combining the words, the noun remains intact but the glottal stop and the vowel following the glottal stop are dropped from both the verb words. In the second word, *zakzipa* ‘to wave’, no addition or deletion is taking place.

7.2.4 Leg and its related words in Garo

The word *za’a* represents ‘foot/leg’ in the Garo language. Its use is almost similar to *zak* mentioned in section 7.2.3. The word *za’a* is added to different bound bases as a category prefix to represent ‘leg’ and leg related words.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>za’a-</i>	<i>sku</i>	<i>za’sku</i>	‘knee’
<i>za’a-</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>za’si</i>	‘toe’
<i>za’a-</i>	<i>skil</i>	<i>za’skil</i>	‘toenails’
<i>za’a-</i>	<i>piŋ</i>	<i>za’piŋ</i>	‘thigh’

Table 12. Leg and its allied words in Garo

When the category prefix *za’a-* is added to the bound base, the vowel phoneme of the category prefix following the glottal stop is always dropped. This condition is the same to all the words mentioned above. Besides the above given examples, the prefix is also used to derive different foot/leg related words in the Garo language. Some examples are *za’kɔp* ‘a pair of shoes’ (*za’a* ‘leg’ + *-kɔpa* ‘to cover’), and *za’paŋ* ‘base of a mountain/mountain valley’ (*za’a* ‘leg’ + *-paŋ*). The first word comprises of a noun plus a verb; the second word comprises of a noun plus a bound base. In both the combinations, the vowel after the glottal stop and the last vowel of the verb *kɔpa* is dropped.

7.2.5 Skin and inner body part related words in Garo

The Garo language uses the category prefix *bV-* to represent skin and inner body part related words. Its use is similar to the category prefix *bV-* of the Boro language discussed in Table 8 above. In the Garo language, it is added to different bound bases to form meaningful body part related words. During the combining of the category prefix and bound base, the vowel of the prefix always becomes [i] and no change occurs in the vowel of the bound base.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>bV-</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>bika</i>	‘heart/liver’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>bik</i>	<i>bibik</i>	‘intestine’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>gil</i>	<i>bigil</i>	‘skin’

Table 13. Skin and inner body parts in Garo

7.2.6 Summary of body parts in Garo

Besides the category prefixes *mik-*, *ku-*, *zak*, *za`a-*, *bV-* mentioned above, the Garo language has one more category prefix *giŋ-*, used to represent the nose and its related body parts. Examples are *giŋ-thiŋ* ‘nose’ and *giŋ-ki* ‘dried mucus in the nostril’. In these two examples, the first is a body part comprising of a category prefix and one bound base and the second comprises of a category prefix and a noun word *ki* ‘stool’. Some body parts in the Garo language comprise of independent monosyllables. Therefore, these are not included in the above-mentioned categories. Examples are *sre* ‘tongue’, *skɔ* ‘head’, *kni* ‘hair’ and *greŋ* ‘bone’. Such independent words are very limited in number.

7.3 Body parts in Rabha

The Rabha language has different category prefixes for denoting body parts. Among the category prefixes, five prefixes are selected here for discussion. The prefixes are *nV-*, *nuka-*, *tV-*, *bV-* and *kV-*. Among these five, only *nuka-* has its independent meaning. All are used with different bound bases and free morphemes.

7.3.1 Face and ear related words in Rabha

In the Rabha language, the category prefix *nV-* is used with a limited number of bound bases to represent ‘face’ and ‘ears’.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>nV-</i>	<i>k^haŋ</i>	<i>nuk^haŋ</i>	‘face’
<i>nV-</i>	<i>kɔr</i>	<i>nakɔr</i>	‘ear’

Table 14. Face and ear related words in Rabha

In prefixing to the bound base, the V in the category prefix *nV-* takes two forms: [u] and [a]. Both vowels are not related to the vowels of the bound base and therefore purely lexical.

7.3.2 Eye related words in Rabha

The word *nuka* is an independent disyllabic word denoting the meaning ‘eye’ in the Rabha language. It is used as a category prefix with a bound base to represent eye related body parts. When it is added to the bound base, the last vowel phoneme [a] of the category prefix automatically drops and turns the word from trisyllabic to disyllabic.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>nuka-</i>	<i>dam</i>	<i>nukdam</i>	'eyebrow'
<i>nuka-</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>nukman</i>	'eyelash'

Table 15. Eye related words in Rabha

It is also used with different free and bound morphemes to represent eye related words. Example words are *nuk-chi* 'tear' (*nuka* 'eye' + *-chi* 'water'), *nuk-zi* 'eye excreta' (*nuka* 'eye' + *-zi* 'stool'), *nuk-san* 'sore-eye' (*nuka* 'eye' + *-san*, a bound base). Among the three examples, the first two are combinations of a category prefix and a free morpheme and the last one is a combination of a category prefix and a bound base. In combining the category prefix *nuka-* with free morphemes and bound bases, the last vowel [a] of *nuka-* is automatically dropped, turning the words from trisyllabic to disyllabic as mentioned in relation to Table 15 above.

7.3.3 Hand and leg related words in Rabha

Hand and leg related words begin with the category prefix *tV-* in the Rabha language. The V in this prefix always takes the form of [a]. It never changes its form from [a] despite using it with bound bases/morphemes that contain different vowels.

Category Prefix	Bound Base/Bases/Free Morpheme	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>tV-</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>tasi</i>	'hand'
<i>tV-</i>	<i>si-k^hu</i>	<i>tasik^hu</i>	'finger'
<i>tV-</i>	<i>t^hej</i>	<i>tat^hej</i>	'leg'
<i>tV-</i>	<i>t^hej-k^hu</i>	<i>tat^hejk^hu</i>	'toe'
<i>tV-</i>	<i>si-tala</i>	<i>tasitala</i>	'palm of hand'

Table 16. Hand and leg related words in Rabha

The examples in the above table have the combination of one category prefix and a bound base/bases. The last one, *tasitala* 'palm of hand', is an exception. It is formed by combining one category prefix, one bound base and one free morpheme *tala* 'flat surface'.

In the Rabha language, some idiomatic and non-idiomatic expressions are formed by using the word *tasi* 'hand'. Examples are *tasi-kantran* 'empty handed' (*tasi* 'hand' + *-kantran* 'only/full of'), *tasi-tat^hej* 'limbs' (*tasi* 'hand' + *-tat^hej* 'leg'), *tasi-zapa* 'to wave hands' (*tasi* 'hand' + *-zapa* 'to wave'), *tasi-koma* 'to fold hands' (*tasi* 'hand' + *-koma* 'to enclose'), and *tasi-nemcha* 'to be inclined to steal' (*tasi* 'hand' + *-nemcha* 'bad').

7.3.4 Head and neck related words in Rabha

In the Rabha language, head and neck related words are formed by using the category prefix *tV-* with a bound base. The same prefix is also used with hand and leg related words, as shown in Table 16 above. However, a difference is found in the V in both types of category prefixes. In hand and leg related words, V is always [a] - the vowel/vowels in the bound base/bases or free morpheme

do not affect the vowel of the prefix, but in head and neck related words, V takes the forms of [u] and [ɔ]. The vowel of the bound base the examples in Table 17 below is [a] in both cases.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>tV-</i>	<i>kam</i>	<i>tukam</i>	‘head’
<i>tV-</i>	<i>kraŋ</i>	<i>tɔkraŋ</i>	‘neck’

Table 17. Head and neck related words in Rabha

The Rabha language has some head related words formed by using *tukam* ‘head’. Example words are *tukam-khɔŋ* ‘skull’, *tukam-ra* ‘head side of a bed or a place for sleeping’. The first word comprises of *tukam* ‘head’ and *k^hɔŋ*, a bound base. The second word comprises of *tukam* ‘head’ and the suffix *-ra*, meaning ‘direction’ or ‘place’.

7.3.5 Stomach and navel related words in Rabha

In the Rabha language, the category prefix *bV-* is used with two bound bases to represent stomach and navel. Though there are differences in the vowels of the bound base, the V of the category prefix for both the words is a schwa.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>bV-</i>	<i>dɔm</i>	<i>bɔdɔm</i>	‘stomach’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>kt^hai</i>	<i>bɔkt^hai</i>	‘navel’

Table 18. Stomach and navel related words in Rabha

7.3.6 Nose, head, mouth and their related words in Rabha

The Rabha language has an unaspirated and an aspirated voiceless velar, [k] and [k^h]. These two consonant phonemes along with one vowel function as category prefixes for denoting body parts situated on the face and head. The examples below show the use of *kV-* with a bound base starting with velar [k] and bilabials [m] and [p] and *k^hV-* with other consonants.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>kV-</i>	<i>mpak</i>	<i>kumpak</i>	‘nose’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>kam</i>	<i>kakam</i>	‘chin’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>pal</i>	<i>kapal</i>	‘forehead’
<i>k^hV-</i>	<i>rɔk</i>	<i>k^hɔrɔk</i>	‘head’
<i>k^hV-</i>	<i>chem</i>	<i>k^huchem</i>	‘mouth’

Table 19. Nose, head, mouth and their related words in Rabha

In combining the category prefix with the bound base, the V of the prefix takes the form of [a], [u], and [ɔ]. In *kakam* ‘chin’, *kapal* ‘forehead’, and *k^hɔrɔk* ‘head’, V is in distant and regressive assimilation to the bound base. In *kumpak* ‘nose’ and *k^huchem* ‘mouth’, no assimilation or vowel harmony is taking place. Another Rabha word *kilak^hɔŋ* ‘elbow’ (comprising of *kV-* + *lak^hɔŋ*) also has

the use of category prefix *kV-*. The words *kapal* ‘forehead’ and *kilak^hɔŋ* ‘elbow’ have close resemblance to the Indo-Aryan Assamese language words *kɔpal* and *kilakuti* having the same meaning.

7.4 Body parts in Dimasa

The Dimasa language has different category prefixes for denoting the body parts. Some of these category ‘prefixes’ are free morphemes and some are bound morphemes. These category prefixes are used with different bound bases to represent body parts. The prefixes are *yac-*, *yaga-*, *mV-* and *bV-*. Among these four category prefixes, the former two are free morphemes having the independent meanings ‘hand’ and ‘leg’ respectively and the remaining two are bound morphemes.

7.4.1 Hand and its related words in Dimasa

The word for hand in the Dimasa language is *yac*. It is used as a category prefix with different bound bases for denoting ‘hand’ and its related words. This category prefix and bound base are combined without any phonological addition or deletion.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>yac-</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>yacp^ha</i>	‘palm of the hand’
<i>yac-</i>	<i>gada</i>	<i>yacgada</i>	‘right hand’
<i>yac-</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>yacsi</i>	‘finger’
<i>yac-</i>	<i>sugaŋ</i>	<i>yacsugaŋ</i>	‘elbow’
<i>yac-</i>	<i>gɔdɔ</i>	<i>yacgɔdɔ</i>	‘arm’

Table 20. Hand and its related words in Dimasa

The category prefix *yac-* is also used with two other bound bases to represent hand related words in the Dimasa language.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>yac</i>	<i>si-ma</i>	<i>yacsima</i>	‘thumb’
<i>yac</i>	<i>si-gur</i>	<i>yacsigur</i>	‘fingernail’

Table 21. Finger related words in Dimasa

Some hand related non-body part words formed by using the category prefix *yac-* are also found in the Dimasa language. One such word is *yacstam* ‘finger ring’. This word comprises of one free morpheme in the form of category ‘prefix’ *yac-* ‘hand’, the bound base *-si*, and a verb word *-tam* ‘to paste’. In combining these three syllables, the vowel phoneme [i] of the bound base *si* is dropped and the word becomes disyllabic instead of trisyllabic.

7.4.2 Leg and its related words in Dimasa

The Dimasa word *yaga* means ‘leg’. Leg related body parts are derived from the word *yaga*, adding it to different bound bases. When the category prefix *yaga-* and the bound base are combined,

the second syllable *ga* of the category prefix is dropped while keeping the remaining elements intact. This process applies to all leg related words.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>yaga-</i>	<i>sgu</i>	<i>yasgu</i>	‘knee’
<i>yaga-</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>yap^ha</i>	‘foot sole’
<i>yaga-</i>	<i>mu</i>	<i>yamu</i>	‘ankle’
<i>yaga-</i>	<i>t^hɔrai</i>	<i>yat^hɔrai</i>	‘calf’
<i>yaga-</i>	<i>p^hɔŋ</i>	<i>yap^hɔŋ</i>	‘thigh’
<i>yaga-</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>yasi</i>	‘toe’

Table 22. Leg and its related words in Dimasa

The above-mentioned leg and its related words are formed by using the category prefix *yaga-* and bound base. Some more leg related words are formed by adding two nouns. The words are *yasi* ‘toe’ + *-gur* ‘skin’ > *yasugur* ‘toenail’, and *yap^ha* ‘foot sole’ + *-k^hɔr* ‘hole’ > *yaɔp^hak^hɔr* ‘the hollow of the foot sole’. Both words comprise of two independent nouns. In the first word, in combining both the nouns, the vowel [i] of second syllable of the free morpheme *yasi* is changing to [u] under the influence of the vowel [u] in the following noun *gur*, resulting in the word *yasugur* in the place of **yasigur*. Likewise, in the second word, the vowel [ɔ] is appearing in between two syllables of the first word *yap^ha* making the word *yaɔp^hak^hɔr* instead of *yap^hak^hɔr*.

A few idiomatic and non-idiomatic expressions are also derived from leg related body parts in the Dimasa language. Examples are *yasgu* ‘knee’ + *-git^hi* ‘dead’, and *yasgu* ‘knee’ + *-t^hu* ‘to lie down/to recline’ representing the meanings of ‘weak’ and ‘to kneel down’ respectively.⁷

7.4.3 Face and eye related words in Dimasa

The word for ‘eye’ in the Dimasa language is *mu*. It is used as a category prefix with bound bases to derive different eye related words as well as ‘face’.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>mu-</i>	<i>gur</i>	<i>mugur</i>	‘eyelids’
<i>mu-</i>	<i>sraŋ</i>	<i>musraŋ</i>	‘eyebrow’
<i>mu-</i>	<i>k^haŋ</i>	<i>muk^haŋ</i>	‘face’

Table 23. Face and eye related words in Dimasa

In forming face and eye related words, the category prefix and bound base both remain intact. The word *mu* has the structure *mV* in the Dimasa language. *mV-* is also used as a category prefix to form other body parts not related to the face and eyes. The words are *mV-rimdiŋ* (*mirimdiŋ~mirumdiŋ*) ‘backbone/spine’, and *mV-thai* (*mithai*) ‘heart’. These two words have no relation to the face and eyes. In both the examples, the V of the category prefix is taking the vowel [i] of the bound base.

⁷ Hagjer, Nirupama: Dimasa Garauren (Dimasa Dictionary), Aug. 2005, p. 275.

7.4.4 Inner body part related words in Dimasa

Some body parts situated inside the belly take the category prefix *bV-* in the Dimasa language. This prefix is comparable to the Boro, Garo and Rabha languages mentioned in Tables 8, 13 and 18 above.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>bV-</i>	<i>k^hlu</i>	<i>bik^hlu~buk^hlu</i>	‘bile’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	‘intestine’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>tla</i>	<i>batla</i>	‘liver’

Table 24. Inner body part words in Dimasa

In all the examples in Table 24 above, the category prefix is taking the vowel of the bound base except in *bik^hlu* ‘bile’. In this example, the V of the category prefix is taking the form of [i] and not assimilating to the vowel [u] found in the bound base.

7.4.5 Closing notes on body parts in Dimasa

The Dimasa language has a few other body parts where the above-mentioned category prefixes are absent. One example in this regard is *k^habaɔ* ‘bosom/breast/chest’. It comprises of two monosyllabic segments *k^ha* ‘bitter’ < *TB ka (Benedict 1972: 18) and one bound base *baɔ*. The prefixes *sV-*, *hV-*, and *t^hV-* are also used in a very limited number of body parts as category prefixes. Example words are *sinp^hlan* ‘hip’, *hɔt^hamai* ‘navel’, and *t^halu* ‘palate’.

7.5 Body parts in Kokborok

The structure of body parts in the Kokborok language is almost similar to the Boro, Garo, Rabha and Dimasa languages mentioned above. Morphemes having independent and non-independent meanings are used with different free morphemes and bound bases to represent body parts. The category prefixes used in deriving body parts are *yak-*, *yakuŋ~yakum-*, *bV-*, *mV-* and *kV-*.

7.5.1 Hand and its related words in Kokborok

The word for ‘hand’ in Kokborok language is *yak*. It is used as a category prefix with the bound base to represent different hand related body parts.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>yak-</i>	<i>gra</i>	<i>yagra</i>	‘right hand’
<i>yak-</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>yaksi</i>	‘left hand’
<i>yak-</i>	<i>p^ha</i>	<i>yakp^ha</i>	‘palm of hand’
<i>yak-</i>	<i>zura</i>	<i>yakzura</i>	‘elbow’
<i>yak-</i>	<i>tuuk</i>	<i>yaktuuk</i>	‘arm’

Table 25. Hand related words in Kokborok

Among the five hand related examples mentioned in Table 25 above, in the combination of *yak* and *gra*, the [k] of *yak* is missing, making the word *yagra* instead of **yakgra*. In the remaining four examples, both the category prefix and the bound base remain intact. The absence of [k] in **yakgra* is due to the morphophonemic system of the Kokborok language. The [k] of category prefix and [g] of bound base are both velars. The former is voiceless and the latter is voiced. In the Kokborok morphophonemic system, two velar sounds are not allowed to sit side by side. Additionally, in the phonemic system, voiced sounds are considered stronger than voiceless sounds. Therefore, in **yakgra*, [k] has been dropped and the word has changed to *yagra*.

In the Kokborok language, some idiomatic and non-idiomatic expressions are derived using the category prefix *yak-*. These are *yak* ‘hand’ + *-kōtər* ‘big/large’ or *kuwar* ‘wide’ resulting in the meaning ‘lavish’, and *yak* ‘hand’ + *-kurun* ‘wise/learned’ resulting in the meanings ‘tradesman/artisan’.⁸

7.5.2 Leg related words in Kokborok

The Kokborok language word for ‘leg’ is *yakun~yakum*. In this language, leg related words are formed under two processes. These are i) a category prefix + free morpheme + bound base and ii) a category prefix + bound base. Among the two, the former is very limited in number. When a category prefix and a bound base are combined, *yakun~yakum* takes the forms of *ya~yak-*. However, the bound base always remains intact. During the combining of the category prefix *yakun* and the free morpheme *yasi*, both remain intact, but when *yakum* (a variation of *yakun*) is added, the semi-vowel [y] of *yasi* is dropped.

Category Prefix	Free Morpheme	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>yakun~yakum</i>	<i>yasi</i>	----	<i>yakunyasi~yakumasi</i>	‘toe’
<i>yakun~yakum</i>	-----	<i>urai</i>	<i>yakurai</i>	‘heel’
<i>yakun~yakum</i>	-----	<i>su</i>	<i>yaksu</i>	‘knee’
<i>yakun~yakum</i>	-----	<i>p^hu</i>	<i>yap^hu</i>	‘foot sole’
<i>yakun~yakum</i>	-----	<i>p^hun</i>	<i>yap^hun</i>	‘thigh’
<i>yakun~yakum</i>	-----	<i>murū</i>	<i>yamurū</i>	‘ankle’

Table 26. Leg related words in Kokborok

Among the six examples mentioned above in Table 26, in the second and third examples, the category prefix *yakun/yakum* is taking the form of *yak-* and in the last three examples, it is taking the form of *ya-*. The absence of [k] of *yak-* and thus becoming *ya-* is due to the morphophonemic system of the Kokborok language, where the voiceless velar [k] does not combine with the voiceless and voiced bilabials [p^h] and [m] respectively.

In the Kokborok language, a few leg related words are also formed following the above structure. Some examples are *yakpai* ‘footmark’ (*yakun~yakum* + *pai*), *yakam* ‘step’ (*yakun~yakum* + *-am*), *yakulap* ‘shoe’ (*yakun~yakum* + *-ulap*), *yasitam* ‘ring’ (*yakun~yakum* + *-si* + *-tam*).⁹ All the above leg related words are formed by combining a category prefix and a bound base except the last one. The last example, *yasitam* ‘ring’, comprises of the category prefix *ya-*, the bound base *si-*, and the

⁸ Dhar, Prabhas C: Kak-Kuthumma (A Kakbarak-Bangla-English Dictionary), 1987, p. 130

⁹ Dhar, Prabhas C: Kak-Kuthumma (A Kakbarak-Bangla-English Dictionary), 1987, p. 131

verb tam ‘to paste’. Kokborok *yasitam* ‘ring’ is very much similar to the Boro word *asit^ham* ‘ring’, both in structure and meaning.

7.5.3 Miscellaneous body part words in Kokborok

The Kokborok language has different body part representing words formed by using the category prefix *bV-*. This prefix has the highest frequency of occurrence of category prefixes found in body parts words. The V of this category prefix turns to different vowels, [u-, ə-, a-, i-, u-], when the prefix is attached to the bound base.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>bV-</i>	<i>slai</i>	<i>buslai</i>	‘tongue’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>k^ha</i>	<i>buk^ha</i>	‘liver’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>k^hrək</i>	<i>bək^hrək</i>	‘head’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>mtəm</i>	<i>bəmtəm</i>	‘elbow’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>hək</i>	<i>bəhək</i>	‘belly’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>sma~sima</i>	<i>bisma~bisima</i>	‘waist’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>gura</i>	<i>baŋgura</i>	‘shoulder’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>buwa</i>	‘teeth’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>kuŋ</i>	<i>bukuŋ</i>	‘nose’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>k^hlɔ~k^hru</i>	<i>bək^hlɔ~buk^hru</i>	‘bile’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>kur</i>	<i>bukur</i>	‘skin’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>k^huk</i>	<i>buk^huk</i>	‘mouth’
<i>bV-</i>	<i>buk</i>	<i>bubuk</i>	‘bowels’

Table 27. Miscellaneous body parts in Kokborok

In the above given examples in Table 27, the V of the category prefix *bV-* is taking different vowel forms based on the vowels of the following bound base. Sometimes, it shows similarity to the vowels of the bound base but sometimes it takes a completely different form. In the first two bound bases having the vowel [a], the V of the category prefix *bV-* is taking the form of a high back unrounded vowel [u]. Turning to [u] from [a] is purely lexical and it is beyond the phonological processes like assimilation, vowel harmony etc. In the combination *bV-wa*, the V of the category prefix is taking the vowel [u] instead of [u] though there is [a] in the bound base. It proves that there is no synchronic pattern and the V varies from word to word – these are purely lexical. In bound bases having [ə], [i], [u] and [u], the category prefix *bV-* is distantly and regressively assimilating with the vowels of the bound base. An exception is found in *baŋgura* (shoulder). In this example, the category prefix *bV-* is taking the vowel [a] from the second syllable of the bound base and a voiced nasal consonant [ŋ] appears between the category prefix and the bound base. In the Kokborok language, the voiced velars [ŋ] and [g] can come in contact position to each other but never in a single syllable.

From the miscellaneous body parts in the Kokborok language mentioned above, some words and phrases are derived. These words and phrases are *bV-ik^humu* > *buik^humu*, ‘hair of the body’ and *bV-krək sa* > *bəkrək sa* ‘to have headache’.

7.5.4 Face and eye related words in Kokborok

Face and eye related body parts in the Kokborok language involve the category prefix *mV-*. It is added to different bound base to denote face and eyes. When *mV-* is added to the bound base, the V of the category prefix turns to the vowels [u] and [ɔ].

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>mV-</i>	<i>k^haŋ</i>	<i>muk^haŋ</i>	‘face’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>kɔl/uk</i>	<i>mɔkɔl~muk</i>	‘eye’

Table 28. Face and eye related words in Kokborok

In the first example, the V of *mV-* is taking the form of a high back unrounded vowel [u] and in the second example (first one), it is assimilating to the vowel of the bound base. Again, in the second example (second one), the V of the category prefix is missing and the consonant phoneme [m] of the category prefix is directly attached to the bound base.

Some eye related words in the Kokborok language are also formed by using the category prefix *mV-* and a bound base. The words are *mV-kalbɔri* > *mɔkalbɔri* ‘eyebrow’, *mV-ksa* > *muksa* ‘disease of the eye’, and *mV-p^hilik* > *mup^hilik* ‘to blink /to wink’. The structure of another eye related word ‘tear’ is different though. It comprises of the two independent morphemes *mɔkɔl~muk* ‘eye’ + *-tuy* ‘water’ > *mɔktuy~muktuy* ‘tear’. In this formation, the second syllable *ɔl* of *mɔkɔl* is missing and the word is turning to disyllabic from trisyllabic.

7.5.5 Ear, heart, breast and buttock denoting words in Kokborok

The category prefix *k^hV-* plays an important role in the formation of ear, heart, chest and buttock denoting words in the Kokborok language. The vowel of the prefix turns to [u, a, i] when it is attached to the bound base.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>k^hV-</i>	<i>nzu</i>	<i>k^hunzu</i>	‘ear’
<i>k^hV-</i>	<i>duk</i>	<i>k^haduk</i>	‘heartstring’
<i>k^hV-</i>	<i>za</i>	<i>k^haza</i>	‘breast’
<i>k^hV-</i>	<i>chlaŋ</i>	<i>k^hichlaŋ</i>	‘buttock’

Table 29. Different body part related words in Kokborok

In all four examples in Table 29 above, the vowel of the category prefix *k^hV-* is taking different vowels. It is assimilating to the vowel of the bound bases in *k^hunzu* and *k^haza* but taking different vowels in *k^haduk* and *k^hichlaŋ*.

A few body part related words in the Kokborok language are formed by using *kun* (*bukun*) ‘nose’. Two examples are *kun-chuk* ‘tip of the nose’ and *kun-bulam* ‘nostril’. The former comprises of a category prefix and the verb ‘be high’ and the second is a category prefix and a bound base.

7.6 Summary: category prefixes relating to human body parts

Similarities

- i. In general, human body parts in all five languages are formed by combining a category prefix and a bound base.
- ii. Eye related words are formed by using the category prefix *mV-* in the Boro and Kokborok languages. The Garo language use *mik-* as category prefix for eyes. The Rabha and Dimasa languages have independent eye denoting words, *nuka* and *mu* respectively, that are used as category prefix with different bound bases.
- iii. *bV-* is a common category prefix found in all five languages for denoting different inner and outer body parts.
- iv. *kV-*, *k^hV-* and *ku'-* are used as category prefix in the Boro, Garo, Rabha and Kokborok languages. However, their use is not the same between all these languages. *kV-* is used only in the Rabha language for denoting nose, chin and forehead. In the Boro language *k^hV-* is used as category prefix for denoting head, mouth, hair and ear; in the Rabha language it is used for denoting head and mouth; and in the Kokborok language for denoting ear, heart, breast and buttock. *ku'-* is used only in the Garo language for denoting mouth and lips. Despite these are used for denoting different body parts in different languages, one similarity of these three category prefixes is that all of them consist of one consonant followed by one vowel. In the Garo language, the glottal stop functions as a consonant phoneme.
- v. All category prefixes generally end with a vowel (except *ku'-* in the Garo language) and all bound bases begin with consonant in all five languages.

Dissimilarities

- i. Human limbs denoting category prefixes are different for all these languages. In Boro and Rabha these are *a-* and *tV-* respectively. These category prefixes have no independent meanings. The Garo, Dimasa and Kokborok languages have independent nouns used as category prefix to represent different human limbs;
- ii. The Boro, Garo and Kokborok languages have bound forms of category prefixes for denoting eyes and their related words whereas the Rabha and Dimasa languages use eye denoting independent words to derive different eye related words;
- iii. The Rabha language uses the category prefixes *kV-* and *k^hV-* simultaneously depending on the first consonant phoneme of the bound base; this rule is not applicable in the remaining four languages.

8 Structure of words relating to bird and animal names

The Bodo-Garo group of languages shows great structural similarities in bird and animal names. These birds and animal names are formed by combining a category prefix and a bound base or free morpheme(s). Those bird names not following these structures are non-native to these languages.

8.1 Bird names in Boro

The general word for representing fowl in the Boro language is *dau*. All bird related words take the word *dau* as category prefix for denoting different bird varieties in this language. Therefore, all native bird names become either disyllabic or trisyllabic with *dau-* always standing in first position. The structures of bird names fall under five different categories. These are: i) category prefix + bound base, ii) category prefix + noun, iii) category prefix + verb, iv) category prefix + adjective, and v) hybrid formation. The category prefix *dau-* is absent in some bird names of the Boro language. These kinds of words are non-native words borrowed from the neighbouring Assamese language or another language.

8.1.1 Category prefix + bound base

Different bird names of the Boro language come under this category. In the words coming under this category, both the category prefix and the bound base remain intact, as can be seen in Table 30 below.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>dau-</i>	<i>sri</i>	<i>dausri</i>	‘martin’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>k^ha</i>	<i>dauk^ha</i>	‘crow’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>bɔ</i>	<i>daubɔ</i>	‘heron’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>ma-sar</i>	<i>daumasar</i>	‘jungle fowl’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>dausa</i>	‘chick’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>rai</i>	<i>daurai</i>	‘peacock’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>blur</i>	<i>daubhur</i>	‘bulbul’

Table 30. Bird related words in Boro: category prefix + bound base

The majority of bird names follow the above-mentioned structure in the Boro language. Some bird names have been derived onomatopoeically, i.e., based on their call. Among these, mentionable is *dauk^ha* ‘crow’. The sound of the crow in the Boro language is *k^ha* and it is used with the category prefix *dau-* to represent this particular bird variety.

8.1.2 Category prefix + noun

The bird and bird related words coming under this category are formed by combining the category prefix *dau-* with a monosyllabic or disyllabic noun. During the combining of the category prefix and the noun, sometimes its form is contracted and sometimes it remains intact, as can be seen in Table 31 below.

Category Prefix	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>dau-</i>	<i>zu</i> (‘female’)	<i>dauzu</i>	‘hen’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>zula</i> (‘male’)	<i>dauzula~dauzla~daula</i>	‘rooster’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>gan</i> (‘feather’)	<i>daugan</i>	‘quill’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>k^hi</i> (‘stool’)	<i>dauk^hi</i>	‘faeces of bird’

Table 31. Bird related words in Boro: category prefix + noun

In the above four examples, except for in *dau-zula* ‘rooster’, both the category prefix and noun are combined without any addition or deletion. *dau-zula* ‘rooster’ appears in three different forms. In the first one it appears in toto, in the second one the high back unrounded vowel [u] of the noun is missing and in the third, the first syllable [zu] of the noun is missing. However, despite their different forms, the meaning remains the same.

8.1.3 Category prefix + verb

A very limited number of bird and bird related words come under this category. In the Boro language, one bird related word and one bird name is formed by combining a category prefix with a verb, as shown in Table 32 below.

Noun	Verb	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>dau</i> (‘bird’)	<i>dui</i> (‘to lay an egg’)	<i>daudui</i>	‘egg’
<i>dau</i> (‘bird’)	<i>t^hu</i> (‘to sleep’)	<i>dau^hu</i>	‘dove’

Table 32. Bird related words in Boro: category prefix + verb

8.1.4 Closing notes on bird names in Boro

In the Boro language, one bird name is formed by combining a category prefix and an adjective word: *dauliŋ* ‘eagle/kite’. It is formed by using category prefix *dau-* and adjective *liŋ* ‘very high’. This name is derived from the flying character of this bird as this bird flies high in the sky searching for its prey.

In the Boro language, there are also some bird names without any category prefix. These words are borrowed from the neighbouring Assamese language. Some examples are *sigun* ‘vulture’ (<Ass. *xɔgun*), *hajsui* ‘duck’ (<Ass. *hāh*), *sila* ‘kite’ (<Ass. *chila/chilɔni*), *bat^hɔ* ‘parrot’ (<Ass. *b^hatɔu*, Chainary and Basumatary 2008: 119). However, there is a growing tendency among the Boros to prefer the use of native words over Aryan borrowings. Bird names are not an exception in this regard. Chainary (2014: 107) mentions that barring the first and the last bird names *sigun* ‘vulture’ and *bathɔ* ‘parrot’, the two other bird names are presently getting replaced by *daup^hlam* ‘duck’ and *dauliŋ* ‘kite’ respectively. However, these two words are borrowed from the Dimasa language, a cognate of the Boro language, because the structure of both words completely assimilates with the structure of Boro language. *daup^hlam* consists of two free morphemes *dau* ‘bird’ and *p^hlam* ‘wide open’ in the Boro language. This name is based on the wide-open sole of the duck. Accordingly, the word *dauliŋ* also is a combination of two free morphemes, *dau* ‘bird’ and *liŋ* ‘very long/very high’.

The Boro language has another bird name formed using hybrid formation: *maslaŋk^har* ‘kingfisher’. It comprises of three morphemes, namely one noun and two verbs (NVV): *mas* ‘fish’, (an Assamese language word), *-laŋ* ‘to take away’ (a Boro word) and *-khar* ‘to run away’ (a Boro word).

8.2 Bird names in Garo

The bird denoting word in the Garo language is *dɔ ɔ*. It is used as category prefix with bound bases and nouns for denoting different varieties of birds. During the combining of the category prefix and a bound base or the category prefix and a noun, the last vowel phoneme [ɔ] of the category prefix

dɔ̃ after the glottal stop is automatically dropped. In the Garo language, bird names that lack the category prefix *dɔ̃* are borrowed from other languages.

8.2.1 Category prefix + bound base

The majority of bird names in the Garo language come under this category. During the combining of the category prefix and a bound base, their phonological form remains intact except for the last vowel [ɔ̃] of the category prefix following the glottal stop – this vowel is dropped.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>bak</i>	<i>dɔ̃bak</i>	‘bat’
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>ka</i>	<i>dɔ̃ka</i>	‘crow’
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>de</i>	<i>dɔ̃de</i>	‘peacock’
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>kru</i>	<i>dɔ̃kru</i>	‘dove’
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>pɔ</i>	<i>dɔ̃pɔ</i>	‘owl’
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>be</i>	<i>dɔ̃be</i>	‘a kind of partridge’
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>gep</i>	<i>dɔ̃gep</i>	‘duck’
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>sik</i>	<i>dɔ̃sik</i>	‘parrot’

Table 33. Bird related words in Garo: category prefix + bound base

8.2.2 Category prefix + noun

The Garo language also has a few bird and bird related words formed by using the category prefix + noun. The rule of dropping the vowel phoneme [ɔ̃] after the glottal stop is the same as mentioned in 8.2.1. However, there is a small difference in the category prefix + bound base structure and the category prefix + noun structure. In the former, the bound base is always monosyllabic but, in the latter, the noun word is either monosyllabic or disyllabic as shown below in Table 34.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>bitchi</i> (‘egg’)	<i>dɔ̃bitchi</i>	‘egg of fowl’
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>grɔŋ</i> (‘feather’)	<i>dɔ̃grɔŋ</i>	‘quill’
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>kasi</i> (‘castrated’)	<i>dɔ̃kasi</i>	‘capon’
<i>dɔ̃</i> -	<i>tik</i> (‘louse’)	<i>dɔ̃tik</i>	‘hen louse’

Table 34. Bird related words in Garo: category prefix + noun

8.2.3 Closing notes on bird names in Garo

In the Garo language, bird names without *dɔ̃* are borrowed from other languages. Two examples are *sɔgin* ‘vulture’ and *parɔa* ‘pigeon’. These two words show close resemblance to the Assamese words *xɔgun* and *parɔ* respectively representing the same meaning. There are some bird names without the category prefix *dɔ̃* for which we could not yet trace their origin. One such bird name is *reŋkɔk* ‘toucan’. This word is neither following the Garo structure related to bird names nor can its relation be established with other neighbouring Aryan or non-Aryan languages of the region.

8.3 Bird names in Rabha

The structure of bird names in the Rabha language is very much similar to the Boro and Garo languages mentioned above. In the Rabha language, bird names generally start with the word *tɔ* 'bird'. *tɔ* is used as category prefix with bound bases, nouns and verbs for denoting different varieties of birds. During the combining of the category prefix and bound bases, nouns or verbs no addition or deletion takes place.

8.3.1 Category prefix + bound base

This is the most common structure among bird names in the Rabha language. In this structure, the category prefix is always monosyllabic but the bound base may be monosyllabic, disyllabic or trisyllabic.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>tɔ-</i>	<i>k^ha</i>	<i>tɔk^ha</i>	'crow'
<i>tɔ-</i>	<i>k^hur</i>	<i>tɔk^hur~tuk^hur</i>	'dove'
<i>tɔ-</i>	<i>bela</i>	<i>tɔbela</i>	'pelican'
<i>tɔ-</i>	<i>dɔbɔne</i>	<i>tɔdɔbɔne</i>	'wagtail'
<i>tɔ-</i>	<i>bau</i>	<i>tɔkbau</i>	'owl'
<i>tɔ-</i>	<i>basar</i>	<i>tɔbasar</i>	'a jungle fowl'
<i>tɔ-</i>	<i>p^hre</i>	<i>tɔp^hre</i>	'sparrow'
<i>tɔ-</i>	<i>re</i>	<i>tɔre</i>	'a type of pigeon'

Table 35. Bird related words in Rabha: category prefix + bound base

The word *tɔk^ha* 'crow' derives from the call *k^ha* of this bird variety. In the word *tɔk^hur~tuk^hur* 'dove', the [ɔ] phoneme of the category prefix is changing to [u] due to influence of the vowel [u] in the bound base. In the word *tɔkbau* 'owl', a phoneme [k] is appearing in between the category prefix and bound base.

8.3.2 Category prefix + noun

The Rabha language has some bird names and bird related words formed by combining the category prefix with a noun. Unlike the category prefix + bound base combination, no addition or deletion takes place.

Category Prefix	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>tɔ-</i>	<i>raŋ</i> ('sky')	<i>tɔraŋ</i>	'eagle/kite'
<i>tɔ-</i>	<i>t^hɔp</i> ('nest')	<i>tɔt^hɔp</i>	'bird's nest'

Table 36. Bird related words in Rabha: category prefix + noun

8.3.3 Closing notes on bird names in Rabha

The Rabha language also has one bird related word formed by using the category prefix + verb combination. The word is *tɔchi~tuchi* 'egg' (< *tɔ* 'bird' -*chia* 'to lay eggs'). A change from [ɔ] to

[u] is taking place in *tɔchi~tuchi* due to vowel harmony as the mid back vowel [ɔ] is raised to a high back rounded vowel [u] to align its position with the front high unrounded vowel [i]. Also, the last vowel phoneme [a] of the verb *chia* is dropped. This same process is also seen in the Garo language, a neighbour of the Rabha language. All native bird names in the Rabha language start with *tɔ* as mentioned above. There are some bird names where *tɔ* is absent. Such bird names are *bɔgila* ‘crane’ and *manchalenka~manchaleka* ‘kingfisher’. These two bird names are closely related to the words *bɔgoli* and *mashrɔka* respectively representing the same meaning in the neighbouring Assamese language.

8.4 Bird names in Dimasa

In the Dimasa language, bird names and bird related words fall under the following categories: i) category prefix + bound base, ii) category prefix + noun, iii) category prefix + verb, iv) category prefix + adjective, and v) hybrid formation. These categories are the same as in the Boro language as mentioned in Section 8.1 above. Among these combinations, the first one is highest in number, and the last one is the lowest. In all these combinations the phonological form of the elements remains intact.

8.4.1 Category prefix + bound base

The bird representing word in the Dimasa language is *dau*. It is used as a category prefix with different bound bases to represent different bird varieties.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>dau</i>	<i>rak^hai</i>	<i>daurak^hai</i>	‘bat’
<i>dau</i>	<i>k^ha</i>	<i>dauk^ha</i>	‘crow’
<i>dau</i>	<i>bɔŋa</i>	<i>daubɔŋa</i>	‘heron’
<i>dau</i>	<i>blib~blub</i>	<i>daublib~daublub</i>	‘bulbul’
<i>dau</i>	<i>bui</i>	<i>daubui</i>	‘partridge’
<i>dau</i>	<i>dai</i>	<i>daudai</i>	‘peacock’
<i>dau</i>	<i>masar</i>	<i>daumasar</i>	‘a jungle fowl’
<i>dau</i>	<i>p^hri</i>	<i>daup^hri</i>	‘pigeon’

Table 37. Bird related words in Dimasa: category prefix + bound base

In all the examples in Table 37 above, the bound base is either monosyllabic or disyllabic and is combined with the category prefix *dau* without any addition or deletion of phonemes.

8.4.2 Category prefix + noun

Bird names formed by combining a category prefix + noun are rare in the Dimasa language. In combining the category prefix + noun, both elements remain intact.

Category Prefix	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>dau-</i>	<i>reza</i> (king)	<i>daureza</i>	‘jackdaw’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>but^hup</i> (nest)	<i>daubut^hup</i>	‘bird’s nest’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>garan</i> (feather)	<i>daugaran</i>	‘quill’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>zela</i> (male)	<i>dauzela</i>	‘cock’

Table 38. Bird related words in Dimasa: category prefix + noun

8.4.3 Category prefix + verb

The category prefix + verb combination is rare in the Dimasa language. Here, both the category prefix and the verb are monosyllabic remain phonologically intact.

Category Prefix	Verb	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>dau-</i>	<i>t^hu</i> (‘to sleep’)	<i>daut^hu</i>	‘dove’
<i>dau-</i>	<i>di</i> (‘to lay eggs’)	<i>daudi</i>	‘egg’

Table 39. Bird related words in Dimasa: category prefix + verb

8.4.4 Closing notes on bird names in Dimasa

The Dimasa language has one bird name formed by using the combination category prefix + adjective. The word is *daulin* ‘eagle/kite’ (< *dau* ‘bird/fowl’ -*lin* ‘very high’). Similar structures of this bird name have been discussed in the Boro and Rabha languages above. The Dimasa language has another bird name *masurakhal* ‘kingfisher’ which is a hybrid word comprising of three distinct free morphemes, the first one *mash* ‘fish’, borrowed from the neighbouring language Assamese, a dominant language of Assam, and the following two are native to the Dimasa language: *ra* ‘to take’ and *k^hai~k^hal* ‘to run’. In combining the Assamese word *mash* with native Dimasa words, [sh] is turning to [s], adjusting to the articulation system of the Dimasa language, and one vowel phoneme [u] appears in between *mas* and *ra* turning the word to *masurak^hal* in the place of *masrak^hai~masrak^hal*.

8.5 Bird names in Kokborok

The bird/fowl representing word in the Kokborok language is *tɔk*. It is used as a category prefix with bound bases, nouns and verbs to derive different bird and bird related words. In combining *tɔk* to represent bird and bird related words, sometimes all forms remain intact and sometimes additions or deletions of phonemes take place.

8.5.1 Category prefix + bound base

In the Kokborok language, when the category prefix and a bound base are combined, sometimes the last consonant phoneme of the category prefix is dropped, sometimes the category prefix and bound base are combined intact, and sometimes the [ɔk] of the category prefix *tɔk* changes to [a] or [ai], or sometimes the last phoneme [k] of the word *tɔk* is dropped. Choudhury (2007: 84),

a contributor on different aspects of Kokborok language, admits that he cannot explain why /tok/ changes to /ta/ as part of a compound.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>tək-</i>	<i>bak</i>	<i>təbak</i>	‘bat’
<i>tək-</i>	<i>kʰa</i>	<i>təkʰa</i>	‘crow’
<i>tək-</i>	<i>tun</i>	<i>təktun</i>	‘snipe’
<i>tək-</i>	<i>sunta</i>	<i>təksunta</i>	‘woodpecker’
<i>tək-</i>	<i>kʰuk</i>	<i>təkʰuk</i>	‘owl’
<i>tək-</i>	<i>kʰum</i>	<i>təkʰum</i>	‘duck’
<i>tək-</i>	<i>yun</i>	<i>taiyun</i>	‘hornbill’
<i>tək-</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>təkma</i>	‘hen’
<i>tək-</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>təksa</i>	‘chick’

Table 40. Bird related words in Kokborok: category prefix + bound base

In the first two words, *təbak* ‘bat’ and *təkʰa* ‘crow’, the unaspirated phoneme [k] of the category prefix is dropped because the bound base begins with a voiced bilabial [b] and voiceless aspirated velar [kʰ], a general rule the Kokborok language morphophonemic system. On the other hand, in the words *təktun* ‘snipe’ and *təksunta* ‘woodpecker’, all elements are remaining intact as the category prefix ends with voiceless [k] and the bound base begins with [t], [s] respectively. In *təkʰuk* ‘owl’ and *təkʰum* ‘duck’, the unaspirated consonant [k] of the category prefix is dropped because the bound base begins with an aspirated consonant and as per the Kokborok morphophonemic system no two voiceless stops can come in conjunct position. If it occurs, then one is either to change into a voiced phoneme or to be dropped. The vowel of the category prefix also changes from [ɔ] to [a]. In *taiyun* ‘hornbill’ the voiceless unaspirated [k] is dropped because of the bound base begins with the semi-vowel [y]. Because of this semi-vowel [y] at the beginning of the bound base, the monophthong [ɔ] changes into diphthong [ai]. In the last two examples, *təkma* ‘hen’ and *təksa* ‘chick’, both the category prefix and bound base are intact.

8.5.2 Category prefix + noun

A limited number of bird and bird related words are formed with the combination category prefix + noun in the Kokborok language. In this combination, sometimes some phonemes are dropped and sometimes all remain intact.

Category Prefix	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>tək</i>	<i>la</i> (male)	<i>təkla</i>	‘cock’
<i>tək</i>	<i>kʰuk</i> (mouth)	<i>təkʰuk</i>	‘beak/bill’

Table 41. Bird related words in Kokborok: category prefix + noun

In the examples in Table 41 above, in the first one, the category prefix + noun are intact and in the second one, the last phoneme [k] of the category prefix is dropped. The reason has already been mentioned in Section 8.5.1 above.

8.5.3 Category prefix + verb

Like the category prefix + noun combination mentioned above, the Kokborok language has only a limited number of words formed by combining a category prefix + verb. In this combination, all elements remain intact.

Category Prefix	Verb	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>tək-</i>	<i>tui</i> ('to lay eggs')	<i>təktui</i>	'egg'
<i>tək-</i>	<i>liŋ</i> ('to be long/far')	<i>təkliŋ</i>	'eagle/kite'
<i>tək-</i>	<i>t^hu</i> ('to sleep')	<i>təkt^hu</i>	'dove'

Table 42. Bird related words in Kokborok: category prefix + verb

8.5.4 Closing notes on bird names in Kokborok

A few bird names in the Kokborok language do not use the category prefix *tək-*. Examples are *məyur~mur* 'peacock', *sikruk* 'vulture', *p^haruk* 'pigeon', *pankuuri* 'water crow', *masraŋa* 'kingfisher', and *kuruua* 'seagull'. The word *məyur* 'peacock' is similar to Assamese and Bengali words; *sikruk* for vulture has close affinity with *xəgun* and *sakun* respectively of Assamese and Bengali language; *p^haruk* shows similarity to the Assamese word *parə*, *pankuuri* 'water crow' to the Assamese word *pani kauri*, *masraŋa* 'kingfisher' to the Bengali word with the same orthography and meaning, and *kuruua* 'seagull' to Assamese word *kurua*. Some native Assamese and Bengali origin words have been adapted to the articulation system of the Kokborok language.

8.5.5 Summary: bird names

The above discussion on bird names of five languages shows both similarities and dissimilarities between them. These similarities and dissimilarities are summarised as follows.

Similarities

- Bird/fowl denoting words of the respective languages are used as category prefix in all five languages.
- The combinations category prefix + bound base and category prefix + noun are common in all five languages.

Dissimilarities

- In the Boro and Dimasa languages, the category prefix and bound base are combined intact whereas in the Garo, Rabha and Kokborok languages these do not always remain intact. In the Garo language the last vowel phoneme [ɔ] of the category prefix after the glottal stop is dropped; in the Rabha language in some words the category prefix and a bound base are combined intact but in some a voiceless velar [k] comes in between the category prefix and the bound base; and in the Kokborok language the voiceless velar [k] of the category prefix is sometimes dropped, and sometimes [ɔk] of this category prefix is replaced by [ai].
- The category prefix + verb combination is found in the Boro, Dimasa and Kokborok languages. This system is absent in Garo and Rabha.

- iii. The eagle/kite representing word in Boro and Dimasa language is formed by combining a category prefix and an adjective. This structure is absent in the other three languages.

8.6 Animal names

All native animal names in the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages begin with the voiced bilabial [m]. This [m] can be followed by one V or by VC, and the form *mV-* or *mVC-* functions as a category prefix in all these languages.

8.6.1 Animal names in Boro

The animal denoting word in Boro language is *mi* and all native animal names begin with *mV-* as category prefix. In a limited number of animal names, it is used as a suffix instead.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>musa~masa</i>	‘tiger’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>suu</i>	<i>musuu</i>	‘cow’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>k^hra</i>	<i>muk^hra~mak^hra</i>	‘monkey’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>p^hur</i>	<i>mup^hur</i>	‘bear’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>muisu~muisu</i>	‘buffalo’

Table 43. Animal related words in Boro

In the above examples that contain a tilde, the first form belongs to the standard variety of the language and the second form to another dialect. The vowel [i] of the animal representing word *mi*, when used as a category prefix, does not remaining intact: sometimes it distantly assimilates to the vowel phoneme of the bound base and sometimes it takes the form of high back unrounded vowel [u]. The high back unrounded vowel [u] occurs when the bound base is contains the vowel [a] or [u]. In first four examples in Table 43 above, no addition or deletion of the phonemes is taking place. However, in the last example, *muisu~muisu*, the vowel phoneme [i] stands in between the category prefix and the bound base changing the vowel of the prefix from monophthong to diphthong.

In some animal names of the Boro language, the bound base does not take any category prefix. Instead, it is attached after the bound base as suffix. When used as a suffix, *mi* never remains the same; it changes to *ma*. A total of three such animal names are found and all are domesticated animals. The words are *suui-ma* ‘dog’, *buur-ma* ‘goat’, and *ɔ-ma* ‘swine’. In all three examples, the bound base and category suffix are combined intact.

Some animal names are formed by combining a category prefix and a verb. One such animal name is *muider* ‘elephant’ (< *mV-* + *der* ‘be big’). However, the category prefix + verb combination is very rare.

Animal names in this language generally comprise of two syllables because most animal names are either a category prefix + bound base combination or a bound base + category suffix combination. These combinations result in Boro animal names that at minimum disyllabic. The word *mui* ‘deer’ is the only animal’s name that is monosyllabic in the Boro language.

The vast majority of native animal names contain with *mV*, either as a category prefix or as a suffix. However, there are two native animal names where the category prefix *mV*- is absent: *lɔk^hra* ‘wolf’ and *sesa* ‘hare’. These two words are related to the Rabha words *lɔkra* ‘wolf’ and *sasa* ‘hare’. There are also borrowed animal names where *mV*- is absent as category prefix or category suffix. A few examples are *gɔrai* ‘horse’, *siyal* ‘jackal’, *ganda* ‘rhinoceros’, *zebra* ‘zebra’, and *zirap^h* ‘giraffe’. The words *gɔrai* ‘horse’, *siyal* ‘jackal’, and *ganda* ‘rhinoceros’ have been borrowed from the neighbouring Assamese language, in which the words are *g^hɔra*, *xiyal* and *gɔrh* respectively. The words *zebra* and *zirap^h* have been borrowed via Assamese or English from Italian *zebra* and Arabic *zarāfa*.¹⁰

8.6.2 Animal names in Garo

In the Garo language, animal names and their structure have close resemblance to the Boro language. In the Garo language, the word for animal is *mat*. It also represents a particular species of squirrel. *mat* is used as a category prefix with different bound bases to represent varieties of animals. Garo language animal names are usually disyllabic as these are comprised of one category prefix and one bound base at minimum. A limited number of animal names has a monosyllabic structure. Animal names beginning with the category prefix *mat*- take the forms of *mat*~*ma*~*meŋ*~*mak*~*mɔŋ* depending on the bound base in the Garo language.

Category prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>mat</i> -	<i>cha</i>	<i>matcha</i>	‘tiger’
<i>mat</i> -	<i>chu</i>	<i>matchu</i> ~ <i>masu</i> ~ <i>ma</i> ‘su	‘cow’
<i>mat</i> -	<i>kre</i>	<i>matkre</i>	‘monkey’
<i>mat</i> -	<i>chɔk</i>	<i>matchɔk</i>	‘deer’
<i>mat</i> -	<i>ma</i>	<i>matma</i>	‘buffalo’
<i>mat</i> -	<i>ram</i>	<i>matram</i>	‘otter’
<i>mat</i> -	<i>churi</i>	<i>matchuri</i>	‘civet cat’
<i>mat</i> -	<i>bil</i>	<i>makbil</i>	‘bear’

Table 44. Animal related words in Garo

In the examples in Table 44 above, the category prefix and bound base both are intact except in the words *masu*~*ma* ‘su’ and *makbil* ‘bear’. In *masu*~*ma* ‘su’ ‘cow’, the voiceless affricate [ch] is changing to voiceless fricative [s] and a glottal stop appears before [s] in the last form, *ma* ‘su’. Along with the changing of [ch] to [s], the last consonant [t] of the category prefix *mat*- is also missing. In the last example, *makbil* ‘bear’, the [t] of the category prefix changes to [k].

The Garo language animal names *meŋ*~*gɔ* ‘cat’ and *mɔŋ*~*ma* ‘elephant’ contain the [m] phoneme from category prefix *mat*-. In the examples *meŋ*~*gɔ* ‘cat’ and *mɔŋ*~*ma* ‘elephant’, the changes that have taken place are different from those discussed for the examples in Table 44. In these two examples, the category prefix *mat*- has changed to *meŋ*- and *mɔŋ*- while attaching to the bound base *gɔ* and *ma*. The change from *mat*- to *meŋ*- and *mɔŋ*- is purely lexical and without any phonological rule.

¹⁰ Sources: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/zebra> and <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/giraffe> respectively.

Some native animal names lack [m] both in the beginning and in the final positions of the word. However, they are not cognate with any dominant Aryan languages of the region. Two examples are the words *wak* ‘pig/boar’ and *sapau* ‘rabbit’. *wak* of Garo language is cognate with the Kokborok language word *wak* ‘pig/boar’. It also has close affinity with the Rabha word *bak* as /w/ and /b/ both are bilabial and voiced. Another animal name with monosyllabic structure and beginning with [m] is *mes* ‘sheep’. Other loan words borrowed from the neighbouring Assamese/Bengali languages include *siɲhɔ* ‘lion’, *se.el* ‘fox’, and *gure* ‘horse’. While Assamese/Bengali *siɲhɔ* ‘lion’ has been borrowed without phonological adaptation, the other two words, *xiyal* ‘fox’ and *g^hɔra* ‘horse’, have been adapted to the articulation system of Garo language.

8.6.3 Animal names in Rabha

The general animal representing word in the Rabha language is *mat*, like the Garo word for ‘animal’. Like the Garo language, in the Rabha language it is also used as a category prefix. The category prefix *mat-* always changes its form to *ma-*, *mi-* or *miɲ-* when attaching to the bound base.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>mat-</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>masa</i>	‘tiger’
<i>mat-</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>masu</i>	‘cow’
<i>mat-</i>	<i>kra</i>	<i>makra</i>	‘monkey’
<i>mat-</i>	<i>sɔk</i>	<i>masɔk</i>	‘deer’
<i>mat-</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>miɲsi</i>	‘buffalo’
<i>mat-</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>mada</i>	‘bear’
<i>mat-</i>	<i>t^ha</i>	<i>mat^ha</i>	‘iguana’
<i>mat-</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>miɲku</i>	‘cat’
<i>mat-</i>	<i>ruk</i>	<i>maruk</i>	‘wild cat’

Table 45. Animal related words in Rabha

In the above examples in Table 45, none of the words is in intact form. In all the words, the last phoneme [t] of category prefix drops when attaching to the bound base and in some [at] of *mat* is changing into [i] or [iɲ]. With bound bases containing /a/ or /ɔ/, the /a/ of the category prefix is not changing except for dropping the /t/ of the category prefix. With bound bases containing /i/, the /a/ of category prefix is changing to /i/, assimilating itself to the vowel of the bound base and the coda of the category prefix is dropped. Also, in some bound bases containing /u/ the category prefix *mat* is changing to *miɲ*, and the low mid vowel /a/ is raised to a front high unrounded vowel /i/, bringing harmony between vowel of the category prefix and vowel of the bound base.

Some animal names in the Rabha language do not have the phoneme [m] at the beginning of the word, for example *ki* ‘dog’, *bak* ‘pig’ (comparable with Garo and Kokborok *wak*), *prun* ‘goat’, *lɔkra* ‘wolf’ (comparable with Boro *lɔk^hra*), *sasa* ‘hare’ (comparable with Boro *sesa*), *huda* ‘otter’, *p^het^he* ‘porcupine’, *tamana* ‘fox’. Some animal names borrowed from neighbouring Aryan languages are *gɔray* ‘horse’ (<Ass. *g^hɔra*), *huti~hiti* ‘elephant’ (<Ass. *hati*), *ganday* ‘rhinoceros’ (<Ass. *gɔrh*, though this word is closer in form to the Boro word *ganda* than to the Assamese word), *gad^ha* ‘ass’ (Ass. *gad^hɔ*), *ut* ‘camel’ (Ass. *ut*), and *siɲhɔ* ‘lion’ (Ass. *xiɲhɔ*).

8.6.4 Animal names in Dimasa

mi is a common animal representing word in the Boro and Dimasa languages. In the Dimasa language, this category prefix is attached to different bound bases to derive a variety of animal names. In animal names in this language, the category prefix and the bound base are combined intact with the exception of a few words where *mi-* turns to *mu-* or *mɔ-*.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>mV-</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>misi</i>	‘tiger’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>musu</i>	‘cow’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>midī</i>	‘porcupine’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sai</i>	<i>misai</i>	‘barking deer’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sɔŋ</i>	<i>misɔŋ</i>	‘spotted deer’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sidaɔ</i>	<i>misidaɔ</i>	‘leopard’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sip</i>	<i>misip</i>	‘buffalo’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>dɔbɔŋ</i>	<i>midɔbɔŋ</i>	‘hare/rabbit’
<i>mV</i>	<i>uŋ</i>	<i>miyuŋ</i>	‘elephant’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>tʰaŋ</i>	<i>mitʰaŋ</i>	‘bison’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>srɔŋ</i>	<i>mɔsrɔŋ</i>	‘jackal’

Table 46. Animal related words in Dimasa

In the examples in Table 46 above, the category prefix and bound base remain intact except for in three animal names. In *musu* ‘cow’, the vowel [i] of *mV* is changing to [u] due to influence of the following vowel in the bound base, i.e., distant regressive assimilation is taking place. In *miyuŋ* ‘elephant’, the semi-vowel [y] is appearing in between the two vowels [i] and [u] of two different syllables due to morphophonemics. In *mɔsrɔŋ* ‘jackal’ the /i/ of category prefix is changing to /ɔ/ due to the influence of the following vowel of the bound base, i.e., in *mɔsrɔŋ* ‘jackal’ and *musu* ‘cow’ the V of the category prefix is assimilating to the vowel of the bound base.

In some Dimasa animal names, the category prefix *mV-* is not added as prefix. Instead, it is used as suffix with the bound base. One such word is *melma* ‘sheep’. In this word, *mi* has changed to *ma* as end syllable of the word. The use of category prefix in the final position of the word as suffix has been discussed in relation to the Boro language above. The same word formation is found in the Dimasa language.

The word *burun* ‘goat’ has a unique structure in the Dimasa language. It is not comparable to other animal names in the Dimasa language or to other languages belonging to the Boro-Garo group. However, the word *gorai* ‘horse’ has close resemblance with Assamese word *gʱɔra* bearing same meaning.

8.6.5 Animal names in Kokborok

The word *mui* in Kokborok means ‘animal’. However, this word is never used in full to represent any animal variety. Instead, only *mV-* is used as a category prefix with different bound bases to represent a variety of animal species. This prefix, when added to the bound base, takes the vowel of the bound base or takes another vowel not related to the bound base.

Category Prefix	Bound Base	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>mV-</i>	<i>suk</i>	<i>musuk</i>	‘cow’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>muusa</i>	‘tiger’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>k^hra</i>	<i>muk^hra</i>	‘monkey’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sui</i>	<i>musui</i>	‘stag’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sip</i>	<i>misip</i>	‘buffalo’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sɔk</i>	<i>mɔsɔk</i>	‘deer’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>yun</i>	<i>mayun</i>	‘elephant’
<i>mV-</i>	<i>sundui</i>	<i>masundui~musandui</i>	‘porcupine’

Table 47. Animal related words in Kokborok

In the animal names above in Table 47, the category prefix *mV-* is taking the first vowel of the bound base and becomes *mu-*, *mi-*, *mɔ-* and sometimes takes a completely different vowel not related to the bound base, as in the case of *ma-* and *muu-*. Here, *ma-* is used as category prefix with a bound base containing [u] as in *mayun* or *muu-* with a bound base containing [a] as in *muusa* and *muk^hra*. In the words *masundui~musandui* ‘porcupine’ the vowels of both the category prefix and the bound base are taking different forms. *sundui* is the only bound base mentioned in Table 47 that has disyllabic structure. When combining the category prefix and the bound base in *masundui~musandui*, the second syllable of the bound base remains intact while the vowels of the category prefix and the first syllable of the bound base are changing. In the first form, where the V of the category prefix is changing to /a/, the vowel /u/ of the first syllable of the bound base is changing to /u/. In the second form where the V of the category prefix is taking the form of /u/, the vowel /u/ of the first syllable of the bound base is changing to /a/.

In the Kokborok language, some native animal names lack the category prefix *mV-*. Example words are *waksa* ‘pig’, *sui~sui* ‘dog’, and *pun* ‘goat’. The Kokborok word *waksa* has very close relation with the Garo word *wak* and Rabha word *bak* representing same meaning. On the other hand, the words *damra* ‘ox’, *siŋgɔ* ‘lion’, *gɔnta* ‘rhinoceros’, *gada* ‘donkey’, *mera* ‘sheep’, *hulak* ‘gibbon’, *ut* ‘camel’, *kɔrai* ‘horse’, *kurkur~kurkus* ‘hare’, and *siyal* ‘jackal’ have very close similarity with the Assamese and Bengali words. The word *amin* ‘cat’ again is native to Kokborok language and the humans have derived it from the calling sound of the cat. The words *zebra* ‘zebra’ and *ziraph* ‘giraffe’ are borrowed via Assamese, Bengali or English from Italian and Arabic origin respectively.

8.6.6 Summary: animal names

Animal names in the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages show similarities and dissimilarities. These are summarised below.

Similarities

- i. Animal names of five TB languages discussed in this paper involve the use of the category prefix *mV-* or *mat-*.
- ii. In some animal names the vowel of the category prefix is distantly and regressively assimilated to the vowel of the bound base.

- iii. Some animal names are native to the respective languages, some are borrowed words from Indian languages, and some are borrowed from the foreign soils.
- iv. Generally, native animal names either start with *mV-* or end with the same. However, there are some animal names in these languages which do not contain the element *mV-*. Despite the absence of *mV-* the words may be native to the language.
- v. In all five languages, borrowed animal names are adjusted to the articulation system of the concerned language.

Dissimilarities

- i. The category prefix is not identical across all five languages. While Boro, Dimasa and Kokborok language use *mV-*, the Garo and Rabha language use *mat-* as a category prefix;
- ii. The Boro language has Noun + Verb=Noun structure in an animal name. This structure is absent in the other four languages.

9 The structure of adjectives

In the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages, verbs play an important role in forming adjectives. Adjectives are derived from verb roots by using prefixes and suffixes. Therefore, in these languages, the adjective comes under the verbal group. There is no use of infixes in these languages. Prefixes used in forming adjectives are either *gV-* or *kV-* and the suffixes are *-kay*, *ba-/bi-* and others.

9.1 Adjectives in Boro

As mentioned in section 9 above, in the Boro language the foundation of adjectives are verbs. This language has a small number of basic (pure) adjectives. Chainary and Basumatary (2011: 102) say this language has many more derived adjectives than basic adjectives. The Boro language has one prefix *gV-* to derive adjectives from verbs (monosyllabic verb roots). When *gV-* is prefixed to verbs, the V (schwa) of the prefix takes a different vowel based on the vowel phoneme of the verb root.

Prefix	Verb	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>gV-</i>	<i>p^hur</i> 'be white'	<i>gup^hur</i>	'white'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>su</i> 'be cold'	<i>gusu</i>	'cold'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>duŋ</i> 'be hot'	<i>guduŋ</i>	'hot'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>rui</i> 'be soft'	<i>gurui~guruui</i>	'soft/mallow'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>bun</i> 'be thick'	<i>gubun</i>	'thick'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>p^huŋ</i> 'be fat/be healthy'	<i>gup^huŋ</i>	'stout/fleshy'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>der</i> 'be big'	<i>geder</i>	'big'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>seb</i> 'be narrow'	<i>geseb</i>	'narrow'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>seŋ</i> 'be thin'	<i>gesen</i>	'thin'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>seɔ</i> 'to rot/to decompose'	<i>geseɔ</i>	'rotten/decomposed'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>lir</i> 'be heavy'	<i>gilir</i>	'heavy'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>si</i> 'be wet'	<i>gisi</i>	'wet'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>dui</i> 'be sweet'	<i>gudui</i>	'sweet'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>sum/sum</i> 'be black'	<i>gusum~gusum</i>	'black'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>zam</i> 'to decay/ to be old'	<i>guizam~gazam</i>	'decayed/old'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>k^ha</i> 'be bitter'	<i>guk^ha~gak^ha</i>	'bitter'

Table 48. Adjective formation with a prefix in Boro

In the examples above, the inherent schwa vowel of the category prefix *gV-* is taking different vowels due to the influence of the vowels of the following verb root. In the adjective word *gurui* 'soft/mallow' the V of the prefix is changing to the first vowel of the verb but the first vowel /u/ of the diphthong /ui/ in the verb root is changing to high back unrounded vowel phoneme /u/ turning the diphthong /ui/ into /ui/. In the word *guzam~gazam* 'decayed/old' two alternative word forms are found. The first one, *guzam*, is used in standard variety and the latter one, *gazam*, in some relic areas of the Eastern Boro dialect. The same is repeated in the words *gukha~gakha* 'bitter'. In these two examples the presence of a high back unrounded vowel [u] in the prefix instead of [a] is purely lexical.

The Boro language has a few more adjectives that have *gV-* as prefix. However, in some words it is not used with a verb root to form an adjective, instead it is used with a bound base. These kinds of examples are rare in the language. Examples are *gV-p^he* (*gep^he*) 'soft', *gV-zer* (*gezer*) 'middle'. Though the combination of a prefix and a bound base can represent a full meaning, the bound base in isolation does not carry meaning. In both the examples the prefix is assimilating to the vowel of the bound base.

The Boro language also has suffixes to derive adjectives from verbs. Some examples are *-k^hur*, *-ble*, *-brum*, *-k^he*, *-lu*, *-na*, *-le*, *-braŋ*, *-t^hu*, and *-raŋ*.

Verb	Suffix	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>sum</i> 'be black'	<i>-k^hur</i>	<i>sumk^hur</i>	'dark green/deep green'
<i>sum</i> 'be black'	<i>-ble</i>	<i>sumble</i>	'little dark'
<i>sum</i> 'be black'	<i>-brum</i>	<i>sumbrum</i>	'slight black'
<i>sum</i> 'be black'	<i>-k^he</i>	<i>sumk^he</i>	'jet black/pitch black'
<i>surzi</i> 'to create'	<i>-lu</i>	<i>surzilu</i>	'creative'
<i>sɔmay</i> 'be/look beautiful'	<i>-na</i>	<i>sɔmayna</i>	'beautiful'
<i>k^ha</i> 'be bitter'	<i>-le</i>	<i>k^hale</i>	'slight bitter'
<i>k^ha</i> 'be bitter'	<i>-braŋ</i>	<i>k^habraŋ</i>	'rough bitter'
<i>k^ha</i> 'be bitter'	<i>-t^huu</i>	<i>k^hat^huu</i>	'slight bitter'
<i>za</i> 'be red'	<i>-raŋ</i>	<i>zaraŋ</i>	'little red'

Table 49. Adjective formation with suffixes in Boro

In the examples above, the forms of the verbs and suffixes all remain intact - no addition or deletion of phonemes takes place. The Boro language has one more adjective formation suffix, *-ru*. It is not used with verbs but is used with the noun *mɔila* 'dirt' to turn it into adjective, *mɔilaru* 'dirty'. Combining a noun with a suffix to form an adjective is very rare in this language.

9.2 Adjectives in Garo

As in the Boro language, in the Garo language also adjectives are derived from verbs by using a prefix or suffix. Verbal adjectives occupy a prominent place though there are few nominal adjectives derived from nouns by using a suffix. The only adjective formation prefix in the Garo language is *gV-* and some examples of the suffixes are *-gipa*, *-gea*, and *-bea*. When *gV-* is added to the verb, it either takes the vowel of the verb or takes the vowel [i] regardless of the vowel is in the verb stem. When the prefix is attached to the verb, the last vowel phoneme [a] of the verb automatically drops. The same applies to verb-suffix combinations. It is noteworthy that in the Garo language verbs end with the vowel phoneme [a].

Prefix	Verb	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>gV-</i>	<i>sima</i> 'be black'	<i>gisim</i>	'black'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>sia</i> 'to die'	<i>gisi</i>	'dead'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>sɔa</i> 'to rot/to decompose'	<i>gisɔ</i>	'rotten/decomposed'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>taŋa~tiŋa</i> 'be raw/be green'	<i>gitaŋ~gittiŋ</i>	'green/raw'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>tala</i> 'be new'	<i>gital</i>	'new'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>bɔka</i> 'be white'	<i>gipɔk</i>	'white'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>cham</i> 'a' 'be old'	<i>gitcham</i>	'old'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>chaka</i> 'be red'	<i>gitchak</i>	'red'

Table 48. Adjective formation with a prefix in Garo

In the above given examples, when the prefix and the verb combine, the V of the prefix *gV-* is taking the form of [i], without being affected by the vowel of the verb. Also, in some words the initial consonant of the verb is changing to another consonant as in *gV-bɔka* > *gipɔk* 'white'. It is happening due to the influence of voiceless [k] in the verb, which changes the voiced [b] to voiceless [p], and

the word *gibɔk* becomes *gipɔk*. In the examples *gV-cham`a* > *gitcham* and *gV-chaka* > *gitchak*, the first phoneme of the verb is a voiceless alveolar affricate [ch] and to support this voiceless phoneme another voiceless alveolar plosive [t] is appearing in between prefix and the verb base. The same is applicable to *gittij* ‘green/raw’. The Garo language also uses suffixes to derive adjectives from verbs, as can be seen in Table 49 below.

Verb	Suffix	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>gɔŋa</i> ‘to droop/to bent’	- <i>gea</i>	<i>gɔŋgea</i>	‘bent/not straight’
<i>gɔŋ`a</i> ‘to be active’	- <i>gipa</i>	<i>gɔŋ`gipa</i>	‘active/dutiful’
<i>raka</i> ‘be powerful/be strong’	- <i>gipa</i>	<i>rakgipa</i>	‘powerful/strong’
<i>ran`a</i> ‘to dry’	- <i>sisia</i>	<i>ran`sisia</i>	‘half dry’
<i>sima</i> ‘be black’	- <i>chat</i> - <i>dikdik</i> - <i>dimdim</i>	<i>simchat</i> <i>simdikdik</i> <i>simdimdim</i>	‘all black’
<i>ka`a</i> ‘be bitter’	- <i>bea</i>	<i>ka`bea</i>	‘very bitter’
<i>ka`a</i> ‘be bitter’	- <i>sika</i>	<i>ka`sika</i>	‘slight bitter’

Table 49. Adjective formation with suffixes in Garo

In the above given examples, the last vowel phoneme of the verb is automatically dropping as discussed in the case of prefix-verb combinations above. Except the last vowel of the verbs, all others are remaining intact. The Garo language also has some adjectives derived from nouns by means of a suffix. These are *ka`dɔt* ‘furious/hot tempered’ from *ka`a* ‘heart’ plus -*dɔt*, *ka`grak* ‘ferocious/hot tempered’ from *ka`a* ‘heart’ plus -*grak*, and *ka`srɔka* ‘joyful, jovial’ from *ka`a* ‘heart’ plus -*srɔka* (to pound rice). Such combinations are few in number.

9.3 Adjectives in Rabha

In the Rabha language, the basis of the adjective is a verb. It has a high number of adjectives formed by using the suffix -*kai*. In the Rabha language, when the verb and suffix are combined, the last vowel phoneme [a] of the verb automatically drops. This language has one adjective formation prefix *pV-*. This prefix is used with a bound base as in the examples *pidan~pidam* ‘new’ (< *pV-dana~dama*) and *pit`ij* ‘raw/fresh’ (< *pV-t`ijə*). In this language, the prefix is never used with the verb to form adjective. However, the combination verb-suffix combination is abundantly present in the Rabha language.

Verb	Suffix	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>sara</i> 'be bright'	<i>-kai</i>	<i>sarkai</i>	'bright'
<i>bɔka</i> 'be white'	<i>-kai</i>	<i>bɔkkai</i>	'white'
<i>saka</i> 'be red'	<i>-kai</i>	<i>sakkai</i>	'red'
<i>aka</i> 'be black'	<i>-kai</i>	<i>akkai</i>	'black'
<i>nema</i> 'be good'	<i>-kai</i>	<i>nemkai</i>	'good'
<i>chuŋa</i> 'be big'	<i>-kai</i>	<i>chuŋkai</i>	'big'
<i>rɔa</i> 'be long'	<i>-kai</i>	<i>rɔkai</i>	'long'
<i>tunja</i> 'be hot'	<i>-kai</i>	<i>tunjkai</i>	'hot'

Table 50. Adjective formation with a suffix in Rabha

In verb-suffix combination the last vowel phoneme /a/ of the verb is dropped. This condition reminds of the Garo language that has the same character. Besides the suffix *-kai* mentioned above, Rabha language has also the suffixes *-su~suk* and *-bubur* to derive adjectives from verbs. However, these suffixes are used with a very limited number of verbs. Examples are *nemsu~nemsuk* 'beautiful' from *nema* 'be good' plus *-su~suk*, and *tunjbubur* 'tepid' from *tunja* 'be hot' plus *-bubur*.

9.4 Adjectives in Dimasa

Adjective formation follows a two-fold system in Dimasa language. One is prefix-verb and the other is verb-suffix. It has single adjective formation prefix *gV-* and suffix *-ba~bi*. When the prefix is added to the verb, the prefix (schwa) assimilates to the nucleus of the monosyllabic verb. However, during addition of the suffix *-ba~bi* all remain intact.

Prefix	Verb	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>gV-</i>	<i>k^ha</i> 'be bitter'	<i>gak^ha</i>	'bitter'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>di</i> 'be sweet'	<i>gidi</i>	'sweet'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>t^hu</i> 'be deep'	<i>gut^hu</i>	'deep'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>zaɔ</i> 'be red'	<i>gazaɔ</i>	'red'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>k^hraŋ</i> 'be green'	<i>gak^hraŋ</i>	'green'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>sep</i> 'be narrow'	<i>gesep</i>	'narrow'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>zam</i> 'be old/to decay'	<i>gazam</i>	'old/decayed'
<i>gV-</i>	<i>zɔb</i> 'to contract/be narrow'	<i>gɔzɔb</i>	'narrow'

Table 51. Adjective formation with a prefix in Dimasa

Besides with the verb (root), *gV-* is also used with a limited number of bound bases. Examples are *gurmu* 'yellow' (< *gV-mu*) and *ganaŋ* 'wealthy' (< *gV-naŋ*). In the first example, the consonant phoneme [r] is appearing in between prefix and bound base and the V of the prefix is assimilating to the vowel of the bound base. In the second example, the V of the prefix *gV-* is also assimilating to the vowel phoneme of the bound base. Beside a prefix, the language also has the suffix *-ba~bi*. It is directly attached to the verb without any changes.

Verb	Suffix	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>ham</i> ‘be good’	<i>-ba~-bi</i>	<i>hamba~hambi</i>	‘good’
<i>lai</i> ‘be easy’	<i>-ba~-bi</i>	<i>laiba~laibi</i>	‘easy’
<i>suŋ</i> ‘be short’	<i>-ba~-bi</i>	<i>suŋba~suŋbi</i>	‘short’
<i>gede</i> ‘be big’	<i>-ba~-bi</i>	<i>gedeba~gedebi</i>	‘big’
<i>laɔ</i> ‘be long’	<i>-ba~-bi</i>	<i>laɔba~laɔbi</i>	‘long’
<i>ruŋ</i> ‘be loose’	<i>-ba~-bi</i>	<i>ruŋba~ruŋbi</i>	‘loose’

Table 52. Adjective formation with a suffix in Dimasa

There is no difference in meaning associated with a prefix versus a suffix – they can be used interchangeably, e.g. *kaham* ‘good’ (*kV-* + *ham* ‘be good’) and *hamba~hambi* ‘good’ (*ham* ‘be good’ + *-ba~-bi*), *gut^hu* ‘deep’ (*gV-* + *t^hu* ‘be deep’) and *t^huba~t^hubi* ‘deep’ (*t^hu* ‘be deep’ + *-ba~-bi*). Besides *-ba~-bi*, the Dimasa language also has a few other adjective formation suffixes, like *-bru* and *-lulu*, to derive adjectives from verbs. Examples are *dumbru* ‘luke warm’ (*dum* ‘be hot’ + *-bru*) and *hilulu* ‘low/short stature’ (*hi* ‘be low’ + *-lulu*). Among the suffixes, *-ba~-bi* is more common than others. A limited number of adjectives is derived from nouns by using a suffix. One such specimen is *regeba* ‘dirty/ugly’ (*rege* ‘dirt’ + *-ba*).

9.5 Adjectives in Kokborok

Adjectives are mostly derivatives in the Kokborok language. They are derived from verbs by means of the prefix *kV-*. This is a very common adjective formation prefix of the language and the V (schwa) accompanying [k] in *kV-* takes all six vowels available in the Kokborok language. The selection of one of these six vowels is based on the first vowel phoneme of the monosyllabic verb i.e., *kV-* takes the forms of *kɔ-*, *ka-* *ku-*, *ku-* *ke-*, *ki-*.

Prefix	Verb	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>kV-</i>	<i>chig</i> ‘be torn’	<i>kichig</i>	‘torn’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>si</i> ‘be wet’	<i>kisi</i>	‘wet’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>tui</i> ‘be sweet’	<i>kutui</i>	‘sweet’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>ruŋ</i> ‘to learn’	<i>kurruŋ</i>	‘wise’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>k^hui</i> ‘be sour’	<i>kuuk^hui</i>	‘sour’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>mun</i> ‘be ripe’	<i>kumun</i>	‘ripe’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>p^hur</i> ‘be white’	<i>kup^hur</i>	‘white’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>t^huk</i> ‘be deep’	<i>kut^huk</i>	‘deep’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>seŋ</i> ‘be thin’	<i>keseŋ</i>	‘thin’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>p^her</i> ‘be flat’	<i>kep^her</i>	‘flat’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>sep</i> ‘be narrow’	<i>kesep</i>	‘narrow’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>sɔm</i> ‘be black’	<i>kɔsɔm</i>	‘black’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>lɔk</i> ‘be long’	<i>kɔlɔk</i>	‘tall/high’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>tɔr</i> ‘be big’	<i>kɔtɔr</i>	‘big’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>ham</i> ‘be good’	<i>kaham</i>	‘good/well’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>han</i> ‘be fresh’	<i>kahan</i>	‘fresh’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>ram</i> ‘be weak/be lean’	<i>karam</i>	‘weak/lean’

Table 53. Adjective formation with vowel assimilation in Kokborok

In the examples above, the prefix is assimilating to the vowels of the verb. Assimilation of V of the prefix to the vowel of the verb is not regular in all the words. Sometimes, when prefix *kV-* is added to a verb base containing [a], the V of the prefix *kV-* instead of taking the vowel of the verb is taking the high back unrounded vowel [u]; no assimilation of the vowel of prefix and verb takes place. Examples are provided in Table 54 below. This condition is comparable to *guzam* ‘decayed/old’, *guk^ha* ‘bitter’ of Boro language mentioned in Table 48. The occurrence of vowel phoneme [u] instead of [a] is purely lexical in both languages.

Prefix	Verb	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>kV-</i>	<i>chak</i> ‘be red’	<i>kuachak</i>	‘red’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>k^ha</i> ‘be bitter’	<i>kuuk^ha</i>	‘bitter’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>t^hañ</i> ‘be alive’	<i>kuut^hañ</i>	‘alive’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>bañ</i> ‘be more/be many’	<i>kuubañ</i>	‘many/more’
<i>kV-</i>	<i>cham</i> ‘be old/to decay’	<i>kuucham</i>	‘old/decayed’

Table 54. Adjective formation without vowel assimilation in Kokborok

Besides prefix *kV-*, the Kokborok language has a suffix *-zak*. This suffix is directly attached to all the verbs without any addition or deletion of phonemes. Examples are *rugzak* ‘one which is already boiled’ (*rug* ‘to boil’ + *-zak*), *nugzak* ‘seen’ (*nug* ‘to see’ + *-zak*), *kanzak* ‘thirsty’ (*kañ* ‘be thirsty’ + *-zak*), *kusubzak* ‘exploited’ (*kusub* ‘to exploit’ + *-zak*), *lachizak* ‘ashamed’ (*lachi* ‘to feel ashamed’ + *-zak*), and *kirizak* ‘frightened/afraid’ (*kiri* ‘to frighten/ to be afraid’ + *-zak*).

9.6 Summary: adjectives

Similarities

- i. The Boro, Garo and Dimasa languages use a *CV-* prefix to derive adjectives from verbs.
- ii. All languages use a suffix to derive adjectives. However, the number of suffixes varies from language to language.

Dissimilarities

- i. The form of the adjective formation prefix differs between languages: in the Kokborok language, it is *kV-*, in Rabha it is *pV-*, and in the other three languages, Boro, Garo and Dimasa, it is *gV-*. Prefix *pV-* of Rabha is an exception in comparison to the other four languages where *gV-*, and *kV-* are used with the verb, while in Rabha it is used with bound bases only.
- ii. In the Boro, Dimasa and Kokborok languages, when a prefix or suffix is attached to a verb, the verb always remains intact. However, in the Garo and Rabha languages the last vowel phoneme /a/ of the verb is automatically dropped.
- iii. A limited number of adjective words formed by using noun-suffix combinations are found in the Boro, Garo and Dimasa languages where one example from each language has been mentioned above. In all three languages, these nouns are disyllabic and the suffixes are monosyllabic. These compounds are similar in meaning between Boro and Dimasa.

- iv. The Kokborok language has only one adjective formation suffix *-zak*. The remaining four languages have more than one suffix.

10 The formation of compound nouns

In the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages, compound nouns are formed by combining two nouns (NN), a noun and a verb (NV), a verb and a noun (VN), or by some other process. Some formation processes have already been mentioned in the discussion of bird and animal names above.

10.1 Compound nouns in Boro

The Boro language has independent nouns with monosyllabic, disyllabic and few with polysyllabic structures. In this language, compound nouns are formed by combining different grammatical categories, for example, NN, NNN, NV, VN, VV, and Adj.N. In compounding two nouns, sometimes both remain intact and sometimes they are compounded in contracted form.

Noun	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>dau</i> 'bird/fowl'	<i>gaŋ</i> 'feather'	<i>daugaŋ</i>	'quill'
<i>dau</i> 'bird/fowl'	<i>zula</i> 'male'	<i>dauzula~dauzla~daula</i>	'cock'
<i>dau</i> 'bird/fowl'	<i>zui</i> 'female'	<i>dauzui</i>	'hen'
<i>p^hisa</i> 'child'	<i>zula</i> 'male'	<i>p^hisazula~p^hisazla~p^hisala</i>	'son'

Table 55. Noun-noun compounds in Boro (1)

In the first and third examples, two nouns are added intact while in the second and fourth examples three different forms are coming up. In the first form, two nouns are added intact while in the second form, the first vowel phoneme [u] of the second noun's first syllable is dropped and in the third form, the first syllable of the second noun is dropped, thus shortening the word. The Boro language also has words formed by combining three nouns (3Ns). This kind of combination is very rare. One such combination is *barduisik^hla* 'the monsoon wind', comprising of *bar* 'wind', *dui* 'water', and *sik^hla* 'virgin'. Here, all nouns are remaining intact. Chainary and Basumatary (2011: 48) mention the combination of two nouns either in contract or in oblique form in the Boro language.¹¹ In this kind of combination, the first noun is always disyllabic and the second noun is always monosyllabic. In combining these two nouns, the first noun takes an oblique form and turns from disyllabic to monosyllabic while the second noun remains intact. Examples are provided in Table 56 below.

¹¹ Contraction refers to the shortening that occurs in a combined form, whereas oblique refers to the structural change of a word when it occurs in combination with another word.

Noun	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>megɔn</i> ‘eye’	<i>k^hi</i> ‘stool’	<i>mik^hi~muiik^hi</i>	‘eye-excreta’
<i>megɔn</i> ‘eye’	<i>dui</i> ‘water’	<i>mudui</i>	‘tear’
<i>k^huga</i> ‘mouth’	<i>dui</i> ‘water’	<i>k^hudui~k^hɔdui</i>	‘saliva’

Table 56. Noun-noun compounds in Boro (2)

Noun-Verb compounds are also found in the Boro language. In this kind of combination both category words remain intact. Examples are provided in Table 57 below.

Noun	Verb	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>t^hai</i> ‘fruit’	<i>lir</i> ‘be heavy’	<i>t^hailir~t^halir</i>	‘banana’
<i>t^hai</i> ‘fruit’	<i>zuu</i> ‘be high’	<i>t^haizuu~t^haizu</i>	‘mango’
<i>ha</i> ‘soil’	<i>sib</i> ‘to sweep’	<i>hasib</i>	‘broom’
<i>dau</i> ‘bird’	<i>dui</i> ‘to lay egg’	<i>daudui~daudi</i>	‘egg’

Table 57. Noun-verb compounds in Boro

In the Noun-Verb (NV) combinations above, both category words are intact in standard language. However, differences are observed in some dialects. For example, in the word for banana, the last vowel [i] of the first noun word *t^hai* ‘fruit’ is dropped in the Eastern and Southern Boro dialects. On the other hand, in the words denoting mango and egg both remain intact both in the standard variety as well as in the Eastern Boro dialect. Here, a difference is observed only in the Southern Boro dialect where the diphthongs [uu] and [ui] change to monophthongs [u] and [i] respectively. This shows that the Southern Boro Dialect uses the high back unrounded vowel phoneme [u] less.

Verb-Noun (VN) combinations are rarely found in the Boro language. Examples are *gulumdui* ‘sweat’ (*gulum* ‘to sweat/to perspire’ + *dui* ‘water’), *hasudui* ‘urine’ (*hasu* ‘to pass urine’ + *dui* ‘water’), and *muzudui* ‘spittle’ (*muzu* ‘to spit’ + *dui* ‘water’). In all three examples, both category words are remaining intact. Here, all verbs are disyllabic and the noun is monosyllabic.

In some newly coined words, the combinations Verb-Verb (VV) is also found. One such example is *zanbuɲ* ‘telephone’ (*zan* ‘be far’ + *buɲ* ‘to speak’). The combination Adjective-Noun (Adj.N) is also found infrequently in this language. An example is *gumudui* ‘pus/suppuration’ (*gumui* ‘yellow’ + *dui* ‘water’). These show that nouns and verbs play a vital role in forming compound nouns, where adjectives play a very minor role.

10.2 Compound nouns in Garo

Compound noun formation in the Garo language is very much similar to the Boro language. NN is a very common type of compound noun formation in this language. Besides NN, we also find the compound types NV and VN. Two types of NN compounding can be distinguished. In one type, all nouns remain intact and in the other type the nouns appear in contracted form.

Noun	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>bɔl</i> 'tree'	<i>dambi</i> 'tender/young'	<i>bɔldambi</i>	'a young tree'
<i>chi</i> 'water'	<i>bima</i> 'mother'	<i>chibima</i>	'river'
<i>mi</i> 'paddy'	<i>saraŋ</i> 'an early crop or vegetable'	<i>misaraŋ</i>	'a species of early rice'
<i>mi</i> 'rice'	<i>sal</i> 'day'	<i>misal</i>	'midday meal'
<i>mi</i> 'rice'	<i>priŋ</i> 'morning'	<i>mipriŋ</i>	'breakfast'

Table 58. Noun-noun compounds in Garo without contraction

In Table 58 above, both noun come together without any addition or deletion. Besides this type NN combination, the Garo language has NN combinations that involve contraction. In this case, the first word is always disyllabic and the second one is monosyllabic. In combining both, the second syllable of the first disyllabic word automatically drops.

Noun	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>mikrɔn</i> 'eye'	<i>chi</i> 'water'	<i>mikchi</i>	'tear'
<i>mikrɔn</i> 'eye'	<i>ki</i> 'stool'	<i>mikki</i>	'eye excreta'

Table 59. Noun-noun compounds in Garo with contraction

The above two words are eye related words and in both the second syllable *rɔn* has been dropped. In the Garo language, limited numbers of compound nouns come under NV and VN structures. Example words are *te rik* 'banana' (*bi te* 'fruit' + *rikaa* 'to pile up') and *gramchi* 'sweat' (*gram* 'to sweat/to perspire' + *chi* 'water') respectively. In the first example, the first syllable of the noun and the second syllable of the verb is dropped. However, in second example, both components of the compound remain intact because both are monosyllabic.

10.3 Compound nouns in Rabha

In the Rabha language, NN is a very common structure for the formation of compound nouns. When forming compound nouns, some nouns are combined unaltered and some are combined in contracted form.

Noun	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>tɔ</i> 'bird'	<i>maba</i> 'male'	<i>tɔmaba</i>	'cock'
<i>tɔ</i> 'bird'	<i>mazu</i> 'female'	<i>tɔmazu</i>	'hen'
<i>bar</i> 'fire'	<i>dam</i> 'place'	<i>bardam</i>	'fireplace'
<i>nɔk</i> 'house'	<i>dam</i> 'place'	<i>nɔkdam</i>	'homestead'
<i>mai</i> 'paddy'	<i>zam</i> 'granary'	<i>maizam</i>	'paddy granary'
<i>mai</i> 'paddy'	<i>dɔp</i> 'bundle'	<i>maidɔp</i>	'bundle of paddy'

Table 60. Noun-noun compounds in Rabha without contraction

In the examples above in Table 60, all nouns remain intact. In all examples, the first noun is monosyllabic and the second noun is either monosyllabic or disyllabic. However, the different number of syllables per word does not make any difference when the two nouns are combined. In

the Rabha language, some compound nouns (NN) comprise of all disyllabics and in some, the first noun is disyllabic and the second noun is monosyllabic.

Noun	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>nuken</i> 'eye'	<i>chika</i> 'water'	<i>nukchi</i>	'tear'
<i>nuken</i> 'eye'	<i>zi</i> 'stool'	<i>nukzi</i>	'eye excreta'

Table 61. Noun-noun compounds in Rabha with contraction

In the first of the above two examples in Table 61, the second syllables of both nouns are dropped and in the second example, the second syllable of the first noun is dropped and the second noun is a monosyllabic and remains intact. In both examples, the resulting compound is disyllabic. The Rabha language also has compound nouns formed by using the combination NV, as can be seen in Table 62 below.

Noun	Verb	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>ha</i> 'soil'	<i>chu</i> 'be high'	<i>hachu</i>	'hill'
<i>tɔ</i> 'bird'	<i>raŋ</i> 'to snatch'	<i>tɔraŋ</i>	'eagle/kite'

Table 62. Noun-verb compounds in Rabha

In the above two examples in Table 62, both NV compound words are monosyllabic and both remain intact.

10.4 Compound nouns in Dimasa

In the Dimasa language, compound nouns are formed under different structures. These are: NN, NV, VN, NAdj. and Adj.N. Of these structures, NN occurs most frequently.

Noun	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>mai</i> 'paddy'	<i>kʰɔ</i> 'place for preservation of paddy etc.'	<i>maikʰɔ</i>	'granary'
<i>mai</i> 'paddy'	<i>pʰaŋ</i> 'plant'	<i>maipʰaŋ</i>	'paddy plant'
<i>tʰai</i> 'fruit'	<i>lu</i> 'necklace'	<i>tʰailu</i>	'banana'
<i>mai</i> 'rice'	<i>di</i> 'water'	<i>maidi</i>	'rice starch'
<i>mu</i> 'eye'	<i>gur</i> 'skin'	<i>mugur</i>	'eyelids'
<i>kʰu</i> 'mouth'	<i>di</i> 'water'	<i>kʰudi</i>	'spittle'

Table 63. Noun-noun compounds in Dimasa

The components of the NN compounds in Table 63 above are all monosyllabic and all remain intact when combined. Very few compound nouns are formed by combining a noun and a verb (NV) in the Dimasa language. One such example is *nsib* 'broom' (*nɔ* 'house' + *sib* 'to sweep'). Another combination found in the Dimasa language is VN. It is also rare. Two examples are provided in Table 64 below.

Verb	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>gulum</i> 'to sweat/to perspire'	<i>di</i> 'water'	<i>gulumdi</i>	'sweat'
<i>reb</i> 'to write'	<i>t^hai</i> 'fruit/result'	<i>rebt^hai</i>	'writing'

Table 64. Verb-noun compounds in Dimasa

In Table 64 above, the components of the VN compounds remain intact. In the first example, the verb is disyllabic but the noun is monosyllabic and in the second example, both the verb and the noun are monosyllabic.

Very few compound nouns are formed by combining Adjective-Noun and Noun-Adjective in the Dimasa language. Examples are *gumundi* 'pus/suppuration' (*gumun* 'ripe' + *di* 'water') and *laigli* 'tender plantain leaf' (*lai* 'leaf' + *gli~gili* 'tender'). The rarest combination in noun compound formation is NAdj.N. An example of this combination is *sagrima* 'barren woman', comprising of the words *sa* 'child', *gri* 'not having', and *ma* 'mother'. There also is the opposite gender word following the same structure: *sagripa* 'barren man'.

10.5 Compound nouns in Kokborok

In the Kokborok language, compound nouns are formed following NN and NV structures. Examples of NN compounds are provided in Table 65 below.

Noun	Noun	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>kək</i> 'language'	<i>ma</i> 'mother'	<i>kəkma</i>	'mother tongue'
<i>k^hum</i> 'flower'	<i>taŋ</i> 'garland'	<i>k^humtaŋ</i>	'flower garland'
<i>a</i> 'fish'	<i>kur</i> 'skin'	<i>akur</i>	'scales of fish'
<i>ha</i> 'soil/land'	<i>ruŋ</i> 'bank'	<i>haruŋ</i>	'valley'
<i>ha</i> 'soil/land'	<i>k^hɔr</i> 'hole'	<i>hak^hɔr</i>	'pond'
<i>nək</i> 'house'	<i>t^hai</i> 'place'	<i>nək^hai</i>	'residence'
<i>mai</i> 'rice'	<i>tui</i> 'water'	<i>maitui</i>	'rice starch'

Table 65. Noun-noun compounds in Kokborok

In the examples in Table 65 above, the components of the NN compounds are all remaining intact. there is no addition or deletion. Like NN structure, the Kokborok language also has NV structures, as can be seen in Table 66 below.

Noun	Verb	Combined Formation	Meaning
<i>tal</i> 'moon'	<i>tuy</i> 'to die'	<i>taltuy</i>	'no moon date/dark night'
<i>ha</i> 'soil'	<i>chuk</i> 'be high'	<i>hachuk</i>	'hill/high land'
<i>t^hai</i> 'fruit'	<i>lik</i> 'be heavy'	<i>t^hailik</i>	'banana'
<i>nək</i> 'house'	<i>si</i> 'to sweep'	<i>nək^hsi</i>	'broom'
<i>tək</i> 'bird'	<i>tui</i> 'to lay eggs'	<i>təktui</i>	'egg'

Table 66. Noun-verb compounds in Kokborok

The compound types in Tables 65 and 66 are very common. Two things can be noticed about the examples. The first point is that all the examples showing NN or NV structure consist of

monosyllabic words. The second point is that when words are combined into NN or NV compounds, all remain intact.

10.6 Summary: compound nouns

The similarities and differences between compound noun structures of the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages can be summarised as below.

Similarities

- i. NN and NV are very common compound noun formation processes in all five languages.
- ii. The Kokborok language has lowest number of compound noun formation processes and Boro language has the highest.

Dissimilarities

- i. In NN combinations, with a few exceptions, all nouns remain intact in the Boro language.
- ii. In NN combinations in the Boro language, the vowel phoneme of the first syllable of the second noun or the first syllable of the second noun is dropped but in the Garo language the second syllable of the first noun is dropped. In the Rabha language, if both nouns are disyllabic, then the second syllable of both nouns are dropped and if the first word is disyllabic and the second is monosyllabic, then the second syllable of the first word is dropped.
- iii. NNN is a very rare structure in the Boro language with only a single example found until today. This structure is generally not seen in other languages.
- iv. VV structure is found in a few newly coined Boro words but it is absent in other languages.
- v. In NV structures in the Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages, both noun and verb remain intact. In the Boro language, in some compounds, both remain intact but in some, dropping of vowels, either of noun or of verb, takes place. However, in case of the Garo language the first syllable of the noun and the second syllable of the verb is dropped.
- vi. AdjN combinations are very rare but exist in both Boro and Dimasa. This combination is not available in other three languages.
- vii. NAdj and NAdjN structures are found only in the Dimasa language. It is absent in the other four languages.

11 Conclusion

This analysis shows that the Boro, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa and Kokborok languages have unique structural features in case of word formation starting from kinship terms to bird and animal names, adjectives and compound nouns. All five languages demonstrate shared structural patterns in all kinds of word formations barring a few. It makes the topic more interesting and encourages researchers to carry out further studies and explore many untouched topics on different aspects of these languages. Many unique features of these languages are remaining unexplored until today. Therefore, the major target of writing this paper is to present some highlights and draw attention of

upcoming researchers to explore the hidden characters and diversities of these languages in a wider way.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

[]	phonetic transcription		NE	North East
~	Free variation		NN	Noun-Noun
3Ns	Noun-Noun-Noun		NV	Noun-Verb
Adj.N.	Adjective-Noun		NVV	Noun-Verb-Verb
B	Boro		R	Rabha
D	Dimasa		TB	Tibeto-Burman
G	Garó		V	Vowel; Verb
K	Kokborok		VN	Verb-Noun
NAdj	Noun-Adjective		VV	Verb-Verb
NAdjN	Noun-Adjective-Noun			

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