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## **A Comparative Study on Linguistic Affinities of Boro, Rabha and Garo Languages**

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### **Abstract:**

North East India consisting of seven states has always been seen as the hub for researchers and scholars from different fields. Linguistically, North East India is very diverse in nature with various ethnic communities having close affinities in the field of linguistic traits have been dwelling together since time immemorial. It is a home to many languages belonging to the four language families viz. Indo-Arian, Tibeto-Burman, Asia-Austic and Dravidians. The existence of four language families in a small place like North East India is to a certain extent unbelievable and hence could be regarded as the region of 'heterogeneous linguistic area'. Linguistically, Boro, Rabha, Garo and Kokborok languages are known to be a cognate group of languages who belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages under the greater Sino-Tibetan family of languages. Structurally, Boro, Rabha and Garo languages have close similarities in case of phonology, morphology and syntactical levels. The present paper intends to make a comparative study of the sister languages of Boro, Rabha and Garo with an aim of exposing a wide range of linguistic similarities in vocabulary and structural features.

**Keywords:** Boro, Rabha, Garo, language.

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**Introduction:** North-East India is the habitat of many tribes and ethnic groups with diverse ethnic origins. Assam is one of the states of North-East India where many tribes and ethnic groups have been settling together since time immemorial. For this reason, Assam can be considered as a home to many languages belonging to the four language families viz. Indo-Arian, Tibeto-Burman, Asia-Austic and Dravidians. Linguists and scholars are of the opinion that the Boro, Rabha, Garo, Dimasa and Kokborok are known as the cognate group of languages who belong to the same proto root of Mongoloid stock of the Indo-Mongoloids or Indo-Tibetans who seem to have come down from the North Eastern region of Tibet in China. Linguistically, they all belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages under the greater Sino-Tibetan family of languages. The physical feature of Indo-Mongoloids of great Mongoloid race are yellow or yellowish brown skin, square set face with broad nose, strong cheek bones, flat nose, almond shaped black or dark brown eyes, black stretches and coarse head hair, scanty beard and moustache.

**Findings:****1) Assimilation of basic noun(words):****a) Name of Parts of the Body:**

<u>Boro</u>	<u>Rabha</u>	<u>Garó</u>	<u>english</u>
Megon	mwkwr	mikron	eye
Mwkang	mahang	mikkang	face
Kwma	nachor	nachil	ear
Khuga	hatong	ku'sik	mouth
Akai	chwsi	jak	hand
Gongtong	nukungdopa	gingting	nose
Gwdwna	tukur	gitok	neck
Gusti	huching	ku'chil	lip
Begeng	kereng	gremg	bone
Ashugur	chiskor	jakskil	nail
Udwi	ogg	ok	stomach
Kokap	katolok	jariking chin	
Kanai	hwrwo	kni	hair
Salai	twlwi	salwa	tongue

From the above given name of parts of the body, we notice that the words are formed by adding consonantal phonemic prefixe (m-) which is connected with the particular bound bases. For instance, {me-gon}>megon(eyes), {mw-kang}>mwkang(face) etc. Words related to other body parts are {kw-ma}>kwma(ear), {ku-ga}>kuga(mouth). There are also other words which are formed by adding vowel phonemic prefixe {a-} with a morphological unit. Eg. {A-ting}>ating(leg), {a-kai}>akai(hand) etc.

In a similar way, the structure of the Rabha language also follows the cognate language where words are formed by adding consonantal phonemic prefixes (m-), (n-), (ch-) etc which are connected with the particular bound bases. For instance, {mw-kwr}>mwkwr(eye), {ma-hang}>mahang(face), {na-chor}>nachor(ear), {ha-tong}>hatong(mouth), {chw-si}>chwsi(finger), {cha-kam}>chakam(hand) etc. It is noticed that most of the names of parts of the body of the Koch Rabhas are formed by adding consonantal phonemic prefixes {mw-}, {ma-}, {na-}, {chw-}, {cha-} etc.

In the same way, most of the names of parts of the body of Garo language are also formed by adding consonantal phonemic prefixes {mi-}, {na-}, {ku} etc. For instance, {mi-kron}>micron(eye), {mik-kang}>mikkang(face), {na-chil}>nachil(ear), {ku-sik}>kusik(mouth) etc.

From the above comparison, it is noticed that most of the words of all the three languages are composed of two morphological segments mostly having consonantal phonemic prefixes producing very similar sound in which all the words end with nasal sound of (-ng), (-i), (-r).

**b) (i) Name of domestic animals:**

<u>Boro</u>	<u>Rabha</u>	<u>Garó</u>	<u>English</u>
Mwswó	musu	matchu	cow
Mwisw	musi	matma	baffellow
Bwrma	purun	do'bok	goat
Maoji	wji	mengo	cat

Swima	kwi	a'chak	dog
Gorai	gor	gure	horse
Oma	bak	wak	pig

(ii) **Name of wild animals:**

<u>Boro</u>	<u>Rabha</u>	<u>Garó</u>	<u>English</u>
Mwsa	masa	matcha	tiger
Singho	singho	singho	lion
Mwi	maichok	machok	deer
Muphur	mapor	makbil/mapil	bear
Sial	sel	peru	fox
Mwkra	kwowi	makkre	monkey
Mwider	nwmpIwo	mo'ngma	elephant
Mwfwó	fórr	mappru	big lizard
Newlai	newlai	mat	squirrel

The words denoting name of some animals of Boro, Rabha and Garo are also composed of two segments or bi-syllabic. The close affinities of these languages are that most of the words begin with consonantal phonemic prefixes having similar sound producing effect of {m}. For instance, {mwswo, musu, matchu}, {mwisw, musí, matma} etc. where the consonantal phonemic prefix are added in all of them. In the same way, with the name of wild animals many similarities are also noticed among the cognate languages. For instance, {mwsa, masa, matcha}, {singho, singho, singho}, {mwi, maichok, machok} etc.

c) **Name of birds:**

<u>Boro</u>	<u>Rabha</u>	<u>Garó</u>	<u>English</u>
Dao	twu	do.o	hen
Daola	twu konta	do'bipa	cock
Daosa	twusa	do'bisachick	
Daotu	gugu	do'kru	dove
Daoka	kaora	do'o gisika	crow
Hangsw	kwoda	do.gép	duck
Sigun	sigun	sogin	vulture
Badamali	badamuli	do'bat	bat
Bato	bwtu	do'sik/ bato	parrot
Parwo	pairao	paroa	pigeon
Daosri	sirwo	saru	starling

The structure of names of birds is composed of two different morphological segments which are monosyllabic in nature. To denote different kinds of birds another morphological segment is added with the word (dau). For instance, {dau-sa}>dau-sa(chick), {dau-la}>dau-la(cock) etc. Similarly in Rabha word (twu). {twu-sa}>twu-sa(chick), {twu-konta}>twu-konta(cock). In Garo, the word (do.o). {do.o-bipa}>do.obipa(cock), {do.o-bisa}>do.obisa(chick) etc. But certain words are used without pre-morpheme {dau}, {twu}, {do.o}. Eg. {parwo}, {pairao}, {paroa}, {bato}, {bwtu}, {bato}. From the above given names of the birds of Boro, Rabha and Garo, we come to understand that some of the words have their own name but some of them do not have their own names.

d) **Numerals:**

<u>Boro</u>	<u>Rabha</u>	<u>Garó</u>	<u>English</u>
Se	Sa	Sa	one
Nwi	Ning	Gni	two

Tham	Tham	Gitam	three
Brwi	Bri	Bri	four
Ba	Bwng	Bonga	five
Do	Crop	Dok	six
Sni	Sin	Sni	seven
Dain	Gin	Chet	eight
Gu	Sku	Sku	nine
ji	Hasi	Chiking	ten

The words denoting use of numerals, it is observed that most of the numerals have monosyllabic and bi-syllabic and also numerals beginning with the same phoneme {s} , {b}, but in certain numerals we observe that {g} is used in Garo instead of {n}, {t} in Boro and Rabha.

**e) Name of vegetables**

<u>Boro</u>		<u>Rabha</u>		<u>Garo</u>		<u>English</u>
Alu	hantwi		alu		potato	
pantao		Bantao		ba'ring		brinjal
sobai bima		Harektwi		ka'rek		beans(long)
jwgwnat		jogon twi		gominda		pumpkin
mula		mula		mula		raddish
kangkrikola	kangklaruru		gambillori/kangkaroti		gourd	
Kerela		gwltwi		kangkelong		bittergourd
tadun		lwng		ta'a		yam
taibeng		soksertwi		te'mit		cucumber

**f) Name of fruits:**

<u>Boro</u>		<u>Rabha</u>		<u>Garo</u>		<u>English</u>
Kantal		Puchung twi		te'brong		jackfruit
Taijwo		Bochor twi		te'gatchu		mango
Anarose		Anarose twi		anaras		pine apple
Sumprang		Sipirtwi	kopiram	guava		
Narekol		narekoltwi		narikel		coconut
Talir		lwtwi		te'rik		banana

The words denoting name of fruits and vegetables, we observe that the words {tai}, {twi}, {te} are used along with the bound form either as a prefix or suffix. For eg. In Boro {tai-jwo}, {tai-sri}, {tai-beng}, {tai-lir} {tai-gir} etc. where {tai} becomes the prefix. In Rabha, {puchung-twi}, {bochor-twi}, {jogon-twi}, {han-ti}, {lw-twi} etc where {twi} is used as a suffix. In Garo, {te-brong}, {te-gatchu}, {te-rik} {te-mit} etc where {te} is used as a prefix. When we look from the morphological point of view, we find that in these cognate languages, words connote specific meaning only when free form and bound form are combined together. Eg. the bound form {-jwo} {-sri} {-beng}, {puchung-} {bochor-} {lw-}, {-brong} {-gatchu} {-mit} {-rik} produce specific meaning only when used with the free form {tai}, {twi}, {te}.

**2) Basic pronouns**

**a) personal pronouns: 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun:**

Language	Singular	Plural
Boro	Ang	Jwng
Rabha	Ang	Ning
Garo	Anga	Anching, chinga, ching

**2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun:**

Language	Singular	Plural
Boro	Nwng/nwngtang	Nwngswr/nwngtangmwn
Rabha	Nwng/Aprong	Nonong/aprong prong
Garo	Na.a	Na.simang/ nasong

**3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun:**

Language	Singular	Plural
Boro	Bi/bitang	Biswr/bitangmwn
Rabha	Umra	Onong
Garo	Be.a/Ua	Bisong/Uarang/ uamang

One of the close affinities we observe in the above given personal pronouns of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns are that almost all the words end in (-ng) except in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns singular {a} of the Garos and in the plural {r}, {n} of the Boros. Whereas in Boro, honorifics are used in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun by adding bound morpheme {-thang} but in Rabha honourific is used only in 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun. In Garo, we do not find any honourific words being used.

**b) Interrogative pronoun**

<b><u>Boro</u></b>	<b>singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
	Swr	swr-swr
	Ma	ma-ma
	Mobe	mobe-mobe
<b><u>Rabha</u></b>	<b>singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
	Chang	chang-chang
	Utung	utung-utung
	Bio	bio-bio
<b><u>Garo</u></b>	<b>singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
	Sawa	sawa-sawa
	Mai	mai-mai
	Badia	badia-badia

For Interrogative pronouns, the plural form of the pronouns is formed by using the singular interrogative pronouns twice. For instance, in Bodo {swr} becomes {swr-swr}, in Rabha {chang} becomes {chang-chang} and in Garo {sawa} becomes {sawa-sawa} which in plural form means {who}. Same is the case with all other interrogative pronouns. It is clear that all the three languages follow the same pattern of forming the plural interrogative pronouns.

**c) Demonstrative pronouns:**

Language	Near	Far
Boro	Be	Bwi
Rabha	Eyo	uwo
Garo	ia	Ua
English	This	That

In the case of the demonstrative pronouns, all the words begin and end with vowel letters except the beginning letter of the Boro language which begin with the consonant letter B.

**d) Reflexive pronouns:**

**Boro** -----Gao  
**Rabha**-----apa

**Garo**-----antang/antangan

**English**-----himself/herself

In reflexive pronouns, only {gao} is used in Boro and {apa} is used in Rabha wherein Garos use two reflexive pronouns {angtang} and {antangan}.

**e) Indefinite pronouns:**

**Boro**-----swrba/kaise/raobw

**Rabha**-----changba/changban/sakswnban

**Garo**----- sa.ba/ sawaba

**English**-----somebody/someone

In the case of the Indefinite pronouns, observation is made that all the Indefinite pronouns are bi-syllabic but tri-syllabic also is seen being used in Rabha and Garo Eg. {sak/swn/ban} and {sa/wa/ba}.

**3) Basic verbs:**

<u>Boro</u>	<u>Rabha</u>	<u>Garo</u>	<u>English</u>
Ja	sa	cha	eat
Ka	hai	ka	tie
Pwi	fwi	reba	come
Kao	chor	kao	steal
Gar	bakai	gal	throw
Kam	ham	ka.am	burn
Dan	tan	den.a	cut
Thang (to live)	heng	tang.a	live
Kar	tolok	ka.at	run
Pan	fal	pal	sell

In basic verbs, maximum words are seen having similarities which are monosyllabic and bi-syllabic in nature.

**4) Basic Adjective:**

<u>Boro</u>	<u>Rabha</u>	<u>Garo</u>	<u>English</u>
Gwjam	maicham	gitcham	old
Gwka	ha.a	ka.a	bitter
Gwtang	piting	giting	green
Gwtwo	tuwa	tu.a	deep
Gwswm	penek	gisim	black
Gwja	pisak	gitchak	red
Gajri	sarcha	namja	bad
Guphur	bolang	gipok	white
Gwkwi	hiya	mechenga	sour
Gwlao	pillwo	ro.a	long
Gwdwi	swma	che.a	sweet
Gwran	rantap	gran/rana	dry
Geder	godak	da.la	big
Gwbang	twkrwi	bang.a	plenty

In basic adjectives, maximum words of the Boros are seen to begin with the sound {g} whereas in Rabha and Garo along with the sound {g} other sounds are also used such as {p} {t} {n} etc.

**Conclusion:** From the above analysis and discussions, one can summarize that in all cognate languages of Boro, Rabha and Garo, the basic vocabularies are monosyllabic and bi-syllabic in

nature. To form a word of different meanings uses of prefixes or suffixes are required. Some of the words are composed of two free morphemes, some of them are comprised of single phonemic morpheme and the others are bound base.

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