

Nouns in Kokborok

Samir Debbarma, M.A., Ph.D.

Department of Kokborok, Tripura University

Suryamaninagar-799022

samirdebbarma85@gmail.com

Mobile: 09436450274

=====

Abstract

The aim of the present paper is an attempt to study about the structure of nouns in Kokborok. The data is based on the variety of Kokborok spoken in Unakoti district of Tripura. Like any other languages of the world, noun in Kokborok form the largest open word class followed by verb. Kokborok shares the features shared by other Bodo-Garo languages i.e., absence of velar nasal in initial position of word, presence of suppletive form of plural of 1st person personal pronoun, presence of numeral classifier etc. Linguistically, Kokborok belongs to Bodo-Garo sub-group of Tibeto-Burman language family.

Keywords: Kokborok, Bodo-Garo, Tibeto-Burman, Noun

Introduction

Kokborok is a Tibeto-Burman language of the Bogo-Garo sub-group spoken mainly in the North East Indian State of Tripura. Kokborok is spoken in all the eight (08) districts of Tripura. The speakers of Kokborok is also scattered in some states of North East India viz. Assam (Hailakandi, Cachar and Karimganj district) and Mizoram and the adjacent neighbouring country, Bangladesh (Chittagong, Khagrachari, Bandarban). According to 2011 Census of India, the total population of Tripura is 36, 73, 917. The scheduled tribe population of Tripura is 11, 66, 813, which constitute 31.8 percent of total population. Kokborok is an official language of Tripura.

Burling (2006) has classified Kokborok under Sal languages. According to Burling, Kokborok was once the predominant Tibeto-Burman language of Tripura but has now been reduced to minority in their homeland. The closest relatives of Kokborok (Bodo, Garo, Dimasa, Rabha, Deuri, etc.) are spoken in Assam and Meghalaya. The dialects of Kokborok are Bru, Debborma, Jomatia, Koloi, Kwtal (Noatia) Murasing, Rupini, Tripura, and Uchoi (Debbarma, 2018). Kokborok is an agglutinating and verb final language with SOV as basic word order. The Roman-based Kokborok orthography will be used in place of the phonetic transcription for the elicited data.

Noun

Like any other languages of the world, noun form the largest open word class in Kokborok. Nouns in Kokborok may serve different functions within sentence. They can serve as the subject and object of the verbs. Morphologically, it can take gender (-la ‘male’, -ma ‘female’) number (-rok and -song ‘plural’), and case marker (-no ‘accusative and dative’, -ni ‘genitive’ etc.) and can be followed by noun modifiers like adjectives, numeral classifiers, quantifiers, etc. Kinship nouns in Kokborok appear with pronominal markers. Nouns in Kokborok can be of monosyllabic root. However, a noun in Kokborok can be of penta syllabic roots. Nouns in Kokborok can be classified into basic non-derived, derived, compound and reduplicated nouns.

Non-derived Nouns

Non-derived nouns are those nouns that are morphologically simple, and it consist of entities like animate and inanimate as given below.

Word	Gloss
nok	‘house’
buphang	‘tree’
tok	‘bird’
wak	‘pig’
som	‘salt’
holong	‘stone’
watui	‘rain’
topepe	‘leaf bird’
athukiri	‘star’
sotorobongo	‘marigold’

Derived Nouns

Derived nouns are those nouns that are complex in nature. These nouns are formed from either verbs, nouns or adjectives by suffixing derivational suffixes. It can also take inflectional affixes. Kokborok uses number of suffixes to derive nouns from verbs as shown below.

Suffix /-thai/

Nouns in Kokborok can be derived by suffixing *-thai* to the verb roots as shown below.

Word	Gloss	Derived form	Gloss
sung	‘ask’	sung-thai	‘question’

khwlai	‘do’	khwlai-thai	‘duty’
san	‘ask’	san-thai	‘demand’
surung	‘learn’	surung-thai	‘lesson’
man	‘to get’	man-thai	‘right’
ri	‘give’	ri-thai	‘debt’

Suffix /-mung/

Nouns in Kokborok can be derived from the verbs by suffixing *-mung* to the verb roots as given below.

Verb	Gloss	Derived form	Gloss
ca	‘eat’	ca-mung	‘food’
nung	‘drink’	nung-mung	‘drink’
thung	‘play’	thung-mung	‘games’
rwcap	‘sing’	rwcap-mung	‘song’
mwsa	‘dance’	mwsa-mung	‘dances’
nahar	‘look’	nahar-mung	‘aim/goal’

Suffix /-ma/

Abstract nouns and verbal nouns are formed by suffixing *-ma* to the verbal root and adjectival nouns are formed by suffixing *-ma* to the adjective roots as given below.

Word	Gloss	Derived form	Gloss
wansuk	‘think’	wansuk-ma	‘thinking’
naisele	‘hate’	naisele-ma	‘hate/grudge’
tuk	‘be difficult’	tuk-ma	‘difficulty’
kwcang	‘cold’	kwcang-ma	‘coldness’
kha	‘be bitter’	kha-ma	‘bitterness’
song	‘to cook’	song-ma	‘cooking’
thu	‘sleep’	thu-ma	‘sleeping’
him	‘walk’	him-ma	‘walking’
khaja	‘enjoy’	khaja-ma	‘enjoyment’
naithok	‘beautiful’	naithok-ma	‘beauty’
hilik	‘heavy’	hilik-ma	‘heaviness’
heleng	‘light’	heleng-ma	‘lightness’
sele	‘lazy’	sele-ma	‘laziness’

Suffix /-mari/

The suffix *-mari* is used to derive nouns from verbs as given below.

Word	Gloss	Derived form	Gloss
man	'get'	man-mari	'profit'
phunuk	'to show'	phunuk-mari	'example'
bai	'to break'	bai-mari	'expenditure'
tung	'be hot'	tung-mari	'temperature'
thang	'go'	thang-mari	'profit'
nuk	'see'	nuk-mari	'sight'

Suffix /-nai/

Agentive nouns in Kokborok are formed by suffixing *-nai* to the verbs as shown below.

Verb	Gloss	Derived form	Gloss
phal	'sell'	phal-nai	'seller'
surung	'learn'	surung-nai	'learner'
thung	'play'	thung-nai	'player'
phurung	'teach'	phurung-nai	'teacher'
song	'cook'	song-nai	'cook'
muruk	'to guard'	muruk-nai	'guard'
ritak	'to weave cloth'	ritak-nai	'weaver'
ri sup	'stitch cloth'	ri sup-nai	'tailor'
khwnai ra	'cut hair'	khwnai ra-nai	'barber'
tuk tak	'to make pot'	tuk tak-nai	'potter'
da tak	'to make knife'	da tak-nai	'blacksmith'

Suffix /-phang/

Nouns in Kokborok are also derived by suffixing *-phang* to the noun and verb roots as given below.

Verb/noun	Gloss	Derived form	Gloss
nok	'house'	nok-phang	'house owner'
ha	'mud'	ha-phang	'government'
samung	'work'	samung-phang	'administrator'
tang	'do'	tang-phang	'secretary'
acuk	'sit'	acuk-phang	'chairperson'
dagi	'to order'	dagi-phang	'director'

Compound Nouns

A compound is a word that consists of two or more roots. Compound nouns in Kokborok are formed by combining at least two different lexical items. However, compound noun with combination of three lexical items is also found in the language. The following types of compound are found in Kokborok.

Noun + Noun + Verb + Suffix

This type of compound is formed by combining three nouns plus derivational suffix as given.

Word	Gloss	Literal meaning
swkalthuinungnai	'chameleon' (swkal 'witch' + thui 'blood' + nung 'drink' + nai 'derivational suffix')	'witch blood drinker'

Noun + Noun Compound

The Noun + Noun compound are formed by combining two simple nouns.

Word	Gloss	Literal meaning
khuk-tui	'spit' (khuk 'mouth' + tui 'water')	'mouth water'
kung-khi	'bogey' (kung 'nose' + khi 'stool')	'nose stool'
kung-tui	'snot' (kung 'nose' + tui 'water')	'nose water'
bwsa-khok	'womb' (bwsa 'baby' + khok 'container')	'baby container'
can-duk	'waist thread' (cang 'waist' + duk 'rope')	'waist rope'
hoku-tui	'vapour' (hoku 'smoke' + tui 'water')	'smoke water'
khunju-khi	'ear-wax' (khunju 'ear' + khi 'stool')	'ear stool'
muk-tui	'tears' (muk < (mokol) 'eye' + tui 'water')	'eye water'
muk-khi	'eye-gum' (muk < (mokol) 'eye' + tui 'water')	'eye-stool'
abuk-tui	'breast milk' (abuk 'breast' + tui 'water')	'breast water'
Hoki	'ember' (hor 'fire' + khi 'stool')	'fire stool'

Noun + Adjective Compound

Noun + Adjective compound are formed by combining noun and adjective.

Word	Gloss	Literal meaning
mui-kuthung	'vegetable' (mui 'curry' + kuthung 'raw')	'raw curry'
mui-sele	'python' (mui 'curry' + sele 'lazy')	'lazy curry'
tok-kolok	'crane' (tok 'bird' + kolok 'long')	'long bird'
tok-sunta	'wood-pecker' (tok 'bird' + sunta 'bald')	'bald bird'

nobar-koto	'storm' (nobar 'air' + kotor 'big')	'big air'
------------	-------------------------------------	-----------

Verb + Noun Compound

Verb + Noun compound are formed by combining verb and noun.

Word	Gloss	Literal meaning
ka-lam	'stair' (ka 'step' + lam 'way')	'step way'

Noun + Verb Compound

Noun + verb compounds are formed by combining noun and verb.

Word	Gloss	Literal meaning
mui-khon	'plantain flower' (mui 'curry' + khon 'coil')	'coiled curry'
yak-khep	'tongs' (yak 'hand' + khep 'hold')	'hand hold'
mui-lok	'gourd' (mui 'curry + lok 'be long')	'long curry'
nok-sip	'broom' (nok 'house' + sip 'to fan')	'fan house'
ha-cuk	'hill' (ha 'mud' + cuk 'be high')	'high mud'

Verb + Verb Compound

Verb + adjectives are formed by combining two verbs.

Word	Gloss	Literal meaning
rom-phe(r)	'flattened rice'	'flat catch'

Noun Reduplication

Like other Tibeto-Burman languages, nouns in Kokborok can be reduplicated to show inflection and derivation. Some reduplicated forms maintain the word class while some changes the word class as shown below.

Word	Gloss	Reduplicated form	Meaning
nok	'house'	nok nok	'to each and every house'
kami	'village'	kami kami	'to each and every village'
bolong	'jungle'	bolong bolong	'to each and every jungle'
bisi	'year'	bisi bisi	'yearly'
jora	'time'	jora jora	'sometimes'

Conclusion

Nouns in Kokborok can be classified into non-derived, derived, compound and reduplicated nouns. Non-derived nouns are simple nouns. Derived nouns in Kokborok are

formed by suffixing affixes (-ma, -nai, -mung, -thai, -mari and -phang) to verb, adjective and noun. Compound nouns in Kokborok consists of at least two lexical items or even more. Nouns in Kokborok can be reduplicated to show plurality.

References

Burling, R. (2006). The Tibeto-Burman languages of Northeast India. In Graham Thurgood and Randy J. LaPolla, ed. *The Sino-Tibetan Languages*. New York: Taylor & Francis.

Census of India. (2011). *Language: India, States and Union Territories*. New Delhi: Office of the RGI.

Debbarma, Binoy and Nakhrai Debbarma. (2018). *Tipra Dophra: A common identity of the Indigenous people of Tripura*. Agartala: Kokborok tei Hukumu Mission.



Samir Debbarma, M.A., Ph.D.
Department of Kokborok, Tripura University
Suryamaninagar-799022, Tripura, India
samirdebbarma85@gmail.com
Mobile: 09436450274