Marked Pronouns in Three Barish Languages

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to describe some aspects of the morphological features – including the morphophonemic changes – in pronouns of three Barish languages namely Dimasa, Kokborok, and Tiwa (aka Lalung). This study mainly focuses on the pronouns marked for plural, possessive, proximate and remote, and indefiniteness in pronominal system of the said languages.

Keywords: Barish, Dimasa, Kokborok, Tiwa, pronouns, markers, morphophonemic alternation

1. Introduction

Dimasa, Kokborok, and Tiwa are cognate languages. The speakers of these three languages are found in the Northeastern region of India. As per 2011 Census of India, the population of following languages was: Dimasa (1,37,184), Kokborok (10,11,294), and Tiwa (33, 921) respectively. R. Shafer (1955: 107) in his classification of Sino-Tibetan languages reported that such closely related languages are preferably termed as **Barish**; however, some scholars use different terms for the same group of languages as such Bodo-Naga (Grierson, 1903), Bodo-Garo (Benedict, 1972), and Bodo-Koch (Burling, 2003). It is observed that these three languages shared some of the morphological features. However, some of the distinct morphological features are also noticed.

One can divide the pronouns of Dimasa, Kokborok, and Tiwa into two categories: basic and marked forms. The basic pronouns in these languages are mostly monomorphemic forms. Marked forms are non-basic ones, often ones with inflectional and derivational endings. As a result, marked form of pronouns are mostly bimorphemic or polymorphemic. In other words, in these three Barish languages pronouns are marked for plural, possessive, proximity and remote, and indefinite.

Figure1: Dimasa, Kokborok, and Tiwa people dwelling areas in Assam, and Tripura states of India

2. Overview of Pronouns in Three Languages
2.1. Personal Pronouns

In the languages Dimasa, Kokborok, and Tiwa, personal pronouns can be distinguished in three persons (first, second, and third persons) and two numbers (singular and plural). In all these languages, there is no gender distinction in the third person personal pronoun; it can refer to both masculine and feminine. The singular personal pronouns are all monosyllabic free forms. In personal pronouns, these languages manifest two pluralization processes: suppletion and affixation. In first person, pluralization is done by means of suppletion, which is one of the typical features of Barish (aka Boro-Garo) languages; on the other hand, in second and third person it is done by affixation.

Table 1: Personal pronouns

Languages	First person		Second person		Third person	
	I	We	You	You all	He/She	They
Dimasa	*aŋ*	*ʤiŋ*	*niŋ*	*nisi*	*bo*	*bunsi*
Kokborok	*aŋ*	*ʧuŋ*	*nuŋ*	*noɾok*	*bo*	*boɾok*
Tiwa	*aŋ*	*ʧiŋ*	*na*	*nabuɾ*	*pe*	*pibuɾ*

2.2. Demonstrative Pronouns

Like other Barish languages, these languages have mainly two demonstratives to locate two different points on a distance scale: a proximal demonstrative referring to an entity near the deictic center, and a distal demonstrative indicating a referent that is located at some distance to the deictic center. In these languages, the demonstrative roots are open, they manifest bilabial sound at its initial with voiced and voiceless contrast, and in nucleus position the occurrence of high-mid vowel is evident. Dimasa, Kokborok, and Tiwa, employ demonstratives that are marked for proximate and distal. Tiwa manifests an anomaly here, i.e., its demonstrative plurals can indicate human and non-human as well (see 3.1.3).

Table 2: Demonstrative pronouns

Languages	Proximate		Distal	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Dimasa	*ibo*	*ibobutu*	*bo*/*houbo*	*houbobutu*
Kokborok	*obo*	*oborok*	*abo*	*aborok*
Tiwa	*hebe*	*himun*	*pe*/*pui*	*pimun*
		hebuɾ		*pibuɾ*

2.3. Interrogative Pronouns

In these languages, the basic interrogative pronouns are those that refer to the meaning of the words *who, what, where*, and *how much*. Most of the basic interrogative forms are monomorphemic. Across these languages, the basic interrogative pronouns that refer the notion of the word *who* appear more productive, in compared to other basic interrogative pronouns, since the expressions for *whose* and *whom* are derived from it by adding bound morpheme (possessive, and dative).

Table 3: Interrogative pronouns

Languages	who	what	where	how much	whose	whom
Dimasa	*seɾe*	*snadi*	*bəɾa*	*bisilei*	*seɾeni*	*seɾene*
Kokborok	*sabo*	*tamo*	*boɾo*	*busuk*	*saboni*	*sabono*
Tiwa	*sʰaɾ*	*inda*	*padʒiŋ*	*pasi*	*sʰaɾe*	*sʰaɾa*

3. Marked Form

In these three languages, marked pronouns can be further categorized into four groups: the pronouns which are marked for (i) plural, (ii) possessive, (iii) proximity and remote, and (iv) for the formation of indefinite pronoun.

3.1. Plural Marker

3.1.1. Personal Pronoun

With exception in first person plural personal pronoun[1], most of the non-singular pronouns are marked for plural in these three languages. The occurrence of plural markers is evident in both second and third person pronouns. Plural markers which are found in these languages are *-si*, *-ɾok*, and *-buɾ* in Dimasa, Kokborok, and Tiwa, respectively.

It has been observed that the plural marker *-ɾok* of Kokborok is used for both human and non-human nouns, whereas the plural markers *-si* and *-buɾ* of Dimasa and Tiwa, respectively, occur only with the human nouns.

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[1] In Dimasa, Kokborok, and Tiwa, the first person personal plurals have suppletive forms.

The use of the plural markers *-si*, and *-buɾ* of Dimasa and Tiwa, respectively, has limitation. The occurrence of the plural maker *-buɾ* of Tiwa is limited to personal, and demonstrative pronoun, whereas in Dimasa the occurrence of the plural marker *-si* is confined to personal pronoun only. In case of Kokborok, besides pronoun, plural marker *-ɾok* is used with noun form, as well.

Table 4: Plural marker in personal pronouns

Dimasa	Personal Pronoun	*niŋ/nuŋ* 'you' 2	*ni-si* 'you all' 2-PL
		bo 'she/he' 3	*bun-si* 'they' 3-PL
	Noun(Human)	*ansa* 'child'	*ansa-rao* 'children' 'child-PL'
	Noun (Animal)	*sisa* 'dog'	*sisabutu* 'dog all'
	Noun (Inanimate)	*laisi* 'book'	*laisibutu* 'book all'
Kokborok	Personal Pronoun	*nuŋ* 'you' 2	*no-rok* 'you all' 2-PL
		bo 'he/she' 3	*bo-rok* 'they' 3-PL
	Noun (Human)	*ʧuɾai* 'child'	*ʧuɾai-rok* 'children' child-PL
	Noun (Animal)	*sui* 'dog'	*sui-rok* 'dogs' dog-PL
	Noun (Inanimate)	*biʤap* 'book'	*biʤap-rok* 'books' book-PL
Tiwa	Personal Pronoun	*na* 'you' 2	*na-buɾ* 'you all' 2-PL
		pe 'he/she' 3	*pi-buɾ* 'they' 3-PL
	Noun (Human)	*orkʰia* 'child'	*orkʰia-rao* 'children' child-PL
	Noun(Animal)	*kʰugɾi* 'dog'	*kʰugɾi-rao* 'dogs' dog-PL
	Noun (Inanimate)	*lai* 'book'	*lai-man* 'books' book-PL

3.1.2. The Plural Markers *-ɾao* and *-ɾok*

It is striking to note that all these languages have monosyllabic plural markers that have alveolar sound *ɾ-* at its initial position. These monosyllabic plural markers are open

form in Dimasa and Tiwa, and closed form in Kokborok. The closed form has final velar stop *-k*. In other words, the diphthong *ao* occurs as the nucleus of plural marker in Dimasa and Tiwa, however the monophthong *o* merely occurs in the nucleus of plural marker in Kokborok.

Although the plural makers *-ɾao* and *-ɾok* are similar but there are differences in their usages as in Dimasa, the plural marker *-ɾao* occurs only with the human nouns, but in Tiwa it occurs with animate nouns. Conversely, in Kokborok it can occur with both human and non-human nouns.

3.1.3. Demonstrative Pronoun

With the exception in Dimasa, the demonstrative pronouns are marked for plural in Kokborok, and Tiwa. The languages Kokborok and Tiwa utilize the plural markers *-ɾok* and *-bur*, respectively, which occurs in their respective plural personal pronoun. However, Tiwa employs another maker *-mun* specifically for non-human since we have observed that (see 3.1.1.) the plural marker *-bur* in Tiwa is used specifically for human. Thus, we can infer that Tiwa has two plural markers in demonstrative pronoun, one for human and the other for non-human.

The base form of demonstrative, in Dimasa, neither employs the plural marker *-si* (of personal pronoun) nor does it have separate plural marker for demonstrative pronoun. Unlike in Kokborok and Tiwa, here the demonstrative form in Dimasa is not marked for plural, instead it co-occurs with the distinct plural word *butu*[2] to represent the notion of plurality.

Table 5. Plural marker in demonstrative pronoun

Dimasa	Demonstrative	*i-bo* 'this' PROX-DEM	*i-bo**butu*** 'they' PROX-DEM all
	Personal pronoun	*niŋ/nuŋ*[3] 'you' 2	*ni-**si*** 'you all' 2-PL
	Noun (Human)	*an-sa* 'child' 1.GEN-child	*an-sa-**rao*** 'children' 1.GEN-child-PL
Kokborok	Demonstrative	*o-bo* 'this' PROX-DEM	*o-bo-**rok*** 'they' PROX-DEM-PL
	Personal pronoun	*nuŋ* 'you' 2	*no-**rok*** 'you all' 2-PL
	Noun (Human)	*ʧuɾai* 'child'	*ʧuɾai-**rok*** 'children'

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[2] In Dimasa, *butu* is used to refer collectively the similar/same items (or group). The second syllable *-tu* of *butu* is a bound root for plural. The plural marker *-tu* can inflect the kinship terms as well as human name to refer the person including its companion.

[3]The form *nuŋ* is mostly used in the dialect (Hawar dialect) spoken in Cachar district.

			child-PL
Tiwa	Demonstrative	*he-be* 'this' PROX-DEM	*hi-**mun*** 'these' DEM-N.H.PL
			*hi-**bur*** 'these' DEM-H.PL
	Personal pronoun	*na* 'you' 2	*na-**bur*** 'you all' 2-PL
	Noun (Human)	*ork^{h}ia* 'child'	*ork^{h}ia-**rao*** 'children' child-PL

3.2. Deictic Elements

One may find interesting to note that, in these languages, most of the base forms of demonstrative pronoun are marked with deictic elements. In demonstrative pronouns, the language Dimasa employs the deictic elements ***i-*** for proximate, and ***hou-*** for remote. Similarly, Kokborok employs the deictic elements ***o-*** for proximate, and ***a-*** for remote. In Tiwa, however, the demonstrative pronouns are marked only for proximity with ***he-***, theremote demonstrative form is unmarked form.To express the notion of remoteness, Tiwa has two (unmarked) forms: ***pe*** and ***pui***. The later form ***pui*** is preferred when there is a need to express more remoteness in the context.

Table6: Deictic elements

Languages	Proximate (This)	Remote (That)
Kokborok	***o-**bo* PROX-DEM	***a-**bo* RMT-DEM
Dimasa	***i-**bo* PROX-DEM	***hou-**bo* /***ø-**bo*[4] RMT-DEM
Tiwa	***he-**be* PROX-DEM	*pui / **ø** -pe* RMT-DEM

3.3. Possessive Marker

For possessive pronoun these languages do not have distinct lexical items like of English 'my', 'your', 'his' and so on, rather the possessive pronouns are formed by attaching possessive marker to the basic pronoun forms as summarized in the following table.

Table7: Possessive marker

Pronoun	Dimasa	Kokborok	Tiwa
1-POSS	*a-ni* 'my'	*a-ni* 'my'	*ã-i* 'my'

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[4]Sometimes unmarked form is also used for remote demonstrative in Dimasa.

2-POSS	*ni-ni* 'your'	*ni-ni* 'your'	*n-e* 'your'
3-POSS	*bu-ni* 'his/her	*bi-ni* 'his/her'	*pe-ne* 'his/her'
DEM-POSS	*ibo-ni* 'DEM-POSS'	*abo-ni* 'DEM-POSS'	*pe-ne* 'DEM-POSS'

3.4. Nominalizing Marker

These languages do not have distinct indefinite pronouns; however, they have their own way of expressing the notion of indefiniteness. With exception in Kokborok, the indefinite forms in Dimasa and Tiwa employ nominalizing marker *–ba* and *-ki*, respectively, which are attached to their respective basic interrogative forms *seɾe* and *saɾ* to express the concept of positive indefinite pronoun.

Table 8: Nominalizing marker

Languages	Someone
Dimasa:	*seɾe-ba* Who-NMLZ
Tiwa:	*saɾ-ki* Who-NMLZ

However, in Kokborok instead of nominalizing marker, it employs an indefinite marker *-suk,* which is attached with the numeral classifiers such as *kʰoɾoksa* (*kʰoɾok* 'head' + *sa* 'one') for human, and *muŋsa* (*muŋ* 'name' + *sa* 'one') for non-human to represent the notion of indefinite pronoun.

Table9: Numeral classifiers

Kokborok:	*kʰoɾok-sa-suk* 'someone' CLF-one-body
	muŋ-sa- suk 'something' CLF-one-body

In negative indefinite pronoun, Kokborok simply employs the same classifiers *kʰoɾoksa* and *muŋsa*, and attach them with the marker *-pʰano* 'any' (Jacquesson 2008: 122) for the sense of negative indefiniteness. In the case of interrogative sentences, Kokborok employs the different expression *kebo* 'anyone' to refer the notion of indefinite pronoun.

In Dimasa, like Kokborok, it also employs the numeral classifier to represent the notion of negative indefiniteness. It has *sao-si* (*sao* 'body' +*si* 'one') for human and *musi* (*mu(ŋ)* 'thing' + *si* 'one') for non-human which commonly co-occurs with the additive marker-*bo*.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com**ISSN 1930-2940 23:10 October 2023**
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Unlike Kokborok and Dimasa, in Tiwa, the classifiers are not used to express the sense of negative indefinite pronoun. Tiwa employs the interrogative pronoun *saɾ*, and marked it with the additive marker-*bo*, to form the expression *saɾbo* for negative indefinite pronoun.

Table10: Negative indefinite pronoun

Languages	Negative indefinite pronoun (nobody/ no one)
Dimasa	*kʰoɾok-sa- pʰano* head-one-any
Kokborok	*sao-si-bo* body-one-additive
Tiwa	*saɾ-bo* who-additive

3.5. Other Markers Precede Possessive Marker

In these languages, when the plural and possessive markers co-occur together with the basic pronoun form, the plural marker precedes the possessive one. Similarly, when the nominalizing marker co-occurs with the possessive marker, the nominalizing marker also precedes the possessive. Thus in both the cases the possessive marker always gets preceded by other markers.

Table11. Possessive and other markers

Possessive Pronoun	Dimasa	Kokborok	Tiwa
	bun-si-ni 3-PL-GEN 'theirs'	*bo-ɾok-ni* 3-PL-GEN 'theirs'	*pi-buɾ-e* 3-PL-GEN 'theirs'
Indefinite pronoun	*seɾe-ba-ni* who-NMLZ-GEN 'someone's'	*kʰoɾok-sa-sɯk-ni* CLF-one-body-GEN 'someone's'	*sʰaɾ-ki-ni* who-NMLZ-GEN 'someone's'

3.6. Marked Interrogatives

In these languages, there are no distinct lexical items to represent the notions of English words: whose and whom. However, these languages have the interrogative forms marked with possessive and dative morphemes. In these marked interrogatives, all the markers have alveolar nasal sound ***n*** at its initial with a few variations in vowels that occur in nucleus position. In nucleus, the possessive marker employs the high vowel ***i*** in Dimasa and Kokborok, whereas in Tiwa it is mid vowel ***e***. On the other hand, in nucleus position of dative marker, Dimasa and Kokborok have the mid vowel ***e*** and ***o***, respectively, but in Tiwa it is low

vowel *a*. Thus, the occurrence of high vowel *i* is predominant in nucleus position of possessive marker across the languages, whereas in dative marker it is mid vowel.

Table12: Marked interrogatives.

Languages	whose	whom
Kokborok	*sabo-ni* who-POSS	*sabo-no* who-DAT
Dimasa	*seɾe-ni* who-POSS	*seɾe-ne* who-DAT
Tiwa	*saɾ-(n)e* who-POSS	*saɾ-(n)a* who-DAT

4. Morphophonemic Changes

It has been observed that the languages Dimasa, Kokborok, and Tiwa manifest some morphophonemic changes, especially when base pronouns are marked for plural and possessive as described below.

4.1. Deletion

Dimasa, Kokborok, and Tiwa languages have the common form *aŋ* as first-person singular, and the form *-nV* as possessive marker. When the first person is marked for possessiveness the final velar nasal *ŋ* of *aŋ* is being dropped in all these three languages.

Table13:Morphophonemic changes in first person

Languages	my
Dimasa	*aŋ-ni >ani* (1-POSS)
Kokborok	*aŋ-ni >ani* (1-POSS)
Tiwa	*aŋ-ne >ãi* (1-POSS)

In Tiwa, when first person personal pronoun *aŋ* is marked with the genitive marker -*ne* to express possessive, the form undergoes through morphophonemic process where the velar nasal *ŋ* of first-person personal pronoun, and the alveolar nasal *n* of genitive marker are being dropped resulting monomorphemic possessive form *ãi*.

With exception in Tiwa, both Dimasa and Kokborok have the form *nVŋ* for second person personal pronoun. Dimasa and Kokborok have the forms -*si* and -*ɾok* for plural marking in personal pronoun. When second person personal pronoun *nVŋ* is marked for plural the velar nasal *ŋ* is dropped here too, as illustrated in the following table.

Table14: Morphophonemic changes in second person

Languages	you all		
Dimasa:	*niŋ-si*	>	*ni-si* (2-PL)
Kokborok:	*nuŋ-ɾok*	>	*no-ɾok* (2-PL)

It is evident from the Table14 that the velar nasal *ŋ* that occurs in the final position of the basic pronouns is dropped when it is followed by alveolar sounds (*n/ɾ/s*). It has been observed that markers also go through some morphophonemic changes when they co-occur with base forms. Here, in Tiwa, the initial alveolar nasal *n* of possessive, and dative markers are dropped when they co-occurs with another alveolar *ɾ* as illustrated in the following table.

Table15. Morphophonemic changes in markers

Tiwa:	*saɾ-ne* >	*saɾ-e*	(who-GEN)
	'whose'		
	saɾ-na >	*saɾ-a*	(who-DAT)
	'whom'		

4.2. Vowel Harmony

The case of vowel harmony is also noticed in the basic pronouns of all three languages when they are marked for plural. These languages exhibit regressive vowel harmony whereby the vowels of basic forms were harmonized by the vowels of plural makers.

Table16: Vowel harmony

Kokborok	*nuŋ-ɾok*>	**no-**ɾok (2-PL) 'you all'
Dimasa (Hawar dialect[5])	*nuŋ-si* >	*ni-si* (2-PL)'you all'
	bon-si >	*b**u**n-si* (3-PL) 'they'
Tiwa	*pe-buɾ* >	*p**i**-buɾ*(3-PL) 'they'
	hebe >*h**i**-mun* (DEM-NH.PL) 'This thing'

4.3. Fusion

It is worth mentioning that the possessive pronoun of Tiwa also exhibits fusion. Although the nasal sounds are dropped, the possessive form *ãi* still retains the nasal feature; here, the remnant of nasal sound fused with the preceding vowel *ã* as illustrated below:

(i)   Tiwa: *aŋ-ne >ãi*

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[5]Found mainly in Cachar district of Assam.

4.4.   Syllable Drop

It also observed that, in Tiwa, when the demonstrative (disyllabic) form gets marked for plural, it retains the disyllabic nature by dropping its second syllable-**be** of **hebe** as can been seen in the following example:

(ii)   Tiwa: *hebe   > he(**be**)-mun > hi-mun* (DEM-PL)

5.   Conclusion

As in other Tibeto-Burman languages, with the exception in first person personal pronoun, the second and third persons in all three languages are marked for plurality. It is interesting to note that first person plural is an unmarked form, its pluralization is done by means of suppletion. Kokborok manifest regularity in plural marking, i.e., the base form of personal pronoun, and demonstrative employs the same plural marker *-**rok*** which uses to pluralize the nouns. In other words, in Kokborok the plural marker of noun has invaded the semantic space of personal pronoun, and demonstrative pronoun. Plural markers of demonstrative pronoun are more productive in Tiwa since they have made distinctions between human and non-human. Demonstrative pronouns manifest an anomaly in Dimasa, instead of employing markers, the demonstrative pronoun co-occurs with the plural word *butu* to represent the notion of plurality.

To represent the notion of indefinite pronoun, in Dimasa and Tiwa, the interrogative pronouns are marked with nominalizing marker, and in the case of Kokborok the human classifier is marked with indefinite or additive marker.

The marked pronouns in these languages exhibit some morphophonemic changes such as deletion, vowel harmony, fusion, and syllable drop. It is also observed that more than one morphophonemic process can take place to a single expression such as the form *ãi* 'my' of Tiwa which has undergone for both deletion and fusion, as well.

In all these languages, pronouns are not marked for gender. In other words, there is no gender distinction in the pronominal system of these languages. Thus, the absence of gender marker forms one of the correspondence features of these languages.

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Abbreviations

1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
Classifier	CLF
Dative	DAT
Demonstrative	DEM

Human	Human
Non	N
Nominalizer	NMLZ
Plural	PL
Possessive	POSS
Proximate	PROX
RMT	Remote

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