

**Kinship Structure And Related Terminology of The Boros:
Discussion From Sociological And Linguistic View Point**

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to analyze the kinship structure and terminologies used in the Boro society. The discussion has been done from the perspectives of sociology of culture and linguistic point of view. From analysis it is observed that kinship terminologies are composed of two different words indicating family relations and the personal pronouns. In this regard a close affinity may be found in the formation of kinship terms among the Bodo group of languages. Chiefly there are two types of constructions in the kinship terms. These are terms of address; and on the other hand terms of references. One set of terms is closely related to the first person who addresses directly to the persons of close relations. It refers to the immediate kin relationship. Terms of address are constituted with combination of first personal pronoun and the terms of kin relations. The other set of terms for kinship are associated to the second and third person. From the sociological perspective it may be observed that the terms of relations are the key units of the clan or family relations and the other hand constitute a linearity of the homogeneous group of clans. In this paper all the aspects have been taken into account from sociological and linguistic perspectives.

Keywords: kin relationship, terms of address, terms of reference, patrilineal, blood relation, affine kin group, social affiliation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As known from the perspective of ethnological account the Boro tribe is belonging to the Mongolians. They have closely racial affinity with other Mongolians of the South-East Asian

countries; and have genealogical relationship in case of cultural traits to a great extent. Among the Boros kin relationship is recognized based on descent, marriage and in some cases based on adoption. This is expressed by using kinship terminology. There are two categories of terms which relate to the kin relationship: (i) speaker's immediate and (ii) the other is speaker's distance relationship. The first category of terms is used for addressing someone immediately. This may be called terms of address; and some of them are used for referring someone to a distance relationship. Besides, some of the terms are used for addressing indirectly to the immediate kin relationship. These are depending upon cultural regulations. Contextualization of kinship terms is a striking cultural behavior in this tribe.

Further it may be observed that the Boros have two types of kinships in each of the family: (i) kinship based on descent which is known as kinship of blood relation. From theoretical perspective of cultural anthropology it is known as consanguineal kinship and (ii) the other is formed based on marriage which is known in anthropology as affinal kinship. Both the kinship structure is extant in the social constraint.

2.0 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The paper aims at discussing two striking aspects: (i) the structure of kinship and its sociological convention; and (ii) linguistic structure of kinship terminology as conventionally used among the Boro society.

3.0 RESEARCH APPROACH

As part of the study of sociology of culture, primarily the research approach will be based on sociological view point. On the other hand the kinship terms are part of lexis; therefore it needs a linguistic analysis based on structural features.

4.0 HYPOTHESIS

From a survey and keen observation as experienced in the field and discussion with native speakers belonging to this linguistic community a peculiar typology has been observed in the structure of kinship terminology. The linguistic structure of the kinship terminology apparently indicates cultural validation through kinship terms and its sociological regulations of the society. Kinship terms are not only the key of kin relationship; also it focuses social affiliation of kinship structure.

5.0 DATA COLLECTION

For a linguistic as well as sociological study of kinship terminologies necessary materials have been gathered from the field work and as result of literature review on Boro kinship terms as primary and secondary sources. Most of the data are received from the native speakers and some of them are gathered from published materials as far as convenient and reliable to the discussion. Field data are used for analysis after doing cross-examination in the field.

6.0 DISCUSSION

The discussion may be divided into two principal sub-heads: (i) kinship structure and sociological perspectives and (ii) linguistic structure of kinship terminology.

6.1 Kinship Structure and Sociological Perspective

It is observed the Boros constitute a patrilineal society. In that case kinship terminology is also affiliated by patrilineal kin group. The kin group is confined within the circle of family and constitutes a genetic relationship. Social norms and customs have innate force for validation of kinship terminology; and it is generally determined from father's and mother's side. The kinship terminology of father's kin group is determined by patrilineal generation, i.e blood kin and the kin associated by marriage. An individual by birth in the family is to be confined within the kin generation and affiliate with kin group of their father. Therefore children of a father by social convention are affiliated by patrilineal descent.

6.1.1 Kinship structure from Father's blood relation

An individual who are children of a father that belong to father's blood kin group; they live surrounding nearby father's residence by practicing patrilineal norms in a traditional society. Within the patrilineal circle or generation they practice kin terms to maintain family connections. Some of these are mentioned below:

- (i) Father's father: Abwu
- (ii) Father's mother: Abwi
- (iii) Father's younger brother: Dada (called in the Eastern Boro Dialect)/Adwi (called in the western Boro Dialect). There is dialect variation in this kinship term. No semantic change has been occurred.
- (iv) Father's younger brother's wife: Adwi (called in Eastern Boro Dialect)/Madwi (Called in Western Boro Dialect)
- (v) Father's elder brother: Ayong

- (vi) Father's elder brother's wife: Ayong
- (vii) Father's elder or younger sister: Anwi
- (viii) Father's elder or younger sister's husband: Amai
- (ix) Father's father's father: Ayong
- (x) Father's father's wife: Ayong

Apart from these certain kinds of kin relationships are also behaved in some cases. Supposed an individual is a child, male or female, of a father and his/her father has elder or younger brother. They have also children, male and female. In that case the kinship structure will be set as given below based on affiliation of the convention of the society. For example:

In case of father's elder/ younger brother's child if age limit is more than an addressee it is to be called "ada" (elder brother), "abo" (elder sister). On the other hand if age limit is less than an addressee it is to be called "phongbai" (one's younger brother) in case of 1st personal pronoun, "nwnghong" (your younger brother) in case of 2nd personal pronoun and "biphong" (his/her younger brother) in case of 3rd personal pronoun. Thus the same process is applicable in case of female child. For instance, "anao"/ "agwi" (younger sister) in case of 1st personal pronoun, "nwnghanao" (your younger sister) in case of 2nd personal pronoun and "binanao" (his/her younger sister) in case of 3rd personal pronoun.

Thus supposed an individual is one of the children of a parent and has two or more brothers of blood relations. The individual is the younger or youngest brother among them and they have also children within the family; in that case the individual calls their elder brother's children as "biadwi" (nephew) while introducing in front of 2nd and 3rd persons. For example, "biw angni biadwi phisa" (He is my nephew son.). The kinship structure is handed down towards the children of nephew. In that case the kin relationship is affiliated within the linearity of the family tree. The individual calls the male child of his nephew as "abwu" (grandson) and "abwi" (granddaughter) in case of female child in direct address. Thus, while addressing in front of other persons the individual calls them "phiswu" (grandchild) in collective sense. To distinguish gender one has to be called "phiswula" in case of masculine and "phiswuzw" in case of feminine gender.

There is other kind of kinship structure. Supposed an individual is a female and she is the eldest or elder one among the children of a parent; and all of the brothers of the individual have female

children in that case the individual calls “anwi” in direct speech. While introducing in front of 2nd and 3rd persons she calls “bianwi”.

6.1.2 Kinship structure from mother’s affine kin group

In this society kinship structure is also constituted by marriage and by affiliation of social convention. The structure is traditionally constituted from matrilineal kin affiliation. An individual who is a child of father’s kin group address the person of mother’s side for maintaining kin relation as given below:

- (i) Mother’s father: Abwu
- (ii) Mother’s mother: Abwi
- (iii) Mother’s younger sister: Madwi (called in Eastern Boro Dialect) / Madwi (Western Boro Dialect)
- (iv) Mother’s younger sister’s husband: Dada (called in Eastern Boro Dialect)/Adwi (called in Western Boro Dialect)
- (v) Mother’s elder sister: Ayong
- (vi) Mother’s elder sister’s husband: Ayong
- (vii) Mother’s elder or younger brother: Amai
- (viii) Mother’s elder or younger brother’s wife: Anwi

In the above discussion under the sub-heads 1.5.1.1 and 1.5.1.2, some similarities have been observed which are difficult to assess that why they have been using some common terminology to represent kin relationship both for father’s and mother’s side. There is no straight cut answer to be proofed the cause of similarities; but these are conventionally using and accepting among them. One thing may be assumed that the commonness of kinship terms used to represent the kin relation both for father’s and mother’s side is major characteristic of integration of the patrilineal and matrilineal generation.

7.0 LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE OF KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

Kinship terminologies of the Boros may be discussed from the point of linguistic typology. There are two types of kinship terminologies-

- (i) kinship terms used for address and
- (ii) kinship terms used for reference

Both of the kinship terms have distinctive kind of representation. The linguistic structure is typical in nature. Generally the structure of kinship terminology is formed by two morphological

units; the syllabic initial is personal pronoun and the syllabic final is noun. In both the cases this typology is necessarily applicable.

7.1 Typology of Kinship Terms in case of addressing someone

The kinship terms of address is composed of 1st personal pronoun and the relative kin persons i.e. person of close relationship to the 1st personal pronoun. The word is compounding in structure; and still preserving its analytical typology of Proto-Tibeto-Burman origin. In case of direct address by **an individual** to his/her kin relationship there must be used first personal pronoun as syllable initial i.e 'ang' (I) and then used the term of kin relationship who is immediate person to the addressee. This typology is made by the process of compoundisation as given below:

Example-1: ang (I)-pha (refers to father)>**apha** (my father)

Example-2: ang (I)-iong (refers to father's elder brother or mother's elder sister)>**aiong** (my father's elder brother or mother's elder sister)

Example-3: ai (I)-mother (the term is used as syllabic nucleus to address his/her mother)

Example-4: ang (I)-bwu (refers to grandfather)>**abwu** (my grandfather)

Example-5: ang (I)-bwi (refers to grandmother)>**abwi** (my grandmother)

Example-6: ang (I)-mai (refers to maternal uncle)>**amai** (my mother's elder or younger brother)

Example-7: ang (I)-nwi (refers to mother's elder or younger brother's wife; and at the same time it refers to father's elder or younger sister)>**anwi** (my mother's elder or younger brother's wife and my father's elder or younger sister)

Example-8: ang (I)-da (refers to elder brother)>**ada** (my younger brother)

Example-9: ang (I)-bo (refers to elder sister)>**abo** (my elder sister)

Example-10: ang (I)-nao (refers to lovely relations in case of relative sister)

7.2 Typology of Kinship Terms used in case of references

The bound base that refers kinship relationship is compounded with 2nd and 3rd personal pronouns for representing terms of reference. Typologically these kinds of words are also composed of two different lexical entities. Each of the lexical entities has own grammatical and semantic representations. While these are put together they form a new structure of lexical entity. The terms of references in case of 2nd personal pronouns are as follows:

Example-1: nwngh (you)-pha (refers to father)>nwnghpha>nwnghpha (your father)

Example-2: nwngh (you)-ma (refers to mother)>nwnghma>nwnghma (mother)

Example-3: nwngh (you)-da (refers to elder brother)>nwnghda (your elder brother)

Example-4: nwnng (you)-bo (refers to elder sister)>nwnngbo>nwmbo (your elder sister)

Example-5: nwnng (you)-phong (refers to younger brother)>nwnngphong>nwmphong(your younger brother)

Example-6: nwnng (you)-anao (refers to younger sister)>nwnnganao>nwnnganao (your younger sister)

Example-7: nwnng (you)-bazwi (refers to wife of elder brother)>nwnngbazwi>nwmbazwi (one's elder brother's wife)

Example-8: nwnng (you)-gumwi (refers to one's elder sister's husband)>nwnnggumwi (one's elder sister's husband)

Example-9: nwnng (you)-mai (refers to one's mother's elder or younger brother)>nwnngmai>nwmai (one's mother's elder or younger brother)

Example-10: nwnng (you)-ma-nwi (refers to mother's elder or younger sister)>nwmanwi (one's mother's elder or younger brother's wife and at the same time it refers to one's father's elder or younger sister)

On the one hand in case of 3rd personal pronoun only the bound bases are put together to form terms of references; e.g. bi (He/She)-pha (refers to father)>bipha (His/Her father), bi (He/She)-ma (refers to mother)>bima (His/her mother), bi (He/She)-da (refers to elder brother)>bida (one's elder brother) etc.

In the examples 7 and 8 mentioned above, the kinship terms “bazwi” and “gumwi” both are lone entity that refers directly kinship relationship in all the persons; e.g.

(i) ang-ni gumwi. (gumwi)

I case-marker one's elder sister's husband

(My elder sister's husband)

In this example, the kinship term “gumwi” is simply used in case of 1st personal pronoun. No 1st personal pronoun is to be put together with it.

(ii) nwnng-ni gumwi. (in short “nwnnggumwi” i.e your elder sister's husband)

You case-marker one's elder sister's husband

(iii)bi-ni gumwi. (bigumwi)

He/She case-marker one's elder sister's husband

In case of 2nd and 3rd personal pronouns, in general discourse the kinship term “gumwi” or “nwnngumwi” both are used directly in syntactic structure. Thus in case of the kinship term “bazwi” the same process is applied for representing kinship terms relating to all the persons.

8.0 Conclusion

The discussion, done from sociological point of view highlights some major aspects on the kinship structure of the Boros; and on the other hand focuses striking linguistic structure of the kinship terminologies as used based on social affiliation. From an analysis some of the basic points may be traced out,

- (i) Though the Boro society practices patriarchal tradition and the social convention affiliates patrilineal kin relationship, at the same time kin relationship is also structured in association with matrilineal affiliation.
- (ii) Based on both the patrilineal kin group and matrilineal affine kin group kinship terms for representing kin relationship are using traditionally in this society.
- (iii) Kinship terms are basically composed of two different linguistic entities where the initial syllable is the personal pronouns and the respective morphological segment is the bound base of noun class i.e. lexical entity that represents kin persons to the addressee.
- (iv) Some of the kinship terms are distinct entity that they do not possess compound formation; e.g. “bazwi” (one’s elder brother’s wife) and “gumwi” (one’s elder sister’s husband).
- (v) Thus three of the kinship terms are composed of neutral formation by which kin relation is expressed indirectly by the addressee. For example, to refer one’s wife’s father is called “bi-hau-sw” where the initial syllable is 3rd personal pronoun and the second syllable is probably a bound base of noun class that refers kin relationship term “father in-law”, the final syllable is a morpheme refers to kin relation. Thus “bikhunzw”, “bihamzw” both are composed of the same formation as stated above. In the two kinship terms the initial syllable is 3rd personal pronoun and the respective syllables are functioning particular kind of kin relations.

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