

# Case marker in Bodo, Dimasa, Kok-Borok, Rabha, Tiwa and Mising

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## Abstract

Case is a grammatical category, which is used to show the relationship among different words used in a sentence. In most branches of Tibeto-Burman language group, case is postposition. These postpositions take nouns structurally to form phrases; therefore they are called postpositional phrases. Postpositional phrases are made up of a postposition followed by a noun phrase. Though postpositions are syntactically bound elements, when they occur with nouns and pronouns, they constitute phrase instead of words.

Bodo, Dimasa, Kok Borok, Rabha, Tiwa and Mising are the Tibeto-Burman language origin. The present paper investigates the case markers in Bodo, Dimasa, Kok Borok, Rabha, Tiwa and Mising. Case is realized in the form of prepositions, in these languages.

## 1.0. Introduction

North-East region of India is called museum of culture, language, tribe and tribes, herbal medicine, animals, birds, etc. It is bounded by the political boundary of China in the North, Bhutan in the West, Bangladesh in the East and Burma (Myanmar) in the South. North-East India is comprised of eight sister states and they are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. Among these states, as per land area, Assam is the biggest state of this region consisting of Brahmaputra Valley and Barak Valley. In North-East India, though languages belonging to different language families are found, most of the languages belong to Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman family of languages.

The linguists have opined that the stock of Tibeto-Burman language family originated from the plain areas of **Yang-tsze-kiang** and **Huang-ho** rivers of China. This family is now

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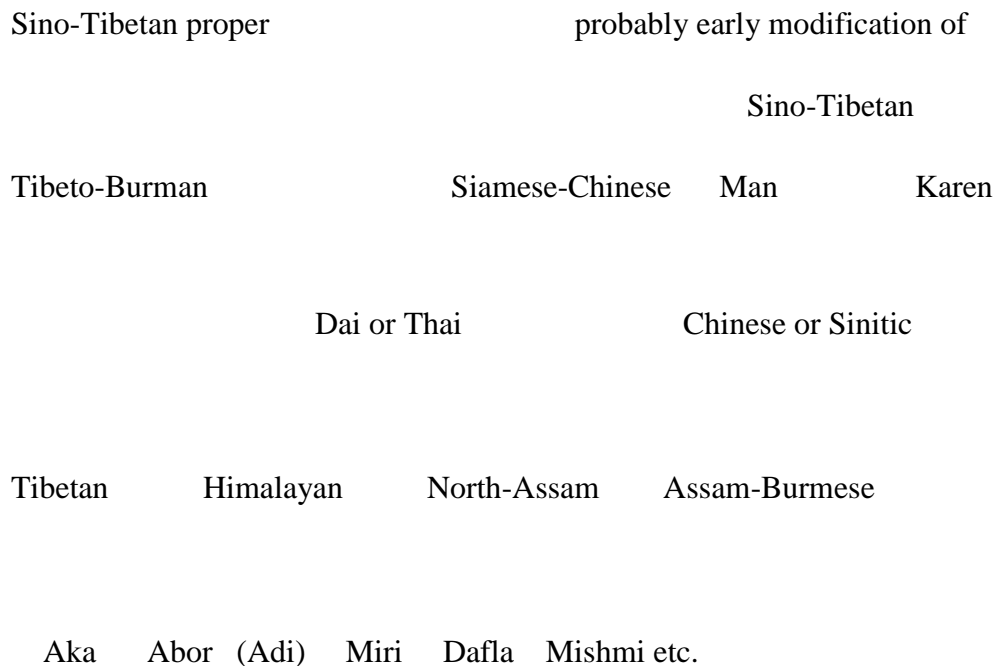
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widespread throughout the western and the southern of the Asia continent including Burma, Assam and North East India. As per the classification given by Robert Shafer, the Bodo language belongs to the branches of Barish section under the baric division of the Sino-Tibetan language family. The *Linguistic Survey of India* describes the languages under the Bodo sub-section under the Assam Burmese group of the Tibeto-Burman branches of Sino-Tibetan Chinese family. The Bodo groups comprise (as stated in the *Linguist Survey of India*, Vol. 3, Part-II) the following tribes: Kochari or Bodo, Lalung, Dimasa, Garo, Rabha, Tripuri (Kok-Borok), Koch, Chutiya (Deori) and Moran.

The table shown below of the Tibeto-Burman language group of Sino-Tibetan family of languages is taken from Bhattacharya, P.C. 1977: *A Descriptive Analysis of Boro Language*. Guwahiti: G.U. Press.

Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese Speech Family



Bodo-Naga

Burmese-Kuki-Chin

Kachin-Lolo

Bodo (Boro)

Naga Kuki-Chin Lolo, Kachin Old Burmese

Or Singpho

Mikir

Boro (Kachari) Dimasa Garo Rabha Lalung Tipra etc.

## 2.0. Objective of the Paper

To find out case and case endings in selected languages of the Tibeto-Burman group of language family, i.e., Bodo, Dimasa, Kok-borok, Rabha, Garo, Tiwa, and Mising.

## 3.0. Methodology

The data are collected from two main sources - primary and secondary.

**Primary sources:** Primary sources are collected from several informants of different age groups, occupation and sex.

**Secondary source:** Secondary sources are collected from renowned books and Ph.D. theses.

## 4.0. Case

According to David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (4<sup>th</sup> ed 1941) (pp-53). Delhi: IVY Publishing House), Case is “a grammatical category used in the analysis of word classes (or their associate phrases) to identify the syntactic relationship between words in a sentence, through such contrasts as **Nominative, Accusative** etc. The traditional classification, such as is found in Latin Grammar, is based on variation in the **Morphological** forms of the word. Each form is analyzed in terms of a specific range of meaning; e.g. nominative is primarily the case of the grammatical **subject** of the sentence, genitive refers to such notion as possession,

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origin, and so on. In languages which lack morphological variations of this kind, the term ‘case’, as traditionally used, does not apply. In English, for example, the only case form which is marked is the genitive (as in *boy’s* or *boys*); all other forms have no ending, the remaining case ‘meanings’ being expressed using prepositions (as in *with a boy, to the boy*) or word order (as in *the cat chases mouse/mouse chases cat contrast*). A great deal of space in introductions to **linguistics** has been devoted to this pointed, in particular to, criticism of **traditional** grammars of English which insisted nonetheless on analyzing the English noun in terms of cases.”

In the languages under consideration here, cases are nominals indicating grammatical category and establish relationship with words in a sentence. The grammatical relations expressed by these cases are varied and numerous such as subject, object, separation origin, possessive purpose and meaning, etc. They are distinguished by different inflectional endings or markers. Cases are inflected forms of noun which fit them for participation in key construction relating to verbs. It is the most important category for the nominal. Case relations are expressed by postposing the case markers to the nouns or pronouns. In others words, all the case markers are postpositional.

#### 4.1. Different Types of Cases

Bodo, Dimasa, Kok-borok, Rabha, Garo, Tiwa, Mising has seven cases, namely, Nominative case, Accusative case, Instrumental case, Dative case, Ablative case, Genitive case and Locative case. Each of these cases has different suffixes. These are known as case endings or case markers. The case and case ending or case markers are shown.

##### 4.1.0. Nominative

The nominative case is the case of the doer of the action indicated by the verb under references. The nominative marker is optional with the pronouns whereas it is obligatory with proper names. Nominative case has no overt marker and it is syntactically used as the subject of an intransitive verb in the languages under study. It is realized as zero morph. These are given below in the following table.

Person	Case marker
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	Bodo	Dimasa	Kokborok	Rabha	Garó	Tiwa	Mising
1 <sup>st</sup> person	aŋ-u, - <i>φ</i>	aŋ- <i>φ</i>	aŋ- <i>φ</i>	aŋ- <i>φ</i>	aŋ- <i>φ</i>	aŋ-o,- <i>φ</i>	ŋa/k- <i>φ</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	-nuuŋ-u, - <i>φ</i>	-niŋ- <i>φ</i>	-nuuŋ- <i>φ</i>	nuuŋ- <i>φ</i>	nuuN- <i>φ</i>	na-o- <i>φ</i>	naŋ- <i>φ</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	bi- yu, - <i>φ</i>	bo- <i>φ</i>	bo- <i>φ</i>	o- <i>φ</i>	bia- <i>φ</i>	pe- o - <i>φ</i>	bΛ- <i>φ</i>

In Bodo the nominative case is marked by /u/ and *φ* to the personal pronoun and both are free variation. Further in Bodo nominative case has different morph which can occur in different phonemes ending, but interesting that these characters are not having in mentioned language group. The processes are given below.

- (i) –*a* occurs when preceded by a noun or pronoun ending in consonant and diphthong./ao/.
- (ii) –*ya* occurs when preceded by a noun or pronoun ending in /i/, /e/, /a/ and diphthong /ai/.
- (iii) –*wa* occurs when preceded by a noun or pronoun ending in /o/, /u/ and diphthong. /uu/
- (iv) –*yu* occurs when preceded by a noun or pronoun ending in and /i/

#### 4.1.1. Accusative

The accusative case is the case of the object towards which action of the subject is directed. When the noun refers to a particular thing or person, the accusative marker is suffixed. The case markers are given in the following table with personal pronouns.

Person	Case marker						
	Bodo	Dimasa	Kok-borok	Rabha	Garó	Tiwa	Mising
1 <sup>st</sup> person	aŋ- k <sup>h</sup> uu,- <i>φ</i>	aŋ- k <sup>h</sup> e,- <i>φ</i>	aŋ-nɔ,- <i>φ</i>	aŋ-, k <sup>h</sup> e – <i>φ</i>	aŋ-k <sup>h</sup> o, -o	aŋ-go	ŋa- <i>φ</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	nuuŋ-k <sup>h</sup> uu,- <i>φ</i>	niŋ-k <sup>h</sup> e,- <i>φ</i>	-nuuŋ-nɔ,- <i>φ</i>	nuuŋ,-k <sup>h</sup> e <i>φ</i>	nuuŋ-k <sup>h</sup> o,-	na-go	naŋ- <i>φ</i>

					o		
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	bi- k <sup>h</sup> uu,- $\phi$	bo- k <sup>h</sup> e - $\phi$	bo-nɔ,- $\phi$	o- k <sup>h</sup> e - $\phi$	bia-k <sup>h</sup> o,-o	pe-go	bɬ- $\phi$

#### 4.1.2. Instrumental

Instrumental case is the case of the instrument with the help of which the action mentioned by the verb is performed. It is marked by post-posing case marker. The case markers are given with personal pronouns in following table.

Person	Case marker						
	Bodo	Dimasa	Kokborok	Rabha	Garro	Tiwa	Mising
1 <sup>st</sup> person	aŋ-zuŋ	aŋ-zaŋ	aŋ-bai	aŋ-p <sup>h</sup> ak <sup>h</sup> e	aŋ-chi	aŋ-re	ŋa-kokki
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	nuŋ-zuŋ	niŋ-zaŋ	nuŋ-bai	nuŋ-p <sup>h</sup> ak <sup>h</sup> e	nuŋ-chi	na-re	nɬŋ-kokki
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	bi-zuŋ	bo-zaŋ	bo-bai	o-p <sup>h</sup> ak <sup>h</sup> e	oa-chi	pe-re	bɬ-kokki

#### 4.1.3. Dative

The dative case is the case of the indirect object of the verb. The direct object is not overtly case marked with the case marker when the indirect object in the expression is overtly case marked. The case markers are given with personal pronouns in following table.

Person	Case marker						
	Bodo	Dimasa	Kok-borok	Rabha	Garro	Tiwa	Mising
1 <sup>st</sup> person	aŋ-nuu	a-ne	aŋ-no	a-na	aŋ-na	aŋ-a	ŋa-dɬm~m
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	nuŋ-nuu	ni-ne	nuŋ-no	nuŋ-na	nuŋ-na	na-a	naŋ-dɬm~m

3 <sup>rd</sup> person	bi-nuu	bo-ne	bo-no	o-na	bia-na	Pe-a	bΛ-dΛm~m
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In Dative case Dimasa and Rabha followed same process as Genitive case.

#### 4.1.4. Ablative

The ablative case is the case of separation from the source in performing the action mentioned by the verb. The case markers are given with personal pronouns in following table.

Person	Case marker						
	Bodo	Dimasa	Kokborok	Rabha	Garó	Tiwa	Mising
1 <sup>st</sup> person	aŋ-nip <sup>h</sup> rai	a-nisiŋ	aŋ-ni	aŋ-ni-para	aŋ-ni	aŋ-p <sup>h</sup> ana	ŋa-lokke
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	nuuŋ-nip <sup>h</sup> rai	ni-nisiŋ	nuuŋ-ni	nuuŋ-ni-para	nuuŋ-ni	na-p <sup>h</sup> ana	naŋ-lokke
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	bi-nip <sup>h</sup> rai	bo-nisiŋ	bo-ni	o-ni-para	oa-ni	pe-p <sup>h</sup> ana	bΛ-lokke

Dimasa has two case markers i.e. /-níp<sup>h</sup>raŋ/ and /-nísiŋ/. /-níp<sup>h</sup>raŋ/ occurs with inanimate nouns and /-nísiŋ/ occurs with animate nouns.

#### 4.1.5. Genitive

The genitive case is the case which indicates the possession of a thing or the relationship of a particular object. The case markers are given with personal pronouns in following table.

Person	Case marker						
	Bodo	Dimasa	Kokborok	Rabha	Garó	Tiwa	Mising
1 <sup>st</sup> person	aŋ- ni	a-ni	aŋ-ni	a-ni	aŋ-ni	aŋ-a	ŋa-k, - <i>φ</i>

2 <sup>nd</sup> person	nun̄- <i>ni</i>	ni- <i>ni</i>	nun̄- <i>ni</i>	nun̄- <i>ni</i>	nun̄- <i>ni</i>	na- <i>a</i>	naŋ- <i>k, -ϕ</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	bi- <i>ni</i>	bo- <i>ni</i>	bo- <i>ni</i>	o- <i>ni</i>	bia- <i>ni</i>	Pe- <i>a</i>	bΛ- <i>k, -ϕ</i>

In Dimasa when genitive case marker is suffixed with personal pronouns the velar nasal /ŋ/ is dropped. Even in Rabha after suffixing genitive case marker with personal pronouns the velar sound /ŋ/ in /aŋ/ is dropped.

#### 4.1.6. Locative

Locative case is the case which expressed by location of a noun and pronoun in space of time. In Bodo the locative case is expressed by the post posing /ao~yao~wao/, /nao/, /ha/. The locative case marker /ao~yao~wao/ are occur with location and the case marker /nao/, /ha/ occurs with animate noun. /na/, /k<sup>h</sup>at<sup>h</sup>aŋ/ is the locative case marker in Rabha, which /na/ occurs in location and /k<sup>h</sup>at<sup>h</sup>aŋ/ occurs with personal pronoun. As well as /pΛ/, /lodelo/ is the locative case markers in Mishing. /pΛ/ occurs in location and /lodelo/ occurs in personal pronoun. The case markers are given with personal pronouns in following table.

Person	Case marker						
	Bodo	Dimasa	Kokborok	Rabha	Garo	Tiwa	Mising
1 <sup>st</sup> person	aŋ-nao/ha	aŋ-ha	aŋ-o~ok~k	aŋ-k <sup>h</sup> at <sup>h</sup> aŋ	aŋ-chi	aŋ-o	ŋa-lodela
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	nun̄-nao/ha	niŋ-ha	-nun̄-o~ok~k	nun̄-k <sup>h</sup> at <sup>h</sup> aŋ	nun̄-chi	na-o	naŋ- lodela
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	bi-nao/ha	bo-ha	bo-o~ok~k	o- k <sup>h</sup> at <sup>h</sup> aŋ	oa-chi	Pe-o	bΛ- lodela

## 5.0. Conclusion



Bodo, Dimasa, Kok-borok, Rabha, Garo, Tiwa, and Mising are the names both of the people and language. They belong to Bodo-Garo section of the Assam-Burmese sub-section of the Tibeto-Burman group of Sino-Tibetan language family. They are found mainly in north-east India. Case is an important category of grammar. It is inflected from noun or pronoun and has a close relationship between the noun phrase and verb phrase of a sentence. The languages have seven cases, namely, nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, instrumental, ablative and locative. Each of these cases has case-ending or case marker. In these languages the cases are realized as post-position. In nominative case, Bodo has special characters not found in other languages in the Tibeto-Burman language family.

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### Colophon

I express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Swarna Prabha Chainary, Associate Professor, Bodo Department, Gauhati University, Guwahati, who had gone through this paper and for his valuable comments and suggestions, which inspired and helped me to improve this paper.

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