A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF 24 PLACE NAMES OF ASSAM

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Introduction :

Name is a product of man's linguistic attribution to a given object. It is not a meaningless entity but cultural necessity to communicate ideas or express significance. Naming a place marks a turning point in the history of the development of human civilization. The study of place name of a given region reveals many interesting aspects of human civilization, which may not be otherwise known. So place names are called 'foot notes of history and fossils of archaeology of the past'. They are a valuable representation of the real speech of the people. Due to the retentive power of the form and content, place names are opposed to changes in the language of a community over time. Yet whenever language undergoes major phonetic changes place names are subject to such changes. The study of Linguistics, Anthropology, Ethnology, Geography and other kindred subjects is incomplete without the application of the results of place-name studies. The aim of the study of place names is to find out the original forms and meanings and interpret them. Important clues regarding origins and human habitation are supplied by place names. Place names call for interdisciplinary study, like :

Language, Anthropology, Culture, Environment, Archaeology, Narrative, Mythology, Epigraphy etc.

The study of place names on a linguistic basis is the present trend. The accoustic transformation in word utterances, the etymology of a place and semantic changes are the main points of interest through which the linguists work. These studies are named under the caption of phonology, morphology, semantics, lexicography, dialectology and so on. The state of Assam falls within the latitudes of N to N and longitude E to E. It lies on one of the important routes of migration of mankind and can be said to be the cradle of heterogeneous culture. This region is frequented by the Austric speaker Mongoloids (the Khasis and Syntengs), Dravidas, Tibeto-Burman groups like —Bodos (Kacharis, Rava, Garo, Lalung, Karbi, Tipra etc), Tai-Ahoms and the Aryans. All these groups left here, an indelible impression on Language and Culture. Their contributions can be well seen in the region in the form of place name elements.

In this work we have selected 24 place names of Assam for linguistic analysis and the stages of the method adopted here are : the correct form of the names are chosen from reliable records, alphabetical order, the territorial location, approximate period of naming, namer (language or ethnic groups), prefix or suffix and specific words in the place name, etymology, structural formations like, noun-noun, noun-adjective, adjective-noun etc, semantic-changes, corruption, re-christening, old names, hybrid formation, superimposition, transliteration and categorization etc.

Brahmaputra : The main river of Assam. In the tenth century A.D, this name was conferred by the Indo-Aryans of Assam. Brahmaputra, Brahmar, N. Brahma, the Hindu trinity, + case ending —r, Brahmar + suffix —putra, son, = Brahmaputra, i.e. son of Brahma (Kalika Purana), here the loss of consonant 'r' has taken place. Old name : 1. Lauhitya-sindhu, aryanisation of the Aus. name 'Lao-ti' or 'Leuti', Lau-hit, (here, change

of 'o' to 'u') red + suffix –ya, + suffix –sindhu, big river, sea i.e., a big red river. 2. Lao-ti, Aus. Lao, clear, + suffix –ti, river, i.e. a clear water river. Softened form of Lao-ti to 'Luit', change of letter, 'a' to 'u', loss of letter 'o' and reverse position of consonant 't' and vowel, 'i' or letters are transposed as 'Laoti' to 'Luit'. 3. Di-lao, Bd. Prefix –Di, river + suffix Aus. –Lao, a case of superimposition. 4. Bd. (Rava) : Bullung-bhuthur, a river with a gargling sound (referred by Bishnu Rava). 5. Nam-dao-phi, Tai. Prefix -Nam, a river, water + dao, a star, + phi, god, i.e. a divine water river. 6. Khe-Nam- ti-lao, a hybrid formation of Tai-Bd.-Aus., Tai. prefix Khe-Nam, river + 'ti', unvoiced form of Bd. 'Di' to Tai. 'ti' + suffix Aus. -Lao = Nam-ti-lao, (reference in Tai-Ahom manuscript of 13th century A.D, Ahom-Buranji, preserved in the house of Mr. Mukunda Phukan). 7. Greek. Duoinoss, Skt. Hrada, Hradini etc.Chantak : A township in Sivasagar district (26-50-45 N. Lat. and 94-47-50 E. Long.). Named by the Tai-Ahoms in the thirteenth century A.D, in the reign of Siukapha, the first Tai-Ahom king. Corruption of Tai-word, 'Chang-tak', Chang, two, + tak, time = Chang-tak > Chantak, here the loss of consonant 'g', has taken place, i.e. when the king Siukapha measured the specific gravity of the lower course of river 'Dikhow' and the upper course of river 'Silpani', he found the latter two times heavier than the former, so he named it Chang-tak.
Old name : 1. Silpani, Old As. Sil, stone, cold, + suffix –pani, water i.e. a cold water river. 2. Tai. Mung-ri-mung-ching, a town, Tai name for Silpani area. Physical characteristic origin.
Dergaon : In Golaghat district (26-38-08 N. Lat. and 95-54-30 E. Long). 14th century A.D by the Bodo-Kacharis. N.NIA As. Deor, god + suffix –gaon, a village of god; corruption of word 'Deorgaon' to 'Dergaon', here, mid vowel 'o' is lost; known for its famous old Siva temple, later rebuilt by the Ahom king Rajeswarsimha and consecrated by Laksmisimha in A.D 18th century. Old names : 1. Devagram, a name given by the Brahmins cf. 'Devagram' of Bengal a neighbouring state of Assam, a transliterated form of 'Deorgaon'. 2. Sital-Negheri, NIA As. Sital, cold, + N. suffix –Negheri, a kind of small birds, i.e a silent place for 'Negheri' birds, it was a royal dockyards of the Ahoms in A.D 17th century. 3. Kopahtoli, N. NIA As.Kopah, cotton, + suffix –toli, field, a cotton growing area. 4. Phutukatoli (vide Nazira). 5. Tai-Ahom. 'Ban-phi', a transliterated form of 'Deorgaon'. Semantically, a temple name becomes a name of township of Golaghat. Cultural origin.
Dibrugarh : Name of a district (Lat. 27-32-03 N. and Long. 94-55-35 E.). The name Dibru, name of the river was prior to the 10th century A.D, given by the Bodo-Kacharis; Dibrugarh, in the 18th century A.D in the reign of Ahom king Siutanpha @ Sivasimha. A word of hybrid formation : Bodo and Assamese, N.Bd. Di, river + suffix –bru, mouth + NIA As. gar, (garh, anglicised form, consonant 'h' is added here due wrong transliteration and pronunciation of the word, it does not bear any meaning) a rampart = Dibrugarh, i.e. a rampart on a river mouth. Transliterated form : Tai. Ti-phao to denote 'Dibru'. Semantically, name of a rampart elevated to the name of a District.
Physical origin.
Dikhowmukh : In Sivasagar district (27-04-55 N/ 94-28-20 E). Di-khow-mukh, Bd. Di, river +suffix –khau, khow, steef, deep, + secondary As. suffix –mukh, mouth, mouth of river Dikhow, cf. Dichang-mukh, Dhansiri-mukh. Other names : 1.Chup-nam-chao, short form of Chup, mouth, + Khe-nam-chao, (Tai name for 'Dikhow') = Chup-khe-nam-chao. 2. Mughals, Trimohini, in Bahar-I-stani –Ghaibi. Physical origin.

Gargaon : The third capital of the Ahoms (26-54-35 N. Lat. and 94-48-40 E. Long.), founded by Siu-kleng-mung @ Gargayan raja in A.D 16th century and shifted from 'Cheregua' or 'Chorogua'(due to wrong pronunciation by the non-Ahoms, Cheregua becomes 'Chorogua', change of first and second vowel 'e' to 'o') the second capital. Gargaon, NIA As. Gar, rampart + suffix –gaon, village, a city of rampart. Old name : Hemenabari, Hemena, personal name + suffix –bari, enclosure or compound. Tai-name Che-hung, Che = town, hung = rampart, a transliterated form of 'Gargaon'.

Guwahati : In Kamrup district, (26-11-05 N/91-46-30 E), a district headquarters. The name was first found in the official and cannon records of Assam, as 'Guvakahatta', in the 17th century A.D in the reign of Gadadharsimha @ Siu-pat-pha. Earlier in the 4th century A.D Sanjali inscription of Gujarat, it reflected as 'Gugabhatti', a trade centre. Some scholars traced the name in A.D 10th century as 'Guvak-hatta', an Aryan formation, i.e., a betel-nut market near present Machkhowa area of the city, cf. Sri-hatta, present Sylhet in Bangladesh. Hamilton, in his 'An Account of Assam', and others, say the name Guwahati, derived from 'Go-hat', a cattle market. Guwahati, is adopted from anglicised form, 'Gauhati' (the word 'Guwa' is wrongly accepted as 'Gau' by the Britishers, which does not bear any meaning) in late the 20th century. N. Guwa, betelnut + suffix –hat, -hati, = Guwahati. Old name : 1. Pragjyotisha, Prag, former + N.suffix –Jyotish, a star, astronomy, i.e., a city of astronomy, an Aryanisation of Austric word 'Pagar-juh (jo)-tic (c'= ch)', a region of extensive hills (B.C era). 2. Kamarupa, according to the Puranic legends is associated with Kamadeva, the god of love. It is here that Kama was sent by the gods to put to an end to Siva's mourning after the death of his consort and reawaken in him the passion of creation. He was burnt to ashes by the angry glance of the god, but later recovered his original form (rupa), hence the name, Kamarupa. 3. Sri Durjya or Durjaya, OIA Skt. Durjaya, means, invincible to enemy, founded by Ratnapala in the 11th century A.D. Cultural origin.

Hajo : In Kamrup district (26-17-25 N/91-32-25 E). Named by one Padangshu, a Hajong (a branch of Bodo) prince. Bd. Prefix –Ha, land, country + N. suffix –jo, hill, a land of hills, cf. Hakama, Habung etc. Other names : 1. Manikut parvat, a hill with jewels, given by the Aryans in the 10th century A.D. 2. Koch-Hajo, Hajo area under the Koch kingdom given by the Koches and the Mughals in 17th century A.D. Physical origin.

Hatigar : A place (26-47-04 N. Lat. and 94-14-20 E. Long.) in Jorhat district. A.D 17th century, originally founded by Pratapsimha @ Siuchengpha.

Hati-gar, Hati, elephant + suffix –gar, cf. British 'garh', rampart. Old names : 1. Gajpur, Gaj, elephant + suffix –pur. The king Pratapsimha proposed to make a city equivalent to 'Hasthinapur' (city having 1000 elephants) old name of 'Delhi', the present capital of India, by collecting 1000 elephants to this place, but he could not succeed in his venture, so he declared the place 'Gajpur' in stead of 'Hasthinapur'. 2. NIA As. Jamiriguri, OIA Skt. Jambir, a soury fruit tree > NIA As. Jamir + suffix –guri, the root, surrounding. 3. Tai-name for Gajpur, Che-chang, a transliterated form, city of elephants. A city becomes a village, semantically, degraded. Cultural origin.

Jorhat : Name of a district and its headquarters (26-47-10 N. lat. And 94-14-15 East long.) in upper Assam.A.D 18th century. The last capital of the Ahoms named by the Aryans. Jorhat, NIA As. Jor, a pair + suffix –hat, market, cf. Maglou-hat, Magara-hat, i.e. combination of 'Phukanar-hat' (the market founded by Parvatia Phukan) and 'Machar-hat' (market meant for fish).

Old name : 1. Dichoi-bahar, Bd. Dichoi, a shallow water river, + NIA As. suffix –bahar, a rest house or camp or an out station. 2. Tai-Ahom. Cham-che-hat, Cham = two, che = town, As. hat = market, a transliterate form of Jorhat. 3. Na-nagar, Adj. Na, new + N. suffix –nagar, town; prime minister Purnanda Buragohain founded this name after renovation of Jorhat in early A.D 19th century. 4. Anglicised formation, 'Jorehaut', here As. 'Jor' is wrongly adopted by the British as 'Jore' which does not bear any meaning.

Name of a pair of market semantically elevated to the status of a district.

Cultural origin.

Kaziranga, Kazironga : A national sanctuary, in Golaghat district (Lat. 26-30 N. and Long. 93-27-12 E.). the 14th century A.D, named after the Karbi village. Kazi, personal name of a Karbi lady, + case ending –r', Kazir + suffix –rang, or rong, Kar. village, Kazir-rang corruption 'Kaziranga' 'Kazironga' here, case ending 'r' is lost. According to Tai-Ahoms, Kaziranga = a sanctuary for wild Rhinos; Old name : Jatiarong or Jatiarang.

Cultural origin.

Langpi : A river in Karbi-Anglong. Named by the Karbis. Kar. prefix –Lang, river or water, cf. Lang-chuliat, Lang-ting + suffix –pi, big, large = Langpi, a big river. Alternative name : As. Bara-pani, a transliteration form. Physical origin.

13. Majuli : In Jorhat district, biggest river island (Lat. 26-15-30 N.to 27-12-15 N. and Long. 93-51-15 E. to 94-35-20 E.) in the world formed in the 17th century A.D in the reign of Ahom king Jaidhvajsimha @ Siutamla, in the middle of river the Brahmaputra due to a severe earthquake and shifting of river course of Dihing. N. OIA Skt. Madhya-juli > MIA. Majali > NIA As. Majuli, (here, second vowel 'a' becomes 'u', in NIA stage) an area between the two rivers. Old name : Ratnapur (27-07-45 N. Lat. and 94-23-10 E. Long.) > soften form –Ratanpur (disseverence of compound letter, i.e. 'Ratna' to 'Ratan'), OIA Skt. Ratna, jewel, + suffix -pur, city = Ratnapur > Ratanpur, the capital of one branch of Bodo-Kacharis founded by one Kosaranga son of Harvinda, A.D 12th century and the Chutiya king Birpal A.D 1190.

Semantically, name of a river island expanded to a subdivision of Jorhat district of upper Assam. A place known for Vaisnavite Satras since 17th century A.D (religious shrines of Vaisnava cult). Semantically, a name of a river island elevated to name of a sub-division. Physiographic origin.

1.16. Nagaon : A name of a district and its headquarters in middle Assam. 17th century A.D in the reign of Ahom king Pratapsimha @ Siuchengpha. The Ahoms (NIA As.). Nagaon, adj. prefix Na, new, + suffix –gaon, a village. Old names : 1. Nowgong (an Anglicized formation of Nagaon, given by the British in A.D 19th century, wrongly transliterated As. 'Na' as 'Now' which does not bear any meaning). 2. Khagarijan, (NIA As. Khagari, reeds + suffix –jan, a river), a name prior to Nagaon. 3. Tai-Ahom, Ban-mou, Ban = village, Mou = new, a transliterated formation of 'Nagaon'. Semantic change : the place name 'Na-gaon' (26-18-10 N/92-34-15 E) to denote 'a new village', is not a new village now expanded from a village name to a district. Settlement geography.

1.17. Nalbari : Name of a district and its headquarters (26-17-15 N/91-27-54-25 E) in lower Assam. A.D 20th century while laying the Railway line. As. N. Nal, a kind of reed, + suffix –bari, a compound, cf. Kathal-bari, Am-bari = Nalbari. Old Name : Govindapur, Govinda, personal name + suffix –pur. A compound of a reed semantically, elevated to the status of name of a district. Biological origin.

1.18. Nazira : In Sivasagar district (Lat. 26-54-06 N. and Long. 94-42-07 E.). the 14th

Century A.D by the Tai-Ahoms. Tai. Na, field, zi, slanting, ra, wide, a wide slanting rice field. Old names : 1. Phutukatali, (N. NIA As. Phutuka, a kind of shrubs, + suffix –toli, field, ground) 2. Tai.Doi-kai-kham-dang, means, Doi-kai, -hilly fowl, Kham-dang, plenty of cloth > Doi-kham-dang also, Jaikhamdang, transliterated form of Phutukatoli and 3. Revatigaon < Revatirgaon, (N. As. Revatir, personal name, Revati + case ending –r, = Revatir, + suffix –gaon, village, here case ending'r' is lost in the final appellation). 4. Engera, means black-soil region. An oil township, Cultural origin.

1.19. Rangpur : The fourth capital of the Ahoms in Sivasagar district (26-56-10 N. Lat. and 94-37-36 E. Long.). The 18th century A.D by the Ahom king Rudrasimha @ Siukhrangpha. Rangpur. NIA As. Rang, pleasure, joy + suffix –pur, city, i.e city of joy; transliterated formation of Tai-Ahom 'Che-mun', means, Che = town, mun = joy. Semantically, contraction of original meaning, a capital city becomes a village name now. Old names : 1. Tengabari, N. NIA As. Tenga, a kind of soury fruits, + suffix –bari, compound, garden. 2. Meteka, water hyacinth, collected in the old course of Dikhow river; the Tai transliterated form for Meteka, Pa-phak-dim. Cultural origin.

1.20. Sadiya : In Tinsukia district, a name of a sub-division (27-50-10 N. Lat. and 95-24-55 E. Long.). The first written reference was found in the inscription of the Chutiya (a branch of Hinduised Bodo) king Laksminarayana, in the 14th century A.D as 'Sadhayapuri'. N. NIA As. Sa, dead body, + suffix –diya, disposed of, i.e. a place known for disposal of dead-body. Old name :

1. Sadhayapuri, N. personal name Sadhakanarayana, short form, 'Sadha' + case ending –yar, = 'Sadhayar' + suffix –puri, = Sadhayapuri, here 'r' is lost; D. 'puram', short form 'pur','puri', a city of the Chutiya king 'Sadhakanarayana. 2. Kundil, alternatively 'Kundin', an old name connected with the legendary king 'Bhismaka', was a capital of Vidarva. 3. Alternative name : Sindhuksetra, N. OIA Skt. Sindhu, a river name given by Aryans presently in Pakistan, + suffix –ksetra, region = Sindhuksetra, when the Chutiya king adopted the Hindu religion as an official religion, he transplanted the Aryan name 'Sindhu' to denote the river 'Kundil' and conjoined 'ksetra' to denote their capital. Transliterated form of Tai for Sadiya, Che-bo-din. Semantically, the name elevated to denote a sub-division. Cultural origin.

1.21. Sivasagar : A district name and its headquarters in upper Assam (26-57-10 N. Lat. and 94-36-32 E. Long.) the 18th century A.D. The Ahoms. (NIA As.). N. Siva + suffix N. –Sagar, cf. Gauri-sagar, Jay-sagar = Sivasagar, tank dedicated to lord Siva. Old name : 1. Kalanchuparia Gohaingaon (Aus. Klang, sound of a river, > Klanchu > softening form, Kalanchu + suffix 'par', a bank, + secondary suffix –ia, = Kalanchuparia; Gohain gaon, village of Gohains, minister's clan of the Ahoms) where the tank was excavated and constructed a temple complex on its bank with images of Siva, Parvati and Visnu and named it 'Sivasagar'; 2. Sivapur or Sivapore (anglicised form), N. Siva + suffix D. –puram, > OIA Skt. –pur, city = Sivapur, city of lord Siva and the name was conferred in the British regime in A.D 1838. 3. Sibsagar, anglicised form of As. Sivasagar. The name of a tank change to a district name, a semantic elevation. Cultural origin.

1.22. Sonapur : A place in Kamrup district. Corruption of Aus. Word 'Snapur', an abode of Malngiang clan of Khasis, means a buffer zone for agricultural produce. The Aryanised form 'Sonapur', disseverence compound letter, 'Sna' to 'Sona'. OIA Skt. Sona, gold + suffix –pur, city, i.e. a city of gold. Tai-Ahom, Che-kham, Che , town or city, Kham, gold, transliterated form of Sonapur. There are number of Sonapur in Assam, one at Sivasagar district, a capital of Borahis. A transplanted name. Cultural origin.

1.23. Tezpur : In Sonitpur district and district headquarters (26-35-25 N/92-46-45 E). A

hybrid formation, Austric + Dravida; Aus. N. Tej, Tijo, snake, lizards + D. N. puram > NIA As. –pur, city = Tejpur > Tezpur, here, 'Tej' is aryanised as 'Tez', blood; transliterated form of Sonitpur, means 'city of blood'. Old name: 1. Sonitpur, connected with the war between legendary king Bana and Krisna. As per the legend, the war led to a heavy bloodshed between both the parties in the area, so OIA Skt. Sonit, blood + suffix –pur, city. 2. Hadyapaka or Hadpeswara or Hattapeswara, or Harupeswar, here Aus. Harup, hill + N. suffix –iswara, god i.e., a god in the hill. Cultural origin.

1.24. Tinsukia : Name of a district and its headquarters (27-31-50 N/95-18-20 E) in upper Assam. the 19th century A.D, named after a three cornered tank excavated by the Matak king Sarvananda. N. NIA. As. Tinsukia, Tini, three + suffix –suk, or –chuk, corner = Tinsukia (last vowel 'i', is lost), i.e., a three cornered tank ; Old name : 1. Bengmora, N. Beng, a frog, +suffix –mora, kill or dead, i.e. a dead frog was found in a tank. 2. Changmai-pathar, Tai. Chang-mai, a clan of cooks, +suffix –pathar, a field, an agricultural field of Changmai clan. Semantically, the name elevated to the status of a district. Cultural origin.

2.0 CONCLUSION

From the above study , we have noticed a handful of linguistic variations in place names. The structural formations are : prefix, suffix, secondary suffix, case ending, noun, adjective. The linguistic change of formations are : semantic changes, transliterations, unvoiced form, softening form, superimposition, hybrid formation, transplantation of names of the place, disseverence of compound letters, transposition of letters, certain letter dropping, shifting of some letters and stress is sometimes transferred etc.

Occasionally mutilation takes place in such a manner that the original is beyond recognition. In this way, we have inherited from the past the rich heritage of wisdom and knowledge. Finally, onomastics reminds us that we are "the heirs to all the ages, in the foremost files of time."

Abbreviation : Aus. = Austric, As. = Assamese, D = Dravida, Skt. = Sanskrit, N = North, Noun; E = East, Lat. = Latitude, Long. = Longitude, NIA = Neo-Indo-Aryan, OIA = Old Indo-Aryan, Adj. = Adjective

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CÁC THỔ NGỮ KHÓ HIỂU
CỦA THỔ DÂN MLABRI (LÁ VÀNG)
(TÓM TẮT)

Jorgen Rischel

Ngôn ngữ của các bộ tộc sống bằng nghề săn bắn và hái lượm ở Miền Bắc Thái Lan / Lào gọi là "Phi Tong Luang" lần đầu tiên được biết đến qua các bảng kê từ vựng do Bernatzik (1938) và kế đến là do Kraisri Nimmanhaeminda (1963) thu thập. Họ đã gọi chúng lần lượt là "Yumbri" và "Mlabri". Sau cùng chúng được nói đến như là các biến thể của cùng một ngôn ngữ : Mlabri (có nghĩa là "người miền rừng núi", xem Egerod và Rischel 1987, có quan hệ cùng loại như Kraiski 1963). Loại thứ ba, hầu như đã biến mất (xem Ferlus 1964, 1974), được Rischel (1995) đưa ra sau đó. Hai biến thể ngôn ngữ trên hiện còn được nói ở Thái Lan bởi các tộc người không lấy gì làm thân thiện với nhau lắm và thỏa đáng hơn có thể gọi chúng là các thổ ngữ (ethnolects); chúng khác nhau chủ yếu là về từ vựng song khác nhau không đáng kể về ngữ âm.

Những dẫn luận của Bernatzit về thổ ngữ "Yumbri" chưa thoả đáng lắm và nhóm người ông đã gặp không bao giờ tìm gặp lại được. Điều này gây khó khăn cho việc đối chứng về mặt từ vựng giữa nó với các nhánh ngôn ngữ được biết đến thời gian gần đây hơn. Tuy nhiên vào tháng hai năm 1999, người ta đã gặp được một nhóm người khác thuộc bộ tộc Mlabri ở Lào, từ vựng được những người này sử dụng cực kỳ giống với thổ ngữ "Yumbri" của Bernatzik (Rischel 1999, đang được xuất bản) và từ vựng sử dụng trong cộng đồng ngôn ngữ này chủ yếu là những lớp từ trung gian giữa hai biến thể ngôn ngữ hiện còn được sử dụng.

Bài viết được trình bày tại cuộc hội thảo khoa học lần này cũng sẽ bàn đến bản chất của sự phân giới trong các thổ ngữ này. Trước đây đã có một cuộc tranh luận cho rằng sự phân giới này có nguồn gốc tương đối gần đây vì (1) các nhánh ngôn ngữ này tương tự nhau về âm vị học và (2) chúng có cùng thành tố quan trọng của lớp từ giống như lớp từ vay mượn từ tiếng Tin thuộc ngữ hệ Mon – Khmer. Tuy nhiên, sự gần gũi nhau về phương diện từ vựng giữa các số liệu của Bernatzik 1938 và của Rischel 1999 đã đưa đến một giả thuyết là sự cách tân từ vựng trong tiếng Mlabri diễn ra không nhanh lắm và sự phân giới các bộ tộc diễn ra qua nhiều thế hệ. Trong một bối cảnh như thế, sự khác biệt về mặt âm vị học dù không đáng kể nhưng thực sự tồn tại giữa ba nhánh ngôn ngữ trên cũng như những mối quan hệ rất gần gũi giữa nền văn hóa tâm linh (thần thoại học, vũ trụ học) giữa các tộc người này là sự khác biệt có ý nghĩa về mặt lịch sử.