



Place Name Of *Buranji* : An Onomastics Study

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Abstract

Every element in the world around us has a 'name' to identify it. People use 'names' as needed to refer to a person, object or element specifically. Onomastics is the special branch of linguistics that systematically studies these names. Accordingly, each object has an identifying name. A place, object or person can't have a name without any reason. There is a reason behind every name. Onomastics can study the heritage and socio-cultural background or factors that influenced the name. One of the categories of literature that enriches Assamese literature is the '*Buranjis*.' The *Buranjis* are an unprecedented contribution of the Ahom kings to Assamese literature. The onomastics study of the place names in *Buranji* will reveal the historical, socio-cultural, linguistic-political aspects associated with the names and the importance of the nouns in the development of the Assamese language. This paper discusses the onomastics study of *Buranji*'s Place names.

Key Words : Onomastics, Onomastics Study, *Buranji*, Place Name of *Buranji*

0.0 Introduction

'Name' is the first identification of any element. Names are used to refer specifically to a person, object or any element. Everything in the world such as people, animals, birds, rivers, places, objects used in daily life etc. people to identify them according to their needs.

Nouns play a special role in language. Onomastics is the special branch of linguistics that systematically studies these names. Just as a name is chosen for the identity of a child after the birth of a child, every object or any other name is influenced by social, cultural, political, geographical etc factors. Accordingly, each object has an identifying name. A place, object or person can't have a name without any reason. There is a reason behind every name. Onomastics is the specific study of this aspect. Onomastics is the scientific study of this aspect. Onomastics can study the heritage and socio-cultural background or factors that influenced the name.

One of the categories of literature that enriches Assamese literature is the '*Buranjis*.' The *Buranjis* are an unprecedented contribution of the Ahom kings to Assamese literature. The word '*Buranji*' is a word in the Tai Ahom language. The *Buranjis* written under the patronage of the Ahom Kings bear the signatures of medieval society, language and culture. Apart from these *Buranjis*, there is a lack of other resources to learn about the social, economic, political, lifestyle etc of the time. Therefore the onomastics study of the nouns in *Buranji* will reveal the historical, socio-cultural, linguistic-political aspects associated with the names and

the importance of the nouns in the development of the Assamese language. This paper discusses the onomastics study of *Buranji*'s Place names.

0.1 Objectives of the Study

This study intends to-

- a. Identify the historical background behind a noun and name it and identification of various socio-cultural factors involved in the process
- b. Study the etymological development of the structure of nouns and become aware of the language group behind the name.

0.2 Significance of the Study

The study of words in a language helps to enrich the language. Especially nominal words contribute to the development of language. Place names discussions will provide information about the cultural heritage and origins of various names. It is also a topic to learn about the meaning, history, significance of a names. The onomastics study of the nouns in the *Buranjis* will help us to understand the historical background, cultural heritage, observation of the formation of the words.

0.3 Methods of the Study

This study is based on an onomastics perspective. There are two different approaches to studying the subject has been done. These aspects are-

- a. Data acquisition methods
- b. Data analysis methods

0.3.1 Methods of data acquisition

Resources for this study have been collected from two sources- primary sources and secondary sources. The place names have been selected as the main sources for this study *Tungkhungia Buranji*, *Deodhai Asom Buranji*, *Satsari Asom Buranji* and *Asom Buranji*. Resources on selected place names from these *Buranjis* have been collected through field studies. Field studies have mainly used two approaches- Interview method and Observation method.

Secondary resources for the study have been collected from various relevant books, magazines, dictionaries, article, government surveys, internet etc.

0.3.2 Methods of data analysis

Three methods are used in this study. The methods are-

- a. Historical Method
- b. Etymological Method
- c. Descriptive Method

1.0 Onomastics : An introduction

Every element in the world around us has a 'name' to identify it. People use 'names' as needed to refer to a person, object or element specifically. The word 'Naam' in Assamese is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Naman' which means 'remember'. The dictionary meaning of the word name is "One or more words by which we remember a friend or person we have seen or heard before and by which we can describe that thing or person to others." (Hem-Kosh, P.552)

Science is the study of a subject in a systematic and through manner. Onomastics can also be considered a kind of science . This is because it is a systematic study of any name. The word Onomastics comes from the Greek word *Onoma* which means Name . The subject of Onomastics is relatively modern and belongs to the disciplines of folk literature, folk culture, geology, geography, environmental science, anthropology, archaeology, history, sociology, linguistics etc.

1.1 Different parts of Onomastics

There are several types of *Onomastics* studies. The various branches of *Onomastics* are-

- *Toponymy*- The study of toponyms.
- *Hydronymy*- The study of water bodies.
- *Hodonymy*- The study of the name of streets.
- *Coronymy*- The study of space names.
- *Oronymy*- The study of the name of mountains.
- *Ethnonymy*- The study of the names of ethnic groups.
- *Anthroponymy*- The study of person names.
- *Eponymy*- The study of toponyms through a person's name.
- *Surnames study*- The study of title names.

2.0 An Onomastics Study of *Buranji's* Place Names

Toponomastics is an important branch of *Onomastics*. The word *Toponymy* is Greek origin. The word *Topos* means the surface of the earth and the word *Nimi* means name. In other words *Toponymy* means place name. *Toponomastics* is the discipline that studies *toponyms*. It refers to the study of the meaning, location, geography, linguistic history, archaeology etc of place names. *Toponymy* is a branch of *Onomastics* that systematically studies the etymology, naming process, folklore associated with the name, ethnic groups, linguistics elements, historical, geographical, socio-cultural factors, name meanings etc of a place.

2.1 Classification of *Buranji's* Place Names

The Place names of *Buranji's* is divided into several categories. The toponyms are classified as follows-

- River-centric place names : Dikhomukh, Dihingmukh, Dilihmukh, Dayangmukh, Demow, Namti, Charing, Teok, Dichoikosh, Kapilimukh, Dhansirimukh, Dikhokosh, Chechamukh, Bharalimukh etc.
- Forts, mountain-centric place names : Charideo, Patkai, Garhgram, Laidoigarh, Chintamonigarh etc.
- Place names formed by the names of animal : Hatishal, Ghorashal, Hatidhara, Gajpur, Haithaguri, Sarucharai, Mahgarh, Maskhowa, Shalguri, Misamukh, Dauka, Chinatali, Hahchara etc.
- Place names formed by the names of flowers, fruits and plants : Shimluguri, Amguri, Champaguri, Panbari, Chamguri, Bahgarh, Latashil, Meteka, Ghiladhari, Kunhiarbari etc.
- Religious place names : Shivsagar, Gaurisagar, Rudrasagar, Bishanath, Debargaon etc.

In this way the Onomastics study of *Buranji's* place names has been done. The main emphasis is on the following aspects of each name-

- General introduction to the place
- Folklore about the naming of the place name
- Possible reason for the name of the place
- Linguistic analysis of the place name

2.2 Various words with phrases used as prefixes

Mu : There are many words with the suffix 'Mu' in Buranji. For ex. Mujakali, Mu-dun-chun-kham, Mu-ri-mu-ram, Mu-kham etc. The word 'Mu' means 'country' in tai language.

Mujakali : Mujakali is an ancient Tai kingdom. The state is located in present day northern Myanmar. The word 'mu' means 'country'. The meaning of the whole word is not understood.

Mujakali = mu + jakali
= mu (country) + jakali

Word formation = free form + free form

Word structure = noun + noun

Mu-dun-chun-kham : The first king of the Ahom kings, Chaolung Chukapha crossed the Patkai Mountains in 1228 AD and came to Assam and named this place Mu-Dun-Chun-Kham. *Mu* means 'country', *Dun* means 'garden', *Chun* means 'full', *Kham* means 'gold'. That is Mu-Dun-Chun-Kham means the country full of golden crop gardens (Assam).

Mu-dun-chun-kham = mu + dun + chun + kham
= mu(country) + dun(garden) + chun(full) + kham(gold)

Word formation = free form + free form + free form + free form

Word structure = noun + noun + noun + noun

Mu-Kham : Mu-kham is a place name mentioned in Buranji. Mu means country and Kham means gold. That is Mu-kham means 'golden country'. The Tai inhabited this land and called it Mu-Kham, meaning golden land, because it was full of golden crops.

Mu-Kham = mu + kham
= mu (country) + kham (gold)

Word formation = free form + free form

Word structure = noun + noun

Kham : There are many words with the suffix 'Kham' in Buranji. For ex. Khamjang, Khamtilang etc. The word 'Kham' means 'gold' in tai language.

Khamjang : Khamjang is a small valley east of the Patkai. The first king of the Tai Ahom, Chaolung Chukapha appointed his first *Borgohain* as ruler of the eastern part of Mu-Dun-Chun-Kham in this Khamjang. 'Kham' means 'gold' and 'Jang' or 'Yang' means shining. Therefore the word Khamjang has two meanings. One meaning is a small valley with a cultured people. And the other meaning is a valley formerly containing gold mines.

Khamjang = kham + jang
= kham (gold) + jang (shiny)

Word formation = free form + free form

Word structure = noun + adjective

Ti : There are many words with the suffix 'Ti' in Buranji. For ex. Tiok, Tipam etc. The word 'Ti' means 'place' in tai language.

Tiok : Tiok is a small town and small river located in Jorhat district. The word 'Ti' is of Austrian origin. 'Ti' means 'place', 'yak' means 'food made from butter or milk'. In other words Tiok means a place where there is a plenty of butter or milk. It was here that Purnananda Buragohain set up his fort to fight against the Mans.

Tiok = ti + yak
= ti (place) + yak (food derived from butter or milk)

Word formation = free form + free form

Word structure = noun + noun

Tipam : Tipam is an adjacent place in Namrup, Naharkatiya and Jaipur areas. The area between Buhidihing and Dichang is called Tipam. 'Ti' means 'place' and 'pam' means 'suitable for cultivation'. That is the word Tipam means a place suitable for agriculture. In other the word 'pam' means south or deep. In that sense, the word 'Tipam' refers to a deep shaped place.

Tipam = ti + pam
= ti (place) + pam (cultivated or deep shaped)

Word formation = free form + free form

Word structure = noun + adjective

2.3 Various words with phrases used as suffixes

There are various place words with phrases like 'mukh', 'pur', 'doy', 'guri' etc. found in Buranji.

Mukh : Some place names have 'mukh' added. For ex. Dihingmukh, Dikhowmukh, Disangmukh etc.

Dihingmukh : Dihingmukh is the estuary of the Dihing river. The Tai Ahom called the Dihing river 'Namjin.' It means a river of fresh water. The Dihing river is characterized by cold water. In Tai, Dichanmukh is known as Chup Namjin. Chup means the mouth of the river, 'Namjin' means 'Dihing'. The present Dihingmukh is located at 27⁰67' north latitude and 14⁰38' east longitude.

Dihingmukh = Dihing + mukh
= Di + hing+ mukh
= Di (water) + hing (cold) + mukh

Word formation = free form + free form + free form

Word structure = noun + adjective + noun

Doy : Some place names have 'doy' added. For ex. Che-rai-doy (Charaideo)

Che-rai-doy : The present word Charaideo is a modified form of *Che-rai-doy*. The word *Che-rai-doy* is a word in the Tai language. 'Che' means 'city', 'Rai' means 'shining', 'Doy' means 'mountain'. That is, a city shining on a hill. Charaideo or Che-rai-doy was once the capital of the Ahoms. Later, when the capital was moved, the tombs of the kings and nobles were located at Che-rai-doy. Formerly Che-rai-doy is a district of Assam, presently known as Charaideo.

Cheraidoy = Che + rai + doy
 = Che (city) + rai (shining) + doy (mountain)
 = Cherai (shining city) + doy (mountain)

Word formation = free form + free form

Word structure = noun + noun

Pur : Some place names have 'pur' added. Such as Rangpur, Jaipur etc. The word 'pur' means 'city'.

Rangpur : Rangpur is now part of Sibsagar district. The Tai Ahom called Rangpur was *Che-mun*. 'Che' means 'city', 'mun' means 'joy'. The ancient names of the Rangpur area were Kalanshupar, Meteka and Tengabari. Swargadeo Rudra Singha shifted his capital from Gargaon to Rangpur. Rangpur is the city where Swargadeo Pramatta Singha and Rajeshwar Singha built the Karengghar and Rangghar. Rangpur was the capital of the Ahoms but Swargadeo Gaurinath Singha shifted the capital from Rangpur to Jorhat in 1794 AD.

Rangpur = Rang + pur
 = Rang (joy) + pur (city)

Word formation = free form + free form

Word structure = Adjective + noun

3.0 Conclusion

This article has find out that-

- Onomastics is a branch of linguistics that systematically studies various names. The social, cultural, historical etc factors behind a name are studied to explain why that particular name came about. In other words, onomastics studies the various factors involved in the naming process of a name.
- There are many different names of places, water names, street names, title names, mountain names, ethnic groups etc. Accordingly, there are several types of onomastics. For ex. Toponymy, Hydronymy, Hodonymy etc.
- The study of place name words in Buranji has shown that the names are influenced by various socio-cultural, historical, folklore and other factors.
- In addition to the free form, various words or phrases such as prefixes and suffixes are added before or after the formation of names. Moreover, words are formed as free form + free form, free form + free form + free form, free form + bound form etc. and also words structure are noun + noun, noun + adjective, noun + adjective + noun etc. have been seen.
- The formation of place names is influenced by language families such as Austrian, Dravidian, Sino-Tibetan etc.

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