

Wariori–Masni toponyms as cultural and geological archives: A review of their original meaning

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Abstract

This study examines the Wariori–Masni toponyms in Manokwari Regency, West Papua, as cultural and geological archives by reconstructing their original meanings in the Biak language and analyzing their relationship to local geomorphological features. Using an interdisciplinary qualitative-descriptive approach, the research combines semantic-etymological analysis with geomorphological observations, supported by in-depth interviews with Biak speakers.

The findings reveal that *Wariori* derives from *war* (water), referring to an irregular water system shaped by alluvial dynamics. *Masni* originates from *masen* (salty), undergoing morphological changes while retaining its meaning as brackish water. Both toponyms reflect ecological interactions between ancient rivers, coastal sedimentation, and swamp or peatland formation. From a cognitive semantic perspective, Wariori–Masni functions as an ecological marker and a traditional spatial orientation system for the Biak people. These findings confirm the correspondence between linguistic structure and landscape structure, categorizing the toponyms as descriptive-geomorphological and demonstrating that language preserves collective memory of environmental change.

Keywords: Toponyms; Original Meaning; Etymological Semantics; Geomorphology; Culture; And Geological Memory

1. Introduction

Toponyms are a product of scientific knowledge relevant to language and also reconstruct the meaning of a name. Therefore, a name emerges as an experience of what is seen in an event. Therefore, within the world of linguistics, there is a field of study called micro. Micro is pure linguistics relevant to meaning, known as semantics. Semantics recognizes several meanings: original meaning (MA), event meaning (MP), cultural meaning (MK), and historical meaning (MS). Although language is arbitrary, toponyms are not arbitrary (or arbitrary). This is because toponymic naming refers to the primary meanings, namely original meaning (MA), event meaning (MP), cultural meaning (MK), and historical meaning (MS). Therefore, each name change can alter the actual field of meaning.

The Wariori-Masni area is examined from the phonemic and phonetic perspectives of the Biak language, which are narrated based on the semantic field. Wariori and Masni are in Manokwari Regency, West Papua Province, but both names were coined around the 16th century, as each toponymic name is based on the characteristics of the surrounding natural phenomena.

Geologically, the Wariori-Masni region in Manokwari Regency is characterized by geomorphological features such as alluvial plains, fluvial systems, and the influence of coastal sedimentation processes. These conditions allow for intense interaction between humans and the physical environment in the formation of place-naming systems.

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The objectives of this research are:

- To reconstruct the original meaning of the toponyms Wariori and Masni in the Biak language.
- To identify the geomorphological characteristics of the study area.
- To analyze the relationship between lexical meaning and landscape conditions.

2. Literature Review

Toponymy studies from an ethnolinguistic perspective view place names as representations of local knowledge. Arwam emphasizes that toponyms in Papua often contain historical, ecological, and cultural dimensions. Within this framework, language serves as a cultural archive that records human relationships with their living space.

In geomorphology, landforms are understood as the result of structural and dynamic processes such as erosion, sedimentation, and tectonic activity. The integration of these two approaches allows for the interpretation of landscapes as both cultural texts and geological realities.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Approach

This research uses an interdisciplinary qualitative-descriptive approach.

3.2. Data Collection Techniques

- In-depth interviews with Metuzalak Awom key informants and Biak language speakers.
- Geomorphological observations (alluvial plains, river systems, coastal morphology).

3.3. Analysis Techniques

- Semantic and etymological analysis (reconstruction of original meanings).
- Landform classification.
- Correlative analysis between linguistic meaning and geomorphological characteristics.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Linguistic Analysis of the Biak Language Toponym Wariori–Masni

The Biak language belongs to the Proto-Austronesian category (subgroups Ambai, Ansum, Waropen – West New Guinea). Typologically, this language has relatively simple morphological characteristics, dominated by basic forms (free morphemes) and the formation of meaning through lexical composition.

4.1.1. Analysis of the Wariori Toponym

Morphologically, the Wariori toponym can be analyzed as a composite form:

War-i-ori in phonemic phonetic wariori

The meaning structure based on functional categories can be distinguished between phonemic and phonetic, as follows:

1. "War" → [war] "air" Biak is relevant to the element air as the primary meaning in various aspects of water

in terms of area, per cubic meter.

Classified into the War category are:

War: River, war Danosen [lake water], war Berkrai [pond], war mgamor [spring water], war saprop [ground water], war bedaf [flood water], warmare [spreading water]

2. "I" → indicates location or position (in/toward).
3. "Ori" → analogous to a specific object being pushed.
4. "Iyori" → analogous to a specific object/material being pushed through the flow of this river.

If semantically reconstructed, Wariori can be interpreted as:

Wariori means irregular current. All materials follow the current, swirling into this area, which was previously open. Currently closed, but the toponym reminds us that this area will reopen due to natural phenomena and human activities that will change its characteristics and reopen its previous geological history. This proves that the Wariori River is an ancient river.

"An area characterized by a specific water system." Elaborated with the toponym masni.

This meaning aligns with the geomorphological conditions of the area, which include an alluvial plain with an active fluvial system. Thus, the toponym serves as an ecological mark

4.1.2. Analysis of the Toponym Masni

The toponym Masni can be morphologically analyzed by its root word and functional category:

There are two words referred to: the first word, Marser [marser], meaning "watery/gambus land," and the second word, masen [masen], meaning "salty," which is more synonymous with salt water. The Wariori River is ancient because its estuary previously underwent significant natural changes, resulting in its closure. Eventually, it formed islands (nus), lakes, brackish water, and gambus land. Natural phenomena and human activities will alter Wariori and its past.

Lexical Element Verification:

1. "Marser" → In the Biak language (BB), the term maser refers to an area of swamp/peatland in the form of a stretch of land, open field, or certain vegetation.
2. "Mar" → gambus soil
3. "ser" → (cultivated land) related to the understanding that there are plants attached to this soil, such as sago palms.
4. "-i" → locative suffix or place marker.

The proof undergoes a morphological process in which the deletion of a syllable is incorrect; phonemes do not eliminate the meaning field. Therefore, the first proof is irrelevant to the word masni.

The second proof of Masni is relevant to the etymology of the Biak language word Masen, which underwent changes and phoneme deletion to become the word Masni.

Proof of Lexical Elements:

1. "Masen" → In the Biak language (BB), the term masen refers to salt water, fresh water, or salt.
2. "e" → the removal of the phoneme [e] loses meaning.
3. "Masn" → this word is meaningless.
4. "i" → The addition of a locative suffix or place marker maintains the meaning field.
5. "masni" → The phoneme is removed, and the [i] is added, but the original meaning is not lost. The literal meaning is: masni refers to brackish water due to the meeting of river water and salt water. Therefore, it is interpreted according to its original meaning as brackish water.)

The proof undergoes a morphological process. In the case of the removal of a wrong syllable, the phoneme does not lose the meaning field. Therefore, the correct word is Masen. The phoneme [e] is removed, and the suffix [i] is added. This is because each addition of a prefix/suffix changes the lexeme. The removal of the phoneme does not eliminate meaning, but rather makes pronunciation easier through morphological processes. Masni did not experience changes in pronunciation/writing by immigrants who spoke with their dialect, so that it lost its true meaning, such as the concrete example of M nukwar [old village]. When the immigrants experienced changes in pronunciation/writing, it was called Manokwari. In the end, it lost its original meaning [no meaning], including sorong from soren [sea] changing to sorong [no meaning].

4.2. Phonological Analysis

From a phonological perspective:

- The syllable structure is relatively open (CVC-CV-CV).
- There are no complex consonant clusters.
- The repetitive rhythmic pattern in Wariori demonstrates the distinctive musicality of the Biak language.

The reduplication of the vowel sound in -ori suggests an emphasis on location or an expansion of spatial meaning.

4.3. Semantic and Cognitive Analysis

From a cognitive semantic perspective, the toponym Wariori–Masni demonstrates:

- Ecological motivation → Names emerge from direct observation of the physical environment.
- Spatial metaphor → The environment is understood through the relationship between water, land, and expanse.
- Orientational function → Names serve as a traditional navigation system.

Toponyms are not merely labels but conceptual representations of space.

4.4. Integration of Linguistics and Geomorphology

Linguistic analysis shows that:

- The water element (war) correlates with the fluvial system.
- The expanse/plains element correlates with alluvial plains.
- Locative suffixes reinforce spatial functions.

Thus, there is a correspondence between language structure and landscape structure.

The Wariori–Masni toponyms can be categorized as:

Descriptive-geomorphological toponyms are place names that arise from observations of landforms.

5. Conclusion

The toponym Wariori–Masni contains original meanings rooted in the structure of the Biak language and correlates with the geomorphological conditions of the region. The meaning of a community with a vocabulary and numerals indicates a high level of need. Biak speakers are able to name all living things on land and in the sea, including flora and fauna. These place names not only represent cultural identity but also capture the community's geological memory. This study emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary approach between cultural literature and earth science in interpreting the Papuan landscape.

Compliance with ethical standards

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