

Introduction to the Bunun language

Languages of Taiwan

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1 Overview

This presentation is an overview of the Bunun language, in particular its grammar. I will concentrate mainly on two dialects: Takivatan and Isbukun.

- **2. Background**: General information about Bunun language; its speakers, dialects, geographical location; a short grammar outline; previous research
- **3. Phonology**: The sound system of Bunun; the phoneme inventory of Takivatan and Isbukun Bunun; an overview of some systematic differences between dialects; some information on vowel combinations; syllables; word stress; interactions between morphology and phonology; some audio samples of Takivatan and Isbukun
- **4. Morphology**: Words and morphemes; word classes; some important affix types: verbal affixes and definiteness markers; different types of verbs; different types of pronouns
- **5. Intermezzo**: Some information about Bunun culture
- **6. Syntax**: Clause structure; topicalisation; complement clauses; auxiliary verb constructions; adjuncts of place, time and manner; clause combining
- **7. What we do not know about Bunun**

2 Background

2.1 *Bunun and its speakers*

With around 50,156 ethnic members, the Bunun are the fourth-largest of the Taiwanese indigenous tribes.

Tribe	Population	Tribe	Population
Amis	178,067	Sediq	(10,000)
Paiwan	85,718	Tsou	6,585
Atayal	71,452	Saisiyat	5,698
Bunun	50,156	Yami	3,513
Truku	24,578	Kavalan	1,172
Rukai	11,684	Thao	647
Puyuma	11,367	Sakizaya	343
		TOTAL	494,318

Table 1: Taiwanese aboriginal groups ordered according to population size CIP 2009

Before the Japanese took control of Taiwan, the Bunun were living high up in the mountains in the northern and central part of the Central Mountain Range. They often lived in relatively small, semi-permanent settlements and travelled extensively through the interior. It is believed that originally the Bunun tribe was all settled in the Xinyi District of the County Nantou (南投縣信義鄉). From there, the various Bunun clans gradually expanded their territory south- and eastwards from the end of the 17th century onward.

Bunun had a reputation as skilful hunters. They were generally hostile towards intruders from the outside and used to be headhunters, but this habit died out with the coming of Christianity from the end of the 19th century onward. Their traditional lifestyle all changed when Taiwan was ceded to Japan at the end of the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895.

The Japanese saw the 'high mountain tribes' (mainly the Atayal and Bunun) as a liability and started a long and often difficult pacification campaign (between 1909 and 1911 there were at least 11 punitive expeditions; Anonymous 1911). The eventual goal was to control the use of weapons and force the aboriginal tribes to move down from the mountains and concentrate them into central villages with a school and – importantly – a police post. The Japanese introduced basic health care and wet rice agriculture, whereas traditional Bunun agriculture had traditionally centred around millet.

During the second part of the 20th century, an increasing number of aborigines in Taiwan have moved to the cities, and this is also the case for the Bunun. Nevertheless, a considerable part of the Bunun population still feels connected to the mountains.

In recent decades, many aborigines in Taiwan have moved to the cities. Nevertheless, a considerable segment of the modern Bunun population somehow feels connected to the mountains and prefers to live in villages near or in the mountains in central and east Taiwan, as can be seen in Map 1.

2.2 Bunun and its dialects

The Bunun language is in all likelihood either one of the primary sub-branches of the Austronesian language family or an immediate daughter of a primary sub-branch. It is traditionally subdivided into five dialects. Traditionally, these dialects are grouped into a northern, a central, and a southern dialect branch (e.g. Ogawa & Asai 1935) and this classification appears to be correct from a historical and a linguistic perspective.

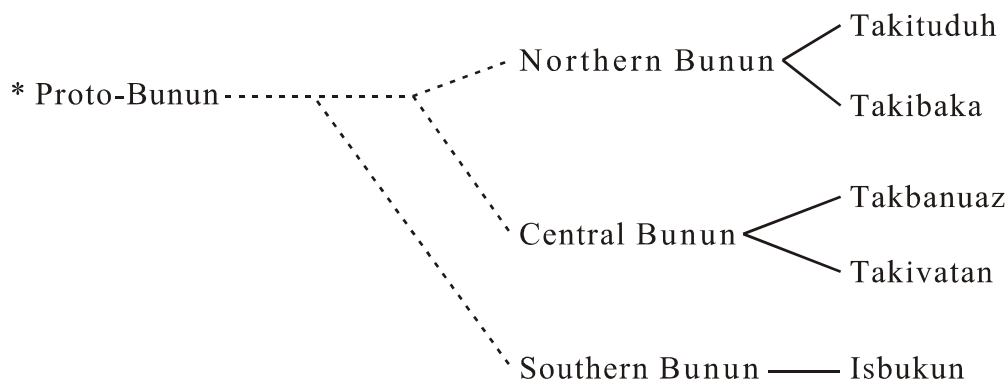


Illustration 1: Bunun dialect tree

Isbukun is the largest Bunun dialect by far, followed by Takbanuaz and Takivatan. Both Northern dialects are almost extinct. We do not have any exact data about the actual number of speakers of each dialect, but I estimated in De Busser 2009 that Takivatan has certainly less than 1700 speakers. The differences between dialects are sometimes quite large, especially between branches. Most speakers are able to understand the Isbukun dialect to some extent, mainly because the Bunun Bible translation is heavily based on that dialect.

The term *Bunun* actually just means 'human' (this is the case for many terms referring to peoples and languages). The names of the dialects correspond to the five Bunun clans that, according to Bunun oral tradition, all find their origin in the *ʔasaŋ Daiŋʔað* 'the Large Village', the original settlement of the Bunun that probably was situated somewhere in Nantou. The element *tak-* or *taki-* means 'originate from', and it is used in many family names and names of minor clans. The names of four of the Bunun dialects thus mean:

- **Taki-Vatan**: originating from Vatan. Vatan is both the name of a former settlement in Nantou and of a person. Here, it probably refers to the settlement (compare with Isbukun below.)
- **Tak-Banuað**: originating from Banuað. Banuað was a settlement in Nantou.
- **Taki-Tuduh**: originating from Tuduh. No idea where or who Tuduh is.
- **Taki-Bakha**: originating from Bakha. Again, I do not know where Bakha would be.

Isbukun, which is also called *Bubukun* (/ʈɔbukun/) by the Isbukun themselves, follows a slightly different pattern. The prefix *is-* means 'belong to' and, unlike *taki-*, can be used to refer to people and not only places.¹ Bukun was probably a leader that lead the majority of the Isbukun from Nantou towards the South. The *bu-* in *Bubukun* is just CV-reduplication: it repeats the first two phonemes of *Bukun*. *Bubukun* probably means something like 'the Bukuns' or 'the people of Bukun'.

¹ Note that you can also refer to the Takivatan as *Isvatan*.

2.3 Geography

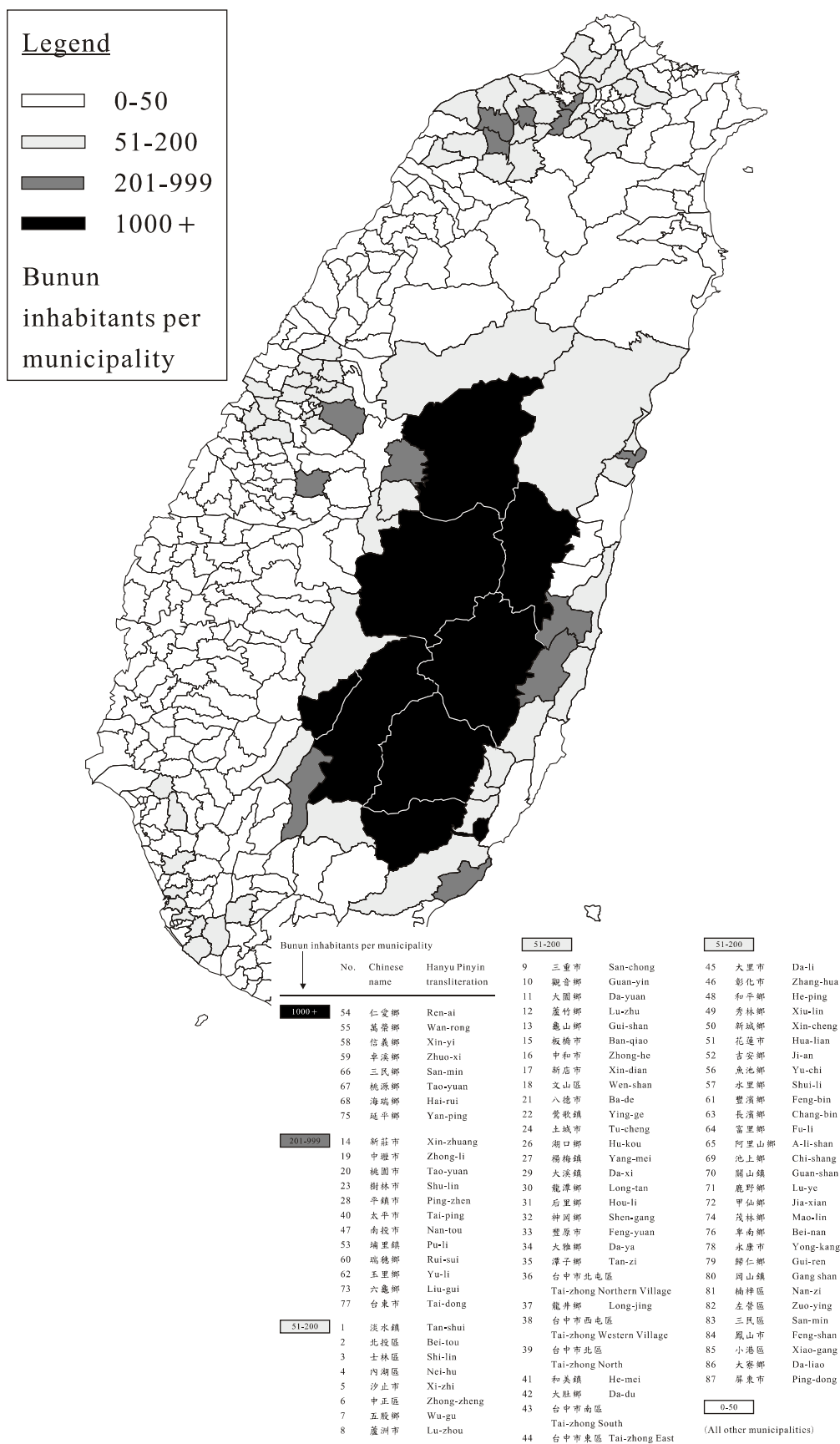
Map 1 gives an overview of where the Bunun people live. The black area on the map indicates the Bunun heartland and stretches from the township Ren-ai (仁愛鄉) in the county Nantou (南投縣) in the north to Yan-ping (延平鄉) in the county Taitung (台東縣) in the South. All of these areas are in the mountains or at mountain sides and were until recently relatively inaccessible. Even today, Bunun villages tend to be in the mountains or very close to the mountains.



Illustration 2: Picture of Mayuan, a Bunun village in Hualien (馬遠村)

There are geographical differences between the different dialects:

- Isbukun is spoken in the counties Nantou, Kaohsiung and Taitung.
- Takbanuaz is spoken in Nantou and in southern Hualien.
- Takivatan is spoken in Nantou and central Hualien.
- Takituduh and Takibakha are both spoken in Nantou.



Map 1: Distribution of Bunun across Taiwan

2.4 Grammar outline

- Bunun dialects tend to have four vowels (/i e u a/) and around 17 consonants.
- Bunun dialects are agglutinative. There are about 200 different affixes, most of which occur on verbs.
- There are two main word classes, nouns and verbs. Most other word classes have a combination of noun-like and verb-like properties.
- Bunun dialects are all verb-initial and have a special voice system for determining which argument is the most important in a clause. This system is usually called a focus system or a Philippine-style voice system.
- There are no adverbs. Many adverbial concepts are expressed by auxiliary verbs. Time, place and manner are expressed by words that sometimes behave like verbs and sometimes like nouns.

2.5 Previous research

There is a fair amount of literature on Bunun dialects He et al. 1986; Jeng 1977; Lin et al. 2001; Zeitoun 2000 and in recent years, MA students in Taiwan wrote a number of dissertations on various Bunun dialects. Below are some publications that I think are noteworthy.

- It is probably fair to say that the first substantial linguistic description of the Bunun language is in Ogawa & Asai 1935. The book is a monumental description of the nine languages that were recognised by Japanese anthropologists. The Bunun section contains an introduction into the language and text samples for the five dialects.
- French Catholic missionaries, mainly from the *Missions étrangères de Paris*, have been active throughout Taiwan for quite some time. They produced some useful dictionaries, but none of them appeared in print: Flahutez 1970, Duris 1987.
- Jeng 1977 was the first to dedicate an entire book to a theoretical linguistic analysis of an aspect of Bunun grammar. He based his study on the Takbanuað dialect.
- He et al. 1986 is a sketch grammar of the Isbukun dialect spoken in Sanmin (三民鄉) in Kaohsiung.
- Li 1988 was the first (and as far as I know the only one) to publish a comparative study of all Bunun dialects.
- Zeng 2006 is book describing a large number of affixes in Isbukun Bunun.
- Huang 2004a, Huang 2004b, Huang 2005a, Huang 2005b, Huang 2006, Huang 2008 are a string of phonological studies of various Bunun dialects.
- Zeitoun 2000 is a sketch grammar of Isbukun Bunun.
- For my PhD, I made a study of Takivatan morphosyntax De Busser 2009.

Most of the data in this talk is from two works:

1. De Busser 2009: an overview of Takivatan Bunun grammar spoken in Mayuan village in Hualien.
2. Zeitoun 2000: a description of Isbukun Bunun in Dongpu village in Nantou.

I will use the Takivatan Bunun data as a basis and, wherever possible, compare it to Isbukun. Much of the dialect comparison is based on Li 1988 and on my own data.

3 Phonology

3.1 Phoneme inventories

Bunun dialects tend to have four vowels (/i e u a/) and around 17 consonants.

Articulation	Takivatan		Isbukun
	Phoneme	% in text	Phoneme
Front Close Unrounded	/i/	23.89	/i/
Front Open Unrounded	/a/	52.95	/a/
Front Mid Unrounded	/e/	0	
Back Close Rounded	/u/	23.16	/u/

Table 2: Takivatan and Isbukun vowel inventory

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Plosive	p			t	k	(g)	ʔ
Implosive	ɓ			ɗ			
Nasal	m			n	ŋ		
Fricative		v	ð	s		χ	h
Affricate				(dʒ)			
Lateral				l			

Table 3: Takivatan and Isbukun consonant inventory (bold = only Takivatan; italics = only Isbukun)

(Note: the phoneme /dʒ/ is not mentioned in Zeitoun 2000, but it is very common in some Isbukun varieties, e.g. in Taidong.)

Writing conventions:

- /ɓ/ = b
- /ɗ/ = d

In other texts, but not in this talk:

- /ð/ = z

- /dʒ/ = j
- /ŋ/ = ng
- /ʔ/ = 'glottal stop'

3.2 *Some differences between dialects*²

1. Isbukun often has a uvular fricative /χ/ or zero in final and post-consonantal position and a glottal fricative /h/ in initial and intervocalic positions where Takivatan and Takbanuað have the uvular stop /q/.

<u>Isbukun</u>	<u>Takbanuað</u>	<u>Takivatan</u>	<u>Takituduh</u>	<u>Takibakha</u>	
bitvaχ	bitvaq	bitvaq	bitvaq	bitvaq	‘thunder’
dihanin	dikanin	dikanin	dikanin	dikanin	‘sky, heaven’
haisiŋ	qaisiŋ	qaisiŋ	?	?	‘rice, food’

2. Intervocalic glottal stops that are obligatory or optional in other dialects are often not present in Isbukun.

<u>Isbukun</u>	<u>Takbanuað</u>	<u>Takivatan</u>	<u>Takituduh</u>	<u>Takibakha</u>	
mapais	mapaʔis	mapaʔis	mapaʔis	mapaʔis	‘bitter’
su	suʔu / su	suʔu / su	suʔu	suʔu	‘you’

3. On the other hand, Isbukun sometimes has a glottal stop where other dialects tend to have a glottal fricative /h/.

<u>Isbukun</u>	<u>Takbanuað</u>	<u>Takivatan</u>	<u>Takituduh</u>	<u>Takibakha</u>	
luʔum	luhum	luhum	luhum	luhum	‘cloud’
ʔuknav	huknav	kuknav	huknav	huknav	‘leopard’

4. Taidong Isbukun often has /dʒ/ where Takbanuað and Takivatan have /t/.

<u>Isbukun</u>	<u>Takbanuað</u>	<u>Takivatan</u>	
dʒina	tina	tina	‘mother’
adʒikis	atikis	atikis	‘small’

There is little data on Takituduh and Takibakha (the two Northern dialects).

3.3 *Vowel combinations: diphthongs or not?*

Bunun dialects have a number of vowel combinations. Illustration 3 gives an overview of the ones that occur in Takivatan.

² The data in this section are from my own research and from PJ-K Li 1988

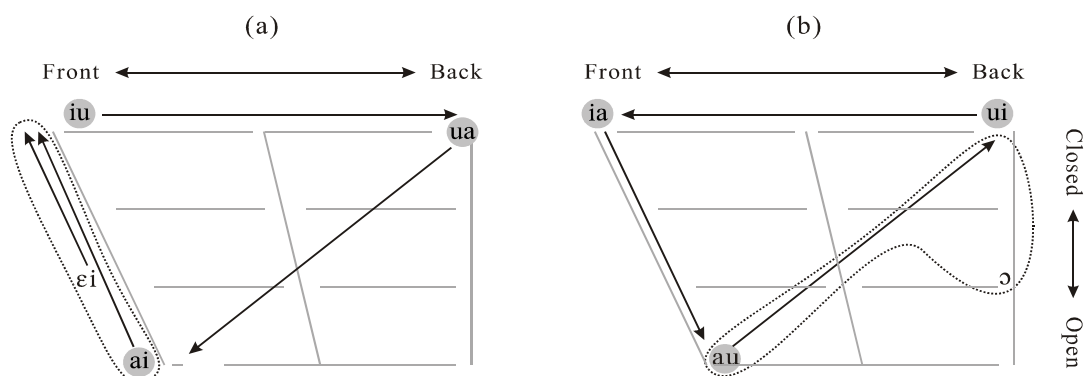


Illustration 3: Vowel combinations in Takivatan Bunun

The problem is that they can occur both syllable-internally and at morpheme boundaries. Some examples:

Inside a word

haiða 'have'

dauk 'slow'

kuis 'slender'

At morpheme boundaries

kitŋa-in 'begin-PRV' → 'have started'

tupa-un 'say-UF' → 'say (something)'

maqtu-in 'be possible-PRV' → 'have been possible'

Another problem is that very often you can insert a glottal stop (/ʔ/) between the two vowels, no matter whether they are at the boundary of a syllable or inside a word, as in the examples below:

buan 'moon'

[ʃwan] or [ʃuʔan]

kuis 'slender'

[kwis] or [kuʔis]

This means it is not clear what these vowel combinations are. Are they diphthongs (e.g. /ua/), glides (e.g. /wa/), or something else (e.g. /u/ + /a/).

Some publications on this topic: Huang 2005a, Huang 2006, Huang 2008; De Busser 2009

3.4 Syllables

The syllable structure in Bunun is:

(C)V(V)(C)

(C are consonants; V are vowels)

This means the smallest syllable you can get consists of only a vowel, and the largest syllable of a consonant followed by two vowels, followed by a consonant. Examples:

V *u* 'yes'

VV *ai* 'interjection'

VC *is-* 'instrumental orientation'

VVC *aip* 'singular demonstrative'

CV *ni* 'not'

CVV *bai* 'grandmother'

CVC *ŋan* 'name'³

CVVC *ŋaus* 'first(ly)'

3 Actually, CVC words almost always have long vowels, so you could say they are actually CVVC. For instance *ŋan* is actually /ŋaan/

3.5 Word stress

Most words in Bunun have penultimate stress on the word root. This means that stress falls on the second-to-last syllable of the form that remains when you take away all the affixes.

<i>qaisiŋ</i> 'rice'	[ˈqai.sɪŋ]	
<i>baluku</i> 'bowl'	[ba.ˈlu.ku]	
<i>haðun-in</i> 'as one pleases'	[ˈha.ðu.nin]	(stress is not changed by the suffix <i>-in</i>)

Some affixes do change the stress, such as the undergoer focus suffix *-un* and the locative focus suffix *-an*.

<i>liskin</i> 'think'	[ˈlɪʃ.kɪn]	(penultimate)
but:		
<i>in-liskin-an</i> 'VIA-think-LF' → 'thoughts'	[ɪn.lɪʃ.ˈkiː.nan]	(last root syllable)

3.6 Morpho-phonology

Morpho-phonology deals with the interactions between the morphology of a language and its sound system. In Bunun, these interactions are quite straightforward. Below are the most important rules for Takivatan:

- **Vowel contraction:** two identical vowels combine and are collapsed into one
asa 'want, must' + *-aŋ* 'PROG' → *asaŋ* [ˈasãŋ]
haiða 'have' + *-aŋ* 'PROG' → *haiðaŋ* [ˈhaiðãŋ]
- **Vowel deletion:** two vowels combine and one is deleted
haiða 'have; exist' + *-in* 'PRV' → *haiðin* [ˈhaiðĩn]
muqna 'be next' + *-in* 'PRV' → *muqnin* [ˈmuqnĩn] / [muqnain]
ma- 'DYN' + *alʔu* 'rest' → *malʔu* 'to rest'
ma- 'DYN' + *iqumis* 'life' → *miqumis* 'to live'
- **Metathesis:** two vowels exchange places. In Takivatan this is always /ia/ → /ai/
This happens only with a very small number of words when they are followed by particular suffixes.
qansiap 'understand' → *qansaip-un* 'understand-UF'
qansaip-an 'understand-LF'

3.7 Some examples of Takivatan and Isbukun

Below are some audio samples to give you an impression of how Bunun actually sounds and of the phonological differences between the dialects. First, an example of Isbukun speech



Compare this with Takivatan Bunun.



Interestingly, the Bunun Bible Bible Society 2000 is heavily based on the Isbukun dialect, but it is used by members of all dialect groups. Below is a example of a Takivatan person reading from the Bunun Bible.



4 Morphology

(The data in this section is mainly based on De Busser 2009.)

4.1 Morphemes and words

As I mentioned before, Bunun is an agglutinative language, which basically means that words in Takivatan Bunun consist of at least one root and possibly one or more bound morphemes and that these morphemes are all distinctly recognisable. In the example below, you can see that all the morphemes that make up the word can be detected in the word itself:

naispinqansiapin 'will have made somebody understand something'

na-	is-	pin-	qan-siap	-in
IRR-	TRANSFER-	CAUS.INCH-	understand	-PRV

A word in Takivatan is composed of:

- A **root** (in the example above: *siap*): the part of the word that carries the lexical meaning; the root is obligatory.
- Zero or more **prefixes** (example: *na-*, *is-*, *pin-* and *qan-*)
- Zero or more **suffixes** (example: *-in*)
- Zero or more **infixes** (none in the example above): an infix is an affixes occurring side the root of a word. An example:

1. *tinas?i kaku*
t-in-as?i kaku
PST-build school
'build a school'

- **Reduplication** (none in the example above): a repetition of a part of the word. An example:

2. *ma-sihal* → *ma-si-sihal*
STAT-good STAT-RED-sihal
'good' 'very good'

In Bunun, there are three major types of reduplication. Most can have a number of functions, depending on what words they combine with:

1. **stem-reduplication**: The entire word stem (the root or the root plus a number of affixes) is repeated. Stem-reduplication can express:
 - **Continuative** (on verbs): 'continuously', 'all the time'

saipuk 'help' → ***saipuk***-*saipuk* 'help continuously'

- **Distributive** (on verbs): 'everybody'

ʔaɔ̃a 'equally' → ***ʔaɔ̃a***-*ʔaɔ̃a* 'all equally, everybody equally'

- **Generic** (on question words and verbs)

maq 'which one? what?' → ***maq***-*maq* 'whichever'

madas 'take somebody somewhere' → ***madas***-*madas* 'take somebody wherever you go'

2. **CV-reduplication**: One consonant and vowel, usually those at the beginning of the root, are repeated. CV-reduplication is used to convey:

- **Intensifying** (on verbs): 'very'

ma-tamasaɔ̃ 'powerful' → *ma-**ta**-tamasaɔ̃* 'very powerful'

- **Habitual** (on verbs): 'by habit'

maun 'eat' → ***ma***-*maun* 'usually eat, always eat'

- **Repetitive / continuative** (on verbs): 'repeatedly', 'continuously'

baɔ̃baɔ̃ 'talk, have a conversation' → ***ba***-*baɔ̃baɔ̃* 'keep talking, have a long conversation'

- **Plural** (on nouns):

bananʔaɔ̃ 'man' → *ba-**na**-nanʔaɔ̃* 'the men'

- **Recursive** (on nouns):

uvaɔ̃ʔaɔ̃ 'child' → *u-**va**-vaɔ̃ʔaɔ̃* 'my children and children's children and children's children's children and...'

3. **Ca-reduplication**: The first consonant of the root is repeated and followed by an /a/. Ca-reduplication expresses:

- **Human** (on numerals and some other words)

dusa 'two' → ***da***-*dusa* 'two people'

piaq 'how many' → ***pa***-*piaq* 'how many people'

4.2 Word classes

The two major word classes in Bunun are nouns and verbs (see Table 4). Most other word classes (with the exception of interjections) can be defined in terms of how noun-like or verb-like they are. Some interesting facts:

- There are no adverbs in Bunun. Most adverbial concepts are expressed by auxiliary verbs

3. *Kavavaʔa musbai*

kavavaʔa *mu-isbai*

immediately TOWARD-cause.to.move

'Quickly run away'

4. *nakitŋa kuðakuða*
*na-**kitŋa** kuðakuða*
 IRR-start work

'we will begin to work.'

- Adjectives are a subclass of stative verbs. There is no separate class of adjectives.
- Many words in Bunun can be used both as nouns and verbs. In the example below, both the personal pronoun *nak* 'I' and the noun *uvaðʔað* can be analysed as verbs.

5. *Manaka uvaðʔaðanŋa ...*
ma-nak=a uvaðʔað-aŋ=a
 DYN-1S.N=SUBORD child-PROG=SUBORD
 'But I, because I was still a child,
 [I had cut off a part of the leg of the pig called “masbinauku”].'

Nouns behave fairly straightforwardly and they do not take a lot of affixes normally, so we will skip them in this discussion.

	Noun	Verb
1 Can be head of a predicate	+	+++
2 Can be modifier in a predicate	—	+++
3 Can have arguments	(+)	+++
4 Can occur in serial verb constructions	—	++
5 Can be head of an argument	+++	—
6 Can be modifier in an argument	+	+
7 Can have focus affixes	++	+++
8 Can have aspectual affixes	+	+++
9 Can have bound pronouns	—	+++
10 Can have -ti/-tun/-ta	+++	++
11 Can have -ki/-kun/-ka	++	+++
13 Can have verbal prefixes	(+)	+++
16 Can be stem-reduplicated	—	+
17 Typical function of stem-reduplication		lexical aspect, generic
18 Can be CV-reduplicated	++	++
19 Typical function of CV-reduplication	PL, REC, HABIT	lexical aspect (HABIT, DUR, ITER, COMPL, DISTR), GNR
22 Refers to an event	+	+++
24 Refers to a referent	+++	+

+++ : typically; ++ : often; + : rarely; — : never; (+) : only specific members

Table 4: Criteria for the distinction between nouns and verbs in Takivatan (De Busser 2009:186)

4.3 Verbs

Most verbs in Bunun belong to a small number of major verb classes:

1. **Dynamic verbs** typically express a dynamic event, that is, they represent a situation that evolves or changes. These events can have an agent and a patient (e.g. *sb eats sth*), or only an agent (e.g. *sb falls over*).

Agent and patient:

6. *ma-tasʔi amu lumaq*
DYN-build 1P house
'We build a house.'

Only agent:

7. *ma-qaisa amu*
DYN-spread.out 1P
We spread out (e.g. over an area of land)

If they do not have any focus suffixes *-un* or *-an* (see), dynamic verbs typically either have a prefix *ma-* or no prefix at all. They normally have a causative prefix *pa-*:

8. *ma-tasʔi* 'build sth' ↔ *pa-tasʔi* 'make sb build something'
DYN-build CAUS.DYN-build

2. **Stative verbs** express a state, that is, a situation that is relatively stable. Bunun adjectives are the largest subclass of stative verbs.

9. *ma-naskal* 'beautiful'
STAT-beautiful

If they do not have any focus suffixes, adjectives normally take a prefix *ma-* (which derives from a different historical source than the dynamic *ma-* above!). Its causative prefix is *pi-* (not *pa-*).

10. *pi-sihal* 'cause something to be good'
CAUS.STAT-good

3. **Locative/directional** verbs express a movement or a stationary position.

11. *mun-han* 'go to'
TOWARD-be.at/go.to

12. *maisna-ʔisaaq* 'come from which place'
FROM-where

4. **Auxiliaries** are verbs that do not necessarily express an event by themselves. In Bunun, they typically express adverbial concepts, which in other languages are often expressed with adverbs (things like absolute and relative time, manner, negations, etc.). Auxiliaries can be used by themselves in a clause, but they more often support another verb with a lexical meaning.

13. asa *pis-baqais-un*
have.to RETURN-hot-UF
 'You have to reheat it.'
14. huat *mu-ḏaḏa* *lukis* (*huat-in* *huat-un* ...)
apparently TOWARD-above tree apparently-PRV apparently-UF
 'Apparently, something went up into the trees.' (Actually, it were monkeys.)

Auxiliary verbs have normally no affix that indicates what type of verb they are

either take no affix that indicates which type of verb they are, or they take a prefix that reflects the meaning of the main verb of the clause. For example, if the main verb is a dynamic verb, the auxiliary might get a prefix *ma-*.

15. kinuḏ-un *qaimaṇsuḏ-tun* *uman-un*
finally-UF thing-DEF.REF.MED take.away-UF
 Finally, the thing was taken away.

4.4 Verbal affixes

Bunun dialects have more than 200 verbal affixes (prefixes, infixes and suffixes). It is impossible to discuss all of them, but I will give a short overview of the most important ones.

1. **Focus (or voice) suffixes** indicate whether the agent, the undergoer, or the location is the most important participant (the topic or the subject, depending to who you speak) of the clause.
 - no suffix: the agent is the most important participant (this is often called agent focus)

16. *tasʔi* 'make/build' (the person doing the building is important)
 - *-un*: the undergoer, usually the patient, is the most important participant (this is called undergoer or patient focus)

17. *tasʔi-un* 'make/build' (the thing being built is important)
 - *-an*: the location is the most important participant (this is called locative focus)

18. *tasʔi-an* 'make/build something so that it stays in a fixed spot'
2. **Participant orientation prefixes** indicate which undergoer is the most important participant.
 - *is-* indicates that this is the instrument

19. *is-tasʔi* 'use a tool to make something'
 INSTR-make
 - *sin-* indicates that it is a resultative object (an object that is created as the result of the action)

20. *sin-saiv* 'have given something to somebody'
RES.OBJ-give
21. *sin-tupa* 'communicate something (successfully)'
RES.OBJ-say

3. **Event type prefixes** indicating what type a verb belongs to and how it should be interpreted.

- *ma-₁* indicates that a verb is dynamic

22. *ma-tasʔi* 'make or build something'
DYN-build

- *pa-* indicates that a verb is dynamic and causative

23. *pa-tasʔi-un* 'have something build'
CAUS.DYN-build-UF

- *ma-₂* (confusing, isn't it) indicates that a verb is stative

24. *ma-sihal* 'good'
STAT-good

- *pi-* indicates a stative verb that is causative

25. *pi-sihal* 'cause something to be good, make something good'
CAUS.STAT-good

- *min-* indicates inchoative verbs

26. *min-qansiap* 'begin to understand, gain understanding'
INCH-understand

- *pin-* indicates an inchoative verb that is causative

27. *pin-qansiap* 'make somebody understand'
CAUS.INCH-understand

- and so on, and so on, and so on...

4. **Tense-aspect-modality affixes:**

- *na-* marks irrealis, that is, something in the future or something that should be done

28. *na-siðä qaimaṃsuð*
IRR-take thing
'I/you... will pick up some things.'

- *-in* marks perfective

29. *tum-vasu-in*
RIDE-train-PRV
'We had gone there by train / We had arrived there by train.'

- *-in-* marks resultative and past

30. *tinasʔi*
-in-tasʔi
 PST-make
 'have built'

- *-aŋ* marks progressive

31. *haiðaŋ*
haiða-aŋ
 have-PROG
 'still have'

More detailed studies of verbal affixes in Bunun are Zeng 2006 for the Isbukun dialect and De Busser 2009 for Takivatan.

5 Intermezzo

5.1 *Structure of traditional Bunun society*

Interestingly, traditional Bunun society did not have fixed social stratification or a centralised leadership. Instead, important decisions were made by consensus, after consultation with a select group of elders. When war or hunt created the need for a leader, the person who was most experienced typically was appointed as the leader. His status depended on his success as a warrior or hunter and was usually derived from the number of human or animal skulls he had acquired in previous expeditions (Huang 1995 refers to this as the great man model).

This is very similar to how Siraya society has been described by 17th century Dutch sources.

5.2 *Hunting and headhunting*

Although there was a fair amount of agriculture (millet, yams, etc.), Bunun culture is strongly centred around the hunt and even today Bunun pride themselves of being skilful hunters.



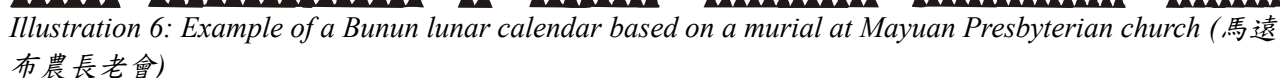
Illustration 5: Bunun hunter in traditional dress with gun



Illustration 4: Performance of earshooting festival

The status of a man in traditional Bunun society depended on how skillful he was in hunting and headhunting. Houses used to have bone altars that displayed the skulls or certain bones of killed animals or vanquished enemies. These also had a spiritual meaning.

A unique aspect of Bunun culture is that it developed (apparently independent of other writing systems) a symbolic notation which was carved on wood to keep track of important events and periods throughout the lunar calendar. An example is given below.



5.4 Polyphonic singing

6 Syntax

6.1 Clause structure

32. *siða-Ø malŋaŋaus-ta maduq-ta*
 take-AF shaman-DEF.REF.DIST millet-DEF.REF.DIST
 ‘The shaman took millet.’

33. *siða-un asik*
take-UF shrub
'they gathered the shrubs.'
34. *maqtu pa-siða-ʔan-in ʎabul vanis*
can CAUS.DYN-take-LF-PRV antler wild.boar
'We could [in that place] catch deer and wild boar.'

All Bunun dialects have a verb-initial argument order; this means that if no special syntactic process is going on, the verb that is the syntactic head of the clause should appear in the clause before all arguments (agents, patients, etc.). Here is an example from Takivatan.

35. *na-is-kalat-un ɔaku tuqnað-i asu*
IRR-INSTR-bite-UF 1S.N bone-PRT dog
'I want to give the bone to a dog to bite it.'

This example contains three arguments (*ɔaku*, *tuqnaði* and *asu*). This is the largest number of arguments that can occur on one verb, but in most situations you will find no more than one.

If there is more than one verb in the clause, the syntactic head is the first verb. Usually, the topic of the clause will appear with the syntactic head, for example the auxiliary, rather than on the verb that carries most of the meaning.

36. *aupa na-kitɲa sak laupaku baðbað tu*
thus IRR-begin 1S.F now have.conversation COMPL
ma-quaq-a Bunun-a min-haiða
DYN-how.come-LNK Bunun-LNK INCH-exist
'And thus I will start now to tell how the Bunun came into existence...'

In Takivatan, the ordering of arguments in a clause is fixed. For instance, a free noun phrase agent will always become before a free noun phrase patient.⁴ (There are some exceptions: some verbal prefixes change the order of arguments, but I will not go into that in this talk.) This means that when the focus suffix changes, for example from actor focus (no suffix) to undergoer focus (suffix *-un*), the order of the arguments does not change.

You can see this by comparing the two examples below. The first is an agent focus construction (it has no suffix) of the verb *siða* 'take'. *Aipi* is the agent, *qaimaŋsuð* the patient.

37. *siða aipi qaimaŋsuð ma-taŋtaŋ*
take DEM.S.PROX.VIS thing DYN-beat
'He [this one here] takes things and beats them against something else.'

The next example contains an undergoer construction *siða-un* 'take-UF'. As you can see, the agent (*ɔaku* 'I') and the undergoer (*qaimaŋsuð* 'thing') are still in the same order as in the example above.

38. *na-siða-un ɔaku qaimaŋsuð-ti*
IRR-take-UF 1S.N thing-DEF.REF.PROX
I want to take this thing [and put it on the table].

4 A free noun phrase is a noun phrase that has a freestanding noun as its head. This means that bound pronouns, which attach to the verb, are not included in my definition above.

An interesting fact about the Takivatan dialect is that it is possible to leave out all arguments and most of the affixes from the clause, if you can recover them from the context. Only the root of the main verb or the auxiliary needs to be present to have a grammatical clause. For instance, if all your conversation partners know what you are talking about, you could express 35. as *kalat* and 37. or 38. as *siða*.

In Isbukun, the situation appears to be different. Examples in Zeitoun 2000 indicate that the argument order changes with the focus suffix.

39. *ma-ludah tama ʔalaŋ*
DYN-beat father Name
'Father beats Alang.'

40. *ludah-un ʔalaŋ tama*
beat-UF Alang father
'Alang is beaten by father.' (Zeitoun 2000:65-66)

As far as I know, it is also ungrammatical in Isbukun to have a verb with all affixes stripped off.

6.2 Topicalisation

Topicalisation is another grammatical phenomena that works differently in Takivatan and Isbukun. In Takivatan, the partial *-a* is used to topicalise the argument targeted by the focus suffix (so the agent in an actor focus construction, the undergoer in an undergoer construction, ...) by placing it in front of the clause (we call this left-dislocation).

41. *kahaŋ-a ma ni sadu-an*
high.grass-LDIS INTER NEG see-LF
'In the high grass, I did not see [the deer] there.'

Isbukun has two topicalisers. The particle *hai* topicalises the argument targetted by the focus suffix.

42. *Tama hai ma-ludah ðaku*
father LDIS DYN-beat me
'Father, he beats me.'

The particle *a* topicalises arguments that are not targetted by the focus suffix.

43. *Ðaku a ma-ludah tama*
me LDIS DYN-beat father
'I, father beats me.'

6.3 Complement clauses and auxiliary verbs

The most productive way to string verb phrases together into something more complex is by using the particle *tu*, which introduces complement clauses. A complement clause is a clause that functions as an argument in another clause. Very often, this involves speech verbs and verbs of cognition. (The examples in this section are from Takivatan, unless indicated otherwise.)

44. *min-qansiap-in* *tu* *maupa-ta*
 INCH-understand-PRV COMPL be.thus-DEF.REF.DIST
 'I started to understand that it was like that.'
45. *a* *tupa-ka* *Tiaŋ* *tu*
 INTER tell-DEF.SIT.DIST T. COMPL
- ma* *tusasaus-du* *naipi* *ma* *vaḏaqvaḏaq-in-dau*
 INTER sing-EMO DEM.S.PROX.NVIS INTER squirm-PRV-EMO
 'And Tiang said: "While I was singing, that deer, well, was squirming."'

Bunun *tu* is also commonly used to create complex verb phrases involving auxiliary verbs and some question words.⁵

46. *tuḏa* *tu* *ka-han-in*
 real COMPL ASSOC.DYN-go.to-PRV
 'We really had arrived there together.'
47. *asa* *tu* *pa-sapal*
 have.to COMPL CAUS.DYN-fur
 'You have to prepare the bed (because I want to go to sleep).'

In some constructions with auxiliary verbs, *tu* is obligatory, but in many it appears to be optional.

Finally, *tu* can also be used for introducing purposive ('in order to') or consequence ('as a result') clauses. Below is an example of a consequential clause with *tu*.

48. *aupa* *taun-han-in* *tu* *min-qansiap-in* ...
 thus THROUGH-be.at-PRV COMPL INCH-understand-PRV
 'And thus, when we had arrived, we quickly found out [that the people that had arrived there before...]'
Literally: 'Thus, we had arrived and as a result gained understanding that ...'

7 What we do not know about Bunun

During the last decade and a half, research into Bunun dialects has gained some momentum. Nevertheless, there are a lot of things we do not know about Bunun and a lot of research that needs to be done.

- At the moment, there is no complete grammar of any Bunun dialect
- There is also no dictionary that is widely available
- We know little about the two northern dialects
- There are many aspects of Bunun grammar, especially syntax, that are not entirely – or even entirely not – clear to us
- Relatively little is known about comparative Bunun dialectology.

⁵ Question words are very much like verbs in Bunun: they can take all verbal morphology, such as tense-aspect-mood marking and focus suffixes, and they can have bound personal pronouns.

8 List of abbreviations

1P	first person plural	DISTR	distributive, indicates that the same event happens in many places at the same time	LDIS	left-dislocation
1S	first person singular			LF	locative focus
AF	actor focus			N	neutral case
CAUS.DYN	causative and dynamic	DUR	durative	NEG	negative
CAUS.INCH	causative and inchoative	DYN	dynamic	PL	plural
CAUS.STAT	causative and stative	EMO	emotive particle	PROG	progressive
COMPL	complementiser	GNR	generic	PRT	particle
DEF	definiteness marker	INCH	inchoative	PRV	perfective
DEM.S.PROX.NVIS	singular proximal non-visual demonstrative	INSTR	instrumental	PST	past
DEM.S.PROX.VIS	singular proximal visual demonstrative	INTER	interjection	REC	recursive
		IRR	irrealis	RED	reduplication
		ITER	iterative, indicates that an action is performed many times	RES.OBJ	resultative object
				STAT	stative
				SUBORD	subordinator
				UF	undergoer focus

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