

The influence of Christianity on the Bunun language — A preliminary overview

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies
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Rik De Busser
rdbusser@nccu.edu.tw



Introduction

- Bunun, Austronesian, Taiwan
- Christianity
 - Central to modern Bunun society
 - Often largely ignored in linguistic research

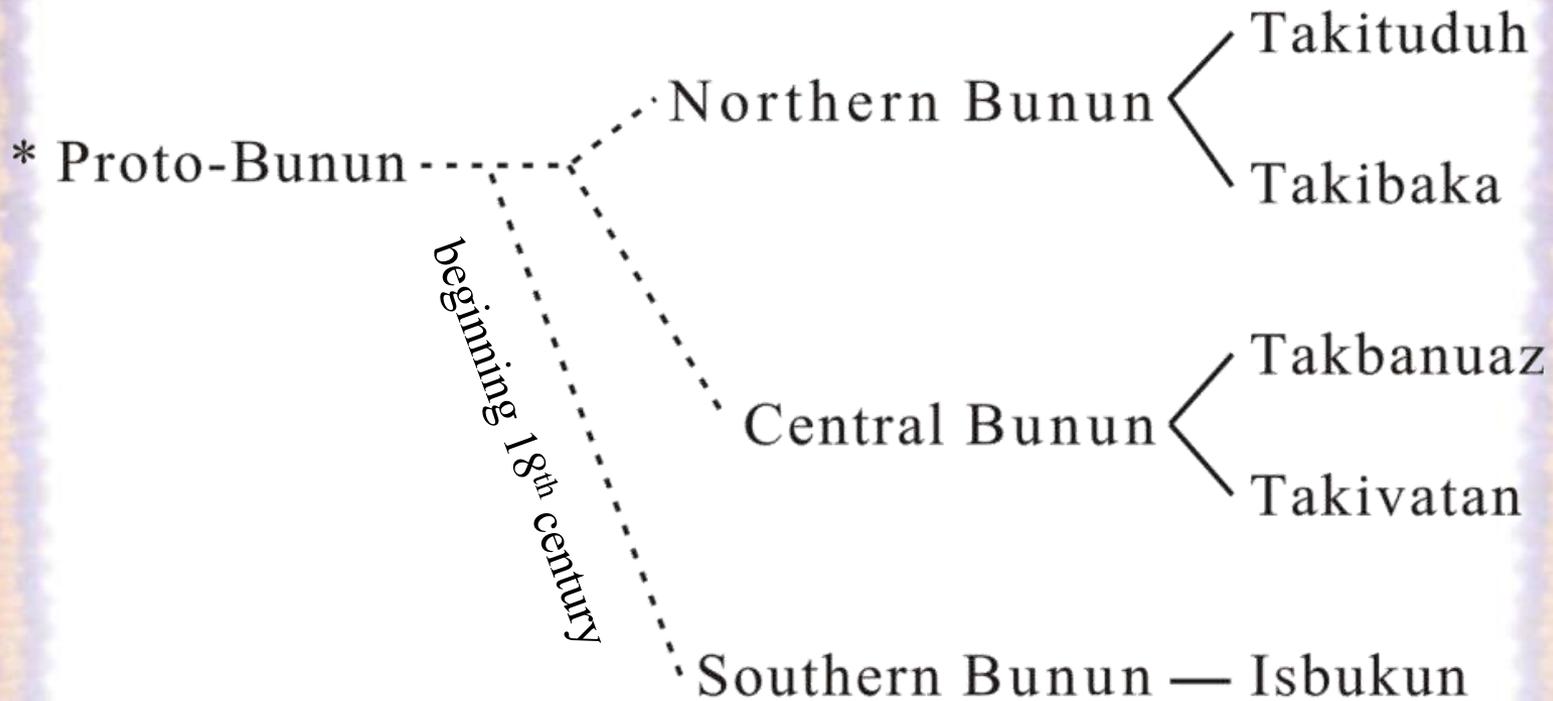
Introduction

- Influence of Christian religion and religious organisations on:
 - Indigenous rights, incl. language rights
 - The Bunun linguistic system
 - Bunun dialect differentiation / homogenisation
- General overview

The Bunun language

- Verb-initial
- Philippine-type voice system
- Elaborate verbal morphology
- 50,000 ethnic members, \pm 20,000 speakers
- Five dialects

The Bunun language



Traditional culture

- Semi-sedentary family groups
- Non-stratified society
 - Competence / experience determines leadership
- Hunters and headhunters
- Animism
 - Complex system of social taboos (*samu*)
 - Various types of shamans



Modern transformations

- Japanese Occupation (1895-1945)
 - Concentration of Bunun into (relatively) low-lying villages
 - Introduction modern infrastructure
- Christian missionaries (first half 20th cy)
 - Replacement / adaptation traditional belief systems
 - Healthcare and food relief

Christianity and Bunun

- Two main organizations:
 - Catholic Church
 - Presbyterian Church
- Most Bunun would identify as Christian
- Tightly integrated in most people's daiy life

Christianity and Bunun

- Influence on the Bunun language:
 - Language preservation
 - Indigenization
 - Language documentation
 - Indigenous rights
 - Linguistic impact
 - Bible translations
 - Liturgical practices

Indigenization

- All churches in aboriginal communities are fully indigenized
 - Bible translation in local language
 - Liturgy and other church activities in local language
 - Local church officials

Language documentation

- Flahutez, Marcel. 1970. *Dictionnaire Français-Bunun.*
- Duris, Antoine. 1987. *Lexique de la Langue Bunun en Usage a Ma-Hoan.*

Indigenous rights

- Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines
 - Founded 29 December 1984
 - Indigenous students National Taiwan University
 - Yu-Shan Theological College and Seminary (玉山神學院)

The Bunun Bible(s)

- **1951:** *Gospel of Matthew* in zhuyin fuhao
- **1955:** Gospel of Luke in zhuyin fuhao
- **1962:** Gospel of Matthew in zhuyin fuhao
- **1983:** New Testament in Roman script
- **1987:** Short Old Testament in Roman script
- **2000:** New Testament + Short Old Testament in Roman script

TAMA DIHANIN
TU
HALINGA



布展語聖經
THE BUNUN BIBLE

The Bunun Bible(s)

“... the reliance on indigenous categories to translate Christian concepts during the proselytizing process has significant bearings on how Christianity is adopted.”

Yang (2008:70)

Influence on the lexicon

- Borrowing:
 - Biblical names
 - From Mandarin, English, Japanese or Latin
 - Integrated in native phonology
 - Exceptions: /e/ and word-initial /j/

	Mandarin	English	Latin	Japanese
Matai	馬太 <u>mǎ tài</u>	Matthew	Matthæus	<u>Matai</u>
Maluku	馬可 <u>mǎ kě</u>	<u>Mark</u>	Marcus	Mako
Luka	路加 <u>lù jiā</u>	Luke	<u>Lucas</u>	Ruka
Iuhani	約翰 <u>yué hàn</u>	John	Joannes (<u>Iohanni</u>)	Yohane
Luma	羅馬 <u>luó mǎ</u>	Romans	ad Romanos	Roma
Kalatia	加拉太 <u>jiā lā tài</u>	<u>Galatians</u>	ad Galatas	Garatea
Ipisu	以佛所 <u>yǐ fó suǒ</u>	Ephesians	ad Ephesios	<u>Epeso</u>
Hebulai	希伯來 <u>xī bó lái</u>	<u>Hebrews</u>	ad Hebræos	<u>Heburu</u>
Iakubu	雅各 <u>yǎ gè</u>	James	Jacobi	<u>Yakobu</u>

Influence on the lexicon

- Conceptual transfer
 - semantic extension of existing religious concepts to a Christian context

Bible	Takivatan	Christian meaning	Traditional meaning
dihanin	diqanin	Heaven	sky
hanitu	qanitu	devil, demon	ghost
sasbinað	sasbinʔað	Lord (God / Jesus)	person of authority

Influence on the lexicon

- Meaning specialisation
 - General meaning > religious domain

Takivatan	Generic meanings		Religious meaning
isʔaŋ	*breath > feeling > belief	>	Christian faith
liskaʔuni	worship	>	Christian worship, belief
kaʔuni	create, make, construct	>	creation, Genesis
tamasað	strength	>	spirit of God

Influence on the lexicon

- Derivation and compounding

is-ka-kaupa

TRANSFER-CV-all

‘universe, creation’

tama dihanin

father heaven

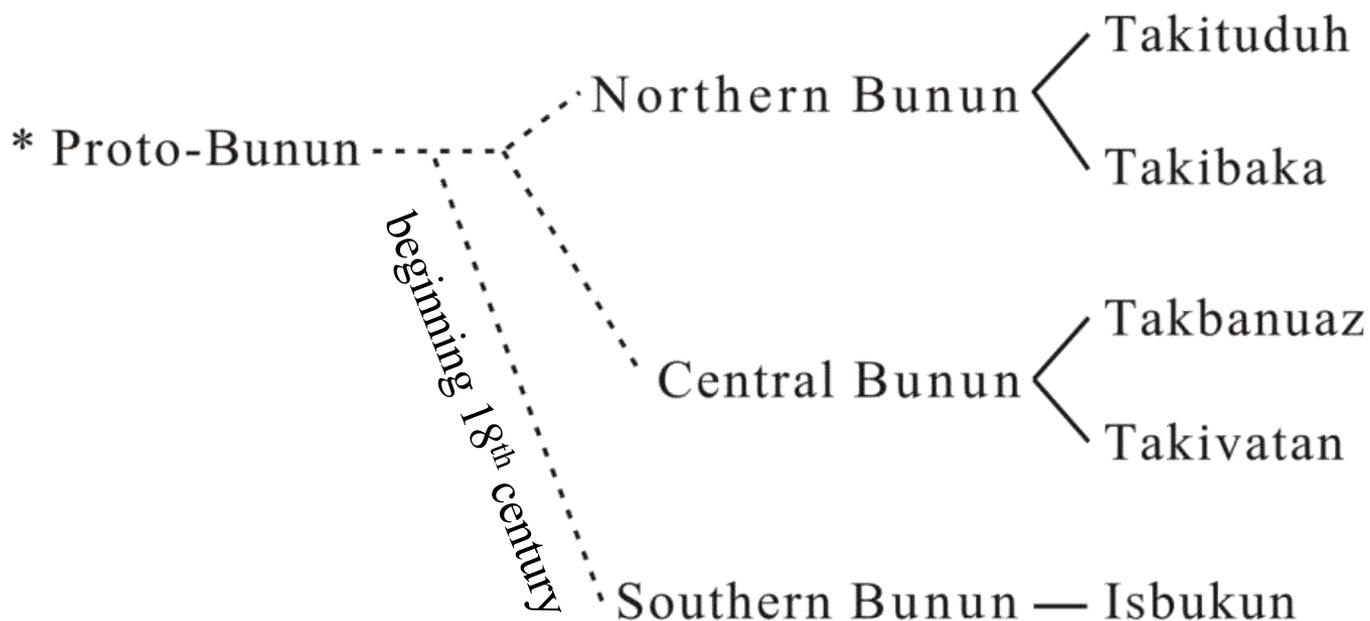
‘God’

Beyond the lexicon

- Morphology and grammar?
- Narrative and performative genres?
- More research is needed

Standardization

- Bible translation based on the Isbukun dialect



Standardization

- Result:
 - Asymmetrical relation between Isbukun and other Bunun dialects
 - Standardization?
 - ... or encroachment?

Standardization

- Bible

(1) *Masa kitɲab Sasbinað Dihanin kauni mas dalah dihanin.*

masa kitɲab Sasbinað Dihanin ka-ɲuni mas dalah dihanin
WHEN begin lord heaven MAKE-be OBL earth heaven

1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

(2) *Iskakaupa hai madumdum niaŋ minɲaiða.*

iskakaupa hai ma-dumdum ni-aŋ min-ɲaiða
world TPC STAT-obscured NEG-PROG INCH-exist

1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

Standardization

- Takivatan

- (3) *Taṅusaṅ matumaskain, siatu, sasaipuk kamisama madaidaḏ mapisḏaṅ, maqtu haip tu sanavan minsumaʔa sia tu, takahan tupaun tu Bilisi tu taisʔan, a, tupaun, a, tunaʔiti tupaun tu Pian.*

taṅus-aṅ *matumaskain* *sia* *tu* *sa-saipuk* *kamisama*
first-PROG be.grateful ANAPH ATTR CV-take.care.of God

ma-daidaḏ *ma-pisḏaṅ* *maqtu* *haip* *tu* *sanavan* *min-suma-a*
STAT-love DYN-just be.possible today ATTR evening INCH-return-LNK

sia *tu* *taka-han* *tupa-un* *tu* *Bilisi* *tu*
ANAPH ATTR ORIGINATE-go call-UF COMPL Belgium ATTR

taisʔan *a* *tupa-un* *a* *tauna-ʔiti* *tupa-un* *tu* *Pian*
relative INTER call-UF INTER PERL-here say-UF COMPL P.

First, I want to thank God for his help and impartial love, and that it is possible that this evening someone has come here, from a place that is called Bilisi (Belgium), a relative, who since he has come here is called Pian.

Bunun church services

- Language clash: In non-Isbukun communities:
 - Bible + hymns: Isbukun
 - Sermon and other parts: native dialect
 - (Certain hymns and part of the sermon: Mandarin)

Bunun church services

- Isbukun negatively affects linguistic performance:
 - Reading speed
 - Word-by-word reading
 - Hesitation phenomena
 - Understanding (?)

Bunun church services

- Sinapalan village, 24 July 2011
- Takbanuað dialect

Sermon
(native dialect)



Reading NT
(Isbukun Bible)



Religious songs

- Adaptation of hymns to traditional Bunun eight-voiced polyphony

Modern



Traditional



Conclusion

- Christianity affects the development of the Bunun language in various ways
 - Language preservation and documentation
 - Language rights
 - Introduction of new concepts & linguistic change
 - Standardization / dialect leveling
- Its influence is largely positive

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Uninaŋ
miqumisaŋ!

