

MINOR LANGUAGES OF MINDORO

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Talking about the "Minor Languages of Mindoro" might come as a surprise to someone who knows that Mindoro Island, with its two provinces, Oriental & Occidental, belong to REGION IV, or to the Southern Tagalog Region, alongside Batangas, Laguna and neighboring Tagalog speaking provinces. So why then talk about Mindoro's "Minor Languages"?

Actually, this "someone" might be in for another surprise if he looks up the latest Population Census of the Philippines, and discovers that in Mindoro are spoken as original "mother tongues" at least some 50 different languages, from Ibanag to Isinai, from Agutayano to Manobo. Indeed, Mindoro has attracted many immigrants from every corner of the Philippines, especially during the last 30 years or so, as evidenced by the 398% increase in population, from 167,705 in 1948 to 667,882 in 1980.

All this, however, would hardly justify a separate treatment of Mindoro's Minor Languages, because anybody settling down in Mindoro, would soon have to adapt himself to the Tagalog language, the "Lingua Franca" of Mindoro, spoken in the coastal towns and barangays around the Island, be it with a recognizable Ilocano or Bisayan intonation.

When I received the kind invitation of Dr. Ernesto Constantino and Prof. Anicia Del Corro to present a talk about the Minor Languages of Mindoro, it was clear to me that they meant the languages spoken by Mindoro's 40,000 or so original inhabitants, generally known as the Mangyans. Less generally, however, is it known that these so called Mangyans, are easily distinguished into a number of separate ethno-

linguistic groups, based on their different languages, customs and cultural expressions.

Permit me to trace back somewhat in past history the first contacts of the "outside world" (Spanish) with Mindoro's indigenous population. As far as I can ascertain, the first mention made of Mangyans in Mindoro (sometimes they are also mentioned to be in Tablas, Romblon and Palawan!), is recorded by Juan de Medina, an Augustinian priest who wrote about Mindoro in 1630, or roughly 60 years after it had been "discovered" by Spanish colonizers.

In these missionary reports, we read about the Mangyans, mostly living in the mountains, and different from the coastal-dwelling Tagalog speaking population. The Mangyan language was already recognized as a different vernacular from those known at that time, and by chance, the first sample of a Mangyan vocabulary was recorded. It was the word DAYO, meaning: "I don't like", still commonly used today in some Mangyan languages. Actually, it is still a socially - and culturally - "loaded" word, expressing the refusal of the Mangyans to accept or associate with the ways of the "outsiders".

In various subsequent publications (often assiduously copied from earlier sources!), the Mangyans are mentioned as the original inhabitants of Mindoro, frequently described in a most exciting and fantastic way, e.g. as having tails, and being "whiter" than the other Filipino people. The whiteness of skin attributed to a genetic mixture with supposedly shipwrecked Dutch sailors, who got stranded on Mindoro's coasts in the early 17th century. Even today still, some people are seriously asking me if it is true that the Mangyans have tails!

At first contact, at different places in Mindoro, the Mangyans were considered as belonging to one homogeneous group, speaking the same language, and belonging to the same tribe. But gradually, in the course of time, racial differences were brought out and distinct tribe's names being recognized. Spanish government records of early 1800 mention the Ilayas (Iraya) in Northern Mindoro as a tribe different from the other "Manguianes". Subsequent travellers, government officials and researchers added to the increasing number of tribal names, that were usually based on a topical description or geographical locality. By 1885, Jordana brings out 10 different tribes of Mangyans living in Mindoro, and later, Blumentritt published these names in his work on Tribal Filipinos. Gardner (1906) and Ordóñez (1906) still add new names to this number, and when Conklin (1949) publishes the result of his fieldwork in Mindoro in 1947, he writes that ... "nine main ethnographic or tribal groups were located, each speaking a separate language ...", bringing to a total of about 20 the names of Mangyan tribes (and/or languages?) mentioned thus far. The latest addition to the Mangyan tribal list, are the Furuan, mentioned in a survey study of a DAF team, conducted around 1975.

The main reason for the great diversity of Mangyan tribal and language names, and the confusion resulting from it, is undoubtedly the lack of understanding between the researcher, his interpreter and the Mangyan informant. This is clearly illustrated by the research of Fletcher Gardner (1906), who called the indigenous group in Southern Mindoro the Hampangan-Mangyans, and a team of U.P. students in linguistics (1974), who called the ethnic-group in Paitan (near Baco) the Iplaong-Mangyans. In my opinion, both researchers made the same mistake when inquiring from the Mangyans by

means of Tagalog or thru an interpreter, how they are called, or what the name of their languages is. The Mangyan answer was simply a translation of the word: "language, talk, speech", or: hampang and iplaong respectively, which was understood by the researchers as being the name of tribe and /or language group!

Extensive field-research by Tweddell (1956-70) reduced and narrowed down the number of tribal and language groups fusing and/or correcting or discarding some names that had been presented by previous researchers. from Jordana to Conklin, describing their approximate locations and boundaries, thus clearing up controversial basic issues concerning Mangyan tribal and language distribution in Mindoro.

Tweddell's research reduced the number of distinct ethno-linguistic groups, collectively called the Mangyans, to seven, namely: the Iraya, Alangan and Tadyawan, located in the northern half of Mindoro, the Batangan, Buhid, Hanunoo-Mangyan and Ratagnon, located in the southern half of Mindoro. It was further concluded that the tribes in each of the main groups, North and South, had their own interrelated linguistic and tribal characteristics. The Ratagnon, located at the extreme southwest of Mindoro, was considered by Tweddell as "not originally indigenous to the island "because of its high common score with a Bisayan language: Cuyunon.

Barbian (1977) continued along the same lines, and confirmed in general the 7 linguistic groups' conclusion of Tweddell, further defining the individual areas of these distinct groups. Although subgroups are being established with more or less dialectical differences, like the Baribi and Taubuid with the Buhid, and Balabaan with the Tadyawan, the essential linguistic features remain the same, and at the present state

of research, does not warrant the addition of another ethno-linguistic group to the established number of seven.

After having presented here the tribal distribution of the Mangyan groups coinciding with their linguistic identity, I'd like to acquaint you briefly with the efforts and the findings of past linguistic research among the Mangyan languages themselves, their internal and external relationships and their positions in the Malayo-Polynesian language tree as it is branched out in the Philippine archipelago.

Linguistic research among the Mangyan languages took a long time to start and to develop. Apparently, the Mangyan inhabitants of mountainous Mindoro were so elusive and hard to contact that little or no reliable information could be obtained by any would-be researchers on their customs or speech.

Mindoro, moreover, was an island with a bad reputation as a shelter for Moro pirates, refuge for escape convicts and graveyard for civilized man because of its unhealthy climate. No wonder that Mindoro's Mangyan inhabitants could continue their centuries-old customs in relative quietness and seclusion, without being bothered by influences and innovations introduced by other cultural contacts.

The only occasional contacts with the Mangyans made in the past, were established by missionaries, merchants or government officials who showed scant interest in their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

During the last part of the 19th century the first scientific reports were published about the Mangyan tribes of Mindoro. What first attracted the attention of the scientific world was the old Filipino writing system still in practical use among the Mangyan tribes. I'll deal with that further on.

The beginnings of the 1900 saw the first publications on one of the Mangyan languages, namely, the southern (Hanunoo) Mangyans. Fletcher Gardner, a U.S. contract surgeon got interested in, what he called, the Hampangan Mangyans, and published in 1905 and 1906 two vocabularies and a grammar of the Hanunoo-Mangyan language.

From 1902 till around 1912 Dr. E. Miller visited various regions in Mindoro and located cultural and linguistic data from three Mangyan groups called nowadays the Iraya, Tadyawan and Hanunoo-Mangyans. Vocabularies of more than 100 basic words belonging to these linguistic groups were published in 1912 by E.E. Schneider, compared with each other and with a large (50) number of known Philippine languages. However, no conclusions or theories were drawn up about the position of these Mangyan languages in the linguistic picture of the Philippines in general.

In the following years, nothing of importance was written on the Mangyans, aside from the sensational travelogues and journeys through Mangyan Territory that were more confusing than clarifying about the diversity of the Mangyan ethno-linguistic groups.

Only in 1939 another linguistic study about the Southern Mangyan language was presented by the veteran Fletcher Gardner. It comprised a great number of Hanunoo-Mangyan bamboo writings with tentative translations, and an elaborate grammar with Mangyan vocabulary. He was the first who attempted to translate the Ambahan poetry, but underestimated the near to impossible task of the interpreter to explain the poetry to him. After the war, Harold Conklin (1949) conducted his field studies in the Hanunoo-Mangyan area and published his Hanunoo-English Vocabulary

(1953), followed by a long series of publications on various aspects of Mangyan life and livelihood, culture and language. All of it, however, concentrated on the Southern (Hanunoo) Mangyan groups.

Gradually other Mangyan linguistic groups were studied and the results published. About the Iraya by Tweddell (1958), the Buhid by Barham (1958), a comprehensive study of all the groups by Tweddell (1970), the Iraya by Nicole Macdonald (1971), relationships of all the groups by Zorc (1974), the Buhid and Taubuid by Penoyer (1976), and the latest comprehensive and comparative study of all the Mangyan linguistic groups by Barbican (1977). My own contributions of linguistic research among the Mangyan language groups have largely remained unpublished, since they were intended in the first place for my own practical use in dealing with them. In 1968 I started collecting extensive wordlists on the major Mangyan languages (Iraya, Alangan, Tadyawan with Balabaan, Buhid with Baribi and Taubuid, and Hanunoo-Mangyan). I surveyed the extent of the written language among the Hanunoo-Mangyan and the Northern Buhid. Collected thousands of Mangyan Ambahan poems and studied the poetic language compiling the individual words into an Ambahan vocabulary that is still growing.

The diversity of the different Mangyan languages has now been established, and their number has been fixed to the above mentioned 7, of which Patagnon is still under discussion whether it should be a sub-group of a Bisayan dialect (Cuyonon), or as a Mangyan language influenced by Bisayan settlers, but originally related to the Hanunoo-Mangyan. I personally believe, that the historically established residence of Mangyans on Iling Island and the opposite Mindoro coast in the South, would favor a strong argument for accepting Patagnon as the 7th Mangyan language group.

In determining the internal and external relationships of the Mangyan languages among themselves and with neighboring Tagalog and Bisayan languages, David Zorc has been particularly active.

Through lexicostatistical evidence, first presented by Isidore Dyen in 1962 and published in 1965, the Mangyan languages got their definite place in the linguistic picture of the Philippine languages, establishing a Northern and Southern Mangyan language group beyond any doubt.

Lexical and morphological evidence has further made clear the internal relationships of the Mangyan languages, although incomplete and incorrect wordlists and errors of understanding and/or interpretation leaves still plenty of room for future clarification, so that the last word on the closeness of the Mangyan linguistic relatives has not been said.

Short vocabularies have been published of all the Mangyan languages, the most extensive with 759 words by Barbican (1977) in his interesting and unique culturally oriented wordlist. However, Conklin's Hanunoo-English vocabulary (1953) is the most elaborate so far, and the only one of that caliber of any of the Mangyan languages. A thorough dictionary of a Northern Mangyan language or of Batangan would be a real asset for the deeper understanding of the relationship and origin of the languages still being spoken extensively by the mountain people of Mindoro.

Since external relationship of the Mangyan languages point rather to the Bisayan South than to the Tagalog North, it can be said that Mindoro linguistically, as far as the Mangyan languages are concerned, belongs rather to a Northern Bisayan than a Southern Tagalog Region.

But knowledge in linguistic and other scientific circles takes a long time to be taken up and shared in, let's say, official government circles.

The latest census figures reveal that there is only ONE single indigenous group in Mindoro, speaking as their mother tongue ONE single language, namely MANGYAN, alongside Ibanag, Isinai, Manobo, etc.

What will be the future of the Mangyan languages? Can they survive the influence of Pilipino in radio, education, trade and even intertribal language? So far there is no indication that the Mangyan languages are in danger of becoming extinct, except, maybe, where the contact with Tagalog neighbors has been of considerable intensity and duration like among some of the Irayas in Northern Mindoro. Interest and pride in their own culture play also an important role. But in general it can be said that the various Mangyan languages are still very much alive, and spoken by the younger generation which is the best guarantee of hope for survival in the future.

By way of illustration of the different means of applying and using their language, and thereby as a sign of vitality, ingenuity and love of the Mangyans for their mother tongue, I'll make a few observations on the language spoken by the so-called Hamnoco-Manoyans in Southern Mindoro.

Since I have stayed with these Mangyans for quite some time, I have observed the various ways wherein they have used their language as a tool of their intelligence and joy.

The first thing the scientific world noticed about the Mangyans of Mindoro, was the amazing fact that they employed a writing system of their own.

Pedro A. Paterno wrote in his book about the Aetas (Los Itas, 1890), that the Mangyan tribes in the Mountains of Mindoro were still using the old-Filipino script. As proof, he presented a letter allegedly written by a Mangyan woman, without mentioning his source..

The German trio, Meyer, Schadenberg and Foy (1894) wrote a learned treatise on the Mangyan script, and they were the first to suggest that there might still be a second writing system among another Mangyan tribe in Mindoro.

Marcilla (1898) reproduced two samples of Mangyan writing, copied from a bamboo that was collected in Mansalay, Southern Mindoro.

And so, this scriptural fossil that was considered to be extinct already, came to life again in the bamboo-writing of a hidden mountain tribe in Mindoro.

For the Hanunoo-Mangyans themselves, there was nothing exciting about all this, because they had been using this method of recording their language, scratched with a sharp knife on a piece of bamboo, as long as they could remember. The oldest sample of Mangyan writing can be found on an old Spanish document of 1792 where some Mangyan leaders from Mansalay had attached their signatures.

Actually, the writing system as such was not very well suited to the Mangyan language with so many closed syllables, because the syllabic character of the script represented always an open syllable, and one had to guess from the context what the meaning was of the written word. When the script character read "TO DO", it could be understood as dubdob, dumdom, dusdos, etc. depending of the rest of the sentence. A very keen mind was needed to read the script, and make it work in practical use. And yet, until this very moment it is still being used by the Hanunoo-Mangyans. The script is an effective means of communication, but above all it is used for recording the ancient poetic songs that are copied in a continuous chain from the remote past to the present day.

Maybe the reason why the writing system survived, was the urgent wish to keep alive the poetic language of the Ambahan. For sure, much of the ancient speech would have disappeared by now were it not for the existence and use of the script.

That the Hanunco-Mangyans do love their Ambahan poetry is clear to anyone who has witnessed their gatherings, especially during the evening. Someone might be inspired and start off reciting the rhythmic and rhyming chant and when he is finished, another person, man or woman, will answer him in the same symbolic and allegoric language, to the enjoyment of all who have quickly gathered around the two bards. This kind of verbal contest can go on until the small hours of the next day, without causing boredom or sleep to the intent listeners.

Exotic script, archaic language, symbolic poetry, what else could the Mangyan do with his language? Like in Tagalog, when you say: pogi, dihin goli, the Mangyans also know their inverted speech, called pasayod, but it's more sophisticated. When they would say: This is our mountain, or Inda kami bantod, in pasayod it would be dan-i mingka tunbad. Only the open syllable is transferred and the final consonant of each syllable left in place. In this way, they can keep a rapid conversation with each other, that can't be understood by another Mangyan who is not part of the plot.

A couple of years ago, a complicated type of pasayod was in use among the young people that baffled and frustrated the older generation. The pasayod or inverted word was created by means of an intermediate word.

For example, using the word asawa (spouse) the intermediate word was sawa (type of snake) and the pasayod word was ulay (snake in general).

So instead of asawa you said ulay. If you did not know the in-between word, it was impossible to find out the real meaning.

Other examples:

<u>Daraga</u> (young girl)	>	<u>darag</u> (fallen leaf)	>	<u>labong kayo</u> (tree leaf)
<u>Kaati</u> (now)	>	<u>atis</u> (fruit)	>	<u>guyibano</u> (fruit)
<u>Masiyado</u> (very much)	>	<u>anisado</u> (strong drink)	>	<u>mapepsi</u> (soft drink)

This type of inverted language was in use for about half a year before the youth got tired of it. But the enjoyment they had in using it was worthwhile the effort to learn it by heart.

A final example of how the technique of speech is used as disguise for one's person; it is done by a boy who goes courting a girl and doesn't want to be recognized. He wraps himself in a blanket and disguises his voice inhaling while speaking, instead of exhaling. It would sound very strange if you'd say: "How are you tonight? Everything's okay?" It seems to me quite an exhausting affair, but it had to be a Mangyan to invent this breath-twister.

I hope that by presenting this to you, I have given some idea of the different Mangyan languages still very much alive in Mindoro and loved by its different users.

Let us hope that these Mangyans may continue using their individual mother tongues among each other, but at the same time learn to know their fellow-Filipinos and feel united with them in the use of one National Language called Filipino.

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Appendix 1

Some Samples of the Mangyan Languages and the Southern Mangyan Script

MANGYAN WORDS (after own research & BARBIAN)

ENGLISH	IRAYA	ALANGAN	TADYAWAN	BATANGAN	BUHID	HANUNOO	RATAGNON
BLOOD	daya	daya	pilit	tagok	fulot	dugo	dugo
KNEE	dulang	dulang	utol	tud	twud	tuod	tuod
NAIL	lekeb	lukob	nangas	go	guho	kuko	kuko
NOSE	urong	urong	ngulong	dungos	uyong	irong	irong
RAIN	udan	udan	basa	moyan	mwayan	uran	uran
SUN	aldaw	ibong	meybong	menit	myanit	init	init
TAIL	ikoy	ikoy	ikoy	iyog	ihog	ikog	ikog
YES	hee	awn	aon	ken	ala	ho	oon
+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

MANGYAN SENTENCES (after BARBIAN)

ENGLISH:	HOW	BIG	IS	YOUR	HOUSE ?
IRAYA:	umaning	kakol		komo	balay ?
ALANGAN:	ang ka	lakoy		kaymo	balay ?
TADYAWAN:	ang ka	koy			balayo??
BATANGAN:	se	daul		m	bale ?
BUHID:		dao da		m	balay ?
HANUNOO:	kabitay	kadaka		kanmo	balay ?
RATAGNON:	paywan	kabaol	ang imo	nga	balay ?

/ / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /

MANGYAN WRITING AND POETRY

si ay- pod bay u- pa- dan

You, my friend, so dear to me,

no kang ti-na- gin-du- man

thinking of you makes me sad...

may u- lang ma- di kag-nan

rivers deep are in between,

may ta- kip ma- di kay-wan

forests vast keep us apart.

no kang ti-na- gin-du- man

but thinking of you with love

ga si- yon di sa ad- ngan

as if you are here nearby

ga pag-tang- da- yon di man

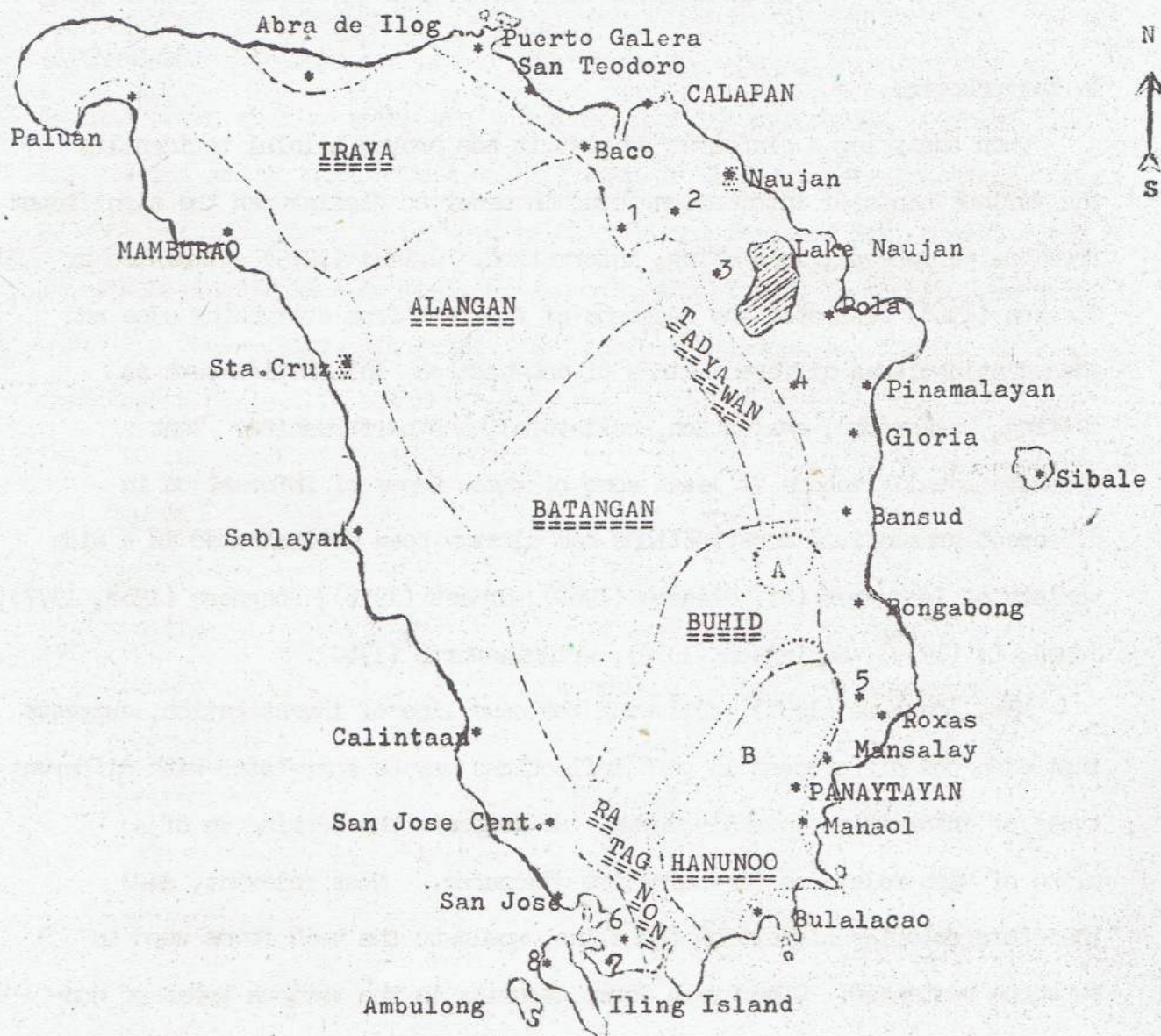
standing, sitting at my side.

(from: Treasure of a Minority by A. Postma. p. 112)

Ethnic Map of M I N D O R O, Philippines.

With approximate Mangyan Tribal & Language Distribution.

SCALE: 1 : 1.000.000



----- = Tribal & Language Boundaries (approximately).

..... = Script areas: A. Northern Buhid; B. Southern (Hanunoo) Mangyan.

- | | | |
|--------------|---|-----------------|
| 1. Comunal | / | 5. San Mariano |
| 2. Barcenaga | / | 6. Magsaysay |
| 3. Victoria | / | 7. Santa Teresa |
| 4. Socorro | / | 8. Iling. |

Sources: BTSM Maps, Edition 1961
USA Map, ONC K-11, Ed. 3, 1967.
Field Research.

Antoon Postma SVD, May, 1983