

The position of the Minahassan idioms

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2020

**Sulang Language Data and Working Papers:
Translations from the Dutch, no. 28**



Sulawesi Language Alliance
<http://sulang.org/>

LANGUAGES

Subject languages : Mongondow, Ponosakan, Ratahan, Tombulu,
Tondano, Tonsawang, Tonsea, Tontemboan
Language of materials : English

DESCRIPTION

Using evidence from vocabulary, sound systems, and morphology, Brandstetter argues that eight languages of northern Celebes (Sulawesi) are more closely related to languages of the Philippines than they are to languages of the rest of the island.

SOURCE

Brandstetter, R. 1906. Die Stellung der minahassischen Idiome zu den übrigen Sprachen von Celebes einerseits und zu den Sprachen der Philippinen anderseits. In: *Versuch einer Anthropologie der Insel Celebes*, part 2: *Die Varietäten des Menschen auf Celebes* (Materialien zur Naturgeschichte der Insel Celebes, 5), by Fritz Sarasin, 34–38. Wiesbaden: C. W. Kreidel. Original pagination is indicated by including the page number in square brackets, e.g. [p. 34].

VERSION HISTORY

Version 1 [05 December 2020]

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[p. 34]

[Fritz Sarasin writes:] The Minahassa in North Celebes (and part of Bolaäng-Mongondow) is inhabited by an anthropologically high-level people,¹ who stand out from the natives of the rest of Celebes and in their physical characteristics point to a different origin. We believe this origin was from the north.

Understandably we were now very interested in the question of whether a foreign element could also be detected in the language and whether, as is sometimes noted in literature, the Minahassan languages really shared a closer relationship with Philippine languages in contrast to the rest of Celebes.² I therefore turned to Prof. R. Brandstetter in Lucerne with a request to share his views on this topic. As you know, Prof. Brandstetter is a consummate expert on the Malayo-Polynesian languages, In response, he sent us a small treatise. As a matter of interest, and with due credit to the author, we include it here in extenso.

**The position of the Minahassan idioms
with respect to the other languages of Celebes on the one hand
and to the languages of the Philippines on the other hand**

by Prof. R. Brandstetter

1. The thesis we have to prove is: The idioms of the Minahassa stand in significant contrast to the other languages of Celebes and show an equally significant inclination towards the languages of the Philippines.

2. The following seven languages are spoken in the Minahassa: Toumbulu, Toumpakewa, Tonsea, Tondano, Bentenang, Tonsawang, and Ponosakan.³ To the west, the Minahassa is bordered by the Bolaäng-Mongondow region, whose language also

¹ [translators' note: Dividing humankind into higher and lower races is now a discredited branch of Darwinian science. Using the historical-comparative method to determine genetic relationships among languages (and sometimes, by implication, migrations) remains a venerable tradition in linguistics. Today's comparativist could poke a number of holes in Brandstetter's evidence. However as Brandstetter was among the first to argue for including northern Sulawesi languages in a Philippines group, it is significant to know how he arrived at this conclusion.]

² [translators' note: An early claim to this effect is found in the introduction to Adriani's 1893 *Sangireesche spraakkunst*, wherein (and without argument) the author places the Sangiric languages in the Philippine group and assigns the Minahasan languages to a 'sub-Philippine' group.]

³ [translators' note: Toumpakewa today is usually referred to as Tontemboan. Betenang or Benteenan is also known as Ratahan.]

belongs to the Minahassa group.⁴ These eight languages are closely related. The resources for studying them are not exactly numerous or extensive, but nevertheless sufficient for the purpose of proving our thesis.

3. Of the non-Minahassan idioms of the island, the best known are the two major languages that occupy the southern peninsula, Bugis and Makassar. These two languages are very close to each other. In the wide area between the [p. 35] Bugis-Makassar lands in the south and the Minahassa in the north, many more idioms are spoken. Of these, Barée in Central Celebes is probably the most important, and we also have adequate knowledge of Barée. It is close to Bugis and Makassar, even more so in terms of its grammatical type than in terms of vocabulary. As for the other idioms of Celebes, which have not yet been mentioned, N. Adriani in particular has carried out valuable research, which however provides us with little information in order to answer our question. These languages are strongly inclined toward Barée, Bugis and Makassar; but here and there we also find special agreement with the Minahassan idioms. However we most naturally consider these to be southward branches from the Philippine-Minahassan type.

4. For the purposes of our investigation it is entirely sufficient to use a single Philippine language as a typical representative of the whole, and here we will choose one of the two most important, Tagalog or Bisayan. I have chosen Bisayan. However, there will also be situations where the use of Bisayan alone is insufficient.

5. So we examine the position of the Minahassan idioms relative to Bugis, Makassar, Barée and the other languages of Celebes on the one hand and Bisayan and the other languages of the Philippines on the other hand. Here we want to touch on three aspects of the linguistic character: the vocabulary, the sound system, the morphology. What we expect for a result has been stated in Section 1.

6. The number of cases where the vocabulary of the Minahassan idioms differs from Bugis, Makassar and Barée, but corresponds to Bisayan, is quite significant and therefore completely conclusive. The following list is a very condensed excerpt, but nouns, verbs, and adjectives, concrete and abstract, are herein considered.

As for pronunciation: *ě* is the reduced vowel, *ñ* the guttural nasal. Acute accent indicates a modified pronunciation of the vowel, not the locus of the accent. [p. 36]

⁴ [translators' note: In this treatise Brandstetter uses 'Minahassa' in a broad way, subsuming under it (including Bolaang-Mongondow) the same eight languages that G. K. Niemann had earlier included in his comparative wordlist of the 'Alfur languages of north-east Celebes' (Niemann 1869–1870). In its narrow sense 'Minahasan' properly includes only five languages: Tombulu, Tompakewa (Tontemboan), Tonsea, Tondano, and Tonsawang. See particularly the opening paragraphs of Adriani (1925) regarding the difference between languages spoken in Minahasa versus Minahasan languages.]

	Bugis	Makassar	Barée	Minahassan idiom	Bisayan
hand	lima	lima	pale	Toumpakewa etc. ¹⁾ : kama	kamai ²⁾
foot	adje	bañkeñ	witi	Ponosakan etc. : tijol	tiil
heel	amputu	katulú	todu	Bentenang etc. : tiñkor	tikod
pox	sagala	sagala	sagala	Ponosakan etc. : buti	boti
hunger	luppú	tjipurú	oro	Bcntenang : ma-hutun	gotom
water	uwae	djéné	uwe	Bolaäng Mongondow etc.: tubig	tubig
mist	saliwú	salijú	limu	Bentenang : hawun	gabon
bird	manú	djañañ	tontji	Bolaäng Mongondow : lagappan	lañgam
lance	tumbá	poke	tawala	Toumbulu : wěñkow	bañkao
window	tělloněñ	tontoñañ	loda	Toumbulu etc. : tětěmboan	talamboan
praise	pudji	pudji	—	Tonsawang etc. : dajou	dajao
old	towa	towa	tuwa	Bolaäng Mongondow etc. : gurañ-ija	ti-golañ
blind	wuta	buta	buta	Ponosakan etc. : bilog	bolog
good	wadji	badji	dago	Bolaäng Mongondow etc. : mo-pija	pia ³⁾
to cook	nasu	pallu	mo-apu	Ponosakan etc. : mu-lutu	loto
to plait	añěñ	añañ	ena	Bolaäng Mongondow : monulapid	manalapid
to wish	eló	eró	rani	Tonsawang etc. : ma-ibog	ibog

¹⁾ “Etc.” means that the word also appears in several other idioms of the Minahassa, I always present the word whose sound is closest to that of the Bisayan.

²⁾ *kamai* is Tagalog, not Bisayan.

³⁾ *pia* is Ibanag, not Bisayan.

In various essays Adriani gives the words for ‘hand,’ ‘foot,’ ‘hunger,’ ‘water,’ ‘old,’ ‘blind,’ ‘to boil’ and ‘to weave’ for the following idioms of Central Celebes: Bobongko, whose vocabulary according to Adriani shows a lot of agreement with that of Gorontalo, Bajo, Togian, Ampana, Bungku, Petasia, Mori:⁵ These words⁶ also deviate from the Philippine-Minahassan type; only Togian *pilombo* ‘window’ aligns with *ta-lambo-an*, further Petasia *bilo* ‘blind’ with *bilog* and Bobongko *ugulan* ‘old’ with *tigolan* of the list.

7. The sound system of Makassar and Bugis differs greatly from that of the Philippine languages. The final position is particularly striking. Here, Bugis and Makassar do not tolerate consonants other than *n*;⁷ the Philippine languages allow pretty much all consonants. The idioms of the Minahassa also place themselves on the Philippine side. Malay *urat*, ‘vein,’ is Bugis *urě* and Makassar *urá*, but Bisayan *ogat* and likewise Ponosakan *ugat*. The languages which lie between the Bugis-Makassar region and the Minahassa usually show the behavior of Bugis-Makassar; Barée even goes so far that it does not tolerate any final consonants, not even *n*.

8. It is a peculiarity of the Philippine languages that they often employ a double vowel, where other Malayo-Polynesian languages have a single one. [p. 37] Thus, beside Malay *bētis* ‘lower leg’ stands Bisayan *bitiis*. And the Minahassa has the same phenomenon, thus Tondano *bětiis*. Bugis, Makassar and Barée have nothing similar.

9. The most important sound law of the Malayo-Polynesian languages is Van der Tuuk’s law. In a condensed form it says: Where Malay has a *r*, in Dayak there is an *h*, in the Philippine languages a *g*, in Javanese no sound at all. Example: ‘lip,’ Malay *bibir*, Dayak *biwih*, Bisayan *bibig*, Javanese *wiwi*. Now, Bugis and Makassar have *r*, never *g*; the Minahassan idioms, on the other hand, often have *g*, in the Philippine way.⁸

⁵ [translators’ note: For the mentioned languages we may cite Adriani’s “De Talen der Togian-Eilanden” and “De Talen der To Boengkoe en To Mori,” both published in 1900, as Brandstetter’s sources.]

⁶ [translators’ note: That is to say, the words given by Adriani for all these languages.]

⁷ [translators’ note: Bugis and Makasar also allow glottal stop in word-final position, as in respectively *urəʔ*, *uraʔ* ‘vein, tendon.’]

⁸ [translators’ note: In the chart that follows, Brandstetter conveniently restricts his attention to Mongondow and Ponosakan, as in fact this sound is reflected as *h* or zero in the six other languages under consideration, compare Tondano *waa*, Tonsea *baa*, Tombulu *baha*, Tompakewa (Tontemboan) *waʔa* ‘coals, embers,’ Tonsawang *baha* ‘fire,’ Bentenan (Ratahan) *waaʔ* ‘heavy.’]

	Bugis	Makassar	Bisayan	Bolaäng-Mongondow
coals	wara	bara	baga	baga
heavy	běrrě	berá	bogat	mo-bogat
hard	těrrě	terasá	togas	Ponosokan togas

The other languages of Celebes usually stand on the side of Bugis and Makassar, insofar as they do not have a *g*.⁹ Barée, like Javanese, has loss of *r*, e.g. *bou* ‘new,’ versus Makassar *beru*, Bisayan *bago*, Bolaäng-Mongondow *mo-bagu*. However, it is precisely in this area of the R-Law that we find outliers¹⁰ of the Philippine-Minahassan type to the south; Bobongko also has *g*, e.g. *bagu* ‘new.’¹¹ It should be noted that the Togian Islands, on which Bobongko is spoken, are not far from the Minahassa.

10. In the domain of word formation and inflection, the verb of course plays the central role, and here we immediately see a big difference between the Philippine and Minahassan verb on the one hand and the verb of Bugis, Makassar and Barée on the other: the former is richly developed, the latter poor and stunted.¹² For example, Bugis, Makassar, and Barée have no organic means to express tense, they have to use auxiliary words for this purpose; the Philippine and Minahassan idioms, on the other hand, have a fully developed tense system, and the two even have the same tense formatives. Thus in Magindanao from the root *mili* ‘choose’ one can derive the present: *kapamili* = *ka* + *pa* + *mili*, preterit: *kinapamili* = *k* + *in* + *a* + *pa* + *mili*. And in Toumpakewa from the root *rano* ‘wash’ comes the present: *pakaranoan* = *pa* + *ka* + *rano* + *an* and the preterit: *pinakaranoan* = *p* + *in* + *a* + *ka* + *rano* + *an*.

11. Also in the field of noun formation we find striking similarities between the Philippine idioms and those of the Minahassa. Many Malayo-Polynesian languages, and also most of Celebes form a nomen agentis by means of the prefix *pa*; thus Bugis *panasu* ‘cook’ from *nasu* ‘to cook’. In [p. 38] the Philippines, on the other hand, we find another, more complicated way of forming the nomen agentis; for instance, from the root *salsal* ‘forge’ Bisayan forms the noun *mananalsal* ‘smith’, and in the Minahassa this corresponds exactly to the Bolaäng-Mongondow equivalent *mononontal*.

⁹ [translators’ note: That is to say, insofar as these languages do not have *g* as a reflex of this sound.]

¹⁰ [translators’ note: German *Absprünge* ‘jump, leap, takeoff’ is a bit difficult to render in this context.]

¹¹ [translators’ note: Cases where Bobongko has a *g*-reflex can in fact be traced to borrowing from a Gorontalo-Mongondow source; in native vocabulary it has a zero reflex (Mead 2003:78–79).]

¹² [translators’ note: The German here is *verkümmert*, e.g. the way one would describe a plant growing on dry and infertile soil.]

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