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An overview of linguistic mechanisms introducing a Christian conceptual universe into the Bunun language

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Abstract

This article discusses how the translation of the Bible in indigenous languages of Taiwan created an entirely new vocabulary for representing the conceptual universe that was introduced by the Christianization of Taiwanese indigenous communities in the second half of the twentieth century. We focus particularly on Bunun, an Austronesian language of Taiwan. We will discuss which linguistic mechanisms the Bunun Bible translation uses to introduce novel concepts into the language, and how this new religious vocabulary influences the local interpretation of religious concepts.

Keywords: Bunun, Austronesian languages of Taiwan, Bible translation, Christianity in Taiwan, diachronic semantics, language contact

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Introduction[1]

Without doubt, one of the transformative events for indigenous cultures in Taiwan has been the introduction of Christianity. When indigenous areas were opened up to Christian missionaries after the Second World War, Catholics and Presbyterians, often in competition with one another, were fast to move into indigenous areas in search for souls to save. After some initial setbacks, they were extremely successful: today almost all indigenous villages have at least one, but often more churches, and Lardinois, Chan & Ryden (2004:114) assert that 85% of the indigenous population have been baptized.

The Christianization of large portions of the indigenous populations change cultural and moral systems of indigenous societies. This is most notably demonstrated in the gradual disappearance of traditional animist belief systems and their associated rituals. Interestingly, however, as the introduced religion became increasingly indigenized and dominant during the second half of the twentieth century, it also became to many Aboriginal communities a marker of their indigeneity that set them apart from the Buddhist and Taoist Han Chinese around them. In case of the Bunun, this happened partly because a conscious emphasis was put on the similarities between moral codes and the cosmology of their traditional and new religion, reimagining Christianity as a

[1] This article is partly based on a paper presented at the *Workshop on Special Genres in and around Indonesia* at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) on 17-19 February 2013, which has been made public in the proceedings as De Busser (2013). Its content has been supplemented with data from two research projects from the Taiwanese Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST 104-2410-H-004-139- and MOST 105-2410-H-004-162-), rendering the original paper obsolete.

moral and metaphysical continuation, or a maybe even a restoration, of their past beliefs and value systems (Yang 2008; Fang 2016).

Not only did the introduction of Christianity shake up the worldview of indigenous communities, but through the translation of religious texts, primarily the Bible, it also had a measurable effect on language use. The translation of the Bible, and its stories of a world removed in both time and geography necessitated the introduction of a conceptual framework that was in a number of ways alien to the indigenous people of Taiwan.

In terms of the general cosmology, a world in which nature, and humans in it, were controlled by supernatural entities, both amorphous and distinct, was replaced by a cosmic order in which a single god gave humankind stewardship of a world he created. Most obviously, this necessitated the introduction of terms referring to the Christian God, but also of new words describing the attributes of that god (for instance, divine grace) and an entire cosmology of supernatural beings (e.g. the Holy Spirit, angels) and locations (e.g. heaven and hell). Christian texts also brought new moral and social rule sets to the indigenous people of Taiwan. This required terms for concepts such as sin, divorce, holiness, peace, etc. Less evidently, Christian stories also introduced a large set of new abstract and material concepts into the language. Due to the complexity of the transmission of Christian written texts and ideas, these concepts are related to both the ancient Middle East, Classical Rome and Hellenistic Greece, as well as to more contemporary Western societies. A good example is the concept ‘king’ (see Table 3 ex. 2). Semi-sedentary societies of hunters such as the Bunun and the Atayal have very little social stratification, so the idea of a hereditary monarch would be completely alien to them.

All of these novel ideas needed to be expressed into the language of the new converts to Christianity. This article takes a look at the specific semantic mechanisms that are used to incorporate these concepts in the contemporary linguistic system. As a case study, it will focus on Bunun, one of the officially recognized Austronesian languages of Taiwan, which has five extant dialects: the Southern dialect Isbukun, the Central dialects Takbanuaz and Takivatan, and the Northern dialects Takibakha and Takituduh (Li 1988).

Bunun as a language of the Bible

In 2000, the Bible Society in Taiwan published *Tama Dihanin tu Halinga*, the first Bible translation containing the entire New Testament, with a selection of important books from the Old Testament (Bible Society in Taiwan 2000; henceforth referred to as the Bunun Bible). At the time of writing, this is still the most widely used translation in Bunun churches of all denominations, and it is still the most complete translation. We will use it as a basis for our discussion in this article.

It is important to realize that this translation did not arise in isolation; that it is the result of a long translation process involving multiple agents; and that it involved complex decision making. First, the Bunun Bible translation of 2000 arose in a complex ecosystem of translations of the Bible and other texts relevant to the Christian experience that came into existence soon after outside missionaries were allowed access

to indigenous areas at the end of the Second World War (for exhaustive lists, see Li 2016 and De Busser to appear).

An important proponent of the translation of the Bible in Bunun was the Presbyterian minister Hu Wen-Chi (胡文池), who moved to Guanshan (關山) in Eastern Taiwan in 1947 (Qiu, You & Zhang 1998: 405–406). He set out to learn "the Bubukun [Isbukun] dialect of Bunun language from Bunun nurses at Shen-Ying Hospital in Kuanshan" (Fang 2016:144) with the explicit goal of translating the Holy Scriptures. This resulted in the publication of a translation of the story of Noah's flood in 1949. The Gospel of Matthew followed two years later. It was written in zhuyin fuhao, an auxiliary script developed for the phonological representation of Mandarin, and unsuitable for representing the sound system of the indigenous Austronesian languages. This was because the Mandarin-only language policy of the KMT government initially led to a strong official resistance against translations of religious texts in indigenous languages (and any language other than Mandarin). Eventually some sort of compromise was reached, and from 1957 onward translations of Christian texts in indigenous languages were allowed, but only when written in zhuyin fuhao. Work on translations of the Bible and other Christian texts in Romanized scripts continued clandestinely.

Hu's eventual goal was an accurate translation of the entire Old and New Testament, and for this purpose he had assembled a team of translators who would guide and correct a translation that he, a late learner of Bunun, would make. Fairly soon, however, conflicts over linguistic and ideological choices broke out between Hu and his team of indigenous translators. Together with government opposition, this meant that a

completed version of the New Testament was only published in 1973. A revised version appeared in 1983, but its idiosyncratic use of Bunun grammar and lexicon was criticized by many Bunun Christians. This prompted a systematic revision by an indigenous translation team, together with a start on the translation of the Old Testament, resulting eventually in the 2000 edition that is currently in use. At the time of writing, a team of translators is working on a second revision that will amend the existing Bunun text and will translate all remaining books of the Old Testament.

It is clear that translating a complex text like the Bible, where conceptual accuracy is deemed crucial, requires careful decision making about how to render particular concepts in the target language, especially when they are central to Christian doctrine. For instance, Fang (2016:160–163) describes how Hu Wen-chi translated prohibitions in the Ten Commandments with the negative imperative auxiliary *katu* 'will not', against the objections of a majority of his team of Bunun translators, who argued for the verb *masamu* 'be taboo', a term that Hu associated with heathen superstition. Even the terms used to refer to Christian divine being were subject to years of discussion (see section *The names of the Christian Supreme Being* for an overview of lexical items currently in use).

Bible translation also requires choices about the style level (formal vs. informal) and the language variety at the basis of the text. For the 2000 Bunun Bible and its predecessors, the Isbukun dialect was selected as a translation base (see De Busser to appear). This is partly because Isbukun is the largest dialect and has the greatest geographical spread, but is very likely to some extent also a historical accident: when

Hu Wen-chi studied Bunun and started to translate his first Biblical texts, he did so in an Isbukun community.

Given the grammatical, lexical and stylistic differences between the five Bunun dialects, a choice like this has linguistic consequences, and will affect the reception of the text part of the language community. One way in which speakers of other dialects have reacted is by working on translations of Biblical text in other Bunun dialects: the four gospels (Qatu 2011) and later the entire New Testament (Worldwide Bible Society 2017) were translated in the Takituduh dialect, and Istasipal (2002) made a study of the preconditions for a Takivatan translation of the Old Testament book of Zephaniah.

Lexical strategies in biblical translation

As mentioned above, with the introduction of Christianity into indigenous communities after the end of WWII, the necessity arose to create a set of concepts that were able to accurately represent the conceptual universe associated with the new religious doctrine. This typically happens through a process of translation and clarification. Lexical terms or constructions to refer to the new concepts need to be agreed upon and, especially forms referring to abstract or highly unfamiliar concepts need to be properly explained to the language users.

Below I give an overview of the mechanisms by which Christianity, and the Bible as its authoritative text, introduce a Christian conceptual world into the Bunun language through the process of translation. It will focus on the latest result of this process, the 2000 Bunun Bible, and will explore how this influences the lexicon of the spoken

language of the Takivatan Bunun community, whose dialect was not selected as a base for the present authoritative translation. The following section will classify the various strategies used for introducing new Christian concepts into the Bunun language in the context of a general discussion of linguistic mechanisms that facilitate the borrowing of conceptual information between languages, especially between religious texts.

Theoretical background

It is probably correct that all instances of conceptual transfer from one culture to another must involve some form of borrowing, but as an account of the translation of religious texts this is also unacceptably imprecise. First, very often borrowing is thought of as a 'natural' process in linguistics in which linguistic information from a source language is transferred to a target language. This implies that it happens intuitively, to some extent latently and on a societal level. This is most evidently the case in syntactic borrowing: when new grammatical items diffuses through a language, this often happens outside the control of individual users and the latter usually not aware that these new constructions are 'alien'.[2] In the case of Bible translations, this is not the case: Christian concepts were introduced into the Austronesian languages of Taiwan by design, and the lexical constructions that were used to express them were chosen or

[2] For example, in Lipke, a Kwa language of Ghana, certain kinship terms such as *ambe* 'mother' and *éwú* 'grandmother' did traditionally not have plural forms. The language developed a plural suffix *-má* for such forms, which is based on the grammatical form of the third person plural. This happened in analogy with the Ewe, the culturally dominant language in the region that many Lipke speakers use as a second language, and that has a suffix *-wó* that functions as a plural marker for kinship terms and is derived from a third person plural marker (Ameka 2007: 111–112). In other words, Lipke borrowed the grammatical structure for expressing plurals of kinship terms from Ewe, but not the actual form. It is very unlikely that this process happened by design, or that normal Lipke speakers are aware that this is a borrowed structure.

created to achieve a specific purpose, namely the transfer of unfamiliar religious knowledge to an indigenous audience, as efficiently as possible.

On the other hand, we need to be careful not to overestimate the control that translators and religious practitioners have over language structure, even when they explicitly intend to manipulate it. The interpretation and manipulation of religious language by its users does not require a full awareness of the linguistic system, as is illustrated by the fact that throughout the twentieth century "even reputable scholars have attempted to shed light on the biblical language while working in isolation from the results of contemporary linguistics" (Silva 1994: 10). For instance, Bible translators, in particular new converts in indigenous communities, often have a relatively limited knowledge of the ancient languages, in particular Hebrew and Classical Greek, in which biblical source texts were written. As a result, indigenous Bible translators in Taiwan typically relied heavily on Japanese and later Chinese translations for their work, although in recent years the availability of electronic databases of annotated Biblical texts have made it easier to relate new translations to Greek and Hebrew sources of the New and Old Testament.[3]

Second, as Thomason & Kaufman (1988: 14) point out, "as far as the strictly linguistic possibilities go, any linguistic feature can be transferred from any language to any other language," although what is actually borrowed depends on the particular linguistic and socio-historical context. This does include phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic patterns "which can be, but [do] not have to be,

[3] This was made clear during an interview on 11 December 2015 with representatives of the Bible Society in Taiwan (台灣聖經公會) who were involved in the coordination of the translation of indigenous Bible translations.

accompanied by some diffusion of forms" (Aikhenvald 2006: 4). Not all of these possibilities will be relevant in this particular situation. For instance, the introduction of Christianity to Taiwanese indigenous communities was a directed, purposeful historical process that happened over a relatively short time span. One can assume that its architects, the missionaries and indigenous converts involved in proselytization and translation, focused largely on the transfer of discrete concepts, which can typically be expressed in well-delineated lexical constructs, rather than grammatical or morphological peculiarities of the source language. This makes the occurrence of complex borrowing processes that often occur over intergenerational time spans less likely.

Although we will see below that the transfer of Christian ideas in Bunun involved certain phonological and morphosyntactic processes, the present discussion mainly concerns the transfer of concepts, and will consequently focus on the borrowing of lexical items, either words or more complex idiosyncratic constructions that encode non-complex conceptual elements. Haspelmath's (2009) investigation of lexical borrowing makes a basic distinction here between material and structural borrowing. In material borrowing, both the phonological form and the meaning are transferred from the source to the target language. This happens, for instance, when a new loanword is introduced. Structural borrowing, on the other hand, "refers to the copying of syntactic, morphological or semantic patterns" (Haspelmath 2009: 39), but does not involve the transfer of a concrete lexical form. This happens with calques, which tend to borrow a lexical-semantic template, but might fill in lexemes in that template with native words. An example is *Bunun tu Uvaz* 'man Possessive child' ('Son of Man')[4], a term which

[4] Bunun dialects do not make a gender distinction for most kinship relationships.

refers to Jesus by means of a possessive construction, reflecting the biblical statement that Christ was the born as a son to all mankind. Very similar constructions are used in the Greek New Testament (*Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* 'son the-Genitive man-Genitive'), the Latin Vulgate (*filius hominis* 'son man-Genitive'), The English King James (*Son of Man*), the Chinese Union Bible (人子 rénzǐ 'man son'), and so on.

In the translation of the 2000 Bunun Bible, we can distinguish at least four major formal strategies that are used to render novel Christian concepts in the Bunun language: (1) loanwords, (2) calques, (3) periphrasis, and (4) conceptual transfer.[5] Each of these categories will be discussed in the following sections.

Loanwords

A loanword is "a word that at some point in the history of a language entered its lexicon as a result of borrowing (or *transfer*, or *copying*)" (Haspelmath 2009:36). As mentioned above, this involves a type of material borrowing in which the phonological form of a single lexeme is transferred from a source language into a target language, here Bunun. Loanwords in Bunun vary along two parameters: their source language and their degree of phonological integration.

To understand how this process works for the Bunun Bible, we first need to establish the indigenous phonology of Isbukun, the Bunun dialect at its basis. The Isbukun variety described in Li (2018: 27ff) has fourteen consonants (/ p b t d k ʔ m n ŋ

[5] In contrast, the classification by Li (2016:129–139) takes a functional perspective.

v ð s ɬ χ /) and three vowels (/ i a u /), which are presented below:[6]

Stops:	/p/		Fricatives:	/v/	
	/ɓ/	<b>		/ð/	<z>
	/t/	[tɛ (_i)]		/s/	[ɛ (_i)]
	/ɗ/	<d>		/ɬ/	<l>
	/k/			/χ/	<h>
	/ʔ/		Vowels:	/i/	[iː]
Nasals:	/m/			/a/	[aː]
	/n/			/u/	[uː ɔ (_ŋqʔχ)]
	/ŋ/ <ng>				

Table 1 gives representative examples of loanwords in the Bunun Bible, with their lexical equivalents in a number of Bible translations that would have been readily available to the Bunun translation team.[7]

[6] The typical phonemic representation of each consonant and vowel is given between /slanted brackets/. Important variants of phonemes are between [square brackets]. When these variants depend on a specific context, this context is given between (rounded brackets), with an underscore representing the position of the phonological variant relative to the context. For instance, (_C) means 'preceding a consonant'. The standard orthography of Bunun dialects normally corresponds to its phonemic representation. Where this is not the case, deviant graphemes are given between <angular brackets>.

[7] Bunun forms are all from the Bunun Bible (Bible Society in Taiwan 2000); English forms from the King James Bible (1769); Mandarin forms from the Chinese Union Version (1919); Japanese forms from the 1955 Kougo-yaku translation; and Latin forms from the Stuttgart Vulgate. Likely sources of Bunun forms are underlined whenever they can be identified.

Table 1 – Examples of loanwords

	Bunun	English	Mandarin	Japanese	Latin	Location
1.	Iesulailu	Israel	以色列 yǐ sè liè	イスラエル Isuraeru	Israhel	Act 1:6
2.	Ichibutu	Egypt	埃及 āi jí	エジプト Ejiputo	Aegyptus	Exo 1:1
3.	Muse	Moses	摩西 mó xī	モーセ Mōse	Moses	Mat 8:4
4.	pang	bread	餅 bǐng	パン Pan	panis	Mar 8:16
5.	Iesu	Jesus	耶穌 yé sū	イエス Iesu	Iesus	Mat 4:1
6.	Babelun	Babylon	巴比倫 bā bǐ lún	バビロ Babiron	Babylon	Mat 1:11
7.	Devid	David	大衛 dà wèi	ダビデ Dabide	David	Act 1:16
8.	Alun	Aaron	亞倫 yà lún	アロン Aron	Aaron	Exo 4:28
9.	Sulumun	Solomon	所羅門 suǒ luó mén	ソロモ Soromon	Salomon	Mat 1:6

Biblical names of people or places are by far the most common type of concepts that enter the Bunun translation as loanwords. Occasionally, a word like *pang* 'bread' (Table 1 ex. 4) occurs, which describes a culture-specific everyday item. Baked goods were not a part of traditional Bunun culture, and the form *pang* probably already entered the Bunun language in the Japanese Era (it is itself a loanword in Japanese, reportedly from Portuguese *páo*).

Interestingly, loanwords in the Bunun Bible are not borrowed from a single source but from a variety of Bible translations in modern languages to which the translators had access. By far the most popular source is Japanese (Table 1 ex. 1-4: *Iesulailu*, *Ichibutu*, *Muse*, *pang*). The search for appropriate indigenous equivalents for Biblical names had started in the immediate post-war era, by missionaries and translators that had lived through the end of the Japanese occupation and had been educated in Japanese schools. Some ideologically loaded terms borrowed from Japanese (such as *kamisama* for 'God'; see section *The names of the Christian Supreme Being*) would later be replaced by indigenous expressions, but there was no need to do this for proper names and toponyms.

Unambiguous borrowings from Mandarin (*Babelun* < *bā bǐ lún*)[8] or English (*Devid* < *David* /dɛj.vɪd/) are less common (Table 1 ex. 6 and ex. 7). Notably absent are forms directly transferred from Latin or Greek. Often, the exact source of loanwords cannot be unambiguously determined. Forms like *Alun* 'Aaron' (Table 1 ex. 8) appear to be phonological composites from Mandarin and Japanese or English. This suggests that the choice of source language for each borrowing was in many cases influenced by the adaptability of the source form to the Bunun phonological system.

The degree of integration of loanwords into the Bunun phonological system varies. A small majority fully comply with the rules of Isbukun phonology and phonotactics. In cases where full integration was deemed impossible for some reason, new phonemes or phoneme sequences were introduced. For instance, the sound /e ɛ/, represented by grapheme <e> in the examples in Table 1, is not a native Bunun phoneme, although [ɛ] does occur in certain dialects as an allophone of /i/ (De Busser 2009:132). It only has phonemic status in borrowed names such as *Muse* and *Iesu* (Table 1 ex. 3 and 5; other examples in the Bible include *Hebulai* 'Hebrews' and *Ielimia* 'Jeremiah'). The voiced dental in *Devid* (Table 1 ex. 7) is traditionally realized as an implosive or preglottalized stop /dˀ/ (Li 1987). It has been attested in coda positions, but exceedingly rarely so, and the sound sequence /id/ does not occur in native Bunun words. Finally, the affricate /tɕ/ in *Ichibutu* /iːˌtɕi.ɓu.tu(ʔ)/ (Table 1 ex. 2) is common in Isbukun, but only occurs in interdialectal loans in other dialects.

[8] Throughout this article, the sign < indicates 'derives historically from'

Calques

A second, less common strategy of borrowing lexical information is calquing. Haspelmath & Tadmor (2009:14) define a calque or loan translation as "a complex form that was created on the model of a complex form in a donor language and whose constituents correspond semantically to the donor language constituents." Depending on their properties, calques can be instances of material or structural borrowing, as Table 2 illustrate. Examples 1 and 2 borrow both the structural template and the individual lexemes from Japanese, with partial phonological integration; we saw in the previous section that /e/ is a loan phoneme in Bunun, but Japanese /r/ is replaced by Bunun /l/. Example 3 in Table 2 is partly a material borrowing (that is, both the form and meaning of *Iesu* and *Kilistu* are borrowed from Japanese), and partly a structural borrowing (that is, *Sasbinaz* 'lord' is an indigenous Bunun form, corresponding semantically to English *Lord* and very likely borrowed via the Chinese form 主耶穌 *zhǔ yésū* 'Lord Jesus'. Finally, examples 4-6 of Table 2 only borrow the structural-semantic template of the source construction, but not the source lexeme. The form *Sasbinaz dihanin* 'lord heaven' closely corresponds with the English 'Lord in Heaven' or 'God in Heaven', which is not the translation equivalent in our particular example, but occurs in the Bible and in religious language in general. The provenance of *asang dihanin* 'village sky' and Bunun tu Uvaz 'man Possessive child' is not entirely clear, mainly because they follow templates that occur in multiple languages.

Calques in the Bunun Bible tend to be expressions that have an importance in ritual performance: they are central concepts that are often repeated in oral invocations during liturgical services.

Table 2 – Examples of calques

	Bunun Bible	Japanese	Chinese	English	Location
1.	Iesu Kilistu	イエス・キリスト Iesu Kirisuto	耶穌基督 yēsū jīdū	Jesus Christ	Joh 1:17
2.	Kilistu Iesu	キリスト・イエス Kirisuto Iesu	基督耶穌 jīdū yēsū	Jesus Christ	Rom 15:17
3.	Sasbinaz Iesu Kilistu	—	主耶穌 zhǔ yésū	Lord Jesus Christ	2 Cor 11:31
4.	Sasbinaz Dihanin	主なる神 Omonaru kami	耶和華 神 yēhéhuá shén	LORD God	Gen 2:22
5.	asang dihanin	天国 tengoku	天國 Tiānguó	kingdom of heaven	Mat 7:21
6.	Bunun tu Uvaz	—	人子 Rénzǐ	Son of Man	Luk 17:30

Most constructional calques in our data sample appear to have been transferred via Japanese. Especially interesting is the distribution of the forms *Iesu Kilistu* and *Kilistu Iesu* 'Jesus Christ' in the Bunun Bible. The occurrences of these forms in the Bunun bible corresponds systematically to forms in the Japanese translation.

Periphrasis

The world of the Old and New Testament is thousands of years and kilometers removed from the daily lives of the indigenous people in Taiwan. Representing certain concepts by a loanword or an indigenous term would still not have made them comprehensible to Bunun people. A simple solution of this problem is the use of descriptive compounds, complex nouns that transparently explain what Biblical concepts means.

Table 3 – Examples of descriptive compounds[9]

	Bunun Bible	Meaning	English	Location
1.	dadangian matatbus	da-dangi-an ma-tatbus CV-place-LV DYN-offer 'place habitually used for offerings'	altar	Gen 8:20
2.	paliskadan daingaz	paliskadan daingaz leader big 'big leader'	king	Mat 1:6
3.	Sasbinaz Dihanin tu asang	Sasbinaz Dihanin tu asang lord heaven ATTR home.village 'home village of the Lord God'	Kingdom of Heaven	Mat 3:2
4.	pakadazuas halinga tu bunun	pakadazu-as halinga tu Bunun entrust-? Language ATTR person 'person of entrusted language'	prophet	Mat 2:5

In general, this strategy is disprefered, possibly because it leads to unwieldy expressions.

Conceptual transfer

Finally, the most commonly used strategy for introducing concepts that are foreign to the traditional Bunun universe into the Bunun Bible translation is conceptual transfer or conceptual borrowing.[10] In this scenario, no phonological or grammatical material is borrowed. Instead, a source concept is mapped onto an existing, often conceptually similar expression in the target language, here Isbukun Bunun. Concretely, an

[9] ATTR = attributive marker; CV = consonant-vowel reduplication; DYN = dynamic verb; LV = locative voice

[10] Haspelmath (2009: 39) calls this a "loan meaning extension", and only describes instances that involve the borrowing of a homonymy pattern from one language to another. This is probably too narrow: a number of semantic relationships between the form in the source and target language can exist.

indigenous word extends its meaning to a Christian context, while often retaining associations to its original meaning. Table 4 contains representative examples.

Table 4 – Conceptual transfer from traditional to Christian concepts

	Bunun Bible	Christian meaning	Traditional meaning	Location
1.	dihanin	Heaven	Sky	Mat 5:34
2.	hanitu	devil, demon	Spirit	Mat 4:1
3.	sinpatumantuk	covenant of God	covenant of moon	Gen 9:15
4.	tatbus	offering to God	offering to the spirits	Act 21:26
5.	inulivan	sin	error, mistake	Luk 5:20
6.	masumsum	pray	talk to the spirits	Luk 18:10
7.	isang	soul	life spirit	Luk 1:46
8.	ilav	gate	Door	Gen 22:17
9.	asang	city	home village	Gen 11:5
10.	siduh	nation	Tribe	Gen 12:2
11.	dalah	Earth	Land	Gen 1:1
12.	ispus	wilderness	barren region above tree line	Joh 1:23

This strategy has been used to great effect with concepts that are central to Christian doctrine (examples 1-7 in Table 4). Often, source words representing concepts relevant to traditional Bunun animism are reinterpreted in terms of a Christian theological framework. For instance, the meaning of the word *dihanin* 'sky' (Table 4 ex. 1) was extended to the Christian concept of 'Heaven', a location where the Christian God lives (see also the periphrastic *Sasbinaz Dihanin tu asang* 'kingdom of Heaven' in Table 3 ex. 3, previous section) and where virtuous people go after death. Similarly, the traditional belief in *hanitu* (the spirits of animals, objects, or deceased humans) was mapped onto the Christian devil and demons more generally. *Sinpatumantuk* 'covenant' (Table 4 ex. 3) was originally used to refer to the covenant between the Bunun people and the Moon, who instructed them to perform certain rituals in exchange for a prosperous life; in a Christian context the term came to refer to the covenant between God and humankind.

Translation choices like this allowed translators to make obtuse Christian concepts comprehensible to the average Bunun reader by connecting them to ideas associated with traditional Bunun spirituality, hereby creating a conceptual continuity between the old and the new faith. Although this facilitated the acceptance of the new religion, it was a strategy vigorously opposed by early missionaries, such as Hu Wen-Chi. It created interpretational problems related to the core doctrine, in that there was no way to be certain that new converts would indeed internalize the new Christian framework through reinterpreting traditional terminology, rather than just assume that the use of identical terminology implied that Christianity was just a slightly improved version of the old belief system. It also subconsciously altered the perception that people had of their traditional spiritual concepts. For instance, *hanitu* 'spirits' (Table 4 ex. 2) was originally a fairly neutral term: there were believed to be both helpful and harmful spiritual beings; one could engage with the former, through shamans and dreams, and one should try to avoid the latter (Li 2016:131; Fang 2016:133–134). In the Bible, the term exclusively came to refer to incarnations of evil forces that existed in opposition to God, a translation choice that was in all likelihood intentional.

When an indigenous Bunun word is applied to a Christian context, the conceptual shift typically happens through four processes.

In a literal transfer, indigenous words more or less retains its original meaning from pre-Christian times, and are simply used to describe an identical or closely related concept in a Christian context. For instance, the form *tatbus* (Table 4 ex. 4) was traditionally used to refer to sacrifices of meat or food items on an altar to spirits or

ancestors in traditional Bunun religion. In the Bunun Bible, it refers to a similar ritual in a Jewish context.

In a metaphorical extension, the newly introduced religious meaning of an indigenous word is derived from the original meaning through a relationship of similarity. For instance, *dihanin* (Table 4 ex. 1) traditionally refers to the sky, either as a natural phenomenon or an incorporeal supernatural power that influences life on earth. In a Biblical context, it came to refer to the supernatural locus of the afterlife, where the Christian God lives.

Certain extensions appear to be metonymic in nature: the form *siduh* (Table 4 ex. 10) refers to family groups or tribes in a non-religious context, but is used to refer to the concept of nation (that is, the political entity that binds people of a shared ancestry) in the Bunun Bible.

In the case of semantic narrowing, an indigenous word that already subsumes a specific concept undergoes a meaning narrowing within the religious domain. For example, *ilav* /ʔilav/ (Table 4 ex. 8) means 'door', but in a biblical context seems to be mainly used to refer to gates of cities or fortifications.

To some extent, the four categories above overlap, and the precise relationship between old and new uses of a lexical item can be complex. For example, the word *is'aŋ* (written *isang* in the Bunun Bible; Table 4, ex. 7) refers to one's breath, but metaphorically also to the human life spirit, which according to the Bunun resided in the centre of one's chest. This life spirit was believed to be involved in the regulation of

emotions. Events in the world, and especially the intercession of spirits, could positively or negatively influence it, thus entailing an indivisible link between one's health, one's emotions, and the spirit world. All this made the lexeme a natural candidate to express the Christian concept of the immortal soul in the Bunun Bible translation; the only difference being that in the traditional Bunun worldview the *is'ang* died with the body, whereas the Christian soul is considered immortal. In traditional contexts, *is'ang* is also commonly used to refer to one's feelings, as is clear from example 1 from the Takivatan dialect.[11]

1 *ma-saqbit* *is'ang*
STAT-painful life.spirit
My heart is sad. [Lit: my breath is painful.] (Takivatan)

In colloquial religious discourse, but—as far as I can attest—not in the current Bible translation, the association of spirit and feelings or beliefs made it possible for *is'ang* to additionally refer specifically to one's Christian faith and one's spiritual adherence to Christian doctrine, as in 2.

2 *...na asa tama taqu uvavaz tu kaupa i-nak is'ang*
Well have.to father tell children COMPL complete POSS belief-1S.N
i-sia *Tama* *Dihanin*
POSS-ANAPH father heaven

[11] 1S = first person singular; ANAPH = anaphoric marker; COMPL = complementizer; N = neutral case form; POSS = possessive marker; STAT = stative verb

… father wants to tell his children about my belief in the Father in Heaven. (Takivatan)

Apart from vocabulary central to Christian theology, the translation of the Bible in Bunun necessitated expressions to refer to commonly occurring concepts that are altogether more mundane, but do not exist in traditional Bunun society (examples 8-11 in Table 4). Most conceptual transfers in this category pertain every-day concepts that are common in Middle-Eastern or Western cultures but absent from semi-sedentary societies of hunters and agriculturalists: cities (*asang* < 'village'), city gates (*ilav* < 'door'), countries or nations (*siduh* < 'tribe'), or the earth as a whole (*dalah* < 'land, soil').

Choice and variation in translation

So far, this section suggests the relatively straightforward, isomorphic transfer of Biblical concepts from their source to the Bunun target language. Why this is often not feasible becomes clear when we look at how the new Christian vocabulary is influenced by parameters such as stylistics, dialect variation, other linguistic factors, cultural idiosyncrasies, and human limitations. Because of the centrality of the Bible to spreading Christian doctrine, the idealized assumption is often that its translation is an entirely rationalized process where terminology for crucial concepts is based on motivated choices that are rigorously applied throughout the translation process and then successfully spread into the community of converts. This is not always the case, and nowhere is this more evident in the Bunun Christian vocabulary than in the translation

of arguably the most pivotal concept in Christianity: that of the Christian Supreme Being.

The names of the Christian Supreme Being

As one would expect, strategies for translating the name of God are a matter of importance to the missionary enterprise (e.g. Loewen 1985). It was certainly important to Rev. Hu Wen-chi. When translating a Taiwanese hymn into Bunun with the help of lay translators in the 1940s, he make the mistake to refer to the Christian deity as *manantuk akia* 'the true idol' (Fang 2016:144–145). In an attempt to dissociate Christian terminology from Bunun animism, he then opted for the Japanese loan *Kamisama* (Table 5 ex. 1), a term that Bunun translators renounced because it had been introduced during the Japanese period when the colonial administration tried to impose state Shintoism on certain Bunun settlements and was therefore "closely associated with Japanese colonialism" (Fang 2016:132).[12] However, the term stuck and appeared in many religious texts, both Presbyterian and Catholic, up to the 1983 New Testament (Bible Society in Taiwan 1983). Only in the current translation (Bible Society in Taiwan 2000) it was replaced by *Tama Dihanin* 'Father in Heaven' (Table 5 ex. 2), together with a number of equivalent expressions that were introduced out of stylistic necessity. This historical process resulted in a proliferation of terms, some of which appear in the Bunun Bible, some of which in spoken Bunun, and some of which in both.

[12] In a 1960 catechism he also coined the Mandarin loan *Sangti*, from 上帝 *shàng dì* 'Emperor above' (Fang 2016:165–166); this term has as good as disappeared.

Table 5 gives an overview of all terms currently used to refer to God and Jesus attested in the village of Bahuan (馬遠 *Mǎyuǎn*), a settlement in Hualien where the Takivatan dialect is spoken. The first column lists words found in the 2000 Bunun Bible; the second contains terms in common use in spoken Takivatan (as recorded during my fieldwork).

Table 5 – Related terms referring to God and Jesus in Bahuan

	Bunun Bible	**Takivatan**	**Translation**	**Reference to**
1.	—	*Kamisama*	'God'	God
2.	*Tama Dihanin*	*Tama Diqanin*	'Father in Heaven'	God
3.	*Sasbinaz Dihanin*	?	'Lord in Heaven'	God
4.	?	*Tama Dazaz*	'Father above'	God
5.	?	*Tama Sasbin'az Dadazaz*	'Father Lord above'	God
6.	?	*Tama Sasbin'az Diqanin*	'Father Lord in Heaven'	God
7.	*Iehuba*	—	'Lord'	God
8.	*Sasbinaz*	—	'Lord'	God
9.	—	*Sasbin'az*	'Lord'	Jesus
10.	*Sasbinaz Iesu Kilistu*	—	'Lord Jesus Christ'	Jesus
11.	*Iesu Kilistu*	*Iesu Kilistu*	'Jesus Christ'	Jesus
12.	*Kilistu Iesu*	—	'Jesus Christ'	Jesus
13.	*Iesu*	*Iesu*	'Jesus'	Jesus

What is evident is that there is a partial discrepancy between terms used in written and spoken religious discourse. Although the term *Kamisama* (Table 5, ex. 1) was expunged from the Bunun Bible, it is still in regular use among Takivatan speakers, especially the elderly. The 'standard' name for the Christian God has become *Tama Dihanin* (< *tama* 'father' & *dihanin* 'heaven'; Table 5 ex. 2), in all appearance a transparent calque from English, although both Li (2016:132) and Fang (2016:169) appear to suggest that *dihanin* in this particular context is a personification of the amorphous supernatural entity that the sky represented to the traditional Bunun. This standard term competes in the Bunun Bible with *Iehuba* (< Eng. *Jehovah* 'Lord'; Table

5 ex. 7), which is mainly used as a vocative form; with *Sasbinaz Dihanin* (< *sasbin'az* 'lord' & *dihanin* 'heaven'; Table 5 ex. 7); and with *Sasbinaz*. In spoken Takivatan, there is a preference for various combinations of *tama* 'father', *sasbin'az* 'lord' and *(da)dadaz* 'above' (Table 5 ex. 4-6). The form *sasbinaz*,[13] originally a term of address for leaders and persons of authority, is of particular interest. When used in isolation, it designates the Christian God in the Bunun Bible and in the Isbukun dialect, but it refers to Christ in the Takivatan dialect. *Sasbinaz* can refer to Christ in the Bunun Bible, but *only* in the construction *Sasbinaz Iesu Kilistu* (Table 5 ex. 10). The inversion *Iesu Kilistu / Kilistu Iesu* is explained in *Calques*.

Altogether this suggests that the terminology used to express core concepts in the Christian universe is the result of a complex evolutionary process which is seemingly still ongoing. The set of expressions used to refer to the Christian deity in the Takivatan dialect is partly determined by current and past translations of the Bible, which are all in the Isbukun dialect. However, the spoken language of the Takivatan community deviates in places from the Isbukun standard translation and contains a number of compound expressions resulting from local creativity.

[13] *Sasbinaz* is actually pronounced /sasɓinʔað/, although the glottal stop in post-consonantal position is often left unrealized, especially in rapid speech and by younger speakers. The Bunun Bible tends to omit phonemic glottal stops in its spelling.

Bunun church services

Local creativity can also be observed in indigenous church services in Bunun villages. Modern Bunun communities are linguistically complex. Although there are five Bunun dialects, intermarriage between dialect groups is common. Furthermore, in all dialect communities, the Bunun language is slowly losing its status as the common vernacular to Mandarin Chinese, and speakers under forty are at best occasional users of their mother tongue. This linguistic situation is complicated even more by the fact that older generations received Japanese-language education, and the fact that Bunun villages are often in direct contact with neighbouring ethnicities who might speak Southern Min, Hakka, or other Austronesian languages.

Depending on the locality, church services in Bunun communities are held either completely in the Bunun language, or partly in Bunun and partly in Mandarin. The latter is often the preferred option, especially when there are many younger church members. The balance between the two languages varies: in some communities Bunun is used extensively, while in others it has a largely emblematic function and is only used for a number of hymns. Especially in Presbyterian communities, such as Sinapalan (新鄉 *Xīnxiāng*), a Takbanuaz community in Nantou, a strong preference for using Bunun during service is the result of linguistic ideology and the belief that Churches should function as caretakers of local culture.

We mentioned before that the Isbukun dialect serves as a basis for the current Bible translation, and for many secondary written works such as hymn books and catechisms. As a result, in Bunun communities that do *not* speak the Isbukun dialect, the language of

authoritative Church literature is further removed from the common vernacular of the community than is the case in in Isbukun communities. This restricts people's interaction with the Bible and other written religious materials and it often leads to the unusual situation that for certain parts of the church service (e.g. the sermon and the personal prayer) the local dialect is used, and for other parts (readings from the Scripture, certain hymns) the Isbukun dialect. (It must be added that the language of the present translation is widely perceived as unnatural and unrepresentative of the spoken language, even by Isbukun speakers.)

Although Bunun are usually quick to point out that mutual comprehensibility between dialects is high, observations of church services in the Presbyterian church in Sinapalan, where Bible readings are from the 2000 Bunun Bible, but sermons are in the local Takbanuaz dialect, clearly show that disfluency is much higher in the production of Bible texts in the Isbukun dialect than in the production of Takbanuaz texts. This manifests itself in a slower production speed, in word-by-word reading and in a relatively high frequency of hesitation phenomena. Taking into account that the low general literacy in Romanized scripts might play a role, the confrontation with an artificial written form of a non-native dialect that has an unfamiliar phoneme inventory and unfamiliar grammatical characteristics is certainly contributing to these signs of disfluency. Most church members received their education in Japanese or Mandarin, and were only exposed intensively to Romanized Bunun script when they started participating in church activities.

In many ways, this situation is not that different from many Christian communities in Western countries a couple of centuries ago. For instance, when the King James Bible

was published in 1611, literacy rates in England and Wales were well below fifty percent (Stone 1969:120) and the language of what would become the most influential book on the English vernacular would have appeared "unnatural, artificial and stilted to some" (McGrath 2001:258).

Bible translation and language change

An important question following from our discussion is: What is the impact of vernacular Bible translations on the Bunun language? How does the introduction of this new Christian vocabulary affect the evolution of Bunun and its dialects?

In a general sense, the newly introduced vocabulary allows Bunun culture to interact with a wider cultural sphere than before. This conceptual broadening transcends religious language and Christianity. Biblical vocabulary either introduced new semantic potential in the Bunun language, or standardized and disseminated lexical forms that had already been introduced during Japanese or Qing rule. Apart from religious terminology, this new vocabulary contained many general concepts related to the Eurasian material environment (*pang* 'bread', *tasasikis* 'horse', *uknav (hauzhauz)* 'lion', *iu ansum* 'myrrh', etc.), a globalized political landscape (*asang* 'city', *siduh* 'nation', *paliskadan daingaz* 'king', etc.), and abstract concepts (*masaningsing* 'holy', *aisvalan* 'peace', *mamantuk* 'righteousness', etc.). A negative side of this influx of new ideas, often through the appropriation of existing Bunun concepts, is the erosion of certain traditional cultural concepts. For instance, we saw above that *hanitu* 'spirit' was originally a neutral term,

but under influence of Christian doctrine became exclusively associated with evil supernatural forces.

A second consequence of the Bible translation is standardization. In earmarking the Isbukun dialect as a basis for Bible translations, Reverend Hu Wen-chi created, possibly inadvertently, a *de facto* supra-dialectal literary standard for the Bunun language. We saw that this was done because Isbukun is the largest Bunun dialect, but very likely also because of convenience. A direct result is that the novel Christian terminology that is introduced through the translations of the texts of the Old and New Testament enter the Bunun language carrying the phonological and linguistic properties of the Isbukun dialect. From the point-of-view of language politics, a long-term effect might be that this creates a stronger, more unified Bunun language. However, a possible adverse side-effect is in that this process might marginalize the four 'minority' dialects (Takbanuaz, Takivatan, Takibakha and Takituduh).

This is because literary prestige is often associated with political recognition. Although the Taiwanese Council of Indigenous Peoples has educational materials and language tests for all five Bunun dialects, the two descriptive grammars that it has published on Bunun (Zeitoun 2000 and Huang & Shih 2016) have no dialect specification in their titles.[14] They are in effect presented as representative of the Bunun language in general, despite the fact that they are both descriptions of Isbukun varieties and that there are observable discrepancies between Isbukun on the one hand and the Central and Northern dialects on the other. It is difficult to deny that the privileged status

[14] The authors do clearly indicate dialect and fieldwork locations in their introductions.

of the Isbukun dialect at least partly results from its dominance as a written variety in a religious context.

It is not clear to what extent this will be a problem, but the basic assumption would be that this new status of Isbukun as a super-dialectal written standard will eventually lead to dialect levelling. This has not happened yet and, especially given the precarious status of the Bunun language, the discussion might be moot. The accelerating erosion of Austronesian languages in Taiwan means that the transmission of Bunun as a functional spoken vernacular to younger generations has halted almost completely in the last decades.

Conclusion

Since its introduction to Taiwanese indigenous cultures after the Second World War, Christianity has been woven into the fabric of indigenous societies. The transfer of the value system and the conceptual universe associated with this new religion happens for a large part through translation. Of particular importance in this process is the translation of the Bible. By investigating the translation of the Bible in Bunun, this article gives an overview of the linguistic mechanisms involved in this transposition of the Christian thought-world into Bunun culture, and of the linguistic effects that this has on the development of the language.

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