

# Bugan—a new Mon-Khmer language of Yunnan Province, China

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The Bugan number nearly 3000 and are found in the mountainous areas of southern Guangnan 广南 and northern Xichou 西畴 Counties in the southeastern part of Yunnan Province. The Bugan live in the following seven villages: 老挖龙 Laowalong [pə<sup>55</sup>luŋ<sup>13</sup>], 新挖龙 Xinwalong [pə<sup>55</sup>tsuŋ<sup>13</sup>], 九平 Jiuping [pə<sup>55</sup>tsian<sup>31</sup>], 石北坡 Shibeipo [pə<sup>55</sup>ɕe<sup>13</sup>], 新寨 Xinzhai [li<sup>31</sup>laŋ<sup>13</sup>], 马龙 Malong [pə<sup>55</sup>yü<sup>31</sup>] and 那拉 Nala. The Bugan and the Han Chinese live together in Jiuping, Xinzhai, and Nala; the other four villages are exclusively inhabited by Bugan. The Bugan call themselves [pə<sup>55</sup>kən<sup>33</sup>] in their own language, the surrounding Han call them Hualo or 花族 Huazu ‘colorful people’, because the Bugan women wear colorful traditional dresses made from sewing together triangular swathes of printed cloth. The Bugan do not consider themselves to be natives of Guangnan and Xichou but came here before the Han, the Miao/Hmong, and the Yao. Some Bugan people say their ancestors originated from Jiangxi, Sichuan, and Guizhou Provinces and have lived in Guangnan and Xichou for ten or more generations. The Bugan celebrate their own New Year’s festival in April of the Chinese Lunar Calendar. During the festival days they sing native or Han songs, and dance together to music of the [pə<sup>31</sup>], a kind of Bugan instrument made of bamboo and calabashes. Nowadays, only a few old people are able to sing their native songs. The Bugan male clothing is the same as the Han’s, females are accustomed to wearing long black skirts, colorful dresses, and headwraps. The Bugan used to marry only within their own ethnic group, but in recent times a few Bugan girls have married young Han men. The most common family names are nine in number and are: 李 Li, 王 Wang, 郭 Guo, 罗 Lou, 严 Yan, 卢 Lu, 普 Pu and Yi. All Bugan people speak their mother tongue and adults also can speak Chinese. There is no variation in the Bugan language. This paper is based on my 1994 investigation.

## 1. The Sound system

There is a double series of initials in the sound system, prenasalized and plain for stops and affricates. Most vowels possess a tense (v̄) and lax (v) contrast.

Final consonants, stops and tones are prone to change. A part of the vocabulary can be pronounced with either final nasal or stop (same place of articulation), some words (but not in context) can be pronounced in two different tones. Sandhi changes are usual, especially tone changes; there are also some blends caused by fusion of syllables. *sau*<sup>33</sup> ‘bird’, *bi*<sup>31</sup> ‘two’, *bi*<sup>33</sup> ‘classifier’ ~ *sau*<sup>33</sup>*bi*<sup>13</sup> ‘two birds’, *wi*<sup>31</sup> ‘we’, *bi*<sup>31</sup> ‘two’, *pau*<sup>31</sup> ‘classifier’ ~ *wi*<sup>31</sup>*bi*<sup>31</sup> ‘we two’, *le*<sup>31</sup> ‘auxiliary, belong to’, *ɔ*<sup>31</sup> ‘I’ ~ *lio*<sup>55</sup> ‘mine, belong to me’.

Compared with the surrounding languages (Han, Zhuang, Yi/Lolo, Miao/Hmong, or Yao), Bugan syllables are rather subject to change.

### 1.1 Initials

p	ph	b	mb		m		f		w
t	th	d	md	nd	n	ɲ		l	
θ	s		ɕ		ʒ				
k	kh	g	ŋg		ŋ		x	q	ŋq
	h	ʔ							ʔ
ts	tsh		mts	mtsh	mdz	ndz			

Figure 1. Initials

The Bugan language has 36 initials, /ʔ/ appears only before vocalic onset. [voice] and [aspiration] are contrastive features in some stops and in some double initials of the type ‘nasal + affricate’: /p b ph, k g kh, t d th, mts mtsh mdz/. There are five prenasalized stops, /mb ŋg ŋq md nd/. Durations of these initials are longer than those of corresponding non-nasalized stops /b g q d/ but their nasal resonance is not especially strong, sometimes it is only slightly perceptible. The same is true of the affricates /mts mtsh mdz/. With the tone 31, nasal /m/ of /mts mtsh mdz/ is pronounced as stop /p/-—*mtse*<sup>31</sup> ~ *ptse*<sup>31</sup> ‘three’, *mtsha*<sup>31</sup> ~ *ptsha*<sup>31</sup> ‘to rub with the hands, make a cord’. Before the rhyme /-i-/, initial /ts-/ is palatalized to [tɕ-]—*tshiou*<sup>31</sup> ~ *tɕhiou*<sup>31</sup> ‘to sneeze’, *tsiū*<sup>35</sup> ~ *tɕiū*<sup>35</sup> ‘to have money on sb.’ The prenasalized initial /ŋg/ sometimes is pronounced as a pure nasal [ŋ]—*ŋga*<sup>31</sup> ~ *ŋa*<sup>31</sup> ‘yellow’. Words with /g-, ŋq-, md-, mdz-/ are few in number; in my record, there is only one word for each of /g- ŋq-/, i.e., *gam*<sup>35</sup> ‘to stab’, *ŋqu*<sup>33</sup> ‘village’.

- /p/ pi<sup>35</sup> ‘sun’; piau<sup>35</sup> ‘human being’
- /ph/ phɔ<sup>35</sup> ‘(maternal) grandfather’; phe<sup>35</sup> ‘(maternal) grandmother’
- /b/ biou<sup>33</sup> ‘mountain’; bou<sup>31</sup> ‘dust’
- /mb/ mbuŋ<sup>55</sup> ‘to eat one’s fill’; mban<sup>55</sup> ‘to lash’
- /m/ me<sup>13</sup> ‘mother’; mau<sup>33</sup> ‘younger brother’
- /f/ fei<sup>33</sup> ‘cooked corn or other cereals’; fi<sup>31</sup> ‘to meet sb.’

/w/	pə <sup>0</sup> wat <sup>31</sup> 'round'; wə <sup>35</sup> 'to drink'
/t/	tau <sup>13</sup> 'to look for'; taŋ <sup>31</sup> 'to point to sb.'
/th/	thə <sup>31</sup> 'large, big'; thu <sup>31</sup> 'to fly'
/d/	di <sup>31</sup> 'bad'; dɔu <sup>35</sup> 'to pull out'
/md/	mda <sup>33</sup> 'be light (of a lamp)'; mda <sup>33</sup> 'be light (of the sky)'
/nd/	nda <sup>33</sup> 'be bold and powerful'; nda <sup>33</sup> 'be light (weight)'
/n/	na <sup>33</sup> 'younger sister'; nau <sup>31</sup> 'much, many'
/n̄/	n̄a <sup>31</sup> 'mosquito'; n̄ɔ <sup>13</sup> 'to erect'
/l/	la <sup>33</sup> 'red'; laŋ <sup>33</sup> 'clear (liquid)'
/θ/	θi <sup>35</sup> mā <sup>31</sup> 'dew'; θi <sup>35</sup> 'alkali water, made from plant ash'
/s/	sa <sup>33</sup> 'hard (material)'; saŋ <sup>35</sup> /sək <sup>55</sup> 'hair'
/ç/	çaŋ <sup>31</sup> 'green'; çə <sup>33</sup> 'stomach'
/z/	zəuŋ <sup>31</sup> 'old'; zə <sup>33</sup> 'long'
/k/	kou <sup>31</sup> 'to finish'; ka <sup>31</sup> 'to beat with fist or a hammer, etc.'
/kh/	khɔ <sup>35</sup> 'to fill a bowl with rice, etc.'; khou <sup>35</sup> 'carry on one's head'
/g/	gam <sup>35</sup> 'to stab'
/ŋg/	ŋga <sup>31</sup> 'yellow'; ŋgaj <sup>31</sup> 'askew'
/ŋ/	ŋa <sup>13</sup> 'dark'; ŋa <sup>55</sup> 'water buffalo'
/x/	xɔ <sup>31</sup> 'horn'; xou <sup>55</sup> 'monkey'
/q/	qau <sup>31</sup> 'to nod'; qou <sup>33</sup> 'to burn up'
/ŋq/	ŋqu <sup>33</sup> 'village'
/y/	yəuŋ <sup>31</sup> 'busy'; yəu <sup>31</sup> 'to read'
/h/	ho <sup>31</sup> 'slow'; ha <sup>31</sup> 'to dry in the sun'
/ʔ/	ʔam <sup>31</sup> 'warm'; ʔa <sup>33</sup> 'to rain'
/ts/	pə <sup>55</sup> tse <sup>35</sup> 'ear'; pə <sup>55</sup> tsə <sup>13</sup> 'placenta'
/tsh/	n̄a <sup>33</sup> tshuŋ <sup>31</sup> 'uvula'; tshə <sup>31</sup> 'urine'
/mts/	mtse <sup>33</sup> 'fruit'; mtsa <sup>35</sup> 'one meal, classifier'
/mtsh/	mtsha <sup>13</sup> 'to kill'; mtshu <sup>31</sup> 'to lure'
/mdz/	mdzə <sup>31</sup> 'to plait (one's hair)'; mdzaŋ <sup>35</sup> 'insipid, lack salt'
/ndz/	ndzuŋ <sup>33</sup> 'thin (human being)'; ndza <sup>55</sup> 'beautiful'

## 1.2 Rhymes

a	<u>a</u> ua	ai am	<u>ai</u> <u>am</u>	au an	<u>au</u> <u>an</u>	auu au	<u>ia</u> <u>ia</u>	<u>iauu</u>
ɛ	<u>ɛ</u> ue	ɛi ɛm	<u>ɛi</u> <u>ɛm</u>	ɛn	<u>ɛn</u>			
e	<u>e</u>			en in	<u>en</u>		ie <u>ie</u>	
o	<u>o</u>			ou	<u>ou</u>		io <u>io</u>	
u	<u>u</u> ə	ui	<u>ui</u>	ən			iu <u>iu</u> iə	iou <u>iou</u>
u y	<u>u</u>						–	
aŋ <u>iaŋ</u>	<u>aŋ</u> iã iẽ	ã iap	<u>ã</u> iak	ap uan	<u>at</u> uaŋ uã	ak <u>ak</u>	<u>iam</u> iaŋ	iaŋ
					et			
oŋ <u>ioŋ</u>	<u>oŋ</u> oŋ	õ		op		<u>ok</u>	<u>ioŋ</u>	
uŋ	<u>uŋ</u>		ũ õ			uk		

The Bugan language has 90 rhymes. The tense vowels and lax vowels are contrastive: *kui*<sup>33</sup> ‘fire smoke’ ~ *kui*<sup>33</sup> ‘to dry by smoke’, *luŋ*<sup>33</sup> ‘well’ ~ *luŋ*<sup>33</sup> ‘abyss, deep cave’. Compared to the lax vowels, the tense vowel tongue position is lower and further back, the lax /a/ in *ta*<sup>31</sup> ‘near’ is [a], but the tense /a/ in *ta*<sup>31</sup> ‘to bet’ is close to [ɑ]. With the rising tonal syllables, the tense vowels are easy to hear; the laryngeal setting is very tense; but in the words with the falling tone (31) the laryngeal setting is weak.

There are three final stops, /-p, -t, -k/; they are not released. Words with final stops are limited; these words appear only with tones 55, 33, 31 (only two with tone 33 in my record). Some words can be pronounced either with final nasal or stop (same place of articulation) or the coda can be lost altogether: *nam*<sup>55</sup> ~ *nap*<sup>55</sup> ‘to close one’s mouth’; *ceŋ*<sup>55</sup> ~ *cen*<sup>55</sup> ‘goat’; *biak*<sup>55</sup> ~ *biaŋ*<sup>55</sup> ‘grape’; *pə*<sup>55</sup>*bop*<sup>31</sup> ~ *pə*<sup>55</sup>*bou*<sup>31</sup> ‘head’; *nuk*<sup>31</sup> ~ *nə*<sup>31</sup> ‘to come’; *wək*<sup>31</sup> ~ *wə*<sup>31</sup> ‘iron pot’. A few words