

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 [pə⁵⁵luŋ¹³], 新挖龙 Xinwalong [pə⁵⁵tsuŋ¹³], 九平 Jiuping [pə⁵⁵tsian³¹], 石北坡 Shibeipo [pə⁵⁵ɕe¹³], 新寨 Xinzhai [li³¹laŋ¹³], 马龙 Malong [pə⁵⁵yü³¹] 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 [pə⁵⁵kən³³] 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 [pə³¹], 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 (ɹ) 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*³³ ‘bird’, *bi*³¹ ‘two’, *bi*³³ ‘classifier’ ~ *sau*³³*bi*¹³ ‘two birds’, *wi*³¹ ‘we’, *bi*³¹ ‘two’, *pau*³¹ ‘classifier’ ~ *wi*³¹*bi*³¹ ‘we two’, *le*³¹ ‘auxiliary, belong to’, *ɔ*³¹ ‘I’ ~ *lio*⁵⁵ ‘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*³¹ ~ *ptse*³¹ ‘three’, *mtsha*³¹ ~ *ptsha*³¹ ‘to rub with the hands, make a cord’. Before the rhyme /-i-/, initial /ts-/ is palatalized to [tɕ-]—*tshiou*³¹ ~ *tɕhiou*³¹ ‘to sneeze’, *tsi*³⁵ ~ *tɕi*³⁵ ‘to have money on sb.’ The prenasalized initial /ŋg/ sometimes is pronounced as a pure nasal [ŋ]—*ŋga*³¹ ~ *ŋa*³¹ ‘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*³⁵ ‘to stab’, *ŋqu*³³ ‘village’.

- /p/ pi³⁵ ‘sun’; piau³⁵ ‘human being’
- /ph/ pho³⁵ ‘(maternal) grandfather’; phe³⁵ ‘(maternal) grandmother’
- /b/ biou³³ ‘mountain’; bou³¹ ‘dust’
- /mb/ mbu⁵⁵ ‘to eat one’s fill’; mban⁵⁵ ‘to lash’
- /m/ me¹³ ‘mother’; mau³³ ‘younger brother’
- /f/ fei³³ ‘cooked corn or other cereals’; fi³¹ ‘to meet sb.’

/w/	pə ⁰ wat ³¹ 'round'; wə ³⁵ 'to drink'
/t/	tau ¹³ 'to look for'; taŋ ³¹ 'to point to sb.'
/th/	thə ³¹ 'large, big'; thu ³¹ 'to fly'
/d/	di ³¹ 'bad'; dɔu ³⁵ 'to pull out'
/md/	mda ³³ 'be light (of a lamp)'; mda ³³ 'be light (of the sky)'
/nd/	nda ³³ 'be bold and powerful'; nda ³³ 'be light (weight)'
/n/	na ³³ 'younger sister'; nau ³¹ 'much, many'
/n̄/	n̄a ³¹ 'mosquito'; n̄ɔ ¹³ 'to erect'
/l/	la ³³ 'red'; laŋ ³³ 'clear (liquid)'
/θ/	θi ³⁵ mā ³¹ 'dew'; θi ³⁵ 'alkali water, made from plant ash'
/s/	sa ³³ 'hard (material)'; saŋ ³⁵ /sək ⁵⁵ 'hair'
/ç/	çaŋ ³¹ 'green'; çə ³³ 'stomach'
/z/	zəuŋ ³¹ 'old'; zə ³³ 'long'
/k/	kou ³¹ 'to finish'; kə ³¹ 'to beat with fist or a hammer, etc.'
/kh/	khɔ ³⁵ 'to fill a bowl with rice, etc.'; khou ³⁵ 'carry on one's head'
/g/	gam ³⁵ 'to stab'
/ŋg/	ŋga ³¹ 'yellow'; ŋgəi ³¹ 'askew'
/ŋ/	ŋa ¹³ 'dark'; ŋa ⁵⁵ 'water buffalo'
/x/	xɔ ³¹ 'horn'; xou ⁵⁵ 'monkey'
/q/	qau ³¹ 'to nod'; qou ³³ 'to burn up'
/ŋq/	ŋqu ³³ 'village'
/y/	yəuŋ ³¹ 'busy'; yəu ³¹ 'to read'
/h/	ho ³¹ 'slow'; ha ³¹ 'to dry in the sun'
/ʔ/	ʔəm ³¹ 'warm'; ʔa ³³ 'to rain'
/ts/	pə ⁵⁵ tse ³⁵ 'ear'; pə ⁵⁵ tsə ¹³ 'placenta'
/tsh/	n̄a ³³ tshuŋ ³¹ 'uvula'; tshə ³¹ 'urine'
/mts/	mtse ³³ 'fruit'; mtsa ³⁵ 'one meal, classifier'
/mtsh/	mtsha ¹³ 'to kill'; mtshu ³¹ 'to lure'
/mdz/	mdzə ³¹ 'to plait (one's hair)'; mdzaŋ ³⁵ 'insipid, lack salt'
/ndz/	ndzuŋ ³³ 'thin (human being)'; ndza ⁵⁵ '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>auu</u> <u>au</u>	ia ia	<u>ia</u> <u>ia</u>	iauu
ε	<u>ε</u> ue	ei em	<u>ei</u> <u>em</u>	en en	<u>en</u> <u>en</u>			ie ie	<u>ie</u> <u>ie</u>	
e	<u>e</u>			en in	<u>en</u> <u>in</u>			ie ie	<u>ie</u> <u>ie</u>	
o	<u>o</u>			ou ou	<u>ou</u> <u>ou</u>			io io	<u>io</u> <u>io</u>	
u	<u>u</u> ə	ui ui	<u>ui</u> <u>ui</u>	ən ən	<u>ən</u> <u>ən</u>			iu iə	<u>iu</u> <u>iə</u>	iou iou
u	<u>u</u>							–		
aŋ	<u>aŋ</u> iaŋ	ā iā iē	<u>ā</u> <u>iā</u> <u>iē</u>	ap iak	<u>ap</u> <u>iak</u>	at uan	<u>at</u> <u>uan</u>	ak ak	<u>ak</u> <u>ak</u>	iam iaŋ
						et				
oŋ	<u>oŋ</u> ioŋ	ō ō	<u>ō</u> <u>ō</u>	op op	<u>op</u> <u>op</u>			ok ok	<u>ok</u> <u>ok</u>	ioŋ
uŋ	<u>uŋ</u>			ū ū	<u>ū</u> <u>ū</u>			uk uk	<u>uk</u> <u>uk</u>	

The Bugan language has 90 rhymes. The tense vowels and lax vowels are contrastive: *kui*³³ ‘fire smoke’ ~ *kui*³³ ‘to dry by smoke’, *luŋ*³³ ‘well’ ~ *luŋ*³³ ‘abyss, deep cave’. Compared to the lax vowels, the tense vowel tongue position is lower and further back, the lax /a/ in *ta*³¹ ‘near’ is [a], but the tense /a/ in *ta*³¹ ‘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*⁵⁵ ~ *nap*⁵⁵ ‘to close one’s mouth’; *ceŋ*⁵⁵ ~ *cen*⁵⁵ ‘goat’; *biak*⁵⁵ ~ *biaŋ*⁵⁵ ‘grape’; *pə*⁵⁵*bop*³¹ ~ *pə*⁵⁵*bou*³¹ ‘head’; *nuk*³¹ ~ *no*³¹ ‘to come’; *wək*³¹ ~ *wə*³¹ ‘iron pot’. A few words

with nasalized vowels lose their nasalization and become oral syllables or they lose the final and preserve the nasal as a nasalized vowel—*sã³³ ~ sa³³* ‘eight’, *laŋ³¹ ~ lã³¹* ‘horse’. The rhymes /iã iap uã ẽm ð ẽ/ appear only in Han and Zhuang borrowing. There is only one word with rhymes /iãu iãm iã iap iak ẽm ẽm ɔk ẽn ẽ/ for each of them. Most of those words are with final nasal or stop, and some are borrowings. Moreover, /uak/ appears only with one suffixed syllable: *ho³¹* ‘slow’; *ŋuak³¹* ‘very slow’.

/a/	ta ³¹ ‘near’; sa ³³ ‘hard (material)’
/a/	la ⁵⁵ ‘thin (material)’; ta ³³ ‘shrivelled, flat’
/ai/	pã ⁵⁵ mai ³⁵ ‘pupil (of the eye)’; pã ⁵⁵ lai ³³ ‘tongue’
/ai/	ai ³³ qou ³¹⁽⁵⁵⁾ ‘cloud’; nai ³¹ ‘flat, level’
/au/	nau ³¹ ‘much, many’; tsau ³³ ‘stingy, narrow-minded’
/au/	lau ³¹ ‘empty’; nau ⁵⁵ ‘soft, pliable’
/au/	ŋgau ³⁵ ‘slippery (road)’; sau ³¹ ‘tree’
/au/	tsau ³¹ ‘early’; sau ³¹ ‘garlic’
/ia/	mia ³¹ ‘salt’; pia ⁵⁵ ‘cymbals’
/iã/	liã ³¹ ‘keep out (the wind)’; tsjã ⁵⁵ ‘to heat up’
/iãu/	bjãu ³¹ ‘lunch, midday meal’
/ua/	kua ⁵⁵ ‘son’; mã ⁰ kua ³¹ ‘folk song’
/am/	kham ³⁵ ‘(to work) hard’; tam ³³ ‘to sink’
/am/	am ³¹ ‘warm’; gam ³⁵ ‘to stab’
/an/	lan ¹³⁽³¹⁾ tã ⁰ tan ¹³ ‘stark-naked’; han ³³ ‘move (house)’
/an/	lan ³¹ ‘naked’; lan ³³ ‘blunt’
/aŋ/	te ⁰ tha ⁵⁵ ‘horizontal, across’; laŋ ³¹ ~ lã ³¹ ‘horse’
/aŋ/	laŋ ³³ ‘clear (liquid)’; laŋ ³¹ ‘wooden basin’
/ã/	tshã ³¹ ‘greedy, fond of good food’; lã ⁵⁵ / laŋ ⁵⁵ ‘blind’
/ã/	bã ⁵⁵ ‘sticky’; sã ⁵⁵ / saŋ ⁵⁵ ‘disorder’
/ap/	te ⁵⁵ map ³¹ ‘knot’; nap ⁵⁵ ‘tense, tight’
/at	pã ⁰ wat ³¹ ‘round’; nat ⁵⁵ /nan ⁵⁵ tã ⁵⁵ ‘to bear, to endure’
/at/	lat ³¹ ‘slippery (road)’; vat ³³ /van ¹³ ‘to turn’
/ak/	pã ⁰ lak ⁵⁵ ‘flat’; ndzak ³¹ ‘frozen, stiff’
/ak/	wak ³¹ /wã ³¹ ‘iron pot’; mak ³³ /maŋ ⁵⁵ ‘muddy (water)’
/iam/	tsiam ⁵⁵ ‘soul’
/iaŋ/	biaŋ ³¹ ‘light (color)’; thiaŋ ¹³ ‘thousand’
/iaŋ/	bjaŋ ³⁵ ‘claw’; phjaŋ ³⁵ ‘to support with the hand’
/iã/	miã ³¹ ‘life’
/iap/	pu ⁵⁵ tsiap ³¹ ‘Chinese chives’
/iak/	biak ⁵⁵ /biaŋ ⁵⁵ ‘grape’
/uan/	tshuan ³¹ ‘boat’; khuan ³³ ‘solidify’

/uaŋ/	ŋuaŋ ³¹ ‘stupid’; ŋguaŋ ¹³ ϕε ¹³ ‘intestines’
/uã/	luã ¹³ ‘disorder’; tshuã ³¹ ‘to send’
/ε/	nde ³⁵ ‘beat’; mtse ³¹ ‘sour’
/ε̃/	xε̃ ³¹ ‘taste good’; sε̃ ³¹ ‘smart’
/ei/	nei ³¹ ‘smooth’; thei ³⁵ ‘false, be not true’
/ɛ̃i/	lɛ̃i ^{35/13} ‘the sting of a bee or wasp’; khɛ̃i ⁵⁵ ‘to run’
/ue/	ŋgue ³¹ ‘crooked, bend’; khue ³¹ ‘piece, lump’
/em/	lem ³⁵ ‘to lose (a game, etc.)’
/ɛ̃m/	lɛ̃m ³¹ ‘reed trumpet, a Chinese woodwind instrument’
/en/	ken ³³ ‘firm, secure’; then ³⁵ ‘to lay out’
/ɛ̃n/	tɛ̃n ⁵⁵ ‘short (human being)’; yɛ̃n ³⁵ ‘cut’
/iẽ/	liẽ ³¹ tɔ ¹³ ‘sickle’; zaiẽ ³³ ‘rich (colors)’
/e/	te ⁵⁵ ta ³¹ ‘true’; mtse ³¹ ‘three’
/ẽ/	be ⁵⁵ ‘short (material)’; te ³¹ ‘accurate (shooting)’
/ie/	phie ³¹ ‘to force, compel’; tie ⁵⁵ ‘hand’
/iɛ/	mɛ̃ɛ ⁵⁵ ‘small’; piɛ ¹³ ‘to change’
/en/	nen ³³ ‘cloth’; yen ^{33/55} ‘be like, to take after’
/ɛ̃n/	tɛ̃n ³⁵ ‘to rub, to scratch an itch’; nɛ̃n ³³ ‘broken’
/et/	zɛt ³¹ ‘to fall down’; ɲɛt ³¹ ‘to swing’
/i/	xi ³³ ‘far’ di ³¹ ‘bad’
/ĩ/	tsi ³⁵ ‘cold’; ki ³⁵ ‘to wipe, to rub’
/in/	min ³¹ ‘understand’; pin ³⁵ ‘shoulder’
/ɔ/	thɔ ³¹ ‘large, big’; ɲɔ ³³ ‘peppery, hot’
/ɔ̃/	tɔ̃ ³⁵ ‘hold or carry in both hands’; lɔ̃ ³¹ ‘little, few’
/iɔ/	diɔ ³¹ ‘loose, inattentive’; biɔ ³¹ ‘two’
/ɔ̃ɲ/	tsɔ̃ɲ ³⁵ ‘to hoe up (weeds)’; kɔ̃ɲ ³¹ ‘steep’
/ã/	luã ¹³ hã ⁵⁵ hã ⁵⁵ ‘in noisy disorder’; mã ⁵⁵ ɲu ⁵⁵ ‘roof’
/ɔ̃k/	kɔ̃k ³¹ /kɔ̃ɲ ³¹ ‘bend upwards’
/o/	zɔ ³³ ‘long’; yɔ ³³ ‘high’
/o/	tɔ ³⁵ ‘to climb’; mɔ ³¹ ‘heavy’
/ou/	kou ³¹ ‘deep’; ɲou ⁵⁵ ‘wrinkle, crease’
/oũ/	thoũ ³⁵ ‘to prop up’; tsoũ ³¹ ‘to eat’
/io/	ta ³¹ bio ³³ ‘to close, near’; pio ⁵⁵ ‘to collapse’
/iɔ̃/	piɔ̃ ³¹ ‘to set upright’; pũ ⁵⁵ liɔ̃ ³¹ ‘coat’
/oŋ/	yɔŋ ³¹ ‘busy’; poŋ ⁵⁵ ‘blister’
/oŋ/	poŋ ³¹ ‘concave, hollow’; khoŋ ⁵⁵ ‘protruding’
/op/	bop ⁵⁵ mtse ³³ ‘hail’; te ⁵⁵ bop ³¹ ‘carp’
/ioŋ/	pioŋ ³⁵ ‘to write down’; pion ³¹ ‘to make a sound’
/ioŋ/	piɔŋ ³³ ‘colorful’; pion ³¹ tie ⁵⁵ ‘finger ring’

/u/	tshu ⁵⁵ 'dry'; khu ⁵⁵ 'expensive'
/ʊ/	lu ⁵⁵ 'small, young'; ʒu ⁵⁵ 'wrong'
/ui/	ŋui ⁵⁵ 'rainbow'; kui ³³ 'fire smoke'
/uī/	pə ⁰ kui ⁵⁵ 'craftsman'; ku ³³ 'to dry by smoke'
/iu/	çiu ³¹ 'poor, poverty-stricken'; mu ³³ çiu ⁵⁵ 'China fir'
/īu/	pīu ³¹ 'bear'; ŋīu ³³ 'sweet potato'
/iou/	biou ³³ 'mountain'; tsiou ³⁵ 'to mend (clothes)'
/īou/	si ⁵⁵ m̄īou ³¹ 'future'; tsīou ¹³ 'to mend (shoes)'
/uŋ/	ndzu, ³³ 'thin (human being)'; ʒuŋ ³¹ 'old'
/uŋ̄/	tsuŋ ³³ 'like, be fond of'; luŋ ³¹ 'to close'
/ũ/	tũ ⁵⁵ 'mouth'; nũ ⁵⁵ 'brain'
/uk/	te ⁵⁵ kuk ³¹ 'frost'; pə ⁵⁵ nuk ³¹ 'heart'
/ə/	də ³³ 'long(time)'; ʒə ³¹ 'see, catch sight of'
/iə/	biə ¹³ 'two (animals)'; biə ³³ 'classifier (for animal)'
/ən/	mən ³³ 'thick'
/ə̄/	lə̄ ⁵⁵ çi ³¹ 'grain'
/u/	lu ³¹ 'good'; khu ³⁵ 'pool, pond'
/ū/	tsu ⁵⁵ 'shallow (water)'; tsau ³³ lu ⁵⁵ 'fermented glutinous rice'
/y/	khy ⁵⁵ 'narrow'; khy ³¹ 'the period of the day (from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.)'

1.3 Tones

There are six live tones: two level (55, 33), two rising (35, 13), one falling (31) and the slight tone (atonality) 'ø'. The slight tone 'ø' appears only in some prefixes. The dead tones have pitch shapes 55, 33, 31. Dead tones occur with either lax or tense vowel syllables. Tones are instable in Bugan, a part of the lexicon can be pronounced with either of two tones, ʒou^{33/55} 'earth', dɔ^{13/33} 'to burn the grass on waste land, for cultivation', tsq^{13/33} 'to bite', xau^{55/31} 'valley', mtshi^{55/13} 'to milk', lɛi^{13/35} 'the sting of a bee or wasp', tsi^{33/35} 'to stretch out (one's hand)', etc. Tonal change is common in context, and many cases show progressive assimilation, mə⁵⁵xɛ⁵⁵³⁽³¹⁾ 'taste bad', mə⁵⁵nam⁵⁵⁽³⁵⁾ 'one year', bi³¹nam³¹⁽³⁵⁾ 'two years', nam³³⁽³⁵⁾ni³³ 'this year', ʏo¹³tɛn³³⁽³⁵⁾ 'very crowded', pə⁰lon³⁵⁽³³⁾ 'the upper'. (Tone values in parentheses are unchanged citation values).

Live tones:

Tone:	Shape:	Examples:
55	high level	lā ⁵⁵ ‘thin (material)’; tə ⁰ than ⁵⁵ ‘horizontal, across’
33	mid level	lā ³³ ‘to turn round’; nən ³³ ‘to sleep’
35	high rising	lā ³⁵ ‘to return, give back’; tən ³⁵ ‘to close (a door)’
13	low rising	tā ¹³ ‘to carry on the back’; tən ¹³ ‘to keep domestic animals’
31	low falling	tā ³¹ ‘to bet’; tən ³¹ ‘to cook, to boil (fold, stable, etc.)’
0	slight	pə ⁰ çi ⁵⁵ ‘left side’; tə ⁰ yo ⁵⁵ ‘the inner’

Dead tones:

Tone	Shape	Examples
55	high level	biak ⁵⁵ /bian ⁵⁵ ‘grape’; tsɛt ⁵⁵ /tsɛn ⁵⁵ ‘to hog’
33	mid level	māk ³³ /mān ⁵⁵ ‘muddy (water)’; wāt ³³ /wān ¹³ ‘to turn’
31	low falling	zət ³¹ ‘to fall down’; kək ³¹ /kən ³¹ ‘bend upwards’

1.4 Syllable types

Syllables appear in 12 types (see below). Most syllables are type 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, or 11; the rest are relatively rare. Type 12 has only one word in my record. All vowel onset syllables have glottal (hard) onset [ʔ]; I do not analyze them here. Vowels in the same syllable must all be tense or lax simultaneously, tense vowels and lax vowels do not occur together in same syllable.

1	VT	a ³³ ‘came back’	ɔ ³³ ‘raw, uncooked’
2	VVT	ai ³³ ‘excrement’	au ⁵⁵ ‘husband of one’s aunt’
3	VCT	am ³¹ ‘warm’	an ³¹ ‘to wash’
4	CVT	ta ³¹ ‘be close’	sa ³³ ‘hard (material)’
5	CVVT	nai ³¹ ‘flat, level’	sau ³¹ ‘tree’
6	CVVVT	biou ⁵⁵ ‘leech’	biou ³³ ‘mountain’
7	CCVT	nde ³⁵ ‘to beat’	mtse ³¹ ‘three’
8	CCVVT	ŋgau ³⁵ ‘slippery (road)’	mtshai ⁵⁵ ‘mad’
9	CVCT	nən ³³ ‘to sleep’	zət ³¹ ‘to fall down’
10	CVVCT	bian ³⁵ ‘claw’	khuan ³³ ‘solidify’
11	CCVCT	ndzun ³³ ‘thin (human)’	mdzan ³⁵ ‘insipid’
12	CCVVCT	ŋguan ¹³ çɛ ¹³ ‘intestines’	

2. Lexicon

2.1 Word structure

2.1.1 Simple words

There are two types: monosyllabic and disyllabic. Most Bugan words are monosyllabic: *pi*³⁵ 'sun', *ta*⁵⁵ 'moon', *tɔ*⁵⁵ 'grandfather', *ʒu*³³ 'grandmother', *buŋ*³¹ 'skin', *naŋ*⁵⁵ 'shoe', *li*³⁵ 'to change', *tsi*³¹ 'to comb'. But there are also disyllabic forms: *bɔ*⁵⁵*mo*³³ 'star', *ŋgɔ*¹³*nau*⁵⁵⁽³¹⁾ 'thing', *fu*⁵⁵*da*¹³ 'money', *tsi*³¹*lɔ*³⁵ 'rabbit', *ta*³⁵*ti*⁵⁵ 'to give', *nou*¹³*tsau*³¹ 'to frighten (sb.)', *e*⁵⁵*e*⁵⁵ 'sand'.

2.1.2 Complex words

2.1.2.1. Compound words. A compound is formed in any of several ways: in parallel, verb-object, head-modifier, subject-predicate, or verb-complement.

Parallel type:

*tu*³³-*ʒau*⁵⁵⁽³¹⁾ 'go out'
out-go

*mau*³³-*na*³³ 'sibling'
younger brother-younger sister

Verb-object type:

*tsɔ*³¹-*ʒɔ*³⁵ 'go hunting'
hunt-go

*bi*³³⁽³⁵⁾-*maŋ*⁵⁵ 'marry (a woman)'
buy-wife

Head-modifier type: most modifiers follow the head, a few modifiers precede the head.

*biou*³³-*ɣɔ*³³ 'rock hill, karst formation' *ʒuŋ*⁵⁵⁽³¹⁾-*tse*³¹ 'foot of mountain'
hill-rock foot mountain

*da*¹³⁽³⁵⁾-*naɪ*⁵⁵ 'wave'
water-jump

*da*³⁵-*təu*³⁵ 'rice field'
water-field

Subject-predicate type :

*mɛ*⁵⁵⁽³³⁾ *lā*⁵⁵ 'the blind'
eye-blind

*pə*⁰*qou*⁵⁵-*luŋ*³³ 'thunder'
sky-make a sound

Verb-complement type:

*nu*³³-*sɔ*³¹ 'easy'
do-easy

*kai*³³-*sɔ*³¹ 'comfortable'
stay-good

2.1.2.2. Derived words. There are two main types of derivation: *prefix + head*, *head + suffix*. All prefixes are pronounced with tone, but a few of them are pronounced with the slight tone.

Prefix + head type:

*pə*⁵⁵- prefix in words for body parts, kinship, nations, people, made objects, or nouns of locality: *~bop*³¹/*lbou*³¹ ‘head’, *~san*³³ ‘navel’, *~du*³³ ‘brother’, *~de*³¹ ‘relatives by marriage’, *~mio*³¹ ‘the Miao/Hmong’, *~khui*⁵⁵ ‘the Han’, *~kha*¹³ ‘guest’, *~zuj*⁵⁵⁽³¹⁾ ‘old people’, *~si*⁵⁵ ‘broom’, *~por*⁵⁵ ‘hammer’, *~ci*⁵⁵ ‘left side’, *~ca*⁵⁵ ‘right side’.

tə^{55/0}- prefix in words for body parts, localities, or animals: *~nou*⁵⁵ ‘the back of the body’, *~qou*³⁵ ‘the palm of the hand’, *~kau*³⁵ ‘middle’, *~vo*⁵⁵ ‘inner’, *~kə*³³ ‘tiger’, *~ke*³³ ‘squirrel’.

*te*⁵⁵- prefix in words for plants, birds, rivers, fauna, made objects, or weather: *~taj*⁵⁵ ‘moss’, *~tan*³³ ‘pumpkin’, *~tso*³¹ ‘sparrow’, *~kəj*³⁵ ‘shrimp’, *~map*³¹ ‘knot’, *~ce*³³ ‘waistband’, *~tsi*³³ ‘snow’, *~kuk*³¹ ‘frost’.

*lə*⁰- prefix in a few body part names: *~kə*³³ ‘the lower jaw’, *~po*⁵⁵ ‘shoulder’.

*na*³³- prefix in small persons and things: *~la*³³ ‘baby’, *~mu*³³ ‘little girl’, *~tau*³³ ‘baby pig’, *~tsaj*⁵⁵ ‘mouse’, *~tie*³¹ ‘index finger’, *~hau*³³ ‘taro’.

*pu*⁵⁵- prefix in some animals: *~lat*³¹ ‘stallion’, *~cen*⁵⁵ ‘nanny (goat)’.

*mu*³³- prefix in some plants and female animals: *~par*³¹ ‘peach tree’, *~san*⁵⁵ ‘pine’, *~lou*³³ ‘rice straw’, *~tau*³³ ‘sow’, *~tsau*³³ ‘bitch’. Some female animals have the prefix *mu*³³-, but the relevant males do not have the prefix *pu*⁵⁵-, *ləpə*³¹*tau*³³ ‘boar’, *tsau*³³*ljo*³¹ ‘dog’.

*tse*⁰- prefix in some birds and made objects: *~qa*³⁵ ‘duck’, *~raj*³⁵ ‘goose’, *~van*³¹ ‘(ring-necked) pheasant’, *~lou*³⁵⁽¹³⁾ ‘pliers’.

*mə*³³- prefix in some made objects: *~tsa*³¹ ‘hand straw cutter’, *~dou*³³ ‘firewood knife’, *~pe*⁵⁵ ‘patch’.

*o*⁵⁵- prefix in some nouns of locality: *~du*³³ ‘upper reaches (of a river), upper place (of land)’, *~nda*³³ ‘the lower’, *~loj*³³ ‘sky’, *~la*³¹ ‘under the sky’.

*di*³³- prefix in January ~March, or December of the Chinese lunar calendar: *~tsaj*³⁵ ‘January’, *~ni*³¹ ‘February’, *~sã*¹³ ‘March’, *~liã*³¹ ‘December’.

*mə*⁵⁵- prefix in April ~November of the Chinese lunar calendar: *~pau*³³ ‘April’, *~mi*³³ ‘May’, *~bo*⁵⁵ ‘November’.

Head + Suffix type : In this type, the head is first, followed by the suffix (one or two syllables) to indicate certain conditions, parts of suffixes are reduplication.

ho ³¹ ŋuak ³¹ ‘very slow’ slow	nda ³³ pə ⁵⁵ lou ⁵⁵ ‘very light (not heavy)’ light
ndzou ³¹ mi ³¹ ‘diamond bright’ bright	lan ¹³⁽³¹⁾ tə ⁰ tan ¹³ ‘be stark-naked’ naked
na ¹³⁽³⁵⁾ ndo ⁵⁵ ‘shiny black’ black	luä ¹³ hō ⁵⁵ hō ⁵⁵ ‘in a mess’ disorder
pou ³¹ pe ³³ ‘very careless’ careless	ŋa ³⁵ wa ³⁵ wa ³⁵ ‘very dark’ dark

Infix type: only one infix *xi*³¹ ‘is found, and it indicates small female animals’, *li*⁵⁵ ‘cattle’, *pu*⁵⁵*li*⁵⁵ ‘ox’, *mu*³³*li*⁵⁵ ‘cow’, *na*³³*li*⁵⁵ ‘calf’, *na*³³*pu*⁵⁵*li*⁵⁵ ‘small ox’, *mu*³³*xi*³¹ *li*⁵⁵ ‘small cow’, *mu*³³*laŋ*³¹ ‘mare’, *mu*³³*xi*³¹*laŋ*³¹ ‘small mare’, *mu*³³*ɕen*⁵⁵ ‘nanny (goat)’, *mu*³³*xi*³ *ɕen*⁵⁵ ‘small nanny (goat)’ (*pu*⁵⁵, *mu*³³, *na*³³ are prefixes).

2.1.3 Semi-inflection

In some cases, related words differ only by vowel alternation, tense and lax vowel alternation, tonal alternation or consonants (initials) alternation. These include synonyms, antonyms, or the categories change.

Vowel alternation:

pho ³⁵ ‘(maternal) grandfather’	phē ³⁵ ‘(maternal) grandmother’
mu ³¹ ‘you (singular)’	mi ³¹ ‘you (plural)’
ɕi ⁵⁵ po ³¹⁽⁵⁵⁾ ‘yesterday evening’	ɕa ⁵⁵ po ³¹⁽⁵⁵⁾ ‘tomorrow evening’
ŋo ³³ ‘peppery’	ŋa ³³ ‘salted’
tsa ¹³ ‘to bite’	tsu ³¹ ‘to eat’
la ³⁵ ‘to return’	li ³⁵ ‘to change’

Tense vowel and lax vowel alternation:

kui ³³ ‘fire smoke’	ku ³³ ‘to dry with smoke’
mda ³³ ‘be light (of a lamp)’	mda ³³ ‘be light (of the sky)’
luŋ ³³ ‘well’	luŋ ³³ ‘abyss, deep cave’

Tonal alternation:

tso ⁵⁵ ‘rake’	tso ³⁵ ‘to harrow’
-tshuŋ ³¹ ‘throat’	tshuŋ ³³ ‘thirsty’
tsan ³⁵ ‘to smell’	tsan ³³ ‘smelly’

Consonants (initials) alternation:

laŋ ³³ ‘clear (water)’	maŋ ⁵⁵ ‘muddy (water)’
ni ³³ ‘this’	ki ³³ ‘that’
pe ³¹ ‘we’	he ³¹ ‘they’
mtsha ¹³ ‘to kill’	mtsa ³¹ ‘to die’
nap ⁵⁵ ‘be closed’	na ⁵⁵ ‘to close one’s eyes, to shut up’
duŋ ³³ ‘hole’	luŋ ³³ ‘well’

2.2 *Loan words*

As the result of communication with the Han and the Zhuang, the Bugan language has borrowed some words from Han and Zhuang languages; all the borrowings are modern words. Some Bugan words are similar to Yi/Lolo or other Tibeto-Burman languages, but it is uncertain whether they are cognates or borrowings.

Chinese loan words :

Bugan	Chinese (Pinyin)	
miou ³¹	miao	‘temple’
pei ³⁵	bei	‘tablet’
tshaŋ ³¹	chang	‘to taste’
mə ³¹	mai	‘pulse’
-kan ¹³	jin	‘axe’
pin ³⁵	bing	‘soldier’
min ³¹	ming	‘understand’
lɔ̃ ⁵⁵ çi ³¹	liangshi	‘grain’
hu ³¹ tɕiu ¹³	hujiao	‘pepper’
tsau ³³	jiu	‘wine’
tsau ³⁵	zhao	‘kitchen range’

Zhuang loan words :

Bugan	Wuming (Zhuang)	
-man ¹³	-man ⁵⁵	‘plum’
-tsiap ³¹	kep ⁵⁵	‘chives’
-ku ⁵⁵	ku ³¹	‘eggplant’
ke ¹³	kve ²⁴	‘towel gourd’
tɕ ⁵⁵	tai ³³	‘bag’

mɔ̃ ⁵⁵ -	mau ⁴²	‘roof’
laŋ ³³	li:ŋ ⁵⁵	‘umbrella’
bə ³⁵	bu ³⁵	‘greasy, be bored with’

3. Grammar

3.1 Word categories

Although Bugan has some cases of derivational morphology, we can divide Bugan word categories most surely on the basis of structure, distribution, and meaning. Categories are: nouns, pronouns, numerals, classifiers, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, auxiliaries, conjunctions, or mood words.

3.1.1 Nouns

Nouns can stand by themselves, or they can be modified by adjectives, pronouns, or numeral classifier phrases. Generally, the position of the modifier is after the head (noun).

laŋ ³¹ pou ³⁵ ‘a white horse’	mɛ ⁵⁵ ɔ̃ ³³⁽³¹⁾ ‘my children’
horse white	children I
mɛ ⁵⁵ ki ³³ ‘that child’	wɛ ³³ mɛ ⁵⁵ ‘the younger brother of the child’
child that	yng. brother child
ɔ̃ ³¹ bi ³³⁽³⁵⁾ moŋ ³³ mə ⁵⁵ tshe ¹³⁽³⁵⁾ ‘I bought one knife.’	
I buy knife one	classi.

When the cardinality of the noun is one, it can be directly modified by the classifier *bɔ̃⁵⁵* ‘one, classifier’.

wɔ̃ ³³ bɔ̃ ⁵⁵ ‘one piece of stone’	bɔ̃ ⁵⁵ kou ¹³ bɔ̃ ⁵⁵ ‘one corn’
stone class.	corn class.
puŋ ⁵⁵ bɔ̃ ⁵⁵ ‘one flower’	puŋ ⁵⁵ liŋ ³¹ bɔ̃ ⁵⁵ ‘one coat’
flower class.	coat class.

Most nouns cannot be reduplicated, but many nouns that are concurrently classifiers, can be: *hɛ⁵⁵ hɛ⁵⁵* ‘every day’.

3.1.2 Pronouns

Personal pronouns distinguish singular, dual, and plural, and the first plural pronouns distinguish inclusive and exclusive. *biŋ³¹* is a blend of ‘*bi³¹* (two) *pau³¹* (classifier of people).’

ɔ ³¹ 'I'	wi ³¹ bi ³¹ 'we two'	wi ³¹ 'we (inclusive)' pɛ ³¹ 'we (exclusive)'
mɔ ³¹ 'you (singular)'	mi ³¹ bi ³¹ 'you two'	mi ³¹ 'you (plural)'
i ³¹ 'he, she, it'	hɛ ³¹ bi ³¹ 'they two'	hɛ ³¹ 'they'

Some interrogative pronouns are formed with *-pau³⁵* (indicating interrogation) and other morphemes, *o⁵⁵pau³⁵* 'where', *tsə⁵⁵pau³⁵* 'when', *tə⁵⁵pau³⁵* 'how many, how much', *nɛ¹³pau³⁵* 'how many (people)', *ɣen⁵⁵pau³⁵* 'why'.

Demonstrative pronouns have two basic forms—*ni³³* 'this' and *ki³³* 'that'. There are some others, *ta⁵⁵ni³³* 'here', *ta⁵⁵ki³³* 'there', *mə⁵⁵ni³³* 'this side', *mə⁵⁵ki³³* 'that side', *nɔŋ¹³ni³³* 'like this', *nɔŋ¹³ki³³* 'like that'. There are three deictic degrees to indicate location—*ki³³/dɔ¹³* 'that far', *kɛ³³* 'that farther', *o⁵⁵kɛ³³* 'that farthest'. *dɔ¹³* is not often used.

mɛ ⁵⁵	ki ³³	xu ⁵⁵⁽¹³⁾	lan ³¹	'That boy rides a horse.'
child	that	ride	horse	
mɛ ⁵⁵	kɛ ³³	tsou ³¹	fei ³³	'That boy (farther) has a meal.'
child	that	eat	meal	
mɛ ⁵⁵	o ⁵⁵ kɛ ³³	mtshau ³¹	li ⁵⁵	'That boy (farthest) herds oxen.'
child	that	herd	oxen	

Normally, pronouns cannot be either modified nor reduplicated.

3.1.3 Numerals

bɔ⁵⁵ 'one', *bi³¹* 'two', *mtse³¹* 'three', *pau³³* 'four', *mi³³* 'five', *piɔ³³* 'six', *poɔ³¹* 'seven', *sā³³* 'eight', *ɕi³³* 'nine', *mā³¹* 'ten', *zu³¹* 'hundred', *thian¹³* 'thousand'.

Different forms of 'one' and 'two' have different uses; *mə⁵⁵* 'one' and *bi³¹* 'two' are used with classifiers to form a numeral classifier phrase.

piau¹³⁽³⁵⁾ (people) *mə⁵⁵* (one) *pau³¹* (classifier of people) 'one person',
piau¹³⁽³⁵⁾ (people) *bi³¹* (two) *pau³¹* (classifier of people) 'two persons'.

mā ³¹ bɔ ⁵⁵ ‘eleven’	mə ⁵⁵ ʒu ³¹ l̥ɛ ³³ bɔ ⁵⁵	‘one hundred and one’
mā ³¹ bi ³¹ ‘12’	bi ³¹ ʒu ³¹	‘two hundred’
bi ³³⁽³¹⁾ mā ³¹ ‘20’	mə ⁵⁵ thiaŋ ¹³	‘one thousand’
mə ⁵⁵ ʒu ³¹ ‘100’	mə ⁵⁵ vā ¹³	‘ten thousand’

Normally, numerals cannot be modified or reduplicated.

3.1.4 Classifiers

Classifiers can be divided into three types—the classifiers for nouns (indicating measures of things, objects, etc.), for verbs (indicating measures of actions), or blends.

Classifiers for nouns:

pau ³¹	for people	piau ¹³⁽³⁵⁾ bi ³¹ pau ³¹	‘two persons’
biə ³³	for animals	li ⁵⁵ mtse ³¹ biə ³³	‘three oxen’
l̥ ³³	for long-shaped objects	xa ³³ mə ⁵⁵ li ³³	‘one stick’
tshe ¹³	for objects, river	you ⁵⁵ mə ⁵⁵ tshe ¹³	‘one river’
tsuŋ ⁵⁵	for plants	sau ³¹ pau ³³ tsuŋ ⁵⁵	‘four trees’
liu ³³	for sheet-shaped objects	yai ³⁵ mə ⁵⁵ liu ³³	‘one sheet of paper’
tsam ³³	pair	sau ³³ mə ⁵⁵ tsam ³³	‘a pair of birds’
pam ³⁵	portion	fɛi ³³ mə ⁵⁵ pam ³⁵	‘a portion of food’

Classifiers for verbs :

tsi ³⁵	time	ʒau ³¹ mə ⁵⁵ tsi ³⁵	‘have been there once’
mtsa ³⁵	for eating	tsou ³¹ mə ⁵⁵ mtsa ³⁵	‘have a meal’
tuŋ ⁵⁵	for biting	tsa ¹³ mə ⁵⁵ tuŋ ⁵⁵	‘be bitten once’
ŋga ³¹	for sleep	ŋaŋ ³³ mə ⁵⁵ ŋga ³¹	‘have slept once’
təŋ ³³	for fist	ndɛ ³⁵ mə ⁵⁵ təŋ ³³	‘give sb. a box’

Blends:

mtse ³³	for animals, consists of mə ⁵⁵ ‘one’ and biə ³³ (classifier), tə ⁵⁵ kɔ ³³ mtse ³³ ‘a tiger’.
biə ¹³	for animals, consists of bi ³¹ ‘two’ and biə ³³ (classifier), tə ⁵⁵ kɔ ³³ biə ¹³ ‘two tigers’.
mbau ⁵⁵	for people, consist of mə ⁵⁵ ‘one’ and pau ³¹ (classifier), piau ¹³⁽³⁵⁾ mbau ⁵⁵ ‘one person’.

Classifiers can be modified by numerals and demonstratives.

ma ⁰ kua ³¹	mi ³³	tsiu ³³	‘five folk songs’
song	five	classifier	

fɛi ³³	pau ³³	pam ³⁵		‘four portions of food’
food	four	classifier		
ʒiu ⁵⁵	bɔ ⁵⁵	ni ³³		‘this spoon’
spoon	classifier	this		
au ³¹	tha ³³	ki ³³		‘that bundle of firewood’
firewood	bundle	that		

A few classifiers can be reduplicated to indicate ‘every , all’.

he ⁵⁵	he ⁵⁵	‘every day’	mai ⁵⁵	mai ⁵⁵	‘every month’
day	day		month	month	

3.1.5 Verbs

Some verbs have causative forms, indicated by ‘ŋgɔ³⁵ + verb’, the original meaning of ŋgɔ³⁵ is ‘to drive out’.

xou ³⁵	‘to ride (a horse)’	ŋgɔ ³⁵ xou ³⁵	‘to order sb. to ride (a horse)’
paɯ ³¹	‘to get up’	ŋgɔ ³⁵ paɯ ³¹	‘to order sb. to get up’
tu ³³	‘out’	ŋgɔ ³⁵ tu ³³	‘to order sb. or sth. to get out’

Some verbs have durative aspect (continuous aspect), indicated by ‘sai³³ + verb + nan³¹’ or ‘verb + nan¹³’.

ɔ ³¹	sai ³³	pion ¹³		‘I’m writing.’	
I	dur.	write			
mu ³¹	ɲu ³³	nan ¹³ (31)	mə ⁰ dze ⁵⁵	‘What are you doing ?’	
you	do	dur.	what		
li ⁵⁵	sai ³³	tsou ³¹	tsiu ⁵⁵	nan ³¹	‘The ox is eating grass.’
ox	dur.	eat	grass	dur.	

Verbs can be modified by adverbs and auxiliary verbs.

pe ¹³ (35)	mə ⁵⁵	yen ⁵⁵	me ¹³	‘The elder sister doesn’t take after her mother.’
eld.sister	not	like	mother	
ɔ ³¹	fəŋ ⁵⁵	zau ⁵⁵ (31)	nai ⁵⁵ /nɛ ³¹	‘I like to go to the market.’
I	want	go	market	

Verbs cannot be reduplicated.

3.1.6 *Adjectives*

Adjectives can be modified by different adverbs to indicate degrees.

1st degree	‘adjective + tɛ ³¹ ,’
comparative	‘adjective + tɛ ³¹ lɛ ³¹ ,’
superlative	‘kaŋ ⁵⁵ + adjective + lɛ ³¹ ,’

nɔ ³⁵	ɔ ³¹	lu ³¹	tɛ ³¹	‘My house is good.’
house	I	good	indeed	

nɔ ³⁵	mu ³¹	lu ³¹	tɛ ³¹ lɛ ³¹	‘Your house is better.’
house	you	good	more	

nɔ ³⁵	i ³¹	kaŋ ⁵⁵	lu ³¹	lɛ ³¹	‘His house is the best.’
house	he	most	good	most	

Adjectives can be modified by all adverbs.

mɔ ³¹	tɛ ³¹	‘be a bit too heavy’	kaŋ ⁵⁵	mɔ ³¹	‘very heavy’
heavy	a bit		very	heavy	

mə ⁵⁵	lou ³³	‘be not cold’	tə ⁰ ka ³³	nɔ ¹³	‘do (it) immediately’
not	cold		immediately	do	

Adjectives can be followed by 1~2 suffix syllables to indicate certain conditions (see § 2.1.2.2.), and most adjectives can be reduplicated.

ŋga ³¹	ŋga ³¹	‘deep yellow’	ndzun ³³	ndzun ³³	‘very thin (person)’
yellow	yellow		thin	thin	

3.1.7 *Adverbs*

Adverbs cannot be modified, their main grammatical function is to modify verbs and adjectives. Most of them occur before their heads, only few adverbs follow their heads (see 3.1.5, 3.1.6).

3.1.8 *Prepositions*

Prepositions form prepositional phrases with nouns and pronouns and play a sentence part.

pə ⁰	nam ⁵⁵	thɛ ³¹	tə ⁵⁵ ni ³³	‘(from) last year until today.’
last	year	to	now	

pi ¹³	thə ⁵⁵⁽³¹⁾	tsai ³¹ /pi ³³	ta ⁵⁵	‘The sun is bigger than the moon.’
sun	big	than	moon	
i ³³⁽³¹⁾	lai ⁵⁵	ban ⁵⁵	pa ⁵⁵ sau ³¹ a ³³	‘He has fallen from the top of a tree.’
he	fall	from	top tree come	

3.1.9 Auxiliaries

mə ⁵⁵	precedes adjectives, indicates quality or condition of sth. or sb.			
mə ⁵⁵ la ¹³⁽³³⁾	‘(It) is red’, mə ⁵⁵ ŋga ⁵⁵⁽³¹⁾ ‘(It) is yellow’			
la ³³	precedes nouns, pronouns, forming a genitive.			
ŋu ³³ mə ⁵⁵ ni ³³ la ³³ mu ⁵⁵⁽³¹⁾	‘This house is yours.’			
	house	here	belong-to	you
le ³¹	follows nouns, pronouns, forms a genitive.			
mo ³³ ɔ ³¹ le ³¹	‘The knife is mine.’			
	knife	I	belong-to	
tsu ³¹	follows verbs, indicates continuous action.			
mɛ ⁵⁵ be ³⁵ tsu ³¹ ɔŋ ³⁵⁽¹³⁾ bi ³¹ tshe ¹³	‘This boy is holding two sugar canes.’			
	child	hold	sugar cane	two classifier

3.1.10 Conjunctions

Conjunctions are often used to link up content words or phrases.

wɛ ³³	le ³¹	du ³³	
eld. brother	and	ygr. brother	
‘elder brother and younger brother’			
mtse ³³	tsə ³³	kai ³³	ma ³³ mtse ⁵⁵⁽³¹⁾
banana	have	or	haven’t
‘(Do you) have any bananas?’			

3.1.11 Mood words

They usually occur at the end of a sentence to indicate its mood. By itself a mood word has no meaning.

ma¹³, a³³ occur in assertives.

i ³¹	mə ⁵⁵	no ³¹	ma ¹³	‘He doesn’t come here.’
he	not	come	assert	

ʒau³¹ ɣau³¹sau⁵⁵ tsu³¹ mə⁵⁵ nam⁵⁵ a³³
 go read auxiliary one year assert.
 'He has gone to school for one year.'

ni⁵⁵ occurs in interrogatives.

i³¹ nɔ³¹ mə⁵⁵ nɔ³¹ ni⁵⁵ 'Does he come here?'
 he come not come ques.

la⁰ occurs in imperatives.

wi³¹ na⁵⁵ la⁰ 'Let us go!'
 we go imp.

3.2. Phrases

There are subject-predicate phrases, verb-object phrases, parallel phrases, head-modifier phrases, verb-complement phrases, and numerical-classifier phrases.

3.2.1 Subject-predicate phrases

Subjects are usually formed by nouns, pronouns, nominal head-modifier phrases or parallel phrases. Predicates are usually formed by verbs, adjectives, verbal and adjective parallel (or head-modifier) phrases, or verb-complement phrases.

tsioŋ³³ ŋgɔ³⁵ 'the deer steps on'
 deer step on

hɔŋ³³ ʒuŋ⁵⁵⁽³¹⁾ tsioŋ³³ tsan³³ 'Footprints of deer are smelly.'
 footprint foot deer smelly

i³¹ nɔ³¹ mə⁵⁵ tsi³⁵ 'He has once come here.'
 he come one time

wɛ³³ lɛ³³ pɛ³⁵ nɛ³¹bio³³ di³¹
 eld. bro. and sis.-in-law quarrel terribly
 'Elder brother quarrels with sister-in-law terribly.'

mɛ⁵⁵ ɔ³³⁽³¹⁾ ʒou¹³ tho³¹ ʒou¹³ ɣo³³
 child I also big also tall
 'My child is big and tall.'

3.2.2 *Verb-object phrases*

The elements which act as an object are the same as those that act as a subject:

te³¹ thuŋ³¹go³¹
 worship buckwheat
 'to offer buckwheat as a sacrifice to (ancestors)'

taŋ³⁵ saŋ³¹ le³³ lau³⁵(13)
 put-in garlic and prickly-ash
 'to put some garlic and Chinese prickly ashes (in the bag)'

ta³⁵ti⁵⁵ mu³¹
 give you
 'to give you'

po⁵⁵kan³³ ɕo³³ nuŋ³¹tsi¹³ko³⁵ thie¹³tsu⁵⁵
 Bugan afraid Nong Zhigao Emperor
 'The Bugan were afraid of Emperor Nong Zhigao.'

3.2.3 *Parallel phrases*

Parallel phrases can be formed by two or more nouns, pronouns, verbs, or adjectives, some use conjunctions but others don't.

ɕu³³ taŋ³³ ɕu³³ tsa³⁵ 'pork and chicken'
 meat pig meat chicken

o³¹ le³¹(33) i³¹ 'he and I'
 he and I

mu³¹ le³³ na³³mu³³ za⁵⁵ po³¹
 you and girl dance a reedpipe wind instrument
 'You and the girls dance following the music (played by a reedpipe wind instrument).'

tsaŋ³¹ a³³ tsou³¹ 'take (it) back and eat'
 take assert. come eat

kaŋ⁵⁵ tho⁵⁵(31) kaŋ⁵⁵ ɣo³³ 'big and high'
 very big very high

3.2.4 *Head-modifier phrases*

There are two types. When nouns act as the head they may be modified by adjectives, pronouns, nouns, or numerical classifier phrases (see § 3.1.1.). When

verbs or adjectives act as the heads, they may be modified by adverbs and time nouns (see § 3.1.5. and § 3.1.6.).

3.2.5 *Verb-complement phrases*

Verbs can be followed by adjectives, verbs, or numerical classifier phrases to complete their meaning, thus forming a verb-complement phrase.

ne³¹ bio³³ di³¹ ‘to quarrel terribly’
 quarrel terribly

kan³⁵ thuŋ³³ ‘to cut down’
 cut fall

bi³⁵ tsu³¹ bi³¹ tshe¹³ ‘to hold two’
 hold auxiliary two classifier

ʒau³¹ yau³¹sau⁵⁵ tsu³¹ mə⁵⁵ nam⁵⁵ a⁰
 go read auxiliary one year
 ‘have gone to the school for one year’

i³¹ ʏo³³ mtse³¹ tshu³³
 he high three chi
 ‘He is three chis (a unit of length) high.’

3.2.6 *Numerical classifier phrases*

These consist of ‘numeral + classifier’; some become blends (see §3.1.3, §3.1.4).

3.3 *Sentence parts and word order*

Bugan is a SVO language; only the existential sentence is OSV (see §3.4). Attributes follow heads; some adverbials follow heads, but the others precede heads. Complements always follow heads.

The elements which act as subject or object in a sentence are the same as those in a phrase; some examples are found in §3.1, §3.2; below are some more sentences.

S	V	O
nun ³¹ tsi ¹³ ko ³⁵ thie ¹³ tsu ⁵⁵	tɛ ³¹ tou ³³ (13)	pə ⁵⁵ kan ³³
Emperor Nong Zhigao	pursue	Bugan
‘Nong Zhigao Emperor pursued the Bugan.’		

S	V	O Complement
pə ⁵⁵ kan ³³	nə ³³ mtsəŋ ³⁵	kə ³³ o ⁵⁵ biou ³³
Bugan	spend	festival on the mountain top.
‘The Bugan spend festivals on top of the mountain.’		

mən⁵⁵ ɔ³¹ ki³³ mi³³ pau³⁵⁽³¹⁾ le¹³ lu³¹
 daughter-in-law I those five classifier all good
 ‘All of my five daughters-in-law are excellent.’

The older Bugan people (60 years old and up) are accustomed to inserting *kai*³³ ‘have’ between the head and the modifier when the modifier is a numeral-classifier phrase.

li⁵⁵ kai³³ mi³³ biə³³ ‘There are five oxen.’
 ox have five classifier

xa³³ kai³³ mə⁵⁵ li³³ ‘There is one stick.’
 stick have one classifier

3.4 Sentence patterns

3.4.1 Existential sentences

Existential sentences indicate that someone has something or there is something in some place, and all objects in this pattern are placed before the subject and verbs; the sentence order is OSV.

pə⁰qou⁵⁵ pi³⁵ kai³³ mtse³¹ bɔ³¹⁽⁵⁵⁾
 sky sun have three classifier
 ‘There are three suns in the sky.’

toŋ¹³ sau³¹ ɔ³¹ kai³³ biɔ³¹
 bucket wood I have pair
 ‘I have a pair of water buckets.’

mtse³³tsə³³ mu³¹ kai³³ ma³³ mtse⁵⁵
 banana you have or not
 ‘Do you have any bananas?’

3.4.2 Assertives and negatives

Some assertives have no linking verb.

ki³³ mən⁵⁵ ɔ³¹ ‘That is my daughter-in-law.’
 that daughter-in-law I

i³¹ khə³³ pə⁵⁵khui⁵⁵ ‘He may be a Han.’
 He may Han

bi³¹ wə³³ du³³ kaŋ³¹ ‘(They) two are blood brothers.’
 two brother be blood

Linking verbs have two forms—*ni*³³/*nu*³³. They are used in assertives. The original meaning of *nu*³³ is ‘do’; it is not often used as a linking verb. *ni*³³ may be related to *ni*³³ ‘this’. *saŋ*⁵⁵ is used in negatives.

ɔ³¹ ni³³/*nu*³³ pə⁵⁵kaŋ³³
 I be Bugan
 ‘I am a Bugan.’

ɔ³¹ mə⁵⁵ saŋ⁵⁵ piau¹³ pə⁵⁵se³³
 I not be man Guangnan
 ‘I am not a person who lives in Guangnan Town.’

mou³³ mə⁵⁵ni³³ lio⁵⁵ mə⁵⁵ saŋ⁵⁵
 knife here my not be
 ‘This knife is not mine.’

3.4.3 Comparative sentences

Comparative sentences are used to compare the conditions and characters of people or things. Basically, their nuclear form is ‘adjective - *tsai*³¹/*pi*¹³ - noun (pronoun or nominal phrase)’; *tsai*³¹/*pi*¹³ are prepositions, they govern nouns (or nominal phrases) and form a prepositional phrase (or a prepositional clause).

li⁵⁵ thɔ³¹ tsai³¹/*pi*¹³ təu³³
 ox big than pig
 ‘An ox is bigger than a pig.’

mɛ⁵⁵ jɔ³¹ sɛ³¹ tsai³¹/*pi*¹³ mɛ⁵⁵ mu³¹
 children he smart than children you
 ‘His children are smarter than your children.’

Although Bugan is a tonal language, most of its words are monosyllabic, and only a few words show morphological changes, still, the Bugan language is very close to Mon-Khmer. From its basic vocabulary, we can clearly observe the close relation between Bugan and other Mon-Khmer languages. From the following wordlist, we note that Bugan shares many cognates in basic vocabulary with Mon-Khmer languages especially with Lai/Bolyu of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous region, China.¹ In coming papers, I will discuss the origin of Bugan tones, Bugan’s relation to Lai/Bolyu and its position in the Mon-Khmer stock.²

¹ Bugan and Lai/Bolyu words come from my investigations, Old Mon (spoken in the Dvaravati Kingdom of Central Thailand in the VI to IXth Centuries A.D.) words from Diffloth: *The Dvaravati Old Mon Language and Nyah Kur*, and the words from the other Mon-Khmer languages come from F. E. Huffman, “An Examination of lexical correspondences between Vietnamese and some other Austroasiatic languages,” *Lingua* 43:171-98 (1977). Vietnamese phonetic values are taken from Laurence C. Thompson. 1987. *A Vietnamese Reference*

	B G	L	V	C	LW	K	OM
one	bə ⁵⁵ /mə ⁵⁵	mə ³³ /məi ³¹	mət	muəy		mooy	*mway
two	biə ³¹ /bi ³¹	mbi ⁵⁵	hai				*baar
three	mtse ³¹	pa:i ⁵⁵	ba	bəy			*pii?
four	pau ³³	pu:n ⁵³	bón	bəun	paon		*pan
five	mi ³³	me ³³	năm [nəm]	pram	phon		*(m-)suun
six	piə ³³	piu ⁵³	sáu [səu]				*t(-w-)raw
seven	pəu ³¹	pa:i ⁵⁵	báy [bɛi]				*tɲpoh
eight	sá ³³	sə:m ⁵³	tám				*tɲcaam
nine	ci ³³	ɕən ⁵³	chín				*(k/t)ɲciit
ten	má ³¹	ma:n ³³	mưđi [muđi]				*cas
hundred	zu ³¹	zə ³³					
hand	tiə ⁵⁵	ti ⁵⁵	tay [tɛi]	day	te?	ti?	*təy
bone	za ³⁵	pau ³¹ zə ⁵⁵	xưông [suəŋ]	cqəŋ	sə?əŋ	c?aəŋ	*j(l)uut
foot	zəŋ ³¹	zəŋ ⁵⁵	chân [cən]	(cəəy)	chuəŋ		*juŋ
tail	pa ⁵⁵ wei ³¹	zi ³¹	đuôi [đuôi]	(kantuy)			*pɲtaa?
tooth	tsə ³⁵	maŋ ³¹	răng [zəŋ]	(tmin)			*ŋiək
hair	sək ⁵⁵	suk ⁵³	tóc [təukp]	sək	haək		*səək
eye	pə ⁰ mɛ ³³	ʔa:i ⁵³ ma ³¹	mat	(pɲeək)	ʔɲae		*mat
neck	kəŋ ³³	ləŋ ³¹	cố	kaa			*kəə?
nose	pə ⁰ má ³¹	ləŋ ³³ mi ¹¹	mũi [mui]	craəmoh	maəh	muh	*(cə)- moh
tongue	pə ⁰ lai ³³	lim ³¹	lưỡi [luoi]	leas Bru			*klntaak
bird	sau ³³	sən ⁵³	chim [cim]	saem			*kɲciəm
dog	tsau ³³	tsu ⁵³	chó [cə]	ckəe	sə?	sə?	*clur
fish	sə ⁰ qou ³³	qə ⁵³	cá [ka]	ka?	ka?		*kaa?
tree	sau ³¹	sa:u ⁵⁵	cây [kɛi]	(kuəl)			*chuu?
leaf	ləu ¹³	lə ¹¹	lá	slək	hla?	hla?	*slaa?
root	yəu ¹³	zi ¹¹	rế	rih	reh	rieh	*ris
stone	təu ³³	mau ¹¹	dá	tmaa	səmo?		*tməə?
cave	ləŋ ³³	ləŋ ³³	lờ		dələh Brao		*srueŋ
river	yəu ⁵⁵	a:n ⁵⁵	sông [səuŋm]	(stij)	kləŋ		*krooŋ
water	da ³⁵	nde ⁵³	nước [nuək]	ɬk			*daək
road	ho ⁵⁵ tsu ³³	kə ⁵³	đường [đuəŋ]				*trəw
wall	ləŋ ¹³	pɛ ³³ və ¹³	tường [tuəŋ]	cəŋceəŋ	ndəŋ		
I	ə ³¹	a:u ⁵⁵	anh [ʔɛŋ]	ʔaŋ			*ʔəy
son	kua ⁵⁵	qu:n ⁵⁵	con [kən]	koun	kuən	kəən	*kəən
year	nam ³⁵	nam ¹³	năm [nəm]	cnam	naim		*cnaam
weave	ta ³¹	ta:n ⁵⁵	dan [dan]	tbaaŋ	taŋ	taaŋ	*taaŋ
eat	tsəu ³¹	tsə ⁵⁵	xôi [səi]	sii	som		*caa?
spin	wəŋ ¹³	pin ³³	quay [kwɛi]	(wil)			*wiəŋ
die	mtsə ³¹	ʔet ⁵⁵	chết [cet]				*ət
cut	yɛŋ ³⁵	an ⁵³	cắt [ket]	kat			*c-m-aa?
bite	tsə ¹³	tsən ⁵³	cán [kən]	kat	kiət		*kuut

Grammar. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. BG=Bugan, L=Lai/Bolyu, V=Vietnamese, C=Cambodian, LW=Lawa, K=Khmu/, OM=Old Mon.

² I would like to thank Professor Jerold A. Edmondson. This paper has benefited substantially in form and content from his help. Responsibility for any errors or misconceptions remains mine alone.