

11. Molbog

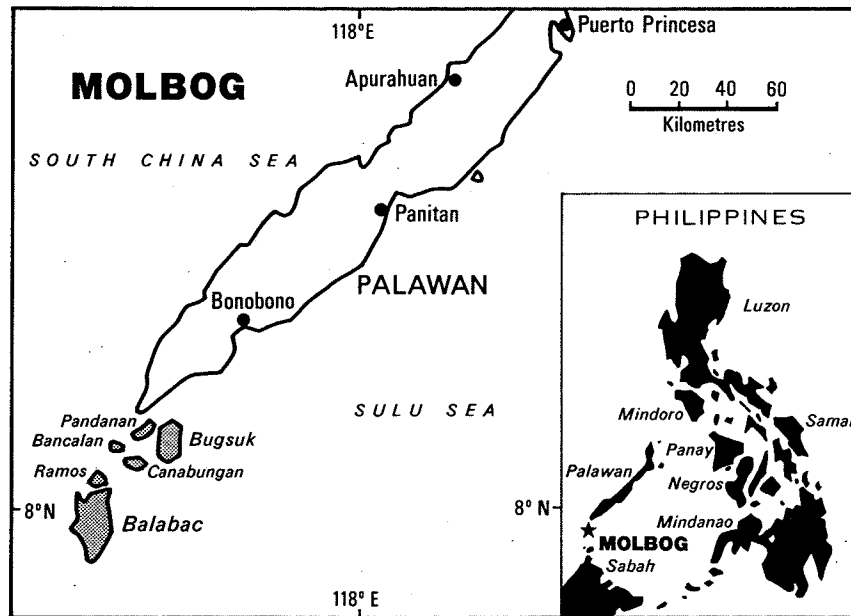
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1. Introduction

Molbog is the name of the people and the language primarily centred on Balabac Island. They claim to have originated in the interior of Balabac, but are now being displaced from the eastern side of that homeland by settlers from other areas of the southern Philippines. Over the past few decades they have spread north to Ramos Island, Bancalan Island, and along the east coast of Palawan in scattered settlements such as at Batarasa and as far north as Sarong. They have also emigrated southward to Banggi and Balambangan islands in Sabah. It is estimated that there are nearly 6,000 speakers in all these areas.



Map 11. Molbog language area

The language has been cited as Melebuganon in Conklin (1952) and Voegelin – Voegelin (1977). Molbog is a member of the Palawanic subgroup of the Meso-Philippine group of Western Malayo-Polynesian. Its closest relationships are to Palawano and then to Aborlan Tagbanwa and Palawan Batak. The language has been under influence from Tausug, Jama Mapun, Sama, Bajaw, and Banggi.

Molbog is still an undescribed language apart from one comparative historical survey (Thiessen 1981) and some unpublished survey wordlists on file with the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Manila.

2. Phonology

2.1 Consonants

Table 1. Consonants

		Bilabial	Alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops/Affricates	vl	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>		<i>k</i>	?
	vd	<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	(<i>ʃ</i>)	<i>g</i>	
Fricatives			<i>s</i>			(<i>h</i>)
Nasals		<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	(<i>ɲ</i>)	<i>ŋ</i>	
Laterals			<i>l</i>			
Flaps			<i>r</i>			
Semivowels		<i>w</i>		<i>y</i>		

Note: Items in parentheses are of very low frequency and are generally the result of the adoption of loanwords from Sama dialects, Malay, or Spanish, e.g., *ʃangut* 'beard' or *duña?* 'world' are ultimately from Malay. Although [h] has generally been lost historically-speaking, it is found on a few forms like *luha?* 'tears' and *tohi?* 'sew'; it is not clear if these sporadic retentions or re-introductions due to contact with languages preserving /h/ in cognate forms.

2.2 Vowels

Table 2. Consonants

	Front	Central	Back
High	<i>i</i>		<i>u</i>
Mid			<i>o</i>
Low		<i>a</i>	

Neither vowel length nor stress is phonemic and therefore do not differentiate root words.

3 Verb morphology

Molbog verbs are conjugated for one of four voices depending on the focus or agreement of the verb with the semantic role of the topic.

Active emphasises an actor (*daton* 'arrive') or a meteorological event (*dolok* 'rain').

Passive, marked by *-on*, emphasises an object affected (*podon* 'extinguish', *baʔal* 'build') or taken in (*okon* 'eat', *kawin* 'marry', *olon* 'buy').

Instrumental, marked by *i-*, emphasises an object moving away (*tulak* 'push', *burbur* 'pour') or parted with (*i-pog-olon* 'sell', *lobon* 'bury').

Local, marked by *-an*, emphasises an object partially affected (*kulit* 'peel', *rasa* 'feel'), cleansed (*ugas* 'wash', *panis* 'wipe off'), or removed (*bayad* 'pay', *buʔlian* 'release, let go').

However, in the active voice, verbs fall into one of two classes marked by: *-um-* (with an alternate *m-* before vowel initial stems, generally denoting punctual or intransitive actions) vs *mog-* (denoting transitive, durative, or reciprocal actions, amongst others). An analogous albeit more complex situation is described for Tagalog (see Pittman 1966 and McFarland 1976). The base forms for these distinctions in Molbog are as follows:

-um- verb, e.g., *tutun* 'burn', *tolon* 'swallow', *tiag* 'wake up', *lomпой* 'swim'
alternate *m-*, e.g., *okon* 'eat', *inum* 'drink', *isiʔ* 'take', *irum* 'seek'

mog- verb, e.g., *akut* 'carry', *gunda* 'cook', *tanok* 'boil', *taras* 'drip'.

Some verbs, which may be described as *stative*, indicate a state achieved and are marked by the prefix *og-*, e.g., *lopun* 'float, be floating', *dolog* 'burn, be burning', or the derivatives *ogko-* (*donog* 'hear', *lotog* 'see', *paya* 'tired, weary', *runut* 'rotten') and *ogko--an* (*boʔgon* 'choke', *oroti* 'understand').

Another common affix *po-*, indicates a *causative* construction and is evident in such pairs as: *i-po-bolos* 'lend' (contrast *bolos* 'borrow') or *i-po-lotog* 'show' (contrast *lotog* 'see; look at').

Little else is known about the morphosyntax of Molbog. However, many of the features described for that of Palawano in this volume and in Revel-Macdonald (1979) will be found to apply since the two languages are typologically and genetically very close.

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