

SUBGROUPING OF THE BATANIC LANGUAGEGS

Paul Jen-Kuei Li^(*)

1. Introduction

The Batanic languages or dialects include Yami, Itbayat, Ivatan (including Ivasay and Isamorong subdialects) and Babuyan. Yami is spoken on the island of Lanyu (called Orchid Island in Chinese or formerly Botel Tobago), with minor dialectal differences in six different villages (Imorod, Iraralay, Ivalino, Iranomilek, Yayu and Iratay). From north to south, Lanyu, Itbayat, Batan, Sabtang and Babuyan are geographically located in almost a vertical line (see Map 1).

I have been working on Yami off and on ever since September 1976. I first visited the Batan Island for a week (March 25 - April 1, 1996) and then returned to the Batanes for the second visit for nearly two more weeks (February 16-27, 1997). I was able to check the animal and plant names listed in Kano (1941a, b) and the comparative wordlists of 851 items for Itbayat, Ivasay and Isamorong, but unable to check Babuyan, as listed in Tsuchida *et al* (1987).¹ I was able to fill in some gaps and correct a few typographical errors and/or mistranscriptions in their wordlists (see Li 1997). Then I also collected more Yami vocabulary for comparative purposes in a few more trips to Lanyu in 1997. More adequate data for Babuyan is needed for a comparative study of the Batanic group of languages.

All the Batanic languages or dialects share more or less the same number of segments with similar phonetic value. The voiced uvular fricative /R/ (written as /x/ in Itbayat but as /h/ in Yami in Tsuchida *et al* 1987) occurs only in Yami and Itbayat. The glottal stop /ʔ/ appears only adjacent to another consonant in the word-medial position in Itbayat, e.g. /isʔis/ 'scales,' /aʔdid/ 'fish sp. (grouper)'. This is rare in Yami and Ivasay, also in the similar phonetic environment, i.e. only adjacent to a consonant. Itbayat retains the voiceless glottal stop /h/ in the word-initial, medial (intervocalic or before another consonant) and final position in some lexical forms, which is lost in all the other Batanic languages, e.g. /hima/ 'heat rashes' in Itbayat, but /ima/ in all the other languages; /liham/ 'steal' in Itbayat, but /liam/ or /diam/ in the others; /ahna/ 'melt' in Itbayat, but /ana/ in the others, /sarih/ 'dark' in Itbayat, but /sari/ in the others. Thus Itbayat is phonologically the most conservative of the entire Batanic group.

Of all Yami dialects, Iraralay is the most conservative in sharing more cognates and their forms with Itbayat or other Batanic languages. Ivatan is comprised of two subdialects, Ivasay and Isamorong, with minor phonological and lexical differences.

To better show the phonetic value and for the convenience of comparison, I have changed some of the orthography: /r/ for the trill, /z/ for the voiced retroflex fricative and /R/ for the voiced uvular fricative in Yami. For these three consonants Tsuchida *et al* (1987) use /z/, /r/ and /h/ respectively.

^(*)Institute of Linguistics, Academia Sinica

¹ The following item seems to be an exception: Yami /pilyay/, Itbayat /pidoy/, Ivatan and Babuyan /piday/. However, the second vowel in the Itbayat form does not correspond to the one in the other languages.

2. Phonological and Lexical Comparison

Phonologically, Ivatan and Babuyan exclusively share two common innovations: PAN *R > l and *l > d adjacent to *i or *e, whereas Yami and Itbayat retain these two as *R > r and *l > l, as exemplified in dozens of cognates shared by all the Batanic languages. In addition, Yami and Itbayat share the voiced uvular fricative [R], which has become voiceless glottal fricative [h] in all the other Batanic languages.

However, Itbayat, Ivatan and Babuyan exclusively share three innovations: (1) PAN *R > y, (2) *ŋ > d̥ only adjacent to *i, and (3) *k > c also only adjacent to *i. While there are 17 examples for (1), there are only a few for (2) and (3). That is to say, d̥ and c have derived from ŋ and k respectively only in a very special phonetic environment in only a few lexical forms. However, the changes have not always taken place in the same phonetic environment for all these languages, e.g., /agcin/ 'unload' in Yami and Isamorong, /agtin/ in Itbayat, while /agtid̥/ in Ivasay; /poliŋ/ 'dust in one's eye' in Yami, /polid̥/ in Itbayat, while /podin/ in Ivatan and Babuyan. These two are only minor changes and they may have developed fairly recently. Thus they can be regarded as areal features recently introduced in the Batanes area.

Yami has a unique innovation, *R > *y > l/a-a, among the Batanic group of languages. The change must have taken place fairly recently, namely after Yami split from Itbayat about five hundred years ago.

Not only ŋ, but also n is occasionally palatalized adjacent to i, e.g., /panid/ 'wing' in both Yami and Itbayat, but /padid/ in Ivatan and Babuyan.

Is Itbayat genetically closer to Yami or to the other Batanic languages? Phonological evidence as stated above seems to indicate that Itbayat is genetically closer to Yami than either is to the other Batanic languages.

Lexical evidence also indicates that Yami groups with Itbayat, while all the other Batanic languages (Ivasay, Isamorong and Babuyan) constitute another subgroup of the Batanic languages. Yami and Itbayat share the same cognates, while the other languages share the others. However, Itbayat appears to share even more cognates (26) with the other Batanic languages rather than with Yami, due to their geographical closeness to each other.

Yami has been isolated from the other Batanic languages for about three hundred years (Yu and Tung 1998:94). All the other Batanic languages except Babuyan have been in close contact with each other, and words are borrowed easily among them. It is clear that Babuyan is heavily influenced by the Ilokano language spoken in northern Philippines. The common vocabulary stock shared by Babuyan and Ivatan is deflated to a great extent, as based on the Babuyan data collected by Moriguchi.

Itbayat and Yami are genetically closer to each other than either is to Ivatan. As previously claimed by Dyen (), Itbayat is closer to Yami. Examine the following:

1). Itbayat shares with Yami in retaining the voiced uvular fricative [R], which has become voiceless glottal fricative /h/ in Ivatan and Babuyan.