

Handout: Siraya: the revival of a dormant Formosan language

Alexander Adelaar, National Museum of Ethnography, Osaka and Asia Institute, University of Melbourne

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1. General

Siraya used to be spoken in a variety of dialects on the plains of Southwest Taiwan (see Map). It became extinct at the beginning of the 20th century (1905) due to a shift to Hokkien in the Siraya community. However, in the last fifteen-odd years the descendants of the erstwhile Siraya-speaking community have begun to revive the Siraya language and culture.

2. Historical background of research

Dutch colonisation of West and North Taiwan (Formosa) between 1624 and 1661.
Two Formosan languages (Siraya and Favorlang) were used in missionary activities.

3. Siraya data

Three categories:

Dutch texts (translation of Gospel of Matthew, some dialogues) + wordlist (1624-1661)

Chinese-Siraya "bilingual" land contracts (17th-18th centuries)

Siraya wordlists collected by Japanese (late 19th - early 20th centuries)

4. Dialect variety

Dutch materials: Gospel dialect (Matthew) vs. Utrecht ms (wordlist + dialogues)

Land contracts: represent three dialects: Makatao, Taivuan, Siraya Proper (Li)

Wordlists collected by Japanese: represent Makatao, Taivuan, Siraya Proper dialects (Tsuchida), but these dialects can also be seen as representing a dialect chain.

Main differences between Gospel dialect and Utrecht Manuscript dialect:

Proto Austronesian *d became UM s, Gospel d-/r- (in initial position) or r (elsewhere):

Proto Austronesian	UM	Gospel
*lahud 'towards the sea'	<i>rmaos</i>	<i>raor</i>
*daya 'towards the interior'	<i>seia</i>	<i>reya</i>
*duSa 'two'	<i>so-soa</i>	<i>ru-ruha</i>
*daləm 'water'	<i>salom</i>	<i>ralum</i>
*dəmdəm 'dark, obscure'	<i>ma-simdim</i>	<i>ma-rimdim</i>

Proto Austronesian *R > UM x¹, Gospel Ø-, -Ø-, -x (+ palatalisation of adjacent vowels):

Proto Austronesian	UM	Gospel
*Rumaq 'house; lineage'	<i>xuma</i> 'village, town'	<i>äwma</i> (æuma xxi:17) id.
*baqəRu 'new'	<i>vaxo</i> ('vacho') 'new'	<i>vahäw</i> (ix:17) id.
*waRi	<i>waxi</i> 'day; sun'	<i>wäy</i> (wæ'i iii:1) id.
*baRiuS 'whirlwind'	<i>vaxiox</i> 'stormwind'	<i>bäyux</i> (bæ'joug-h xvi:3) 'thunderstorm'
•DamaR 'resin'	<i>xamax</i> 'blood'	<i>ämax</i> (xvi:17) id.
•SuRəla 'snow'	<i>uxla</i> 'snow'	<i>äwla</i> (æu'la xxviii:3) id.

Proto Austronesian *-an > UM -ang, Gospel -an :

Proto Austronesian	UM	Gospel
*<um> + *kaʔən 'to eat'	<i>k<m>ang</i>	<i>k<m>an</i>
duma (+-an) 'other'	<i>sumang</i> 'other ; future'	<i>ruman</i>
*ka-*Ratus-*an	<i>saat ka-xatux-ang</i> 'hundred'	<i>saat ka-ätux-an</i>
*ka- ? -an	<i>i-ra-rong-ang</i> 'seat, chair'	<i>i-ra-rung-an</i>
*ka- ? -an	<i>ka-va-voel-ang</i> 'kin-group, lineage'	<i>ka-va-vuil-an</i>

Main differences between Makatao -, Taivuan - and Siraya Proper dialects:

Proto-Austronesian	Siraya	Taivuan	Makatao
*l	r	h or ø	r
*ɭ	l	l	n

Examples:

Proto Austronesian	Siraya	Taivuan	Makatao
*dapaɭ 'leg'	<i>rapal</i>	<i>rapan</i>	?
*tapiɭ 'shoe'	<i>ta-tapil</i>	<i>ta-tapin</i>	<i>ta-tapin</i>
*quzaɭ 'rain'	<i>udal, udan</i>	<i>uran</i>	<i>uran</i>
*qaɭitu 'spirit'	<i>litu</i>	<i>anitu</i>	<i>ngitu</i>
*ma-puɭi 'white'	<i>ma-puli</i>	<i>ma-puli</i>	<i>ma-puni</i>
*(qa)-ɭuang 'big animal'	<i>luang</i> 'cow'	<i>lowan</i> 'cow'	<i>noang</i> 'cow'
*aɭak 'offspring'	<i>alak</i>	<i>alak</i>	<i>alak</i>
*daɭum 'water'	<i>dalum</i>	<i>ralum</i>	<i>ralum</i>
*qaSəlu 'pestle'	<i>haiero</i>	<i>hayu</i>	<i>hayu</i>
*Cəlu 'three'	<i>turu</i>	<i>toho</i>	<i>toru</i>
*lima 'five'	<i>rima</i>	<i>hima</i>	<i>rima</i>
*zalan 'road, path'	<i>daran</i>	<i>raan</i>	<i>raran</i>
*bulal 'moon'	<i>vural, vuran</i>	<i>buan</i>	<i>buran</i>

¹Most probably a velar fricative.

5. Typological interest

- loss and merger of non-agent voice markers
- animate-inanimate opposition (in case marking and in numerals)
- Bound verbs
- Orientation prefixes
- Anticipating prefixes; examples:

- (1) *ka Raraman=uhu ka kmi-dǔng k<m>ĭta*
 LK Father=2S.GEN LK AS-secrecy <AO3>see
pää-vli-a ĭmhu-an tu rämäx
 give-reciprocate-SJ 2S-OBL LOC light
 'and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you openly' (vi:18)
- (2) *mu-ĭmid=kamu kawa m-u-mha ki ĩta*
 AS-all=2S.NOM QU AO3-MOT-understand DF PRX
 'do you understand all this?' (xiii:51)
- (3) *ni-k-ĭmid k<m>an ka mi-bangtaw ta neni*
 PST-AS-all <AV3>eat LK INCH-satiated NOM 3P.INDEP
 'they did all eat and were filled' (xiii:20)
- (4) *pĭpi ka ni-k-da k<m>an*
 crumbs LK PST-AS-remain <AV3>eat
 '...crumbs that were left from the dinner' (xiv:20)
- (5) *Īru ka ma-dung=ato ni-k-lam ma-i-rung*
 when,if LK AV1-obscure=PRF PST-AS-with AO-LOC-sit
ki saat kĭtiän äb ki ruha
 DF one ten plus DF two
 'At evening, the disciples sat together [at the table]' (xxvi:20)

AS 'anticipating sequence'
 AV 'Actor-voice'
 DF 'default relation marker'
 GEN 'genitive'
 INCH 'inchoative'
 LK 'linker'
 LOC 'locative'

MOT 'motion prefix'
 NOM 'nominative'
 OBL 'oblique';
 PRX 'proximate' QU 'question'
 PST 'past'
 2S '2nd person singular'
 SJ 'subjunctive'

6. Historical linguistic interest

The Formosan languages constitute various first order branches of Austronesian:

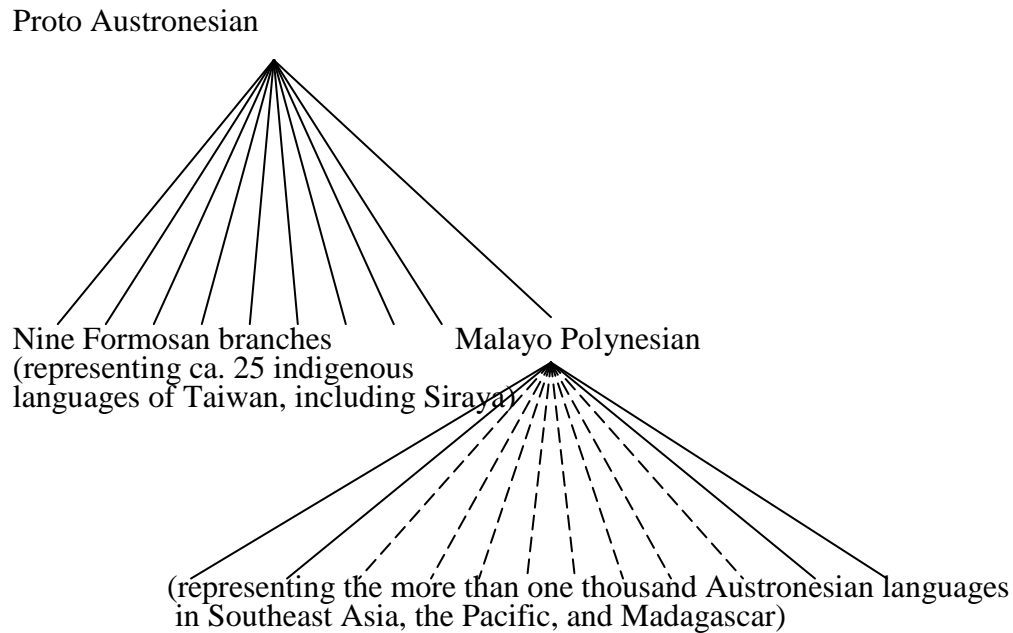


Fig. 1 : primary branches of the Austronesian language family tree according to Blust (2009:29-30).

7. Interest for Siraya community

- Rediscovering one's own identity
- Tribal status

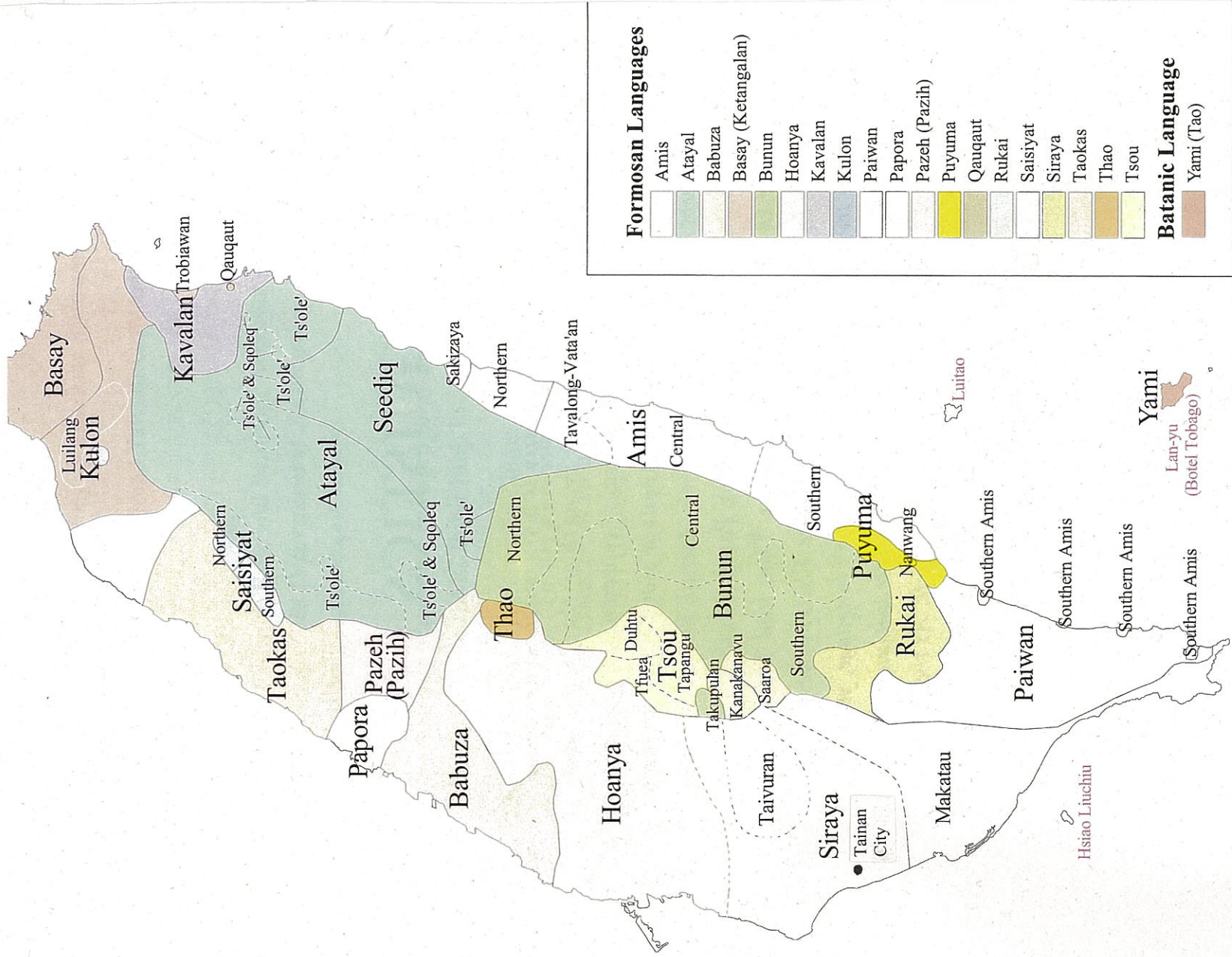
8. Political setting

- Formosan ethnic groups are re-asserting themselves
- Taiwanese nationalists are claiming "otherness" from the PRC through a genetic affiliation with the Formosans
- PRC propagandists use the ultimate roots of the Formosans in mainland China and the geographical unity of Taiwan and the mainland in very early prehistory as evidence for unity of PRC and Taiwan

9. Siraya language activists and their work

Since when
their achievements
their support

10. Research method?



Formosan Languages and Yami

Map with adaptations based on *Austronesian Taiwan. Linguistics, History, Ethnology, and Prehistory*, edited by David Blundell. P.44. Berkeley: Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley; Taipei: Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines; 2001.