

# Translating Baptism: A Case for Buniag<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Vatican II's allowing the use of the vernacular in the administration of the sacraments with the goal of having the faithful participate in the liturgy opened the door to those serving Ilocanos to make decisions regarding what terms to use. One such term was *buniag*, about which there was a lack of consensus. Juan A. Foronda and Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr. explore the matter by looking in the history of the baptismal formula in Ilocano, the supposed pagan roots of *buniag*, and the theological implications of word choices when translating Church doctrine into indigenous languages.

This paper discusses the history of *bunyag* (as it was originally written) and corrects misconceptions about its roots and the decision to use it to signify baptize, baptism, and other ways in which this sacramental term is used. In addition, a solution is posed which does not require a theological discussion or justification for the choice of *buniag* (as it is now written). While not dismissing theology or arguing for a dualistic approach to the matter, this paper points to philology, not just among Ilocanos, but across the archipelago, for an answer.

**Keywords:** *Translating Ilocano, Bunyag/buniag, Foronda, Juan A., Foronda, Marcelino A., Jr., Francisco Lopez*

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<sup>1</sup> The reader will find this spelled in two ways throughout this paper: *buniag* and *bunyag*, depending on its spelling by the source cited.

In translating, sometimes difficult choices have to be made. Each choice reflects a particular perspective as to what the task is and what the meaning conveyed will be. When there is more than one individual involved in choosing, there will be differences. And we who come after the fact have to sift through and decipher what was intended. In the case of the early friars, specifically those in the Ilocos region, the search for Ilocano equivalents for Spanish or Latin terms was challenging; and the friars, apparently, did not always agree. One such example is the word *buniag*.

In their article, “The Iloko Baptismal Formula: Its Historical Genesis and Theological Implications,”<sup>2</sup> Juan A. Foronda and Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr.<sup>3</sup> discuss the choice of the word *buniag*, in its various forms, for baptism; specifically, “In line with the Vatican Council II’s desire to make the faithful participate in the liturgy, the Roman Catholic Church has permitted the use of the vernacular in the administration of the sacraments and sacramentals.”<sup>4</sup> In dealing with the construction of the baptismal formula “in the new Iloko ritual,” the authors examined the history behind the formula as well as the theological implications of that formula.<sup>5</sup> Among the issues dealt with are: *buniag* as possibly an inappropriate choice and the possibility of a more appropriate Ilocano word for baptism.

Going back in history for answers, the Forondas began their search with the Augustinian friar, Francisco López (?-1627). As he was the creator of the first book in Ilocano,<sup>6</sup> *Libro a naisuratán amin ti bagás ti Dotrina Cristiana* (A book in which is written all the substance of Christian doctrine), published in 1620, this appears a proper choice. Not much is known about López. A theologian from the University of Alcalá de Henares before his move to the Philippines, he arrived in Manila in 1598. While he first studied Tagalog, López later was assigned to the Ilocos region, where

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<sup>2</sup> *Philippiniana Sacra* Vol II, No. 4, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Juan A. Foronda studied Philosophy at the Major Seminary in Vigan, Ilocos Sur and later graduated with honors from the University of Santo Tomas in Theology. He taught at the Minor Seminary in Vigan and served as parish priest in various towns. A note at the bottom of the first page of the article states: “With deep sadness the editors inform the readers of the death of the Rev. Juan Foronda in a road accident in the Ilocos highway.” Fr. Foronda died on March 27, 1967. His brother, Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr., also graduated from the University of Santo Tomas. He went on to receive his Ph.D. from Universidad de Salamanca, followed by post-doctoral studies at Stanford University and the University of Notre Dame. He was a professor in the History-Political Science Department at De La Salle University, and also served as chair of the department.

<sup>4</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 547.

<sup>5</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 552.

<sup>6</sup> I will use Ilocano in this essay to keep in line with how it was spelled during the early Spanish period. Some choose to write Ilokano today. López actually wrote Samtoy (abbreviated form of *sao mi ditoy*) for what is now known as Ilocano. Indeed, that may have been how the language of Ilocano was known.

it is said that he mastered Ilocano easily. In 1606, he was (surprisingly)<sup>7</sup> chosen to translate the Belarmino's catechism into Ilocano, a task which took him ten years to complete.<sup>8</sup> Along with López (and the friars who may have assisted) was an Ilocano informant, Pedro Bucaneg about whom López wrote:

Poniendolo yo por obra, con todo cuydado, iacompañado siempre del indio mas ladino, que áy en la provincial, i mas exercitado en la inteligencia de las cosas de nuestra Fee, (que es D. Pedro Bucanég ciego, natural de Bantay)

I made it possible with the greatest care, served always by the indio more "ladino" of the province, and more skilled in the insight of the things of our Faith (who is Don Pedro Bucaneg, blind, a native of Bantay)<sup>9</sup>

The first twenty-three pages of *Libro a naisurátan* are taken up with a *Proprio motu*<sup>10</sup> from Pope Clement VIII and a series of licenses and approvals.<sup>11</sup> Following these are a series of verses in Latin, one composed by Father García Garcés, a Jesuit, and another composed by Father Miguel Goto, a Japanese priest. Next comes a poem dedicated to López by Juan Liaño. Finally, one comes to López's work, beginning with a prayer in Ilocano to Mary (*Carrarag Ken Santa Maria*) and then a dedication to the priests and other ministers in the Ilocos region. After a few remarks regarding orthography and definitions of Spanish words which López says must be "borrowed,"<sup>12</sup> López presents a basic catechism: Amami (Our Father), Ave Maria (Hail Mary), Mamatiac (the Apostles' Creed), Bilin ti Dios (the [Ten] Commandments), Bilin ti Santa Iglesia (the [Five] Commandments of the Holy Church), Articulos [ti Pammati] (Articles [of Faith]), Sacramento ti Santa Iglesia (Sacraments of the Holy Church), Poon a paggaoan ti Basol (the origin of sin [Seven Mortal Sins]), Aramid a Caasi ([Fourteen] Works of Charity), and Iti Unaen a Lualuen ti Agconfesar (Prayer of Confession). They are followed by what López entitles "Catecismo," some seven

<sup>7</sup> I say surprisingly as there were other friars who had been in the region longer and whose expertise in the language may have exceeded that of López.

<sup>8</sup> Nieto 1972, 110-111.

<sup>9</sup> López 1620, 28. I am grateful to Verónica García Moreno for her assistance in translating this and other passages.

<sup>10</sup> This refers to an action taken by a pope on his own initiative.

<sup>11</sup> The licenses are as follows: License of Governor Alonzo Fajardo: Manila, 25 September 1620; License of Archbishop Miguel García Serrano: Manila: 3 September 1620; License of the Provincial of the Augustinians, Fr. Juan Enríquez: Tondo, 11 November 1620. The approvals are given by Fr. Hernando Becerra: 10 July 1620; Approval of Miguel de Velasco: 16 November 1620; Approval of Frs. Pedro de Lassarte, Pedro Lasso, and Jerónimo Cavera: Bantay, 30 July 1616.

<sup>12</sup> *Deficiones de los vocablos que en este libro no ha podido escusar la lengua Iloca de tomar prestados de la Castellana.* (Definitions of terms that in this book the Iloca language could not avoid borrowing from the Spanish language.) *Iti sasaoen itóy iti caipapanán dagiti sáo a kinacastilla nga bulúden ti Samtoy, ta di mabalín a saó o iti sanga cabitla nga sáo, no oimaynayónan.* (page 35)

pages of question and answer between a priest and parishioner. The same material is then given in *baybayin*, the form of writing in use at the time of the Spanish intrusion. López refers to the system as *la letra Tagala*. At last one comes to López's translation of Belarmino's *Doctrina Christiana* mentioned in the subtitle: *nga naisúrat iti libro ti Cardenal a agnagan Belarmino; ket ináon ti P. Fr. Francisco Lopez padre à S. Agustin, iti sinasamtay*.

Beginning with López and his work, the Forondas state that there were at least five baptismal formulas in Ilocano. I will argue that they are quite mistaken in this. They list the formulas as follows:

- The first form: BUGGOANCA ITI NAGAN TI AMA, KEN ANAK, KEN TI ESPIRITU SANTO. This form was employed by Fr. López in the first Iloko catechism, according to the 1895 edition of his *Gramatica Ilocana*.
- The second form: MAMUGGO AC KENCA, Fr. López considered an improvement of the first. The verb *Buggoanca* is now converted from the passive into the active voice in MAMUGGO AC. However, the pronoun *I* is not yet expressly or explicitly there.
- The third form: SIAK TI MAMUGGO QUENCA, according to Fr. López, is a literal translation of the Latin baptismal form: *Ego te baptizo* (I baptize thee). It is the most perfect of the translations: the pronoun *I* is expressly translated and the verb is in the active voice.
- The fourth form: BAPTIZAREN KA. While this form was not to be used in baptismal rites according to the prohibition of the Synod of Calasiao, it was allowed for the dying.
- The fifth form: BUNIAGANKA ITI NAGAN TI AMA KEN ANAK KEN TI ESPIRITU SANTO. This form was adopted in the new Roman ritual in Iloko.<sup>13</sup>

As the Forondas present it, there are two choices for the word baptize or baptism (*baptizo* in Greek): *buniag* or *bunyag* and *buggo*.

What does baptize or baptism mean? The Forondas utilize John H. Miller as their reference for the meanings of the Greek word *baptizo*: “to dip repeatedly, to bath.”<sup>14</sup> However, as they point out:

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<sup>13</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 554-555.

<sup>14</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 566.

The present Iloko, English, and Spanish baptismal formula used in the Philippines are literal translations from the Latin form. This is understandable for we belong to the Latin rite. The Latin form runs thus: ‘N. Ego te baptizo in nomine Patris e Filii et Spiritus Sancti’. (I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost).<sup>15</sup>

How do *buniag* and *buggo* match up? The following definitions are given in different Ilocano dictionaries listed in chronological order:

In *Iloko-English Dictionary* based on Andrés Carro’s *Vocabulario Iloco-Español* [1956 based on Carro’s 1849 (first edition) or 1888 (second edition)]:<sup>16</sup>

*buggó*—To wash any part of the body. To cleanse with water; to baptize (66)

*buniág*—To name; to baptize (70)

In Ernesto Constantino’s *Ilokano Dictionary* (1971):

*buggo*—to wash one’s hands or limbs (128)

*bunyag*—to baptize someone especially in church; to give or bestow on as name or alias (135)

In Carl Ralph Galvez Rubino’s *Ilokano Dictionary and Grammar: Ilocano-English, English-Ilokano* (2000):

*buggó*—n. washing the hands or feet (124)

*buniág*—n. baptism. *agbuniag*, v. to have a baptism (132)

The Forondas appear to favor *buggo*; this in spite of their reservations regarding the shortcomings of *buggo* to express accurately the meaning of *baptizo*. As they note:

Buggo is a general term for *bodily washing*, and hence, is not a literal translation of the Greek word, “*Baptizo*” which means to dip repeatedly in water; much less does it connote its metaphorical sense; i. e. to be immersed in calamities. *Buggo*, therefore, fails to express the manner of bodily ablution; it simply states the material action of washing in a general manner.<sup>17</sup>

The Forondas continue:

<sup>15</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 566 n 69.

<sup>16</sup> In reality, Carro’s work was entitled *Vocabulario de la Lengua Ilocana*.

<sup>17</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 567-568.

In this context, therefore, the Greek word *baptize* can be translated with *buggo*. Yet, *buggo*, being too common a word, seems to lack the mystic ring of the word *Baptizarenka* or *bunianganka* and, thus people may miss the spiritual meaning that is principally to be effected by the words of the baptismal formula.<sup>18</sup>

Why the seeming rejection of *buniag* and the half-hearted embracing of *buggo*? The Forondas seek to make a case against *buniag* beginning with their dealings with historical sources and their mistaken views of the origins of *buniag*, which leads to an interesting but unnecessary digression into the theological implications of translation, when in reality the answer may in fact lie in philology.

The Forondas state that *buniag* is the word used in the oldest formulas, this in spite of their assertion that there were “at least three baptismal forms in Iloko as translated by Fr. Francisco López.”<sup>19</sup> In the 1620 *Libro a naisurátan amin ti bagás ti Dotrina Cristiana*, one finds the formula: *Buniagán cat iti nágan ti Amá ken Anác, ken Espíritu Santo* (I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit). This formula is found in the section on baptism- the first sacrament- *ti omoná nga Sacramento*.<sup>20</sup>

The Forondas point out that in the copy found in the López Museum, *buniag* has been marked or scratched out and in the margin is handwritten: *Buggoan cat*. On the back of the title page is handwritten or signed the name of Fray Pedro de Lassarte,<sup>21</sup> one of the three experts in Ilocano who gave their approval.<sup>22</sup> He may have been the original owner of this copy, meaning that he made the “correction” as the Forondas see it. Would this also mean that he was the one who underlined a portion of the *aprobacion* written by Fr. Hernando Bezerra, as well as other marks or notes? In any case, the Forondas take this note in the margin to be a correcting if not censoring of the use of *buniag* in favor of *buggo*. Acknowledging that they did not have a copy of the 1621 *Libro a naisurátan* (*Libro a naisurátan* was published both in 1620 and 1621), they could not confirm if the handwritten correction was put into place in the latter edition.<sup>23</sup> In the 1621 edition, this baptismal formula was not changed; it remained *Buniagan cat*.

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<sup>18</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 568.

<sup>19</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 554.

<sup>20</sup> López 1620, 214.

<sup>21</sup> Pedro de Lassarte arrived in the Philippines in June, 1595. Ordained in Manila, he studied Ilocano and then was assigned to work in Purao, Bacarra, and Bauang from 1600 to 1608. In 1610, he was made an examiner of Ilocano.

<sup>22</sup> Approval of Frs. Pedro de Lassarte, Pedro Lasso, and Jeronimo Cavera: Bantay, 30 July 1616.

<sup>23</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 554 note 27.

This is the case with the tenth and last edition of *Libro a naisurátan*, published in 1895. In that same year, the third edition of *Gramatica Ilocana compuesta por el p. predicador fr. Francisco López, corregida y aumentada por el p. Carro* was also published, originally published in 1793. While the *Libro a naisurátan* retained the *buniagan cat* formula, the *Gramatica Ilocana*, “corrected” and “augmented” by Fray Carro mistakenly claims that the formula in the Belarmino catechism was *Buggoán ca iti nagan ti Ama*, etc. This “correction” is somewhat surprising, given that the fifth edition of *Libro a naisurátan* was published in 1767 and that Carro in his definitions of *buggo* and *buniag* seemed to favor the latter in terms of the choice for baptize. Perhaps it was due to the fact that in the Synod of Calasiao of 1773, *buniag* was set aside in favor of *buggo*.

According to Barrion, “it is not an overstatement to say that the Synod was almost his [Bishop (of Nueva Segovia) Miguel García’s] work alone.” There was no discussion at the Synod of Calasiao, the bishop simply read the acts to the assembled clergy and demanded their approval.<sup>24</sup>

As Rebecca Fernández Rodríguez has observed, “En cuanto al término ilocano, del misionero afirma que al principio se usaba *buniag* pero que tras el Sinodo de 1773 se impuso *buggò* ‘lavar’.”

Buniag: este vocablo es lo q[ue] usarron, los antiguos en el baptism, que significa, dar nom[bre], y pore so se ha quitado en el synodo, que selebrò el señor Garcia en Calasiao en 1773: y se puso *buggò*. Pregunta; mi insuficiencia, si los que fueron bautisos, con las vos, buniag, fueron salvos? y si los que se bautizan con las voz, buggo lo son? en mi concepto, todos connudos, v[éase] buggo. (Vivar 1797: 11)<sup>25</sup>

This may have influenced Fr. Carro in his “correcting” the formula that López used, which, in turn, caused confusion as to what the friars favored and used in terms of the baptismal formula. But the historical record is clear: *buniag* was their choice.

A second problem was the result of mistaken views as to the origin of the word *buniag*. A number of related issues are involved here. The first is the belief that *buniag* comes from the root *Buni*, believed to be the name of the deity that Ilocanos worshiped. The second is the pre-Hispanic practice of “rebaptizing” a child who has a near-death experience. And then there is the practice of renaming a child after having been rebaptized.

<sup>24</sup> Irving 2010, 311 The Barrion referred to by Irving is Caridad M. Barrion and the work cited is *Religious Life of the Laity in the Eighteenth-Century Philippines as Reflected in the Decrees of the Council of 1771 and the Synod of Calasiao of 1773*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press, 1961.

<sup>25</sup> Fernandez 2014, 285.

*Boni* or *Buni* is believed to have been one of the deities if not the supreme deity of the Ilocanos prior to the Spanish intrusion, and possibly related to *Kabunian*, a deity of various groups of the neighboring Igorots. According to Raul Pertierra, *buni* is a spirit associated with ricefields.<sup>26</sup> This deity or spirit is thus seen as the basis for the practice of *buniag* which combines *Buni* and *nagan* (name).

Key to this view is the belief that the practice of *buniag* – baptizing or rebaptizing- was pre-Hispanic in nature. When a child became ill and near death, either before or after the near death experience, the child would be washed or “baptized” and would be renamed. Daniel Scheans refers to this practice as *anak ti digos* which means literally the “child of bathing or of the bath.” Scheans believes the rite to be composed of “a complex of pre-Christian practices,”<sup>27</sup> but offers no proof. Ferdinand Blumentritt refers to this rite of rebaptism as the *Buniag* (*bunyang*) *ti sirok ti latok* (under the plate) among the Ilocanos. The Forondas state that “the practice of renaming a sick child seems to date to the distant past.”<sup>28</sup>

The ritual is performed in different ways. Pertierra points out an intriguing fact concerning the use of *buniag* and *bautismo* in contemporary Ilocano society. In the Ilocos region, *buniag* is “reserved for the more formal church ceremony officiated by the priest or minister in the presence of sponsors and followed by a feast.” On the other hand, the Spanish term *bautizar* is used for the indigenous ceremony employed when a child is seriously ill, at which a senior kinsman baptizes the child. This informal rite, called *bautizar*, employs the standard Catholic baptismal formula... two interchangeable forms: (1) ‘Buniaganka iti nagan ti ama ken ti anak ken ti spiritu sancto, amen’ (I name thee in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen) or (2) ‘Bautizarenka iti nagan etc.’ This ceremony is performed in the house of the child and does not involve sponsors.<sup>29</sup> Included in the ritual was the renaming of the child.<sup>30</sup> Based on this ritual Pertierra sees *buniag* as referring to giving someone a name.

This practice can be seen as imitating or mimicking the baptismal practice of the Catholic Church. A newborn is baptized and named in the church ritual. In the Ilocano version, at some point either before or after a near death experience, the child is in a sense “reborn” and baptized or washed to indicate new life, reinforced by the giving of a new name. And rather than use the Ilocano *buniag*, which is used in the church ceremony, the Spanish term *bautizar* is used for the indigenous ceremony.

<sup>26</sup> Pertierra 1988, 99.

<sup>27</sup> Scheans 1966:82.

<sup>28</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 563. Rubino has under *latok* an additional note: *nagan iti sirok ti latok* a name given to a sickly child (other than the baptismal name).

<sup>29</sup> Pertierra 1988: 99.

<sup>30</sup> Scheans views the new name as temporary. Scheans 1966:82, 83, 84.



Due to the fact that a new name is given, *buniag* is sometimes seen as referring primarily or exclusively to the giving of a new name. This view is influenced by the practice of “pagan tribes; for example, the Isneg tribe.”<sup>31</sup> Morice Vanobergergh, CICM noted that when a child was “repeatedly ill, which means pestered by the spirits, the best way to cure it is to change its name.”<sup>32</sup> Carro in his *vocabulario* has as one of the definitions of *buniag* as to name. (see above)

The result of these errors, the Forondas felt it necessary to justify the use of *buniag*, with its supposed pagan roots and origins. They perceived at least two difficulties with using the word *buniag*. First: does the use of *buniag*, a word reminiscent of pagan cults or practices dedicated to Buni, imply a recognition of Buni as the name of the Supreme God and an approval of those pagan practices? Second: in the ceremony of naming or renaming which we call *buniag*, the use of water or physical ablution by water has not been proven conclusively. Their mistakes about the origins of *buniag* lead them to consider a theological discussion regarding word choices.

The Forondas turn to Thomas Aquinas and his *Summa Theologica* for a discussion on baptism, the physical act of being baptized.<sup>33</sup> They write:

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the Church did not determine the manner of bodily washing in baptism; she only required that there be bodily washing by water. The manner may be immersion, aspersion or by pouring. But the manner is only incidental: provided that there is physical ablution by water, baptism is valid.<sup>34</sup>

This view would allow either *buggo* or *buniag* as possibilities, though, as mentioned above, *buggo* is seen to “lack the mystical ring of the word *Baptizarenka* or *bunianganka* and, thus, people may miss the spiritual words of the baptismal formula.”<sup>35</sup> In this section (Theological Implication of the Iloko Baptismal Formulas), the Forondas include a lengthy discussion of the Thomistic Theory of a *sacrament of nature* as expounded by Fr. Edward Schillebeeckx, whom they considered the leading authority on sacramental theology.<sup>36</sup> As this is beyond the scope of this study, I would

<sup>31</sup> The Forondas’ use of “tribe” will be overlooked here.

<sup>32</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 563.

<sup>33</sup> The section in the *Summa* on baptism is found in Pars III, Quaestio 66, Articuli 1 – 12. Articulus 7 deals with the specifics of the physical nature of baptism, i. e., is immersion necessary. See for Latin and English: <http://dhsprory.org/thomas/summa/TP/TP066.html#TPQ66A7THEP1>.

<sup>34</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 568.

<sup>35</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 568.

<sup>36</sup> Schillebeeckx’s *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* is their source in this discussion.

simply put to the fact that the Forondas dedicated significant space (almost a full third of their article) to a theological discussion of the acceptability of *buniag*, one that I believe was unnecessary, as will be explained below.

Fr. Francis Lambrecht, CICM, in his article, “Adoption of Local Customs in Christianity,” writes:

If the missionaries raise the problem of adopting into this new religion (Christianity) something of the old, their purpose is *to create some resemblance between the two*, with the hope of making Christianity more acceptable to the natives. I say “some” resemblance, for on second thought it is clear that not much resemblance can be found or created between religions which are so extremely different, and hence, the term resemblance as well as adoption will have to be understood in its broadest sense.<sup>37</sup>

Lambrecht argues that there are (at least) two types or manners of adopting local or indigenous customs into Christianity: a resemblance of *form* or a resemblance of *function*. The Forondas write:

It seems that the adaptation of the word *buniag* into Christian baptismal formula falls into adaptation of resemblance in function, that is, something of the old ways is merely clarified to be present in the new religion. Obviously, the Ilocanos performed the *buniag* cults and rites with a view of averting some evil, of giving a protector of the child, of incorporating him into the Supreme God. Are these purposes of the *buniag* rites incompatible with Christianity?<sup>38</sup>

This is based on false assumptions in the matter of *buniag*: that *buni* is the root of *buniag*, that the practice was pre-Hispanic, and that the practice of *buniag* involved renaming the child. The problem with these assumptions is that there is no evidence for them. Instead, one could make the case that the practice came about after the Spanish intrusion; that it was a mimicking of Catholic practice in the face of crisis. Whereas a newborn might be baptized and named in the Church, a reborn child, following a serious illness, is rebaptized and renamed in the home.

But the key is the origin of the word *buniag*. And for this, one must look across the archipelago, where one finds *binyag* among the Tagalogs, *boniag* among the Bicolanos, and *buniag* among the Bisayans. A theological decision to use an indigenous word, *binyag*, for baptize was made decades before *Libro a naisuratan* was produced. The first book published in Tagalog was *Doctrina Christiana*, printed in 1593. *Binyag*

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<sup>37</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 569.

<sup>38</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 569.

written as *biñag* appears in the last section of the work, *Ang Tanongan*, which was a brief catechism consisting of thirty-three questions and answers (*tanong at sagot*). The question (*tanong*) was: *dito sa sancta yglesia mei ycauauala nang casalanan?* The answer (*sagot*) in turn was: *ang pagbiñag sa di pa christianos at ang pagcoconfesal nang manga christianos mei casalanan, cun magsising malaquet mei look na di moli maccasala s adios magparating man saan.*

In 1610, Tomas Pinpin produced *Librong pagaaralan nang manga Tagalog nang uicang Castila* (A book to teach Tagalogs the Castila language [Spanish]). This was the first book in Tagalog by a Tagalog printed during the Spanish period.<sup>39</sup> Included in this book was a *confesionario*, written by a friar. While Pinpin does not use *binyag*, the word in various forms appears five times in the *confesionario*. The *confesionario* was structured on the Ten Commandments; with questions a priest was to ask the person in confession. The format in the *confesionario* was to have the question first in Tagalog and then in Spanish. In the section on the First Commandment, *binyag* (forms of it), it is found three times. It is worth noting that the three occurrences in the section on the first commandment use the term as a negative description: one who has not been baptized (*di binyagan*).

Nagpapangap ca cayang di binyagan?

*Haste habido como no cristiano?*

Opan con caharap ca nang manga di binyagan, ay gongmagagadca sa canila ng canilang asal?

*Por ventura estando entre infieles hiziste como ellos en algunas costumbres suyas.*

Opan baquin, at di ca binyagan: ycao ay nagpapangap Christiano?

*Por ventura quando no eras Christiano, te hazias y da vas por Christiano.*<sup>40</sup>

In the section on the sixth commandment, *binyag* is given as the Tagalog equivalent of *baustismo*.

Opan anac mo yaon, at ama caya, at yna caya sa pag binyag, at sa pagcocompil man caya?

*Era hijo, ó hija, ó padre, ó madre de Bautismo, ó de la Confirmacion?*

<sup>39</sup> See Woods. *Tomas Pinpin and Tagalog Survival in Early Spanish Philippines*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2011 and *Librong pagaaralan nang manga Tagalog nang uicang Castila*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Woods 2011, 87-88.

Opan casama mong nag anac sa pag binyag at sa compilman caya?

*O era tu compadre, ó comadre de bautismo ó de la confirmacion?*<sup>41</sup>

Blancas de San José in his *Arte y reglas de la lengua tagala*, under the heading “*Disposicion en el adviento para la Pasqua*” gives the following: *Ecce advenit Rex: occurramus obviam Salvatori nostro, Gumising na cayong manga binyagan, ang Haring darating*—Wake up now you who are the baptized ones (Christians), the King is coming (no page number available). In his *vocabulario* (1610-15), which was not completed, Blancas de San José describes “binyag” as “the act of baptizing” and “binyagan” as a Christian.” This word is derived from a ceremony which the Borneans used anciently, purifying themselves with water.” *Binyag* as to wet with a certain washing. Juan José de Noceda and Pedro de Sanlucar in their *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala*,

“Adviértase que esta palabra binyag es de Borney, y significa echar agua de alto: para esto venia de allá acá un ministro de Mahoma á enseñar á estos su perversa ley, haciendo esta ceremonia echando el agua de alto. Ahora lo han aplicado á la Sagrada ceremonia del Bautismo.”

Ang salitang *binyag* ay mula Borneo, at ang ibig sabihin ay buhusan sa tubrin: para sa gawang ito ay dumadating dito mula roon ang isang ministro ni Mahoma upang mangaral sa mga táong ito ng kanilang maling tuntunin. Ginagawa ang seremonyong ito na nagbubuhos ng tubig. Ngayon ay ginagawa ito sa Sagradang seremonya Bawtismo.<sup>42</sup>

Dictionaries of other languages in the archipelago confirm the origin and evolution of *buñag*. The Bisayan dictionary (circa 1615) by Mateo Sánchez states: “*buñag*: To sprinkle with water or liquid ... and metaphorically they call baptism *pagbuñag*. It is to be noted that the word *buñag* cannot be used in the formula of Baptism.” Alonso Mèntrida’s Hiligaynon dictionary of 1637 defines “*Buñag* as to water plants by throwing water over them, or the floor of the church...it has been introduced for baptizing: the use has a meaning it never meant among the indios.”<sup>43</sup>

One might point to the Povedano Manuscript of 1572 as an argument for Kabunian (from *buni*) as the source of *bunyag* for both Bisayans and Ilocanos. The document states: They held one in great respect, and him they called Kabunian. They say that he was the best of all, for he lived in the highest part of the sky. He was, they

<sup>41</sup> Woods 2011, 99.

<sup>42</sup> Almario 2013, 82.

<sup>43</sup> I am extremely grateful to the late Dr. William Henry Scott for this information provided in a personal letter.

say, very strong and powerful, for he could do whatever he wished.”<sup>44</sup> This document and others, produced by Jose E. Marco and “acquired, translated, and later published” by Dr. James Alexander Robertson, Director of the Philippine National Library, “were purported to be pre-Hispanic, but were later proven to be fraudulent.”<sup>45</sup> The name *Kabunian* is not known to have been used or familiar outside the Cordilleras. But in any case, the close connection between *binyag* and *bunyag* makes either *Buni* or *Kabunian* an unlikely source or origin.

Andrés Carro’s mid-nineteenth-century Ilocano dictionary lists the following:

buniag: A word the ancients used in baptism, and it means, to give a name. It was abolished as improper in the Synod which Señor García held in Calasiao in 1773, and fixed buggo, which instead means to wash. Despite this, the natives of Ilocos Sur take it in the sense of baptism even today.

Voz que usaron los antiguos en el bautismo, y significa, dar nombre. Se abolió por impropia en el Sínodo que celebró en Calasiá el Sr. García en 1773, y se purso, *buggó*, que significa, lavar. Esto no obstate, los naturales de Ilcos Sur la toman en el sentido de bautizar aún hoy día.<sup>46</sup>

At least two individuals in this saga showed a preference for *buggo* over *bunyag*. The first may have been Pedro de Lassarte and his preference was shown by writing in the margin *buggo*, after marking out *bunyag*. His actions in this matter should not be taken as correcting or censoring the text but rather a sign of his preference. I take this to be the case as the edition of *Libro a naisuratan* published the next year (1621) did not make the change he has included in the margin.

The second individual was Bishop Miguel Garcia who seemingly unilaterally made the decision to eliminate *bunyag* from the ceremonies of the Church and to put *buggo* in its place. The unilateral action of Garcia in this matter mirrored his other actions in the Synod. As Philip F. Smith, O.M.I. observed:

However, the expected and promised cooperation to the participants was not fully given; graciously they were allowed to attend the synod sessions to a limited degree—they were to be seen not heard. Calasiao was to be the “Synod of Silence.”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Eggan 1954, 53.

<sup>45</sup> Cano 2015:307. See Salman, Michael. “Confabulating American Colonial Knowledge of the Philippines: What the Social Life of Jose E. Marco’s Forgeries and Ahmed Chalabi Can Tell Us about the Epistemology of Empire” in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*.

<sup>46</sup> Carro 1849, 65.

<sup>47</sup> Smith 1970, 70.

While the use of *buggo* was ratified by the Synod of Calasiao of 1773, not surprisingly, as Carro points out, *bunyag* continued to be used by the Ilocanos of Ilocos Sur.

Baptism was and is viewed as crucial, both as a sacrament as well as an identifying marker of one who is called a Christian.<sup>48</sup> As mentioned above, Blancas de San Jose refers to the Christians as *manga binyagan* and the author of the *confesionario* attached to Pinpin's *Libro pagaaralan* identified non-believers as *di na binyagan*. As such, the vocabulary of baptism was important. One finds in the various *vocabularies* and *artes* in languages across the archipelago, that the early friars did in fact choose indigenous words to use for baptism, including the act of baptizing. Clearly, *bunyag* was the choice for baptize in Ilocano, as had been *binyag* in Tagalog and *bunyag* in Bisaya. And one would imagine that theological issues were taken into account.

Almost four centuries later, the Forondas sought to find theological rationale and justification for the choice of *bunyag*. "In line with the Vatican Council II's desire to make the faithful participate in the liturgy, the Roman Catholic Church has permitted the use of the vernacular in the administration of the sacraments and sacramentals."<sup>49</sup> But the theological justification was unnecessary; this was a matter of philology.

This paper does not represent a dualistic point of view that sees a wall of separation between theology and other disciplines. Such a wall may well be maintained in our thinking by a belief that we must keep the secular separate from the sacred, imagining them to be radically distinct spheres of human knowledge and experience. In the issue dealt with here, a theological answer is not necessary. This does not mean that it has no place in the discussion, but rather that the explanation sought lies elsewhere.**PS**

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<sup>48</sup> John Leddy Phelan dealt with different aspects of the question of baptism, as opposed to the issue of language, in his article, "Pre-Baptismal Instruction and the Administration of Baptism in the Philippines during the Sixteenth Century" and in Chapter 5, "The Imposition of Christianity," in *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565-1700*.

<sup>49</sup> Foronda and Foronda 1967, 547.

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