

The Importance of Diacritical Marks in Romanized Kapampáŋan

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Abstract

Since the Kapampáŋan Language was never a part of the curriculum in schools throughout the region, a majority of Kapampáŋan speakers remain illiterate in their own language. An increased awareness of their ethnic identity after the eruption of Mount Pinatubo however created an increasing demand for works written in Kapampáŋan. Contemporary Kapampáŋan writers are turning out works devoid of the customary diacritical marks, an influence of the legally imposed Tagalog-based Pilipino taught in every school within the region. Pilipino can be written and understood without the use of diacritical marks to denote accents. But the Kapampáŋan Language is filled with words that are spelled in the same way but pronounced differently. As a result, many Kapampáŋans now can not avoid making logical errors due to the ambiguous reading of a word that has a different meaning. This is due to the absence of the necessary diacritical marks. This paper explores the function and importance of the diacritical marks in Romanized Kapampáŋan.

Introduction

Logic recognizes a defect in reasoning known as the *Fallacy of Accent*. This occurs when one confuses two words of the same spelling but with different reading as one and the same word. Strictly speaking, words having different accents are not the same word. (Bachuber 1952)

There are a considerable number of words in the Kapampáŋan language that are written similarly but read differently and therefore each conveying a different meaning. What prevent readers from committing a logical error due to the ambiguous reading of a word that has a different meaning due to a difference in accents are the indispensable diacritical marks. The following are classic examples from Mariano A. Henson (Henson 1965:171):

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------|-------------|--------|
| (1) | <i>masákit</i> | ‘difficult’ | (ADJ.) |
| | <i>másakit</i> | ‘infirm’ | (N.) |
| | <i>masakit</i> | ‘painful’ | (ADJ.) |

Here is another set of example:

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------|----------|------|
| (2) | <i>súsu</i> | ‘breast’ | (N.) |
| | <i>susû</i> | ‘snail’ | (N.) |

The importance and function of the diacritical marks in Romanized Kapampangan writing has not yet received much attention from language scholars. This paper tentatively explores and presents the function and importance of the diacritical marks in Romanized Kapampangan writing so as to generate an interest for their future study.

Figure 1. KAMBAL SIUÁLÂ represented as diacritical marks in Romanized Kapampangan

Ding Matuang Súlat Kapampangan				
kambal siuálâ	mikukúyug a siuálâ	siuálâ		

<p>Kambal Siuálâ are represented as diacritical marks when writing in the Roman script</p>					
	sísí	sísî	masakít	masákit	másakit

Figure 1. The indigenous Kapampangan script reconstructed by Siuálâ ding Meángûbié in 1987

Ding Matuang Súlat Kapampangan					
kambal siuálâ	mikukúyug a siuálâ	siuálâ	ibat lábí	dalan kng dílá ← ibat ípan	ibat akmlán
			titiúp	sasalitsit	dalan árung

ka	-ká- -kâ	ki	-kí- -kî	ku	-kú- -kû	ke	ko	kang

1. Historical Background

Before the Spaniards Romanized the Kapampáŋan Language after the conquest of Lúsung Guo (circa 10th century AD – 1571 AD) in the late 16th century, an extra vowel symbol was simply added to prolong the medial vowel sound as well as create the final glottal stop. For instance 𐆗 was simply added to create the vowel sound Romanized as -Á- and -Â; 𐆘 was simply added to create the vowel sounds Romanized as -í- and -î; and 𐆙 was simply added to create the vowel sounds Romanized as -ú- and -û. These added vowels were called *KAMBAL SIUÁLÁ* ‘twin sounds’, from Kapampáŋan *kambal* ‘twin’ [N.] and *siuálá* ‘voice’ [N.] (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

When the Tagalog-based Pilipino was legally imposed and became widely taught throughout the Kapampáŋan speaking region, Kapampáŋan writers who adopted the Pilipino orthography or ABAKADA began to neglect the use of the diacritical marks in the same manner as Pilipino. For instance, in the collection of works written by contemporary Kapampáŋan poet laureate Vedasto Ocampo and published by the Akademyang Kapampangan and the Angeles University Foundation, the use of the diacritical marks was totally neglected (Ocampo 1994).

Before the year 2000, the Kapampáŋan nationalist group Batiáuan proposed a revision of the ABAKADA used in contemporary Kapampáŋan writing. Batiáuan insisted on the use of the diacritical marks to denote accent and therefore create a semantic distinction between words written in the same way but pronounced differently (Siuálá ding Meángûbié 2004:33). The Akademyang Kapampangan laments that Batiáuan further complicated Kapampáŋan writing instead of simplifying it. Akademyang Kapampangan stressed that all that was needed by a *true Kapampangan* to distinguish between words with similar spelling but with different accents and meaning was simply *common sense*.¹

2. The Diacritical Marks in Romanized Kapampáŋan Writing

Traditionally, diacritical marks were commonly used by Kapampáŋan writers using the Romanized orthography introduced by the Spaniards. A good example of this practice is found in the conversation manual written by D.E. Fernandez in the late 19th century (Fernandez 1876). When the revolutionary writers of the Wáwâ tradition decided to indigenize Kapampáŋan writing by using the orthography proposed by José Rizal (Pangilinan 2006), they also retained the diacritical marks used by those who still wrote in the Spanish style orthography. A good example of this would be the verse narrative KASULATANG GINTÛ written by Aurelio Tolentino during the early years of American Occupation (Tolentino 1914).

2.1. The Customary Diacritical Marks Employed by the Bacúlud and the Wáwâ Traditions

Both traditions employed the use of three forms diacritical marks. These are:

- a. *SAKÚRUT* ´ to indicate a prolonged vowel sound. Examples:

(3)	á	<i>ásu</i>	‘dog’	[N.]
	í	<i>giling</i>	‘to grind’	[V.]
	ú	<i>úlad</i>	‘larva’	[N.]

- b. *TELATURUNG* ^ to indicate the glottal stop. Examples:

¹ These words were used specifically by the vice president of the Akademyang Kapampangan in his letter to the editors of the Kapampáŋan Magazine that condemned Batiáuan’s revision to the ABAKADA used in contemporary Kapampáŋan writing. The letter was published on page 33-34 of Issue XIV of Kapampangan Magazine.

(4)	â	<i>bagâ</i>	‘lungs’	[N.]
	î	<i>imî</i>	‘urine’	[N.]
	û	<i>bulû</i>	‘calf’	[N.]

- c. *MANÉNE* ` which was placed at the last vowel to indicate a combination of medial long vowel sound that finally ends in a glottal stop. Examples:

(5)	<i>tulâ</i>	[TŪ-LÂ]	‘joy’	[N.]
	<i>sisî</i>	[SĪ-SĪ]	‘chick’	[N.]
	<i>pugû</i>	[PŪ-GŪ]	‘quail’	[N.]

2.2 The Batiáuan Revised Diacritical Marks

In the revised orthography introduced by Batiáuan, only two diacritical marks are employed: *SAKÚRUT* ´ and *TELATURUNG* ^. The unique diacritical mark *MANÉNE* ` has been eliminated. For words having the *MANÉNE* accent ~ where the vowels in each syllable are prolonged, the marks are placed above each vowel exactly as they are pronounced. Example:

Table 1. Diacritical Marks for the *MANÉNE* Accent from the Traditional Manner to Batiáuan

Traditional <i>MANÉNE</i>	Batiáuan <i>MANÉNE</i>
<i>tulâ</i> ‘joy’ [N.]	<i>Túlâ</i>
<i>sisî</i> ‘chick’ [N.]	<i>Sísî</i>
<i>pugû</i> ‘quail’ [N.]	<i>Púgû</i>

3. Functions of the Diacritical Marks in Romanized Kapampáangan

The following is a tentative list of the functions the diacritical marks in Romanized Kapampáangan. Since their function and importance has remained virtually unexplored by linguists, the functions listed in this paper may not be complete.

3.1. To Distinguish Between Two Unrelated Words

There are many examples of words in the Kapampáangan language that have no relation other than a similarity in spelling. The meanings of which are determined by their difference in accents. Diacritical marks are needed to determine this difference.

Table 2. Examples of words written similarly but accented differently

<i>súsu</i> ‘breast’ [N.]	<i>susû</i> ‘snail’ [N.]
<i>sísi</i> ‘to regret’ [V.]	<i>sísî</i> ‘chick’ [N.]
<i>kúkû</i> ‘cough’ [N.]	<i>kukû</i> ‘finger nail’ [N.]
<i>bábâ</i> ‘chin’ [N.]	<i>babâ</i> ‘to put down’ [V.]
<i>salát</i> ‘to touch (sexually)’ [V.]	<i>sálat</i> ‘blemish’ [N.]

From the examples on Table 2, notice the problems in the two following examples caused by the absence of the diacritical marks:

- (6) The folktale *DENG SUSU NANG LUNINGNING* that appeared in Turla's Classic Capampangan Dictionary (Turla 1999:120) has been left without a translated because of the absence of the diacritical marks. The reader will remain uncertain as to whether the story talks about

susû nang Luningning
snail ERG.3SG=ART.ERG.SG. Luningning²
'Luningning's pet snails'

or súsu nang Luningning
breast ERG.3SG.=ART.ERG.SG Luningning
'Luningning's breast'.

- (7) In the 1882 genealogy of Don Pedro Mallari Macapagal, a descendant of the Lakandula of Tondo, there appeared the name of DOÑA MARIA ALANGCASALAT, wife of Don Joseph Capulong (Santiago 1990:60). Without the essential diacritical marks, Kapampángans can not determine if the cognomen ALANGCASALAT meant

alâng	casálat	or	alâng	casalát
NONEXIST+LK	to have blemish		NONEXIST+LK	to be touched sexually
'without blemish'			'can not be sexually violated manually'	

3.2. To Distinguish Between Two or More Related Words

Usually, it is the affixes that change the function and meaning of Kapampangan words that come from the same root. There are instances however when it is the accent that does the changing. Diacritical marks are needed to distinguish those changes.

- (8) From: *sakit* 'pain' [N.] –
masakit 'painful' [ADJ.] *másakit* 'infirm' [N.] *masákit* 'difficult' [ADJ.]

- (9) From: *gámat* 'hand' [N.] –
gámat 'hand' [N.] *gamát* 'being experienced in a particular craft' [N.]
gámatan [N.] *gamátan* [V.] *gamatán* [ADJ.]
'activity that requires the use of one's bare hands' 'to require the use of one's bare hands' 'without the use of tools'
'dubious craftsmanship'

- (10) From: *lugúd* 'love' [N.] –
kalugurán 'beloved' [N.] *káluguran* 'friend' [N.]

- (11) *ápú* 'grandmother' [N.] *apú* 'grandchild' [N.]

² English Gloss in Example (6) by Kitano Hiroaki of the Aichi School of Education, Nagoya, Japan.

3.3 To Determine the Plural Forms of Certain Nouns

It would have been easy to discard the use of the diacritical marks if Kapampáŋgan, like English simply, simply added *-s* or *-es* at the end of a word in order to change it to its plural form. But unlike English, Kapampáŋgan language depends on the change accent to indicate the plural form. This change in accent has to be indicated by a diacritical mark.

Table 3. Examples of how changes in accents shift the number of certain nouns from singular to plural

Singular	Plural
anak 'child'	ának 'children'
babái 'woman'	bábai 'women'
laláki 'man'	lálaki 'men'
dalága 'maiden'	dálaga 'maidens'

3.4. To Distinguish Between Nouns and Verbs

The Kapampáŋgan language has words that function either as nouns or as verbs. The difference can be determined by the accent.

(12) *lugúd* 'love' [N.] Lugúd ya ing magligtas kaya.
 love ABS.3SG. ART. save OBL.3SG.³
 Love will save her

lúgud 'to love' [V.] Lúgud ya ing magligtas kaya.
 will.love ABS.3SG ART. save OBL.3SG.
 Her saviour will fall in love.

(13) Here are some more examples:

sulú 'light' [N.] *súlú* 'to light a candle' [V.]
pagál 'weariness' [N.] *págala* 'to become weary' [V.]

4. To Determine the Tense of Certain Verbs

The change in tenses in a number of verbs in the Kapampáŋgan language can be determined by the shift in accent. Here is one example:

(14) Future Tense Manós yang gámat.
 will.wash ABS.3SG.= LK. hand
 He will wash his hands

Present Progressive Mános yang gámat.
 washing ABS.3SG.=LK hand
 He is washing his hands.

³ English Gloss in Example (12) and Example (14) by Kitano Hiroaki of the Aichi School of Education, Nagoya, Japan.

5. To Shift Emphasis From Subject to Object

A common phenomenon in Kapampáŋan sentences is the existence of verbs that put emphasis on either the subject or the object. In most cases, the verbs simply take a different form. Take the Kapampáŋan word *KAN* for instance. If it takes the form *MANGÁN* ‘to eat’ (FUT.) the emphasis would be on the subject. If it takes the form *KANÁN* ‘to eat’ (FUT.), the emphasis would be on the object.⁴ Notice the following examples from Kitano Hiroaki (Kitano 1997):

(14) Subject Emphasis: Mámangan kung manúk
 eating.AF ABS.1SG.=LK chicken
 ‘I am eating chicken.’

Object Emphasis: Kakanán ké ing manúk.
 Eating.PF ERG.1SG.+ABS.3SG ART.ABS.SG chicken
 ‘The chicken is being eaten by me.’

In certain cases however, a number of Kapampáŋan verbs need only to change their accent in order to shift the emphasis from subject to object. Notice the following examples:

(14) Subject Emphasis: Totóto ne ing sinúlad.
 dangling ERG.3SG.+ABS.3SG ART. thread⁵
 He is dangling the thread.

Object Emphasis: Tótoto ne ing sinúlad.
 dangling already+ABS.3SG ART. thread
 The thread is already dangling.

Even with the right amount of common sense, the sentence *TOTOTO NE ING SINULAD* would have an ambiguous meaning. Diacritical marks are essential in this case to determine the exact context and meaning of the sentence in order for readers to avoid committing logical errors.

6. Conclusions

It is rather unscholarly to label the diacritical marks used in Romanized Kapampáŋan writing as mere residues of colonialism and friar scholasticism and that they then must be eliminated from contemporary Kapampáŋan writing. If not for the orthography introduced by the Spanish friars, which includes the diacritical marks, Kapampáŋans who are relearning their language and reading Kapampáŋan works for the first time will have no way of determining how to place the proper stress and accents in the words that they are reading.

For instance, the diacritical marks are now aiding teachers of Kapampáŋan literature at Holy Angel University (Simon pers. comm.)⁶ in pronouncing Kapampáŋan words that have now

⁴ From Anicia del Corro’s lecture on Kapampangan Morphophonemics held during the Akademyang Kapampangan’s *Seminar Workshop on Kapampangan Culture Its History, Language, Literature and Its Role in the Identity of the Filipino* held at the Angeles University Foundation on May 13, 1989.

⁵ English Gloss on Example (15) by Kitano Hiroaki of the Aichi School of Education, Nagoya, Japan.

been replaced by Tagalog words. In the 1970s, most of these words were still commonly used and understood. By the year 2000, many of these words are now alien to many Kapampángans. If not for the aid old dictionaries and conversation manuals like the one written by Fernandez (Fernandez 1876), these words would have completely disappeared from the Kapampángan vocabulary and forever replaced by Tagalog loan words.

It is also quite inconsiderate to assume that these diacritical marks only serve the non-Kapampángan reader and that *all a GENUINE Kapampángan reader needs is simple common sense*.⁷ Most Kapampángans are illiterate in their own language. As shown by the examples presented in this paper, it is difficult for even a GENUINE Kapampángan to determine the exact meaning and context of Kapampángan words and sentences without the necessary pronunciation guides or markers (see Example (6) and Example (7)).

What some groups also fail to consider is that an increasing number of the young Kapampángan population are growing up abroad and never had the privilege or the convenience of reading and writing in the language of their elders. Many of these expatriated Kapampángans are now yearning to know how to read, write and speak their parents' language (Pampanga-Online Forums 2005).⁸ Many of them will be deprived from doing so *simply because they do not have enough common sense* to distinguish between *másakit* 'infirm' [N.] from *masákit* 'difficult' [ADJ.] when written without the diacritical marks.

As shown by the examples presented in this paper, this initial exploration proves the importance and usefulness of the diacritical marks in Romanized Kapampángan writing. Further study is needed to accurately determine the extent of their importance and function.

⁶ Constant communication with Lisa Cusi Simon, a faculty at the College of Arts and Sciences in Holy Angel University, Angeles City in the School Year 2003-2004.

⁷ See Footnote 1.

⁸ Pampanga-online at <http://www.pampanga-online.com>

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