

# 1 MANSAKA BACKGROUND AND PHONOLOGY

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## 1.1 GEOGRAPHY

Mansakas live along the mountain streams emptying into the north-eastern portion of the Davao Gulf, along the Masara and upper Hijo rivers, and the relatively large mountain valley of Maragusan at the headwaters of the Agusan River. Some also live on the upper Sumlug River, which is separated by a relatively high mountain pass south of the Maragusan Valley. The Maragusan Valley is separated on the west from the Hijo River valley by the Masara mountain range; but the divide between the Maragusan Valley and the upper Masara River is relatively easy to hike, so there is good communication between these two areas. The upper Kingking River and the Hijo River are close, so it is not too difficult for intercommunication between the Hijo area and the coastal foothills. Today all these areas are connected by road.

But to the east of the Maragusan Valley are the very high Caragan Mountains which are a natural barrier to communication with the Mangaragans of the very high mountain valley on the upper Caraga River. The Mangaragans do come down to trade at New Bataan, where one may find a few Mansakas and Mandayas. The Mandayas of this area have acculturated almost completely to the Visayan culture.

## 1.2 DIALECT DIFFERENCES

Mansaka, Mandaya, and Mangaragan are mutually intelligible for ordinary purposes, but are different enough to require separate translations on more difficult materials.

An interesting difference in these dialects is the unstable phoneme /l/. The phoneme /l/ has different allophones in each of these three dialects. In the Mansaka dialect the phoneme /l/ in medial position between vowels is pronounced [r] after a, o, and u, (central high vowel or shewa); but after i /l/ is usually pronounced [l]. In the Mangaragan dialect of Caraga, which has been quite isolated from other areas, the phoneme /l/ in medial position between a, o, and u is pronounced [l<sup>v</sup>]; if /l/ is either before or after i, the /l/ is pronounced [l]. In the Mandayan dialect the phoneme /l/ is usually a flapped [l] between a, o, and u, or in certain localities it is dropped out completely; before or after i /l/ is pronounced [l].

The Mangaragan dialect is spoken to the east of the Mansaka dialect. Mandayan is spoken to the north, east, and south of Mansaka, and is spoken by the local inhabitants throughout Davao Oriental province. (Mangaragan is also called Mandaya in eastern Caraga.) Along the coast is another related dialect called Davawefio which is mixed more with Visayan, but it is basically the same language group as Mansaka, Mangaragan, and Mandaya.

### 1.3 THE MANSAKA PEOPLE

The Mansakas and Mandayas, in accordance with several theories of their origin, seem to have more characteristics of the Indonesians than of the Malays. The Mansakas and Mandayas have a little lighter skin coloring and are a little taller on the average than some of their neighboring groups.

Most of the Mansakas still engage in "kaingin" farming like their forefathers; they raise corn, camote, and some vegetables, plus one crop per year of upland rice. Coffee is now being grown in some areas as a cash crop in addition to corn, and is usually used to pay off their debts to the local storekeeper where they purchase such items as salt, rice, sugar, canned sardines, dried fish, clothing, etc. The Mansakas still raise some abaka (Manila hemp) for a cash crop, but not nearly as much as fifteen years ago since most of the abaka has been destroyed by the "mosaic" infection.

### 1.4 VISAYAN INFLUENCE

Many Mansaka children are now going to school, and the dialect is undergoing rather rapid change since the Mansakas are rapidly taking on much of the culture of the Visayans. The younger generation gains a fairly good grasp of the Visayan language, and at the same time their knowledge of their own language becomes limited, especially when it comes to words which they say have a "deep" meaning. Hence the younger generation may not know any one language as well as their parents do since in school they also study English and Tagalog. Most of them do not go to school long enough to speak or understand much English, even though they finish elementary school (six grades). There are, however, Mansaka and Mandaya children who are now able to go on to high school and college, especially due to the help of PANAMIN (Presidential Assistance to the National Minorities).

There is also encouragement through the PANAMIN for Mansakas to engage in making baskets, hats, necklaces, bracelets, etc., which can be marketed in the larger cities. The Mansakas are not averse to change, so national integration is readily being accepted by most of them.