

# philippine studies

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**Central Tagbanwa Central Tagbanwa:  
A Philippine Language on the Brink of Extinction  
by Robert A. Scebald**

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peace and order condition and tourist preference, among others, have proven the difficulty of turning utopias into reality.

This book is not only important to tourism specialists but also benefits scholars who are drawn to the study of Philippine culture and society. It provides a good model of a cultural approach to understand different issues in the contemporary world. Anthropologists, too, may also gain from this book since it addresses some current theoretical and methodological issues arising from some inherent conflicts in touristic and anthropological identities and practices.

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**Robert A. Scebald, *Central Tagbanwa: A Philippine Language on the Brink of Extinction*. Linguistic Society of the Philippines Special Monograph Series 48. Manila: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2003. xiii+168 pp.**

Sociolinguistic factors such as schools, local government, mass media, and interethnic marriages have contributed to make Central Tagbanwa an endangered language. If the current trend continues, the language will soon die out completely. In-migration of non-Tagbanwa settlers from other islands after the Second World War to seek land and livelihood has been so extensive that Tagbanwas are now very much a minority in their own land. Furthermore, mother-tongue Tagbanwa speakers have become very proficient in languages of wider communicative reach and power such as English, Tagalog, and Cuyunon, and they have been teaching these to their children for decades—leading to substantial language and culture shifts.

As a result, the younger generations are ethnically more diverse and linguistically less proficient in Tagbanwa than prior generations. They are also more attuned to the wider world through more education and modern media.

With diversity of background, many young people have a choice as to which heritage to gravitate toward Tagbanwa, or the other side of the family. Some develop a strong sentiment toward maintaining a Tagbanwa identity. These young people often learn Tagbanwa despite

the lack of it in their own homes. They wear it as a badge of identity. However, others gravitate more toward Cuyunon or Visayan; as a result they get assimilated into the wider culture.

Robert A. Scebald's volume contains a linguistic description of Central Tagbanwa spoken in northern Palawan in terms of its phonology, morphology, and morphophonemics. Although there is no full treatment of the grammar but simply an overview of the essential grammatical patterns in the language, it is still a significant contribution. Although the data table does not present nuanced or peripheral information, several case histories are included, organized along genealogical lines, all of which are rather interesting. Moreover, one whole chapter (Chapter 5) includes a sample of the Central Tagbanwa lexicon with an English index. The entries have been gathered from natural texts and word list data. Many entries contain only a headword, its part of speech, and an English gloss. Others contain a more detailed definition and other information gleaned from text analysis.

Another important contribution of this book is the natural texts recorded in the appendices. These texts consist of an oral narrative, a written narrative, and an oral conversation.

This book is an excellent undertaking, providing researchers from various fields, not only sociolinguists and ethnolinguists but also cultural anthropologists and historians, with the opportunity to acquire in-depth information derived from extensive fieldwork among the Central Tagbanwa speakers. The book in itself is not technical in its style and content; hence, even undergraduate students can use it as an easy reference on an endangered language such as the Central Tagbanwa.

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