

# What language endangerment tells us about Negrito societies:

The story of the Arta language

**Yukinori Kimoto**

# Outline

## The Arta language of Negrito

1. what is Arta?
2. how endangered?



**Massive immigration  
of agriculturalists**

**Arta people**

**Agta**

How? (endangerment scenario)

**Non-Negrito**

**vs.**

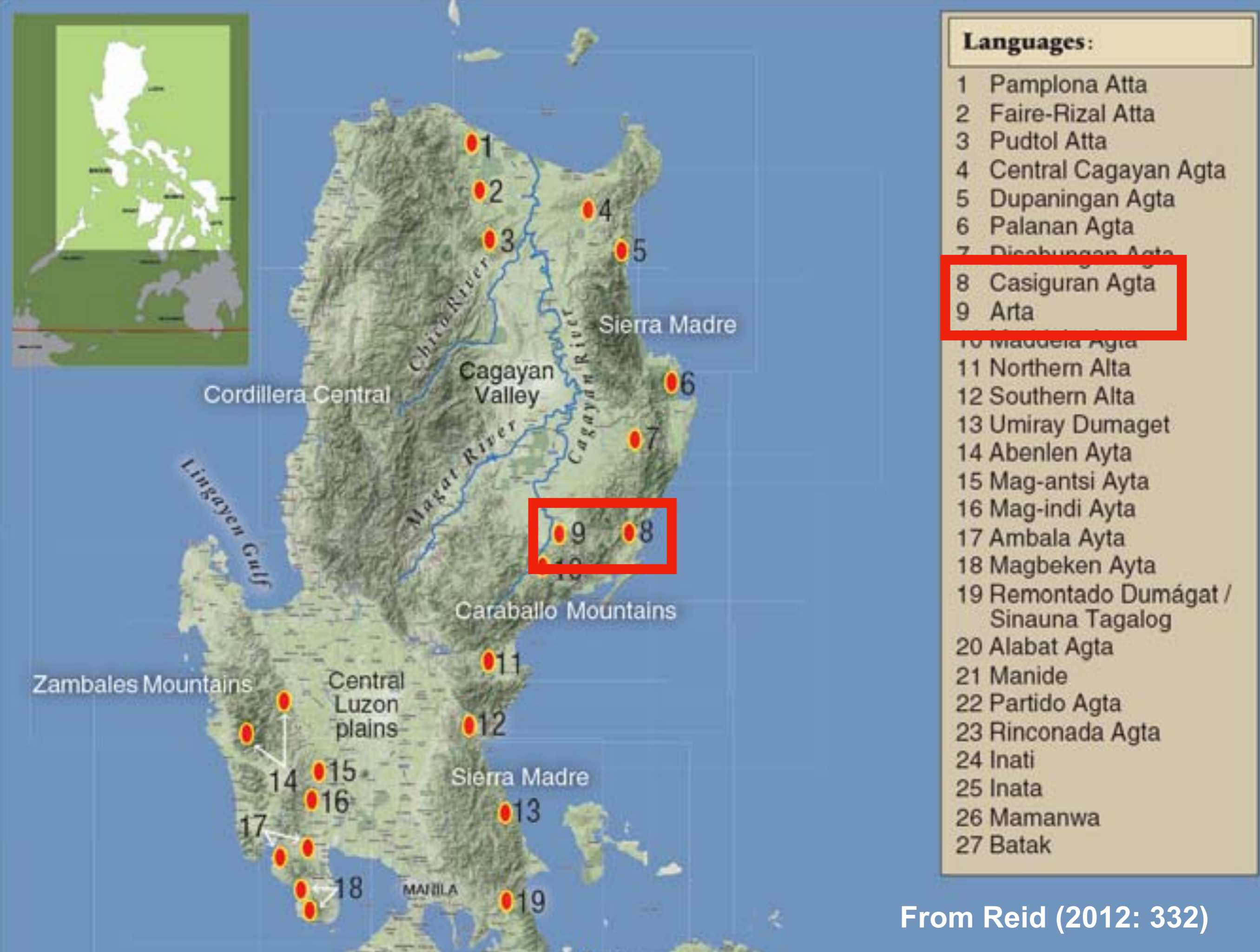
**Negrito (Arta ~ Agta)**

fluid identity of each  
ethnolinguistic group

Why? (factors)

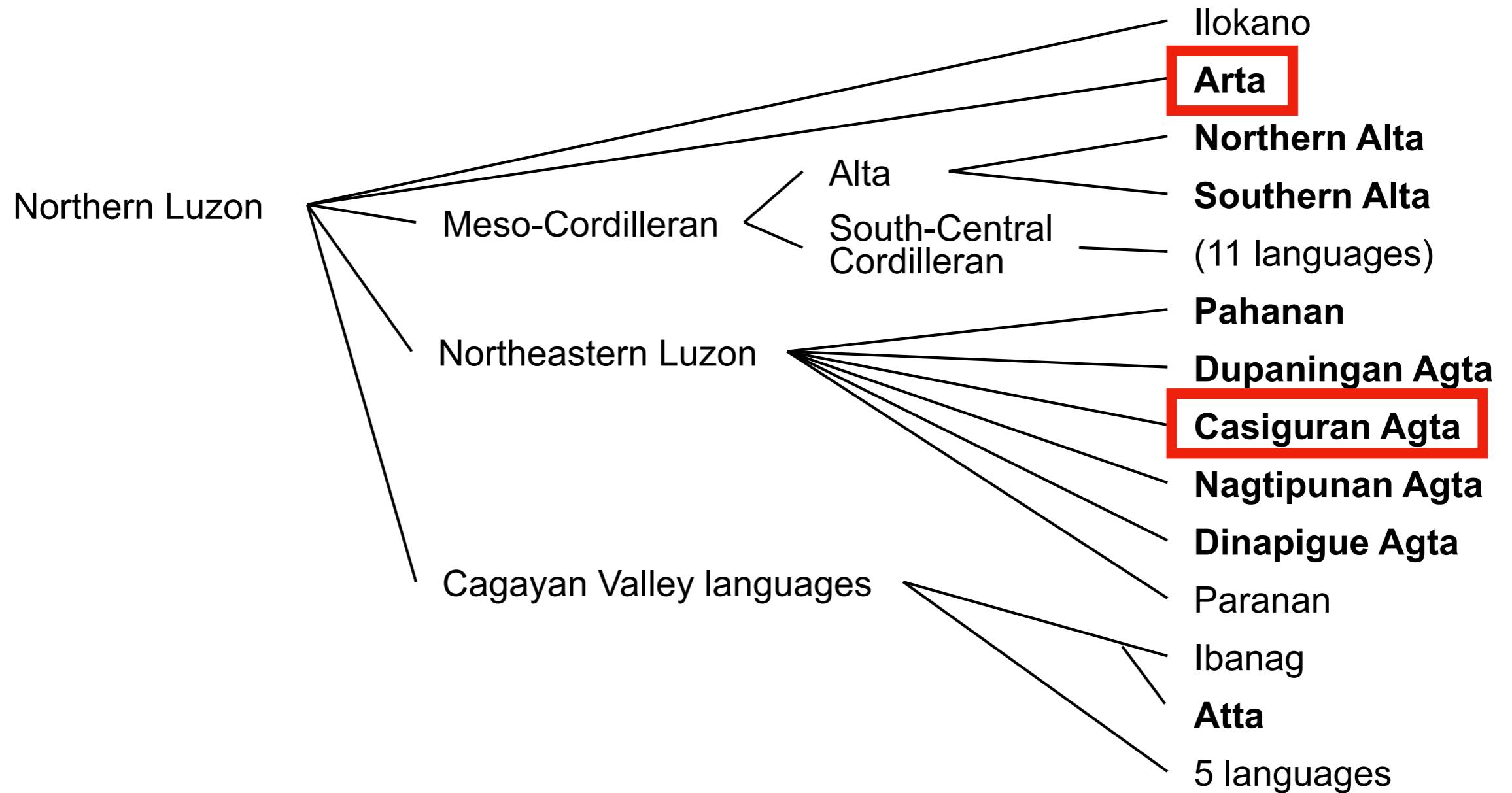
# What is the Arta language

- Arta is the language spoken by a small number of Philippine Negrito people in northern part of Luzon.
- who call themselves *Arta*, *Edilod*, *Edisubu* (*tiga:disubu*), etc.
- The language is not mutually intelligible with geographically adjacent languages (e.g. Casiguran Agta, Yogad, Ilokano).



From Reid (2012: 332)

# The Arta language



After Reid (1989), Robinson and Lobel (2013)



# The Arta language

- **Lexical differences**

	Tagalog	Ilokano	Casiguran Agta	Arta
‘eye’	<i>mata</i>	<i>mata</i>	<i>mata</i>	<i>mata</i>
‘head’	<i>ulo</i>	<i>ulo</i>	<i>ulo</i>	<i>ulu</i>
‘breast’	<i>suso</i>	<i>suso</i>	<b><i>gisat</i></b>	<i>susu</i>
‘nose’	<i>ilong</i>	<i>agong</i>	<b><i>dungos</i></b>	<i>adung</i>
‘excrement’	<i>ta’i</i>	<i>takki</i>	<b><i>attay</i></b>	<b><i>sirit</i></b>
‘laugh’	<i>tawa</i>	<i>katawa</i>	<b><i>ngihit</i></b>	<b><i>èla</i></b>
‘banana’	<i>saging</i>	<i>saba</i>	<b><i>biget</i></b>	<b><i>bagat</i></b>
‘back’ (body)	<i>likod</i>	<i>likod</i>	<i>adèg, sèpang</i>	<b><i>sapang</i></b>
‘hair’	<i>buhok</i>	<i>buok</i>	<i>buk</i>	<b><i>pulug</i></b>
‘body’	<i>katawan</i>	<i>bagi</i>	<i>bègi</i>	<b><i>abi:</i></b>
‘water’	<i>tubig</i>	<i>danum</i>	<i>dinom</i>	<b><i>wagèt</i></b>
‘house’	<i>bahay</i>	<i>balay</i>	<i>bilè</i>	<b><i>bunbun</i></b>
‘male’	<i>lalaki</i>	<i>lalaki</i>	<i>lèlake</i>	<b><i>gilèngan</i></b>
‘female’	<i>babae</i>	<i>babae</i>	<i>bèbe</i>	<b><i>bukagan</i></b>

Note: “ng” = /ŋ/; “è” = /ə/, “’” = /ʔ/.

**Sociolinguistic situation**

# Number of speakers

- Number of fluent speakers
  - 11 people
- Speakers with mixture between Arta/Agta vocabulary
  - 33 people

**Table 1** Generation of speakers

Age	number of speakers
30-39	1
40-49	2
50-59	4
over 60	4



# Register of language use

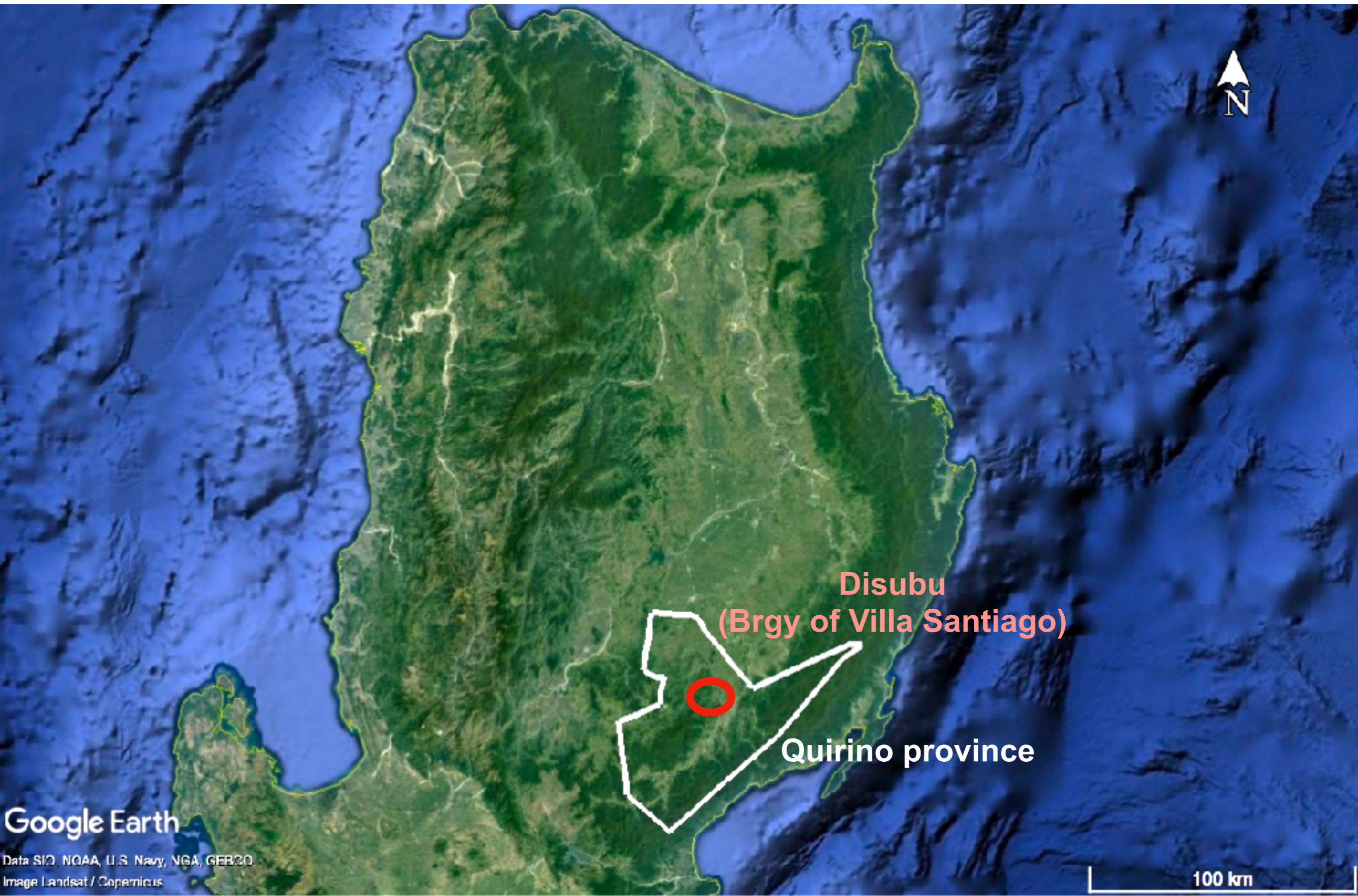
- The use of the Arta language is mostly limited to:
  - the conversation among (elderly) Arta people
- Since there is no family/community exclusively composed of Arta, the language is not used in families or communities any longer.
- “The language is not learned as mother-tongue by children, hence beyond mere endangerment, but ‘moribund’ ” (Krauss 1992: 4)

# Endangerment scenario

# Stage 1: Life in Disubu

- The first academic access to the language was by an American anthropologist, Thomas Headland. According to Headland, he first accessed the community in 1977, at which they are in so-called Disibu~Disubu, in Quirino province.
- All of the fluent speakers of Arta are from the same community: Disubu (Disubu ~ Disibu), Aglipay.
  - The Arta community were living when I (Headland) visit them in September 1977 at Disibu, Aglipay, in Quirino Province. As I recall, there were 30 or 40 Negrito adults there that day, 22 of whom claimed to be mother-tongue speakers of Arta (ISO code atz). The others were speakers of Casiguran Agta (dgc) or the Maddela (Quirino) Agta dialect. (p.c. Headland May 2, 2015)





**Disubu  
(Brgy of Villa Santiago)**

**Quirino province**

**Google Earth**

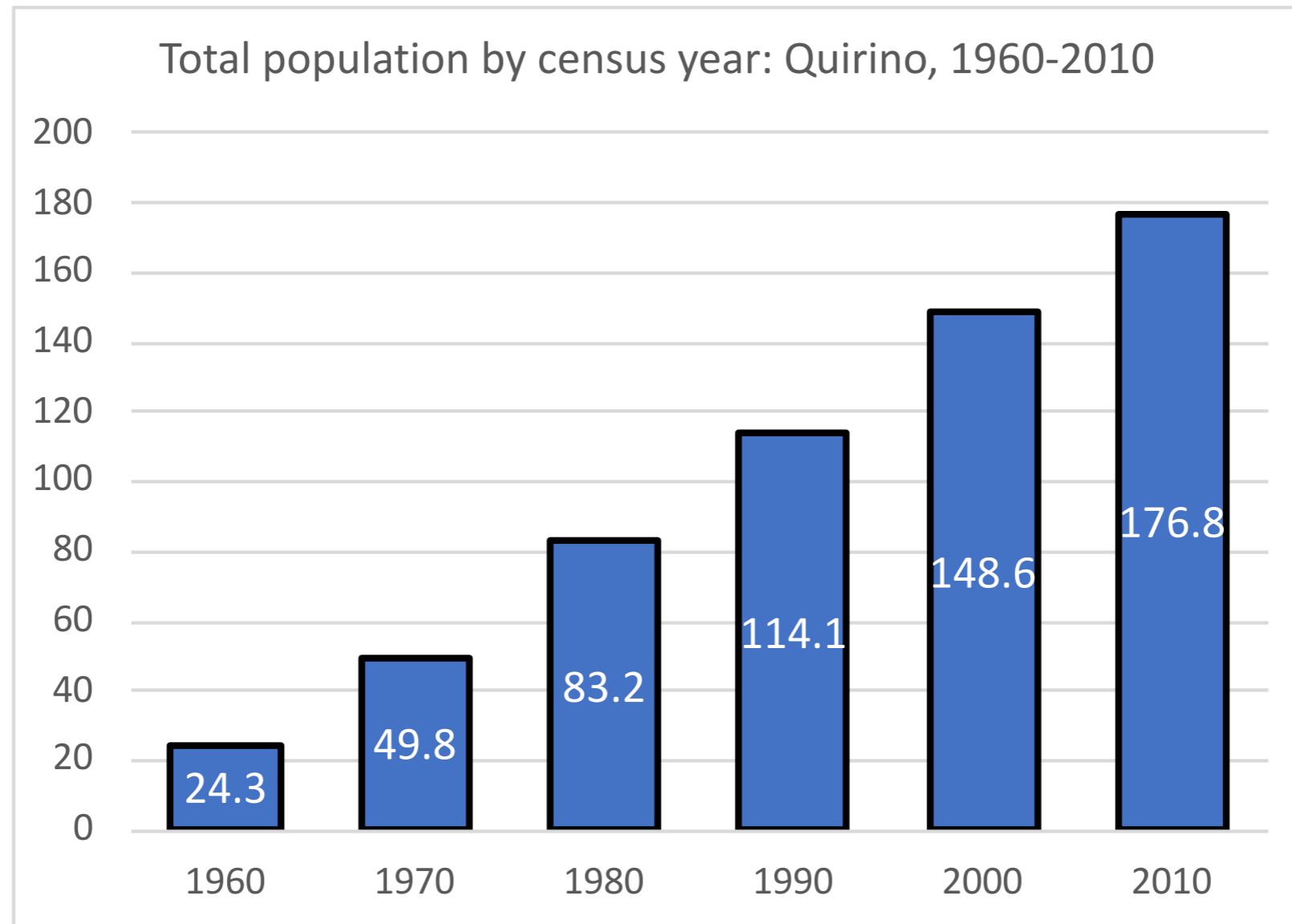
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO  
Image Landsat / Copernicus

**100 km**



# Stage 2: Immigration into Quirino

- The whole area of Quirino province witnessed an expansion of population by immigrations.



Philippine Statistics Authority (released at June 20, 2013)

(<https://psa.gov.ph/content/quirino-population-increased-150-thousand-results-2010-census-population-and-housing>)

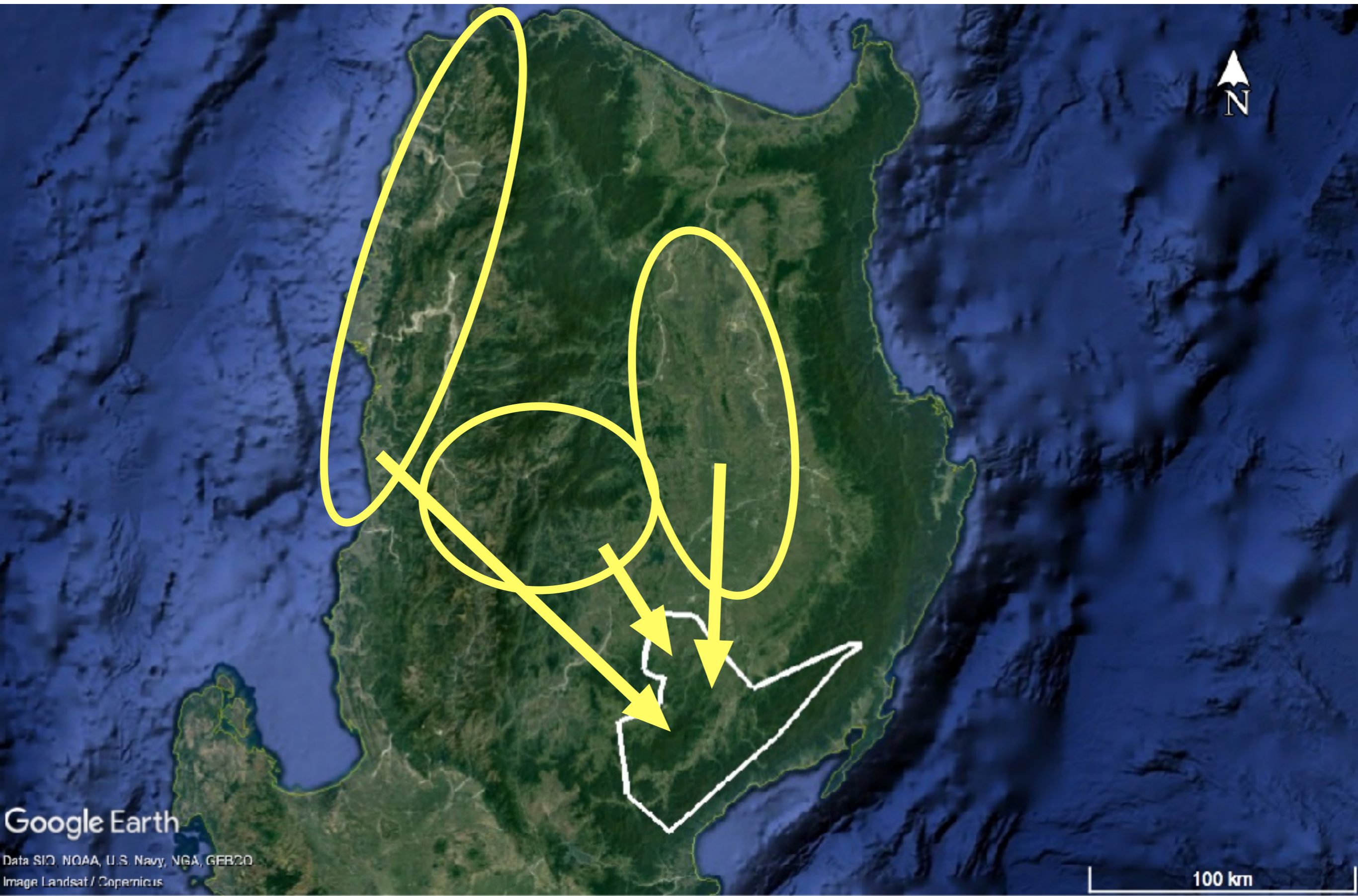
## Ethno-linguistic groups in the province of Quirino

Ethnolinguistic group	Municipality	Barangay (sitio/purok)	Place of Origin
<b>Native</b>			
Ilongot (Bugkalot)	Nagtipunan	Landingan (Sitio Gibien), Wasid, San Pugo, Matmad (Manpat, Comgang, Tabayong), Keat, Guingin, San Dionisio II (Tamsi)	
Arta	Nagtipunan	Disimungal (Kalbo, Pulang Lupa)	
Nagtipunan/Casiguran Agta	Nagtipunan	Disimungal (Tulitilan, Junuan, Masog, Dioryong, Kalbo, Pulang Lupa)	
	Maddela	San Martin (Panganian/Training Ground)	
<b>Immigrants</b>			
Ilokano	all		Ilocos
Tagalog	all		
Ifugao (Tuwili/Ayangan)	Nagtipunan	San Duiniso 2, Anak (Dibunglin, Tabiis)	Province of Ifugao (Banaue, Mayao-yao, Lagawe, Kiangan)
	Maddela	<i>Kiangan Ifugao</i> : Santo Nino (Panay), Villa Agullana, Cabuaan; <i>Ayangan Ifugo</i> : Jose Ancheta, Cabuaan, San Martin	
	Aglipay	San Manuel, Diodol, San Benigno, Alicia, Nagabgaben	
	Diffun	Campamento, Pagaduan, Ifugao village	
	Cabarroguis	Tucod, Eden, Dingasa	
	Saguday	Lapaz, Cardenas, Dibul, Gamis	
Kankanaey	Nagtipunan	San Ramos, Landingan, Disimungal, Sangbay (Purok 7), Gingin	Mountain Province, Benguet, Ilocos Sur
	Maddela	Pidlisan, Dumabato Norte,	
	Aglipay	San Ramon, Victoria	
	Duffun	Sitio Der-an (Guribang), Palma, Baguio Village	
Bontok	Cabarroguis	Sto Domingo	Mountain Province (Talubin, Tubeng)
	Nagtipunan	Sangbay (Ramay Manok)	
Itneg (Tinggians)	Diffun	Rizal	Abra
	Diffun	Guribang	
Ibaloy / Kalinguya	Diffun	Don Mariano Perez	Bokod, Atok, Benguet
	Cabarroguis	Dibibi	
Itawis Gaddang	Nagtipunan	Landingan, Wasid, San Pago, Dipantan	Isabella
	Nagtipunan	Dipantan, Wasid	Isabella, Nueva
	Diffun	Rizal	Viscaya, Cagayan
	Maddela	Villa Ylanan	
Ibanag	Nagtipunan	Landingan, Dipantan	Isabella, Cagayan

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Google Earth

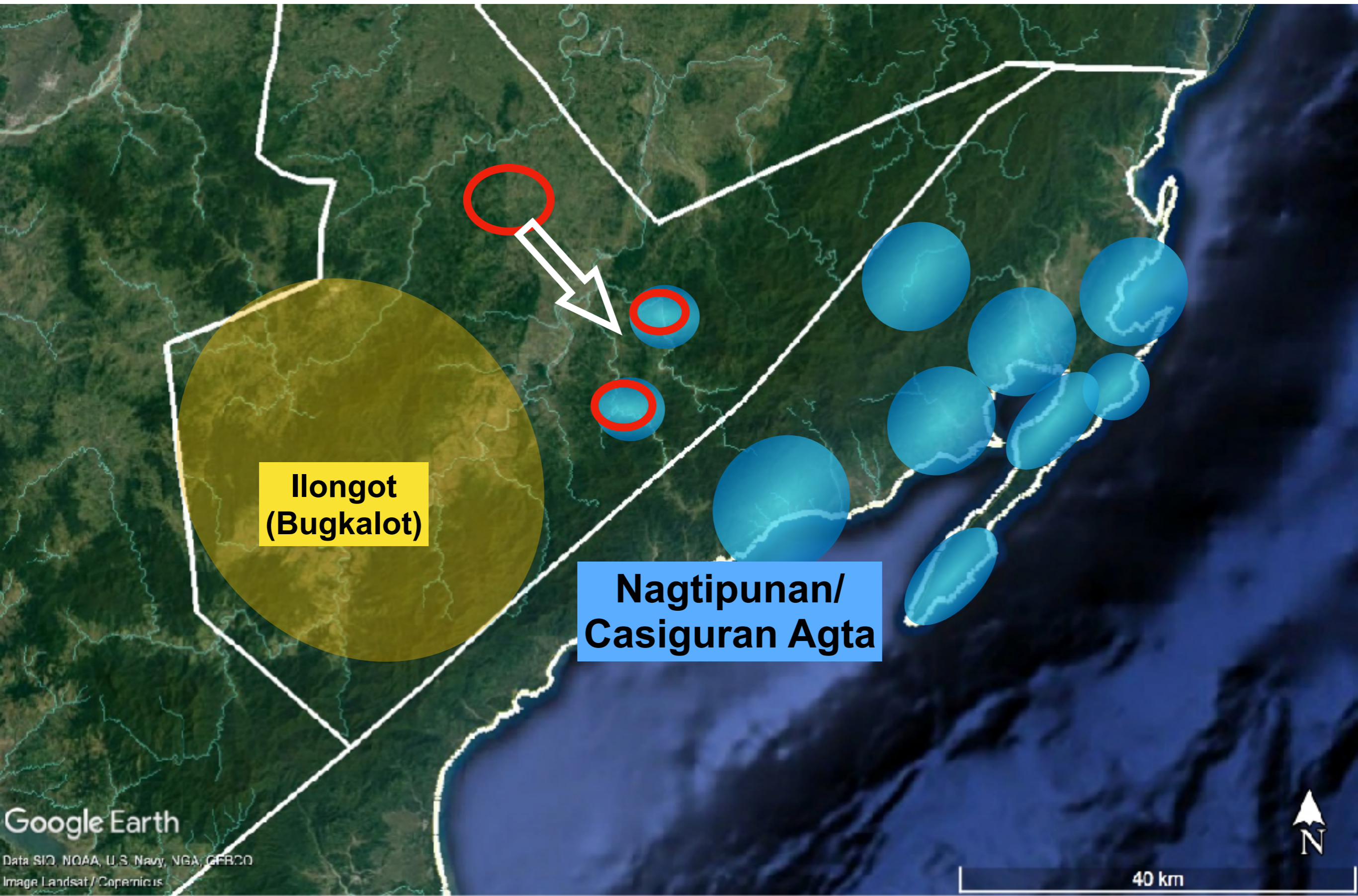
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Image Landsat / Copernicus

100 km

# Stage 3: Merger into Agta community

- The increase of agriculturalists, possibly coupled with other factors (e.g. the decrease of game, New Peoples Army), resulted in the Arta's leaving the original place for more mountainous areas: Ngilinen in Maddela and Disimungal in Nagtipunan (Pulang Lupa, Tilitilan, Kalbo).
- However, these areas have been the territory of other Negrito tribes speaking Casiguran/Nagtipunan Agta.
- The Arta people merged into the majority in the communities, where the dominant language is Casiguran/Nagtipunan Agta.





**Ilongot  
(Bugkalot)**

**Nagtipunan/  
Casiguran Agta**

Google Earth

Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO  
Image Landsat / Copernicus

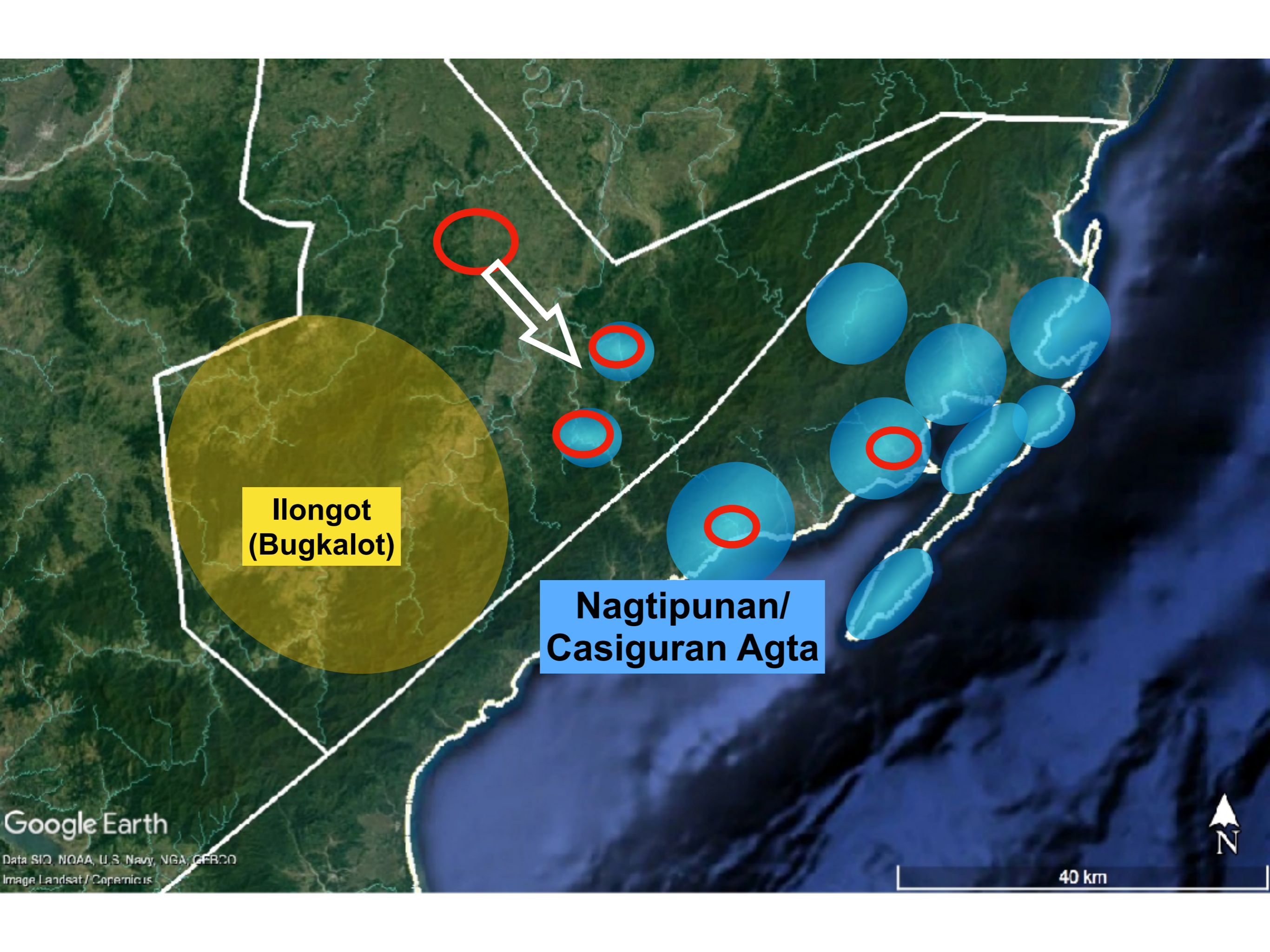
40 km



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- Several members moved out of Quirino province, settled down in Aurora province, the eastern side of Sierra Madre (Ramos Caras in appx. 2000, Gumabon Lando in 2013, Bueno Delia in 2017).





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- Several members moved out of Quirino province, settled down in Aurora province, the eastern side of Sierra Madre (Ramos Caras in appx. 2000, Gumabon Lando in 2013, Bueno Delia in 2017).
- As a result, the Arta language is not being used, nor is a mother-tongue for children.



Possible factors  
causing language shift



# Fluid identity within Negrito subgroups

- I suggest that one of the factors for their merger is the inherently fluid identity in Negrito groups:
  - phenotypical (physical) characteristics
  - similar cultural practices
  - apparent solidarity in social behavior
  - similar socio-political status vis-a-vis the non-Negrito
  - blurred conceptual distinction in autonym

# Fluid identity within Negrito subgroups

- **Cultural practices**

1. Traditional occupations

- hunting as a primary activity (cf. Headland 1986)
- using bow and arrow made of the similar materials

2. social organization:

- “modified communism” (food sharing)
- monogamous (cf. traditional Isneg and Kalinga culture)

3. Economy

- trading wild products

4. dwelling and settlements

- edge area near forest

5. food and meal

- staple food: rice

6. Supernatural world

- role of shaman (*bunugan*)

7. bodily adornment

- no tattoo, or sharpening of the teeth

8. Intellectual culture

- difficulty in calculation

(Vanoverbergh 1937/1938, Headland 1986)

# Fluid identity within Negrito subgroups

- Social behavior
  - One Arta person, Ramos Caras, attempted to help build a chapel for Dinapigue Agta community, none of whom are his acquaintances. (2017xxx)
  - Until recently the community members went to the nearby chapel for mass, but Ramos Caras made efforts to build their own chapel, and succeeded in building it, and now he is the representative of the local chapel.

# Fluid identity within Negrito subgroups

- Social behavior
  - One daughter of an Arta person was married to a speaker of Northern Alta (2016)
  - “my Negrito carriers, when meeting members of their race formerly entirely unknown to them, stopped to chat with them ... **as if they had been acquaintances of old standing.**” (Vanoverbergh 1930: 539; for Atta)

# Fluid identity within Negrito subgroups

- Negrito groups has been involved in the similar socio-political conflicts:
  - Agriculturalists accuse the Negrito of their “laziness” to cultivate lands, but they actually prevent them from entering into the same socio-economical domain. “competitive exclusion principle” (Headland 1986: 426ff)
  - By giving food, medicines, daily necessities for free, Agriculturalists succeeded in sustaining economic dependence.
    - So-called charity or gift is given to Negrito by the Ilokano, which is “an attempt to exploit the Negrito family in question”, “the prospect of a business transaction very advantageous to himself under all respects”

# Fluid identity within Negrito subgroups

- Sharp conceptual distinction between Negrito vs. non-Negrito
  - In Arta, there are two forms referring to ‘human, person’:
    - *arta* ‘Arta, Negrito person’, vs. *agani:* ‘non-Negrito person’

	Negrito	non-Negrito
<b>Arta</b>	<i>arta</i>	<i>agani:</i>
<b>Casiguran Agta</b>	<i>agta</i>	<i>pute</i>
<b>Dupaningan Agta</b> (Robinson 2008: 272)	<i>agta</i>	<i>ogden</i>
<b>Central Cagayan Agta</b> (Healey 1960)	<i>agta</i>	<i>ugsin</i>



# Fluid identity within Negrito subgroups

1. Yukinori: *Sa:ŋan a Arta ayta Simbaʔan?*

**‘How many Arta people are there in Simbahan?’**

2. Caras: *Meʔʔa:du=ay!*

**‘Of course there are plenty’**

3. Caras: *Nakurug sigu:ro=ya wa, Trenta.*

**‘I think (they) are around thirty’**

4. Caras: *Baŋat a Arta, Agta.*

**‘not Arta, but Agta’**

5. Yukinori: *Agta=te:.*

**‘It is only Agta (that are in Simbahan)’**



# Fluid identity within Negrito subgroups

- The conceptual distinction between Arta, Agta, (Atta, Alta), etc. is quite fluid.
  - Arta people tend to conceptualize them as the same ethnic group as "Negrito", in spite of a significant linguistic differences.
- as described by Vanoverbergh (1925)
  - “even when unknown, they are always very friendly; they seem to consider the while Negrito race as a big family.” (ibid: 187)
- This may have accelerated their merger, in spite of the significant difference in language.

# Future prospect

- Does language shift matter to Arta people?
- It really matters to us researchers, but...
  - They do not feel pessimistic. In spite of the presence of a linguist, and an anthropologist, they have a neutral attitude towards the language shift.
  - Their choice could be evaluated as the result of a positive adaptation to the global culture (see also M. Griffin & B. Griffin 1997).
- The most important thing is to find an ecological niche to live in the changing society, as they have been doing since the advent of the Austronesian.

# Thank you!



Endangered Languages  
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