

The Ilokano Identity in Stories of Origins of Ilocos Norte Toponyms

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ABSTRACT

Using a thematic approach in analyzing qualitative data, the study determined the Ilokano cultural values embedded in Ilocos Norte toponyms that reflect the Ilokano identity. Specifically, it focused on their positive Ilokano values before any foreign influences. It involved the stories of 21 towns and two cities from the account of Cadiz, Curammeng, and Dy (1988), wherein three significant themes were identified. These themes include the following: *Ilokanos are Industrious and Indulgent*; *Ilokanos are Independent and Individualistic*, and *Ilokanos are Illustrious and Impressive*. By looking into the historical accounts, the study provides an overview of the Ilokano identity by understanding the Ilokanos' worldview and sense of self. Thus, as an extension, the researchers recommend looking into personal accounts through oral history to justify further the themes that emerged in the study.

Keywords: *Ilokano Cultural Values, Ilokano Culture, Stories of Origins, Thematic Analysis, Toponyms*

INTRODUCTION

Helleland (2012) posited that the vast majority of place names given today belong to the first type and result from a process of lexicalization with its starting point in a description of the object bearing the name. Furthermore, Helleland (2006) also emphasized that names, especially place names, are not only a source of linguistic knowledge but also of geographical, historical, anthropological, ethnographic, social, psychological, or other knowledge and may be of interest to the respective sciences. Interestingly, Nordquist (2017) provided a term for place, names, or any word coined in association with the name of a place- *toponym*.

In NORNA's fifth symposium at Hanaholmen, place names, or toponyms, were pointed out as a critical part of one's geographical and cultural environment that play paramount social importance and represent irreplaceable cultural values of vital significance to people's sense of well-being and feeling at home. Hence, society, in general, should be responsible for taking care of place heritage and ensuring the preservation of such from the changes brought about by modernization.

Notably, efforts to preserve resources on cultural heritage have gained new momentum worldwide. Protecting cultural heritage is an economical, historical, and artistic process (Ekwelem et al., 2011). For example, in recent years, China has constantly strengthened the protection of geographical names as cultural heritage and launched a series of protection and promotion works where remarkable results were achieved (Tianjin et al., 2016).

In the Philippines, only a few studies or researchers have been conducted concerning the toponyms of the different

places in the country. In Ilocos Norte, some resources document the toponyms of the different towns and cities in the province. One of the existing books that included the toponyms of the various towns and cities of the region is 'Ilocos Norte: Gem of the Northern Philippines' written by Cadiz, Camange, and Dy (1988). It has included the origins of the names of the towns and cities in Ilocos Norte. The book was a part of a larger project entitled 'History, People and Culture of Ilocos Norte' of the Iloko Research and Information Center (IRIC) of the Mariano Marcos State University.

On the one hand, cultural values are defined as the beliefs, practices, symbols, specific norms, and personal values that a society shares. The person's ability and experiences are shaped by the cultural values to which their cultural values adhere. Relatively, Ilokano are known to be values-oriented people, and good values have already been part of their cultural values (Jocano, 1982).

In this study, the researchers have reviewed the literature on existing Ilokano cultural values to avoid being influenced by the existing literature and produce a more comprehensive and detailed output from the analysis. Reviewing the literature was conducted after the final data were written. Thus, this study analyzed the toponyms of the different towns and cities of Ilocos Norte to discover the cultural values embedded in them. Hence, people understand the values before foreign influences come into the province. The researchers analyzed 21 stories of the town and two stories of the cities. Specifically, they answered the question: What are the Ilokano cultural values that can be seen in the toponyms of the towns and cities in Ilocos Norte?

METHOD

The study employed qualitative research design, particularly the thematic analysis approach. It conceptualized the analysis and interpretation of the researcher on the Ilokano values manifested in the accounts of the towns and city's name origin. The primary data source for this study is the account of Cadiz et al. (1988), the only available book that compiled all the stories on how every town and city in the province got their names. The stories were analyzed thematically to develop the Ilokano values for this research. The thematic analysis of qualitative data is most effective in showing the researcher's interpretation. Each story was analyzed through three level codes, and an extra code was considered for those who exceeded the three codes. The codes were then mixed and formed into different categories. The researchers synthesized the idea from the categories to come up with the general themes that emerged from these stories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study focused on identifying the Ilokano values in the stories of how the towns and cities in Ilocos Norte got their names. Cadiz et al.'s (1988) account was used as the study's primary document.

The central values seen in the stories were grouped into three themes: Ilokanos are Industrious and Indulgent; Ilokanos are Independent and Individualistic; and Ilokanos are Illustrious and Impressible. To further understand the different themes, the following explanations are offered.

Ilokanos are Industrious and Indulgent

The stories of how the town and cities of Ilocos Norte got their names gave an exciting insight into the distinctiveness of the values of the Ilokano people. The stories show that Ilokanos had already managed to portray different good qualities in their lives before the foreign influences took place.

These qualities or values include being hardworking and indulgent in different situations. Hardworking is defined as something or someone that is diligent and putting effort into doing their task (Your Dictionary, 2017).

Being hardworking can be seen in the following excerpts:

‘They ***cleared the land, tilled the soil and planted abundant root crops*** like camote (awee potato), Tugui (Yam), and cassava.’ – Excerpt 1

‘One day, while some inhabitants were ***catching fish in the river***, Spaniards who were then passing asked them the name of the place.’ – Excerpt 2

‘They were awakened by the ***noise of the people picking up shells and seaweeds*** along the shore.’ – Excerpt 3

‘The ***town originated from the nine Rancherias*** of Padsan, Cabittauran, Paor, Patoc, Padpadong, Garnaden, Pagayong, Ugu is, and Tibangran. These **Rancherias** were settled before 1572, the time when the Spaniards set foot on the northern part of the country to spread Christianity’. – Excerpt 4

In excerpt 1, it is clear that Ilokanos already had their ways of living before the foreign invaders came. They tilled the soil so that they would have crops to eat, and they used this to make their lives easier. The same is valid with excerpt two, which reveals that people in the place were catching fish and gathering seaweeds when the Spaniards came and that it led to the naming of their place. In excerpt 4, it was stated that the place originated from nine Rancherías. Rancherías are defined as where the 'ranchos' were located, which gave the idea that the places were places where the people worked for their livelihood. Thus, portraying how hardworking the Ilokanos are.

Aside from being hardworking, Ilokanos are also tagged as Indulgent people. In the stories analyzed, Ilokanos love giving their visitors different festivities, and they welcome guests from all over the place. This trait is evident in the following excerpts:

'The missionary began looking for the chief of the tribe. With several natives as guides, he found a group of small houses on top of a hill. ***The priest was hospitably received by the chief*** who was requested to assemble the people. The chief called all his subjects "Intar" meaning "order" in a commanding voice.' – Excerpt 5

'When Spanish soldiers visited the place, ***they were welcomed with a big festivity***. Lechon (roasted pig), fruits, chicken and basi (native wine) were served abundantly.' – Excerpt 6

'Ding was gathering wild flowers on the opposite bank. Ras gathered the most beautiful flowers and put them on the river while they floated towards

the lady. *Ding happily waved her hands to Ras, who went home very happy.*’ – Excerpt 7

‘The village was ruled by a brave and wise chief named Bana and his wife Ipana. He words of the ruler were the laws of the people. *One time, Bana held a feast to celebrate his birthday, and all the settlers of the neighboring tribes were invited.*’ – Excerpt 8

The act of hospitality and a warm welcome can be seen in excerpts 5 and 6. In the former, the chiefs welcomed the priest who was visiting their place, while in the latter, the people in the place welcomed the visitors with a big festivity to show their respect and warmth. Another case was seen in excerpt 7 with a love story. Waiving of hands could signify a good reception of feelings, or it can mean a return of favor to the other party. In excerpt 8, it is proven that Ilokanos love celebrating with their friends and other people and are very indulgent in everything they do.

The results imply that the Ilokanos were already industrious and indulgent even before foreign influences came into the province. They work with what is available in their places and have a significant connection with the natural resources around them. They are industrious because of their limited natural resources because of different factors in the province (Jocano, 1982).

Furthermore, being indulgent or hospitable is one of the characteristics that Cadiz (1990) pointed out. He explained that Ilokanos are hospitable because they are very welcoming and treat their guests warmly.

Ilokanos are Independent and Individualistic

Another set of values that were seen identified was of being independent and individualistic. On the one hand, being independent is defined as being free from external control or not depending on others to survive. On the other hand, being individualistic is defined as being self-reliant and unconventional.

These values can be seen from the following:

‘When sea rovers (*Tirong*) like the Moro pirates attacked the settlement, many of the settlers built their home farther away from the place where *poblacion* is presently located. Sensing the danger that the people would suffer from the Moro raiders, the people of Batac invited them to live with them. ***But the people of Paoay refused to join them saying “Makapaoay kami,” which means they could manage independently.***’ – Excerpt 9

‘On the other hand, there are those who claim that before the coming of the Agustinian friars, there were already people living in the place. ***At that time also, there was a war between the lowland natives and the Kalanasan-Yapayao tribe. After the war, they traded with each other. During this time, the Chinese pirates invaded many places and stole the properties of the rich natives.*** The natives devised a sort of warning signal by kindling a fire called *paasok* (*asok* means smoke; *paasok* means something that gives out smoke).’ Excerpt 10

In excerpt nine, one of the places was named because of Ilokanos' love of being independent. They stand their ground in whatever circumstances and keep it to themselves. Excerpt 10 also pointed out that even before the Augustinian Friars came; there were already wars between other tribes and other invaders in some places because they wanted to protect their properties and other belongings; because of these, they were able to create ingenious acts to protect themselves.

Ilokanos' individualistic nature can be seen in how the stories portrayed acts for people to be able to protect themselves from the invasion of other outside power. An example can be seen in the following excerpt:

'To protect the natives from these pirates, the Spanish authorities built two watchtowers at two strategic points, one at the tip of what is now called Arboledan Point and the other at Torre. Whenever pirates appeared on the horizon to attack the villagers, the people manning the watchtower warned the people by shouting corrier which means "to run." As soon as the natives heard the shouts, they would hide to save themselves.' – Excerpt 11

The analyses also prove that Ilokanos, even before foreign influences, were already very individualistic and very independent. They did not want foreign influences and lived with their means and ways.

Jocano (1982) pointed out that:

Ilocano is group-oriented, but they consider individualism a highly desirable trait. In many villages, group orientation is generally family-

group orientation. Beyond the confines of kinship, group identification is usually restricted to those who are known, or, if everyone is known, to one's intimates.' P. 205.

Thus, this proves that Ilokans were independent and individualistic even before foreign influences came into existence.

Ilokans are Illustrious and Impressive

Other cultural values seen in the stories were Ilokans as being illustrious and impressive to the people they respect. Being illustrious is familiar to the Ilokans, who call this Ilokans 'January'. Some towns in Ilocos Norte were named to remember the Ilokano ilustrados who have contributed much to the province's development. These are evident in the following excerpts:

'In 1913, the town was renamed *Burgos* in honor of Father Jose Burgos. This was by virtue of an act passed by the Philippine Legislature through the effort of Hon, Santiago Fonacier, who was then representative of the first district of Ilocos Norte'. – Excerpt 12

'The town was named in honor of the late Mariano Marcos, a father of former President Ferdinand E. Marcos. The former served as an assemblyman of the province ' – Excerpt 13

In excerpt 12, the town's people changed their name to honor Father Burgos, a known Ilokano who has served for the freedom of the Filipino people; it is believed that some of his family members were also from the place. Moreover, in excerpt

13, the town was called Marcos to honor a person who had a significant impact on the development of the province and produced a son who became the president of the country.

Additionally, when Ilokano people are impressed, they name their places with the people or the situations that come with it. In extract 14, for example, the dynamic leader of the place was named after a river and their place, and when he became the leader of the place, they named the place after him:

‘It is said that it was customary among the early inhabitants to adopt the name of the popular place where the child was born. Thus, the child was named after the river and place where the child was born. Thus, the child was named after the river and he became the dynamic leader of their place Dumalneg named in his honor.’ – Excerpt 14

Also, one account pointed out that a town was named after a saint since people in this place believed that they were protected by this patron saint, thus naming the place in his name:

‘They intermingled with the natives and later on intermarried with them. When they increase in number, they formed a pueblo, a rural community, and named it San Nicolas in honor of San Nicolas de Tolentino.’ – Excerpt 15

In summary, as can be seen in the excerpts presented, Ilokanos, before any foreign influences came to the place, were already praising illustrious people, and they were quickly impressed by the heroic acts that were being done by the people that are living in their place. Thus, proving that Ilokanos are

illustrious and impressive. The results imply that even before and until now, Ilokanos love honoring the people from their places that contributed to the growth, prosperity, and other aspects of improving their society. The analyzed stories clearly showed different traits or cultural values possessed by the Ilokanos even before the foreign influences came to the country. Thus, they have a unique set of cultural values that reflect the Ilokano identity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The themes offered in the study revealed that the toponyms of places in Ilocos Norte are mostly historically rooted and reflect essential values that depict the Ilokano worldview. The historical accounts provided important justifications for how the emergent themes reflect Ilokano's sense of self. The researchers recommend that future researchers look into other historical accounts, or even personal accounts through oral history, of how the Ilokanos lived in different places. Such personal accounts can help clarify the Ilokano identity or disprove otherwise.

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