

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF
IBANAG PROVERBS

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by
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THE RESEARCHER

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The proverb is one of the important forms of Folklore, which includes ballads, epics, folktales, folkdance and drama, riddles, superstitions and even customs and manners. The Philippines is rich in proverbial lore. They constitute sound wit and wisdom and are the embodiment of moral and religious truths and lessons. They are food for constructive thought and inspiration. They reveal the psychology of the people. They open the way to the discovery of the daily life of the "folk" who are the essence and trunk of the nation.

Proverbs are an integral part of the people's lives. They mirror the actual views of those who use them, their practical philosophy of life and their principles of action. "Proverbs are wise sayings of general truths usually expressed in the oblique language of metaphor. The implied and/or expressed parts of a proverb are the description of the situation and the didactic observation or comment upon it,"¹ says Asuncion David Maramba.

¹Asuncion David Maramba (ed.), Early Philippine Literature (Manila: National Bookstore, Inc., 1971), p. 109.

One of the human universals, proverbs are international in scope and character. They are general and must be capable of wide application. Yet, they need not have universal validity. They are a part of a people's culture and belong to every level of society. They have a special place in the family which is the basic unit of society. Each cultural group may realize them differently, invent, adopt, or generate them uniquely with local color and indigenous style. They depend upon oral-aural transmission and tradition; yet, they represent more than surviving ideas in practice.

In the Philippines proverbs originated from many sources. They are selectively tailored to suit Filipino style and tastes. Historically, some were brought by the waves of immigrants who made the Philippines their home. These people came from such lands as India, China, Indonesia, and the Pacific Islands. A number of proverbs were brought by the Spanish Friars. Other proverbs came with the American teachers. Still others came from far places as visitors and Filipinos returning from abroad intermingled and exchanged ideas with each other. Finally, the majority of proverbs are of local origin and developed in the Philippine setting. They arose from the soul and heart of the folk going about their everyday life.

Proverbs in the Philippines are highly revered to this day. In 1975, Damiana L. Eugenio introduced her book, Philippine Proverb Lore, with the observation that:

The Filipino's fondness and respect for proverbial sayings and maxims are readily apparent to any close observer of Philippine life and culture, for among Filipinos, every occasion in life is an occasion for proverb telling. Any gathering at all -- a wedding, a funeral, a baptism, a barrio meeting, a harvest festival -- may elicit proverbs appropriate for the occasion. This high esteem for proverbs has survived despite the wave of modernism that has swept the country² with the resulting influx of foreign influences.

The proverbs of the nation reflect its heritage. They reveal part of the culture of the ethnolinguistic cultural groups who collectively own and use them. There are many studies about the proverb lore of the country which will be cited in the review of related literature in this work.

Ibanag proverbs, like the proverbs of other Philippine ethnolinguistic groups, are respected in their culture. It is not uncommon in Ibanag communities to find that their

²Damiana L. Eugenio, Philippine Proverb Lore (Quezon City: Philippine Folklore Society, Reprint Issue No. 2, 1975), p. 1.

children know the proverbs by heart. However, proverbs are born from experience and the most revered keepers of proverbs among the Ibanags are their elders. For from the lips of age speaks the wisdom of a lifetime. Proverbs just so tuned to the need of the moment are lovingly handed down. And so the proverbs are learned and make their steady way through time, impressed on the hearts of those they touch.

The compilation of proverbs which is the subject of this study are those collected from the Ibanag people of Cagayan Valley in Northern Luzon.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is fivefold. The study attempts to:

1. describe the content of Ibanag proverbs towards the end of finding out whether these proverbs reflect aspects of Ibanag culture.
2. describe the nature of the social context of Ibanag proverb-making as far as available information permitted.

3. arrange the Ibanag proverbs collected in such a way as to facilitate understanding and make them useful to future researchers.
4. complement and facilitate the study of Ibanag language by introducing a single orthography and analyzing a sample of Ibanag proverbs.
5. assemble a significant addition of unpublished proverbs for a cultural linguistic group, the Ibanags, little represented in existing proverb collections.

Importance of the Study

As with other forms of oral tradition proverbs are deserving of anthropological study. Both explicit and implicit proverbs offer a wealth of information. They are essential in transmitting a system of religious beliefs and "common sense" to the young. Implicitly, they provide a broad and firm foundation for illuminating Filipino values and institutions. They make an important part of Philippine heritage.

The importance of this study also rests on the role proverbs have in national development. Proverbs are