

# Inabaknon Proverbs: Retrieval and Translation into English

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**Abstract:** *This ethnolinguistic study retrieved and translated into English the proverbs of the people of Capul, Northern Samar. Specifically, it categorized the Inabaknon proverbs according to nature, range of subject matter, form and style; find out its structure; noted the extra-linguistic features; determined the figurative language used; find out how the culture or worldview of the people are reflected; and knew the techniques employed in the translation. One hundred sixty (160) proverbs were collected and analyzed. It was categorized for their general attitudes towards life and laws that govern life, ethical, system of values, general truths and observations about life, humorous, and miscellaneous. It revealed that proverbs were prose statements in couplets with neither rhyme nor measure both in the original text and the English translation. Conditional construction, analogy, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, contrast, comparison, and parallelism were the figurative language used. The functions were restraining, regulating, advising and tempering. The extra-linguistic features were hand gestures and facial expressions to state the degree of seriousness as to the proverb's wisdom and spirit. The dominant worldview reflected is the Capuleño's religiosity. Free and word for word translation, functional and descriptive equivalent, and paraphrasing were utilized.*

**Keywords:** Proverbs, retrieval, translation, extra-linguistic, traditional bearer

## 1. Introduction

*The genius, wit, and spirit of a nation are discovered in its proverbs.*

-Francis Bacon

Learning the language of other people includes a knowledge of the culture of these people. Proverbs are a good source of language study for they reflect both the culture and the language.

The island of Samar is one of the rich hunting grounds for indigenous art and literature. In the skill in proverb making, the people of Leyte and Samar have been productive. Collecting these proverbs, however, began almost as a historical accident.

A famous line has it that "brevity is the soul of wit". Brevity with wisdom is found at its best in proverbial sayings. The most primitive of men coin sayings founded on common experiences and observations. There sapiential pronouncements when taken together embody the wisdom and philosophy of a people.

Proverbs had been in use by Filipinos long before the coming of the Spaniards to the Philippine shores and have managed to survive to this day through constant use handed down from generation to generation.

Proverbs are said to be an effective means of transmitting folk wisdom to succeeding generations since, they are marked by the use of wit and brevity (Eugenio, 1995). However, the preservation of such oral literature has not yet been given much emphasis in Northern Samar since few of the present studies conducted focused on riddles, folksongs, legends, folktales and other vernacular literature.

Moreover, it is sometimes said that the proverb is going out of fashion or that, it has generated into a cliché. But the proverb had nonetheless retained its popularity as a homely commentary on life, as reminders that the wisdom of one's ancestors may still be useful today. Proverbs continue as the early collectors never tired of stating them – to provide the source to relish the meat of ordinary speech (Simpson, 1982).

In view of this, the preservation of the folk's oral and vernacular literature in some remote areas requires attention. It attested to the fact that Northern Samar is a fertile ground for oral and vernacular literature.

Inabaknon sounds queer and unique, is entirely different from Samaron. Stressing the urgency of putting Inabaknon in the mainstream of Filipino literature, this research collected Inabaknon proverbs which are translated to the English language for non-native speakers of NinorteSamaron. The collected proverbs will help present a concept of the people of Capul, Northern Samar, their life, appreciation, expressions, observations, and ways of valuing. It is hoped that this bilingual collection of Inabaknon maxims and proverbs will interest the readers in general but be of special value to students and translators of the main languages.

For the above reasons, the researcher aimed to retrieve and translate the proverbs that are popular among Capuleño's, their lives as human beings, as Samareños, as Filipinos, and as citizens of the world having something in common with those from other cultures.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The researcher aimed to retrieve and translate into English the proverbs of the people of Capul, Northern Samar.

Specifically, it is intended to: (1) collect Inabaknon proverbs and translate them into the English language; (2) categorized the proverbs according to the nature and range of subject matter and form and style; (3) find out the structure of the proverbs; (4) take note the extra-linguistic features accompanying the Inabaknon proverbs; (5) look into the figurative language used in the proverbs; (6) note and analyze the situation when these proverbs are used; (7) find out how is the culture or worldview of the people reflected in the proverbs; and (8) know the techniques employed in the translation of Inabaknon proverbs into English.

### 3. Methodology

This ethnolinguistic study was conducted in the municipality of Capul, Northern Samar.

Capul is an island town located at the northwest portion of the province of Northern Samar. It has been said that this was the first town established and evangelized by the Spaniards. Historically, the galleons from Mexico have docked at San Luis, Capul before they set sail on to Acapulco, Mexico. The name Capul was said to derive from the city of Acapulco. It has been said also that Moro vintas would pass and make a short stay in the island before going to Manila and in Luzon province likewise when going to Mindanao. Some of these Muslim traders married native Capuleños. It is believed that these Muslim traders had inhabited the islands and imbibed its culture which was at the same time influencing the island's language. The language spoken is Inabaknon, but Tagalog and English can also be understood by the majority.

Thirty-seven (37) informants were chosen as the sources of the data and who met the criteria for this study. The criteria specified that the primary source or informants be Northerners: sixty years old and above; known to be tradition bearers; those who had never gone beyond grade three to minimize the influence of the printed page and to authenticate their proverbs; and those who rarely left the place except for occasional visits to other towns or cities. Also tradition bearers who are professionals were included as data source to strengthen the folkloricity of the proverbs.

This research examined a people's words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants. It made use of the ethnolinguistic and participant observation methods complemented by informal conversational interview and the interview guide approach. A personal interview schedule was used with an interview guide to elicit the background information of the primary sources of data. A tape recorder to record the proverbs and a camera for taking pictures of the informants were used in this investigation. While the interview was going on, the researcher observed the accompanying extra-linguistic features of the informants and recorded them in her journal. The researcher gathered 160 proverbs from the 37 informants from the twelve (12) barangays of Capul, Northern Samar.

The actual field work was conducted from October 2004 to December 2004. For authentication of proverbs, E. Arsenio Manuel's test for folkloricity as contained in his guide was

used. That is the proverbs must be recited, it has no authorship, its medium of transmission is by word of mouth, and variants must exist.

Effort was exerted to insure that the words from the proverbs were recorded as exactly as they were given by the informants and all the extra-linguistic features were noted down during the interview. In translating the texts, this research tried to render meaning as faithfully as possible so as to be understood by the readers. The classification of proverbs by Damiana Eugenio was used to categorized the Inabaknon proverbs. In translating the proverbs, the closest possible translation was considered. However, in some cases where there was no English equivalents to some words, the meaning was given consideration that the form of structure or word arrangement. The original terms were also retained to maintain the greater part of the meaning. For the readers' convenience, the original and English translations came after the Inabaknon proverbs.

### 4. Findings

#### The Collected and Translated Inabaknon Proverbs

##### A. General Attitudes towards Life and Laws that Govern Life

###### 1. Patience and Perseverance

*I mag-antossikasakitan*  
*Mahalap i kabubuwasun-na.*  
S/He who sacrifices  
Will have a better tomorrow.

###### 2. Cautiousness

*Gana' sagdonngamara'at.*  
There is no advice that leads to evil.

###### 3. Gratitude

*I a'angaga' iagttilisitnikangan-na*  
*Ga'ikapada 'iraysi parade 'irayon-na.*  
S/He who does not look back at his/her past cannot

go where s/he desires.

###### 4. Resentment

*Ako i magtapa, ako i magsugna'*  
*Katahak la 'in magkakan.*  
I pounded, I cooked, when finished, other reaped  
the glory. Or  
I was the one who cooked it, another ate it.

###### 5. Death

*Kamatayonhamok*  
*I gana' kalibrihan-na.*  
From death alone  
Is there no escape.

##### B. Ethical Proverbs Recommending Certain Virtues and Condemning Certain Vices

###### 1. Cautiousness

*I makusoglakang-na*  
*Malalom i ontug-na.*  
The heavier the step  
The greater the fall.

###### 2. Loyalty

*Kon i alla-moduwa*  
*Pabalikon I adda.*  
If you have two spouses  
Return the other.

###### 3. Promptness

*I magkallattulos*

*Mahayagrasya i saala'-na.*

The early rises,

Receives bountiful graces.

4. Industry

*I a'amadurutosipanginabuhi*

*Niya' kahalapan-nasidamuriallow.*

S/He who is helpful

Reaps something in return.

5. Thrift

*Dakawagititibusondimu'an*

*Kay aniya' orasngaagkinahanglankaw.*

Don't consume everything

Time will come that you need some.

6. Consideration for others

*Dakawagpallingmara'at*

*Basi' gana' mabido' sika'aw.*

Don't say bad words

So that people will not be mad at you.

7. Humility

*Konbinalitokkawbatobulusongapas*

*Ngaga'ikawakapapaddisiigkasia'amo.*

If some throws you a stone, throwback cotton

So that you will not hurt him/her.

8. Patience

*Tadungon i paglalangngan-mo, dakaw*

*Paratitili*

*Kay angabatkawawiraynakawdina.*

Look straight, don't look back

You will find you're already there.

9. Respect

*Konmahalappagtratar-mosila'ina'a,*

*Mahalap may lat i pagtratarsika'aw.*

If you treat others well,

You will be treated well too.

10. Charity

*I a'adapatata'oaghigugma'*

*Si mgaanggana' pina'agisipagbuwan limos.*

A person should love those people

Who do not have by being generous.

C. Proverbs Expressing a System of Values

1. Honesty

*Kon ay i sa'ad-mo*

*Iya I tinumanon.*

What you promised

You should fulfill.

2. Good Reputation

*Konaniya' humbo*

*Aniya' may api.*

If there is smoke

There is fire.

D. Proverbs Expressing General Truths and Observations About Life

1. Adaptability

*Dakawagdadahulokay i dahuloiya i nagtestingan*

*Dakawmay*

*latagpadamurikawka'awmakabawasikadaa'an.*

Neither be the first for you will be tested;

Nor be the last for you will bear the old.

2. On the Attitude of the Young and Present

Generation

*I siraypati' ina'anto*

*Mahaya i dipirensya-na.*

Between yesterday and today,

There is a great difference.

3. On the Attitude of Human Beings

*Konniya' mahalapbinuhatan-moga'i*

*Lugodkina'intumanI mara'atlugodiyapirmi i*

*nagparatigamanan.*

People do not look on the good deeds

of a person

Rather they look into their defects.

4. Obedience

*Tipada'iray pa kamhamok,*

*Tibalikna kami'.*

You are still going there,

We are already returning.

5. Judgment

*Myintraskawaghusgasiditangnga'*

*Husgahindahulo i kalugaringon-mo.*

Before you judge others,

Judge yourself first.

6. Sensitiveness

*Mamma' ngani' a'a*

*Makudatngani' kayo.*

If it is soft then it's human.

If it is hard then it's wood.

7. Talkativeness

*Gana' mahimotrabaho*

*Konsigehamoktabil.*

Nothing is accomplished

By talking always.

8. Love of Pleasure and Relaxation

*I a'angamapinaturihon, makaliamatay.*

S/He who sleeps always dies early.

9. Modesty

*Ga'ipadugok i paraysimanok.*

Palay never comes near the chicken.

10. Contentment

*I a'angabagtokkuntentona.*

Each one who gets full is weaned.

11. Wooing

*Sikreto pa hamok*

*Baliskadna i lamisa.*

It is still a secret;

But the table has already been turned

upside down.

12. Fame and Power

*I gahum-nasia'aapara'*

*Pero i-gahum-nasiDiyosga'Iapara'.*

The power of man fades

But the power of God does not.

13. Ability

*I kulur-nasia'akinakulawansigawas;*

*Pero i abilidadsikalidad.*

The color of man is on the outside;

But the ability lies in the quality.

14. Courage

*I a'aakonakasamaran*

*Agdugang i kusug-na.*

A person when wounded

All the more s/he becomes brave.

15. Repentance

*Abungolakosikapapamati' ina'anto.*

*Mahalap i kabubuwasun-na.*

I've been deaf but I listen now.

16. Perseverance

*I orasiglalangnan*

*I trabahoag'antahak.*

Time flies;

The job awaits.

17. Inheritance

*Kon ay i tatay-mo, kaydadi'-na may*

*Kaw, iyakawliwat.*

Like father, like son.

E. Humorous Proverbs

1. On Emotions

*Sa 'ilub-mo i paddipero i katul-naga'i.*

You can stand the pain but not the itch.

2. On Jokes

*Gana' ngani' pataraw'an*

*Gana' may makapatatawa.*

No jokes,

No laughter.

F. Miscellaneous Proverbs

*I gi'ossipagkadadi' abawasi*

*Kamaklong.*

Childhood disposition is carried to maturity.

*Gana' sapagga'-mosigana'.*

You can't squeeze something out of nothing.

### The Categories of the Proverbs

#### The Nature and Range of Subject Matter, Form, and Style

One hundred-sixty (160) Inabaknon proverbs were collected and categorized using Damiana Eugenio's classification. The Inabaknon proverbs were categorized as to range and nature of subject matter into; general attitudes towards life and laws that govern life, which is 41 proverbs were retrieved and translated on patience and perseverance, cautiousness, gratitude, resentment, and death. On the ethical proverbs recommending certain virtues and condemning certain vices, 45 proverbs were retrieved on cautiousness, loyalty, promptness, industry, thrift, consideration for others, humility, patience, respect and charity. With regard to proverbs expressing a system of values, 9 proverbs spoke of honesty and good reputation. On proverbs about life, 49 proverbs focused on adaptability, on the attitude of young and present generation, on the attitude of human beings, obedience, judgment, sensitiveness, talkativeness, love of pleasure and relaxation, modesty, contentment, wooing, fame and power, ability, courage, repentance, perseverance, and inheritance. Six (6) humorous proverbs centered on emotions and jokes. And 10 miscellaneous proverbs that spoke on nature and confidence. All these Inabaknon proverbs are in prose statement.

#### **The Structure of the Proverbs**

Most of the retrieved and translated Inabaknon proverbs were prose statements in couplets with but there is no discernible rhyme scheme or uniformity in syllable composition both in the original text and the English translation.

And there is a number of proverbs in quatrain and three-line stanza with no discernible rhyme scheme or syllable composition.

### **The Extra-Linguistic Features Accompanying the Proverbs**

The extra-linguistic features that accompany in the Inabaknon proverbs were hand gestures which impress the functions coupled with the facial expressions usually wearing some degree of seriousness as to the wisdom and spirit of the proverb.

### **The Figurative Languages Used**

The figurative languages used in the Inabaknon proverbs were conditional construction, analogy, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, contrast, comparison, and parallelism.

### **The Situation When the Proverbs are Used**

The Abaknon's main reason for using proverbs is to render advice, sermon, and warning to others specially to the young ones or it appeared that their function includes that of restraining, regulating, advising, and tempering. These were used when applicable and necessary.

### **The Culture or Worldview of the People Reflected in the Proverbs**

The dominant culture or worldview of the people reflected in the collection and translation of Inabaknon proverbs is the Capuleños religiosity.

### **The Techniques employed in the Translation of the Inabaknon Proverbs into English**

The techniques employed in the translation of the Inabaknon Proverbs took the form of free translation, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, word for word translation, and paraphrasing.

## 5. Conclusions and Implications

After thorough analysis and evaluation of the data gathered in this study, the following conclusions and implications are given.

- 1) Proverbs are still commonly heard and recited by the people of Capul as observed by the researcher. From the proverbs gathered, the researcher experienced that the Inabaknon proverbs are next to human nature if only to deduce from them the fundamental human traits. They are indispensable in the sense that they function to restrain and regulate, advise, and temper people. They are the bearers of the values of the people which have survived despite influx of foreign influence. Such proverbs are people's precious possession, the best legacy from folk bearers who handed them down to the informants.
- 2) The collected proverbs were categorized according to the range and nature of subject matter like general attitudes towards life and laws that govern life (patience and perseverance, cautiousness, gratitude, resentment and death); ethical proverbs recommending certain virtues and condemning certain vices (cautiousness, loyalty, promptness, industry, thrift, consideration for others, humility, patience, respect, and charity); proverbs expressing a system of values (honesty and good reputation); proverbs expressing general truths and observations about life (adaptability on the attitude of the young and present generation, on the attitude of human beings, obedience, judgment, sensitiveness,

talkativeness, love of pleasure and relaxation, modesty, contentment, wooing, fame and power, ability, courage, repentance, , perseverance, and inheritance); humorous proverbs (emotions and jokes); and miscellaneous proverbs (nature and confidence).

- 3) The iunabaknon proverbs were structured as prose statements. Most of the proverbs were in couplets. However, neither rhyme nor measure was prominently discernible. The number of syllable composition was not consistent even when these were translated into English. What was observed was that in the English translations, there were lesser number of syllables in each translation compared with those written in the original.
- 4) Extra linguistic features accompanied the proverbs. Hand and head gestures impressed the functions emphasized by the facial expression usually wearing some degree of seriousness as top the wisdom and spirit of the proverb.
- 5) As oral literature, figurative language brought home the message of the proverbs. They included among others, conditional construction, analogy, smile, metaphor, hyperbole, contrast, comparison, and parallelism. The proverbs provided a more striking effect on the person for whom the expression was intended and made him/her accept the truth behind these utterances. Metaphor abounded in the proverbs although there were several variations in the utterances. Some sayings do not have rhymes.
- 6) From the analysis and readings of the proverbs, their functions that can be deduced include that of restraining, regulating, advising, and tempering. These proverbs were used whenever applicable or necessary. The proverbs have been learned from their parents, grandparents, relatives, friends, even from their children, and other people whom they associate with within the community including the people they respect aside from their parents, elders, or priests. These expressions or sayings were acquired in the home, from their friends or neighbors and from their socializing. These proverbs are used in casual or ordinary conversations, arguments arising among parents/elders and children, among siblings, and among neighbors and friends.
- 7) The proverbs are reflections of the values caught from parents and elders, from hard work, careful deep thought in any undertaking, good reputation, keeping ones word, adaptability, prescribing, proper behavior, and recognizing the will and power of god. They teach the virtues of patience, promptness, perseverance, industry, loyalty between husband and wife, honesty, charity, thrift, humility, respect, obedience, courage and contentment. One dominant worldview of the people reflected in this collection of proverbs is the Capuleño's religiosity. The wisdom and spirit of the proverbs reflect the people's attitudes toward life and those which govern life, general truth and observation of and in life, their work ethic, the people's values system, and the lighter side of life which is humor.
- 8) Translated into English using the free translation techniques, they have been rendered understandable to readers who are non-native users of the language.
- 9) These proverbs are manifestation of their day-to-day activities, feelings and attitudes, and depicting their confrontation with the facts of life. This proves that Capul like any other place has a rich repertoire of

beautiful proverbs embodying their sentiments handed down by word of mouth. Thus, it will sensitize the readers to an indigenous oral literature.

## 6. Recommendations

From the results of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations.

- 1) The folklore be included in the high school curriculum as well as in the elementary as teaching materials so that from that start the student will recognize the importance of folklore and earlier they can begin retrieving and collecting those that have not been collected so far.
- 2) Other proverbs should be gathered in various places, towns, and barangays in Northern Samar as a way of preserving the people's wisdom before they totally vanish.
- 3) Future thesis writers are encouraged to retrieve, collect, and translate NinorteSamaron literature and study them for their literary merits. In so doing, the actual interview of the informants should be videotaped so that the extra-linguistic features of the informants could be recorded.
- 4) For them to be appreciated, these proverbs may be recited first in class, before discussing the values, worldview or culture contained therein and the figurative language used. In this manner the students will develop an appreciation of the NinorteSamaron culture, besides enjoying the Inabaknon proverbs.
- 5) The Inabaknon proverbs should be included in the literature classes so that the languages and culture should not be regarded as strange by students who do come from Capul.
- 6) The use of proverbs is highly effective in conveying one's thought because of their imaginative treatment of the language. A literary appreciation of them would be a good research.
- 7) The proverbs need conclusion in DepEd values education program to enhance human development and strengthen the moral fiber of the people through familiar situations embedded in them, besides sensitizing the readers to indigenous oral literature.
- 8) it also recommended that another research be conducted comparing proverbs from different places focusing on the difference in cultural materials or nuances or retrieving proverbs in Northern Samar.

## 7. Acknowledgement

The researcher would like to express her deepest gratitude to her master's thesis adviser, Dr. Lydia P. E. De L Rosa, DALL and the Abaknons, the people of Capul, Northern Samar who served as informants. Likewise, to her very supportive husband, Reyson, for being her inspiration and acted as research arm. To her nephew, Ariel Kary C. Gordo, as her ever-ready encoder. And most of all to God, for his constant guidance in all her intellectual endeavors.

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