

ILOCANO DIASPORA TO CAGAYAN: A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT AND FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING ILOCANO INTER- PROVINCIAL MOBILITY

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ABSTRACT

This study is a descriptive-historical research on Ilocano migration to Cagayan using the Push and Pull Theory of Everett Lee as a framework. It is focused on the migration process and experiences of Ilocano migrants who moved from their place of origin in the Ilocos region to their place of destination in Cagayan between 1912 to 1980 with data on (a) the migrants' characteristics; (b) reasons for migration; (c) push and pull factors that affected their decision to move; (d) life in Ilocos prior to migration; (e) hindrances in migration; (f) life in Cagayan during the early stage of migration; (g) problems and adjustments during migration; (h) benefits acquired from migration; and (i) social relationship of the migrants with the host communities (i.e., Ibanags, Itawes, Aetas). The study found that aside from the personal motives of migrants traceable to economic and peace and order concerns, Spanish colonial policy related to the use of agricultural lands in Ilocos also played a major role in the Ilocano diaspora.

KEYWORDS: *Migration, inter-provincial mobility, push-and-pull theory, Ilocano*

INTRODUCTION

History has shown that Ilocanos are well-known for their migratory movement from their home provinces. Ilocanos, in large groups, have been involved in long distance and pioneering migration to Mindanao and to the United States primarily in Hawaii and California. They have also been involved in movement into adjacent provinces, in the eastern and southern part of Ilocos and into the Cagayan Valley. According to Smith as cited by Concepcion (1985), as early as 1903, Ilocanos already numerically dominated the native population of certain areas of Cagayan Valley and Central Luzon. As a result of Ilocano migration, the popular claim that "Cagayan is the home of the Ibanags" does not hold true today. It has been observed that the indigenous groups of Ibanags, Itawes and Malauegs are thinning groups in Cagayan and are in fact, outnumbered by the Ilocanos in their own province. Based on the 2000 Census, Cagayan has a population of 992,065; of this population, 68.6% are Ilocanos, 8.5% are Ibanags, 16.4% Itawes and 1.4% Malauegs. Many towns which were originally inhabited by these natives are already dominated by the Ilocanos.

The decision of the Ilocano migrants to move to Cagayan can be better understood using the Push-and-Pull Theory of Everette Lee (1970). Push factors are the negative forces that are associated with the place of origin (forces of repulsion) and pull factors are the positive forces that are associated with the area of destination (forces of attraction). According to this theory, places of origin and places of destination are first evaluated first for positive and negative factors in order for the potential migrant to arrive at a rational choice that will ensure relative success. Then, intervening factors are considered but the deciding factor as to whether the move will materialize or not is the personal attributes of the prospective migrant.

Viewed from Lee's theoretical lens, it is hoped that the Ilocano's migration process and experiences in Cagayan will be understood in order to come up with a framework which could possibly be used in shedding light to the long history of Ilocano internal and international migration.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The paper addressed the following questions regarding Ilocano migration to Cagayan:

1. What are the characteristics of the migrants ?
2. What reasons are most frequently advanced by the migrants for their migration?
3. What are the push and pull factors at origin and at destination that affected their decision to migrate including the socio-economic and political condition at both locations?
4. How did the migrants move to Cagayan?
5. What were the hindrances to migration?
6. What problems were encountered and how did the migrants adjust to them?
7. What benefits were acquired from their migration? How was the social relationship of the migrants with the host communities in Cagayan (i.e., Ibanags, Itawes, Aetas)

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The paper used a descriptive non-probability survey and a mix of qualitative methods as well historical documents to understand the migration process and experiences of Ilocano migrants to Cagayan. To choose from which Cagayan municipalities to recruit survey respondent the 2000 Census was used as the reference. Thirteen Ilocano dominated Cagayan towns were identified namely Alcala (98.7% Ilocano), Allacapan (97.8%), Ballesteros (97.8%), Claveria (98.3%), Santa Teresita (97.2%), Gattaran (96.8%), Sanchez Mira (95.3%), Sta Ana (95.3%), Lasam (94.9%), Gonzaga (96.8%), Baggao (96.6%), Buguey (94.4%) and Sto Nino (92.7%). The respondents were limited to migrants from the Ilocos region who moved to Cagayan in the period 1902 to 1980 and are still residents of the Cagayan at the time of the study. They must also be at least 60 years old. A total of one hundred fifty (150) Ilocano migrants were interviewed in the survey. They were randomly selected from the barangays of each identified Ilocano dominated town. Identification of these respondents was done through the help of the barangay officials and the barangay listing of residents.

In addition to the one-shot survey, key informants were interviewed in depth. The purpose of the key informant interviews is to capture more clearly the migratory experiences of the informants which a one-shot survey may fail to accomplish. Focus group discussions were also conducted. Historical documents recounting Ilocano migration in Cagayan were likewise used. These were subjected for critique by two local historians, one in Cagayan and one in Ilocos Norte who analyzed all the documents to check which could be admitted as data for the study.

RESULTS

Discussions in this section are divided into quantitative and qualitative results. The quantitative results are sourced from the survey while the qualitative results are the data obtained from the in-depth key informant individual interviews, and focus group discussions. Topics included in the qualitative part are the accounts regarding the migrants' life in Ilocos prior to migration, the hindrances and manner of migration, life in Cagayan during the early stage of migration, benefits acquired from migration, and social relationship of the migrants with the host communities. Historical documents as well as results of the key informant interviews are also used to substantiate the discussions of these topics.

A. SURVEY RESULTS

Table 1 shows the basic characteristics of the migrant respondents to the survey. There are more male than female respondents in the study. As regards the province of origin, most of the migrants came from Ilocos Sur followed by Ilocos Norte and the least from La Union. Considering the year of migration, majority of the respondents moved to Cagayan from 1921 to 1940. The second largest group came in 1961 to 1980 followed by those who moved before 1920. The least number of respondents migrated in 1941 to 1960. Moreover, the age at the time of migration shows that majority of the respondents were young adults during their movement with their ages ranging from 21-30. Most of the informants were farmers before migration. Some engaged in fishing while few others were into small scale home industries such as carpentry, pottery making, loom weaving, blacksmithing and vending.

Table 1. Characteristics of Migrant Respondents

Characteristics	Percentage	N = 150
Sex		
Male	59.3	89
Female	40.7	61
Province of Origin		
Ilocos Sur	50.0	75
Ilocos Norte	46.0	69
La Union	4.0	6
Year Migrated to Cagayan		
before 1921	18.7	28
1921-1940	34.7	52
1941-1960	14.0	21
1961-1980	32.7	49
Age at the time of Migration		
Below 10 years old	6.0	9
11-20	18.7	28
21-30	35.3	53
31-40	23.3	35
41-50	16.7	25
Occupation in Ilocos prior to migration		
Farmer	65.3	98
Fisherman	10.7	16
Carpenter	7.3	11
Potter	5.3	8
Blacksmith	4.7	7
Weaver	4.0	6
Vendor	2.7	4

As seen Table 2, migration was mostly motivated by economic reasons. The most common reason given for their movement is to escape the 'difficult' life they had in Ilocos which they mostly characterized as such that their families' resources were not enough to provide for three square meals a day. They had to work hard all day long so as to have something to eat. Most informants narrate this reason in these words; *Immakar kami ditoay Cagayan ta narigat unay biagmi idiaay*. (We moved here to Cagayan because our life was so 'difficult' there). Other economic reasons were also given such as 'to search for a better life', 'to seek for a wider land to cultivate', 'to look for a job' and 'to help relatives and friends in Cagayan who were in need of farm laborers'. Thus, the study supports the basic premise that underlying most decisions to migrate is the economic motive.

The finding of seasonal migration by Da Vanzo (1980) was confirmed by the result of the study. With peak labor demands during the planting and harvest season in Cagayan, many Ilocanos were invited to help their family members, relatives and friends who migrated earlier. This perennial invitation either to harvest or to plant in the province gave them the opportunity to experience "seasonal migration" for sometime and consequently view permanent migration as most practical, acceptable and realistic decision or undertaking.

Although most migration to Cagayan by the respondents was economically related, there were those which took place because of family related factors. These respondents wanted to be with their parents/brothers/sisters/ who were permanently residing in Cagayan. This conveys that the presence of kinsmen served as a major support system for these respondents as they were helpful in encouraging their movement.

The least reason for the movement of the respondents was political in nature. The political turmoil brought about by the feuds of rich and influential politicians and *hacenderos* created social unrest in their communities of origin. The respondents remarked that Ilocos politics was remarkably bloody and 'dirty'. Hired killers and goons were scattered. For a long time, the people remained quiet for fear that they too would be killed, harassed or abused. As one key informant succinctly revealed; "*I migrated to this place when I was twenty one years old. When Martial Law was declared, our place (Vigan, Ilocos Sur) was surrounded by the military. Out of fear, I left our place and moved here to Annayatan, Baggao, Cagayan*"

Table 2. Reasons for Migrating to Cagayan

Reasons	Percentage	N=150
Economic		
To escape from the 'difficult' life in Ilocos	35.3	53
To search for a better life	20.7	31
To search for a wider land to cultivate	15.3	23
To search for job	6.7	10
To help relatives/friends to harvest	5.3	8
Family Related		
To live with parents and relatives	7.3	11
Political		
To escape from the chaotic political condition	9.4	14

The migrants evaluated both place of origin (Ilocos) and the place of destination (Cagayan) before their migration as revealed in Table 3. The primary factor that pushed them to migrate was the limited arable lands in Ilocos. As one respondent from Newagac, Gattaran puts it; *Bassit ti pangalaan ti pagbiagan idia y Ilocos ta bassit ti daga nga taltalonen* (Sources of livelihood in Ilocos were few because lands to till were small). Other push factors in Ilocos that influenced migration were the scarce resources, prolonged dry season, and the large population of the region. Accounts of the respondents reveal that Ilocos has scarce natural resources because majority of its terrain is mountainous, or hilly while its rivers and coastlines are clayey and shallow respectively. Also, majority of the respondents were lured to move to Cagayan because of their desire to have a wider farm to cultivate (*Immay kami ditoy gapu ta simmapul kami ti nalawlawa nga daga a talonen*). This desire was intensified among the respondents because they heard from their neighbors that lands in Cagayan were vast and fertile. As a matter of fact, a key informant revealed that he and his relatives were surprised at first to find many of their neighbors leaving their home province. After sometime, they and other neighbors were also enticed to move because they learned from their

former neighbors that the latter's economic conditions had improved after their migration to Cagayan. This finding relates to the account of Azurin (1993) who said that; "It was in the early years of the 1900's when Ilocanos were in "search for lands". Ilocano men in their desire to have wider lands to cultivate journeyed and discovered many lands from the different provinces. This movement was without plan, system, leadership, and funds following only the natural law of expansion".

On a complementary note, the principal pull factor of Cagayan was the presence of wide and fertile arable land. Half of the respondents (50.7%) revealed that Cagayan has large agricultural lands (*nawadwad ti talonen a daga ditoy Cagayan*) which enabled them to plant a variety of crops. Farming was not difficult as the land was easy to cultivate and adequately watered by the Cagayan River. Other pull factors include the availability of jobs (mostly agricultural jobs), low population density, peaceful political condition and a favorable climate. Finding work was not a problem as they had various sources (land, river, sea, and forest) for livelihood. (*Nabuslon iti matrabaho a daga ken asideg ti baybay, karayan ken bakir nga pangalaan ti pagbiagan*). Almost all lands were suitable for farming providing the people with a permanent source of livelihood and sufficient food to eat. Also, they mainly attributed the peaceful living condition and the favorable political condition of Cagayan to its small population. Most lands remained uninhabited because the original settlers of Cagayan were few.

In sum, the final deciding factor that enabled the migrants to move was the desire to obtain a "better life" manifested by their aspirations to acquire lands, have adequate food and attain a higher standard of living. In short, the basic premise underlying the decision of the Ilocano migrants was their expectation of becoming better-off through their migration. Results of the focus group discussion reveal that the presence of kinsmen made the decision to migrate easier and was another significant pull factor or magnet that ensured chain migration to Cagayan. Kin's persuasive influence served as a significant catalyst and source of information and attraction for migration decision. If one kin has been successful in his search for land or a "better life" in Cagayan, he sees to it that he disseminates the information to other relatives. Hence, the influence of family and kinship networks has far reaching implications to Ilocano migration in the province.

Table 3. Push and Pull Factors that Affected the Decision to Move

Perceived Push Factors in Ilocos	Percentage	N=150
Limited arable lands	50.7	76
Scarce resources	26.0	39
Prolonged dry season	14.0	21
Huge population	9.3	14
Perceived Pull Factors of Cagayan		
Presence of wide and fertile lands	54.7	82
Availability of jobs	22.0	33
Low population density	9.3	14
Peaceful political condition	9.3	14
Favorable climate for agriculture	4.7	7

Qualitative Results

The respondents' life in Ilocos was 'difficult'. They generally lived in poverty or had hand-to-mouth existence. Majority of the informants reported that their life was difficult before their movement. There were even instances when they only have to eat once a day (*Narigat ti panagbiag idiay Ilocos sakbay nga immakar kami. Adda pay aldaw nga maminsan kami nga mangan*). The difficulty of life was attributed by the respondents to the unfavorable geography and scarce resources of the region. These conditions were further aggravated by the combination of unsuitable soil and unfavorable climate characterized by a distinct and long dry season. One respondent narrates; "*Idiay Ilocos, awan makitam nga nalawa a talon no di ket banbantay*" (You could not find wide agricultural fields in Ilocos because it is mountainous). A large population could also explain the impoverished conditions of the migrants prior to their move to Cagayan. The region was thickly populated, a condition which limited the size of farms tilled by the inhabitants. Significantly, these conditions created scarcity of jobs for them. Sources of livelihood were inadequate which paved the way to stiff resource competition.

The pull factors at origin prior to migration were mostly economic having to do with the difficulty of deciding to leave assets behind. These include fixed assets like land and house, and other assets like animals, farm implements and personal belongings which they had to leave behind. One respondent described his experiences in these words; "*Ti lappedmi idi ket sanikua. Daydiay daga nga inted kaniak idi ni tatang ko isu ti gapuanan ti pagproblema-ak. Saanko koma kayat a panawan* (Our main obstacle in moving was our property. The land that my father gave me posed a great problem to me. I would not have wanted to leave it). In the early days another commonly mentioned roadblock was transportation. Personal belongings were selected because the journey was not easy. There was no available transportation except for the *Viray* or *punting*, a big boat with one or two masts of sails and manual paddles. Although the closely-knit family system played an additional inducement to move, it was proven however to also be a hindrance to some. The respondents' great emotional attachment to their loved ones at origin led them to think twice about moving. Still despite these pressing hindrances, the migrants continued their decision to move. This can be attributed to a general characteristics of migrants motivated by pull factors at destination as "risk-takers". Their outlook for the future especially the possibilities which their place of destination could offer play an important part in their migration decision.

As to the manner of migration, the earliest movers reached the province around 1912 or earlier on foot, hiking the trails near the seashore and through the sharp ranges of the Caraballo Norte Mountain. One informant vividly relates his experience in these words; "A group of male Ilocanos from Laoag decided to search for lands here in Cagayan. I was one of them. We crossed the Caraballo Mountain in coming here. Crossing this mountain was long and difficult. We hiked its steep terrain and its dense jungle undergrowth. It took us three weeks to cross until Aparri and another week to Calaogan Bassit, Gattaran. The reason for this long journey was the carabaos that we brought with us to pull the carts that carried the wives and the children that my companions brought with them, Also the food that we brought with us. Also, with the scarce food provisions, we stopped from place to place in order to gather food to eat".

Years later, more respondents came over and they sailed on a ship called "Viray". The introduction of Viray as a major means of transportation

facilitated the movement of these respondents making Cagayan closer to Ilocos. Travel was made relatively easy and many respondents could travel to and from Cagayan with relative ease. Soon, information on the rich and vast lands of the province spread like wildfire to many respondents still in Ilocos. The last group of respondents reached the province by motor vehicles via Patapat, Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte. Some noted public transportation companies at that time were Sumbrano transportation, Philippine Rabbit, Maura Transit, Ilocos Highway and Hino.

The general living conditions in Cagayan upon arrival of the informants was favorable. Most of them felt the atmosphere of contentment. They mentioned the factors that accounted for the perceived good life in the province as the presence of wide arable lands, availability of jobs especially agriculture-related, a small population and a peaceful environment. Most Cagayan towns where the respondents settled were sparsely populated making it peaceful and secure for settlement.

On the whole, the Ibanags, Itawes, Aetas who were the dominant aborigines encountered by the respondents were perceived to be generally good, amiable and hospitable. A proof that the aborigines of Cagayan were good people was seen in the easy acquisition of land by the respondents. Most of them freely acquired their lands because these early inhabitants did not restrict them to clear forest land and consequently stake a claim on it as their own. This clearly implies that the natives did not perceive these Ilocano migrants to be resource competitors. Probably, this is due to the fact that the lands and other resources were more than enough for everyone as their population was small and widely scattered.

FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING ILOCANO INTER-PROVINCIAL MOBILITY

While economic factors predominate in the migration decision of the respondents to the survey and the key informants historical data points to the roots of Ilocano migration from their home province as related to Spanish colonial policy. Ilocano migration is primarily a structural issue rather than simply a geographical, cultural or population related concern. The colonial economic and political policies which worked in favor of the Spanish masters were the primordial reasons why the Ilocanos started to migrate. Instead of planting rice, corn and vegetables, the Ilocanos were

forced to produce agricultural crops for the colonial government's use and not crops for their own survival need, i.e., food crops. These crops include tobacco, sugarcane and *tayum* (a shrubby herbaceous plant, 1–2 m tall with erect and copiously branched stems belonging to the genus *indigofera* of the pea family). Tobacco production provided the Spaniards with cigars, the sugarcane with wine and *tayum* with dye and fertilizer. Tobacco and *tayum* were produced in Ilocos Sur while Ilocos Norte was the center of sugarcane growing. The cultivation and monopoly of these crops were the main source of government revenue but caused much misery to the Ilocanos and consequently instigated their migration.

This finding is supported by Mallo (1987) who propounded that Ilocanos came to Cagayan during the Spanish regime. They came to the province as fugitive from their Spanish masters in Ilocos and many others arrived to build roads which natives of Cagayan refused to construct for these roads enabled the Spaniards to move their line of defense each time they rose in arms. It is also interesting to note that the Spaniards have done great efforts to facilitate the coming of the Ilocanos to Cagayan. According to Malumbres (1918), the Spaniards first opened the Abra-Cagayan trail across territory which now belongs to Kalinga Apayao. The trail cost much not only money but also lives as many laborers died of fever. This momentous enterprise is attributed to Don Domingo Moriones, governor-general of the islands. On February 23, 1880, the road was pronounced completed. This opened the province of Cagayan and other provinces in the valley to Ilocano migration. Many Ilocanos in search for a greener pasture migrated to Cagayan.

The secondary reason that explains Ilocano diaspora is the precarious environment of the Ilocos region inherent in its land and climatic condition. This is evidenced by the limited arable land because of the mountainous and hilly terrain. Moreover, the climate of Ilocos has a distinct dry season thereby limiting optimal planting time to a very short period of time. This is further aggravated by its clayey river and sea. The coast of the region is not of great help either. Shorelines are shallow and one has to engage in deep fishing to have a good catch. Streams and rivers are also short and narrow that easily dry up during the dry season.

On the other hand, the population of Ilocos was large. In fact, it has the largest population in the early 1900s (Smith, cited by Concepcion, 1981). This created an imbalance between its resources and population. The

“carrying capacity” (that is, how many people can be supported by its resources and to what level) was a major problem in the region. In the context of supply and demand, (i.e. supply factors are determined by the land and its quality whereas demand is the combined effect of population growth and income growth) there was an imbalance between demand of the people and supply of resources.

This condition made life very difficult in Ilocos. The pressure of population growth was great. Population growth continuously generated increasing demand for a variety of goods and services yet resources were scanty. The result was the widespread increasing demand for goods which, in many ways, resulted in a stiff resource-competition. Food was scarce and jobs were limited which caused agricultural labor surplus and unemployment among the inhabitants. This finding affirms the historical account of Father Malumbres (1918) that on December 31, 1880, Governor General Fernando Primo de Rivera wrote the Spanish Minister to make a decree on the need to immediately declare the migration of the Ilocanos to the unpopulated and fertile provinces of Cagayan and Isabela. Such action was made in view of his findings that the province of Ilocos Norte and Sur were the most populated but also the most poor. With the unanimous agreement of the committee of the authorities and the clergy, the Spanish Minister declared that all families or individuals in Ilocos Region who wished to move to Cagayan or Isabela with the objective of residing in those places and of dedicating their time to agriculture, will be protected by the respective authorities and enjoy numerous advantages. Such advantages included forming a new town or barrio, having a parish priest, conducting a free election of their own local officials, excuse from paying their debts, local funds, and liabilities to the “royal” and freedom from personal service or forced labor.

With the pressure of both population and geography, many Ilocanos were caught with no alternative but to migrate. This was particularly felt by the poor who were vulnerable victims of growing landlessness and unemployment. The further decline in the standards of living and the lack of opportunity to obtain employment made them regard migration as a mechanism by which this imbalance could be corrected.

Another factor that caused Ilocano migration is the political turmoil of Ilocos in the 1960's to 1970's. These two decades were characterized by reign of terror, goons and guns. It was an era when ambushes and murders were

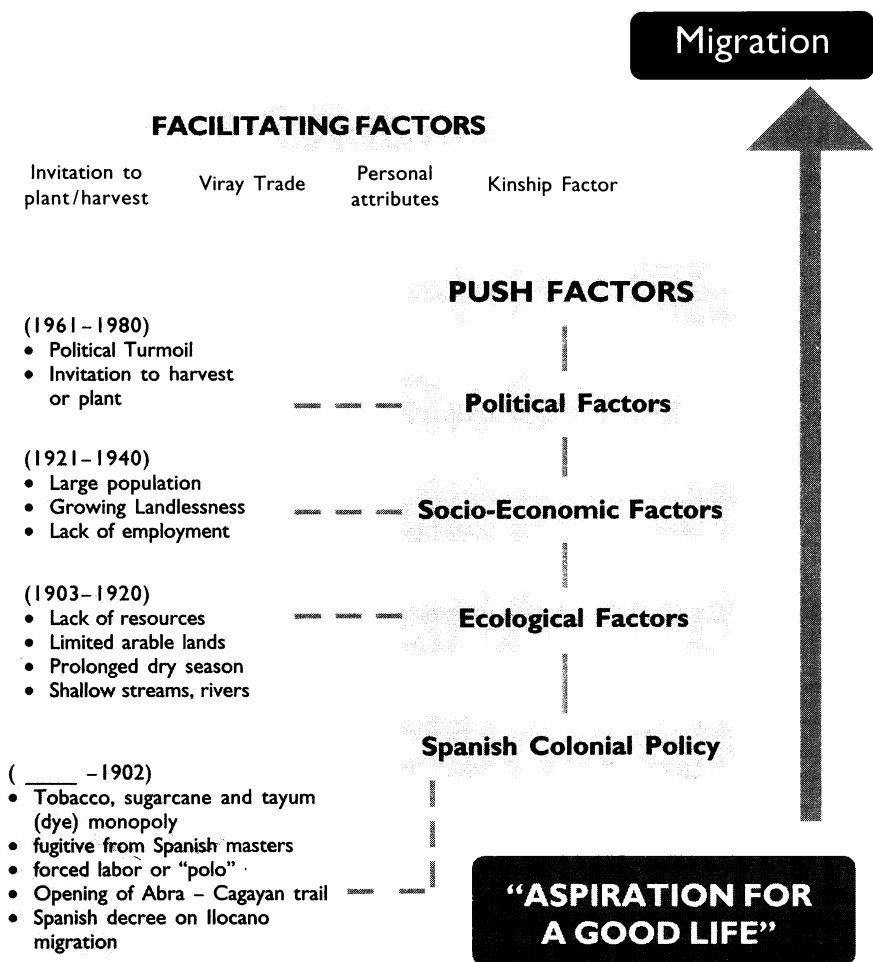
being committed by men with high-powered firearms. Two villages in Bantay, Ilocos Sur (Ora East and Ora Central) were burned and many Ilocanos from these places were forced to migrate to the different areas in Cagayan.

One major facilitating factor to Ilocano migration is the Viray Trade, a commercial relation between Ilocos and Cagayan that lasted until 1970's. Ilocano traders in Ilocos transported their products to Cagayan using the *viray* or a big boat with one or two masts of sails and manual paddles as transport. The Viray carried Iloko goods such as *inabel* clothes (Ilocos cloth), *burnay* (earthen jar), garlic, onions and on the return trip, the Viray carried palay, corn, rice and other Cagayan products that Ilocano traders wanted. This trade was a catalyst in the migration of Ilocanos to Cagayan because it made their travel relatively easy. It also gave them the opportunity to see the potential resources and the possibility of a "better life" in the province. This contention is supported by Azurin (1993) who said that the wind-powered Viray is an answer to the "colonization" of the Ilocanos of some provinces in the country. As an evidence of the Viray Trade, the Viray Festival is celebrated annually in Sta. Ana, Cagayan to commemorate the migration of the inhabitants through the Viray.

Another facilitating factor could be an Ilocano cultural trait – such as being adventurous, ambitious, and risk-taking as these people are among the most mobile of Filipinos not only internally but internationally as well. Moreover, it can be said that Ilocanos remain to be Ilocanos wherever they go. The continuity of Ilocano consciousness and identity in Cagayan and in other provinces where they moved to in large groups, such as Cotabato stands to be a trademark of these people. Their value orientation as seen in their proverbs, riddles, social practices and beliefs is a testimony for this. In mind, in heart and in way of life, they seem not to have left Ilocos. These people have brought their own culture and own language to Cagayan. as a matter of fact, naming their destination areas after their own place of origin (i.e. Calaoagan, Cabatacan, San Vicente, etc.) vividly showing their "ethnocentricity" thereby keeping their "Ilocanoness" intact. The migrants were not caught in conflict with the existing cultures of the early inhabitants of Cagayan - the Ibanags, Itawes, and Aetas. Instead, they lived in harmony with them and in time came to dominate many Cagayan towns in numbers and in language. The push and pull factors that characterize Ilocano migration to Cagayan is summarized in the schematic diagram below (Figure 1).

This study is just an initial investigation about Ilocano diaspora in Region 2. The findings hold true only as far as Cagayan province is concerned. It is hoped that this endeavor shall encourage future researchers to delve into Ilocano migration to Isabela, Quirino and Nueva Vizcaya to provide a wider perspective of Ilocano internal migration in Cagayan Valley. This will likewise address the scarcity of written documents on the migration of Ilocanos and the contributions of their migration to the region.

Figure 1
Schematic Diagram of Interacting Variables Related to Ilocano Migration



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