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## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/16902  
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/16902>



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### ORAG: SORSOGON VICE OR VIRTUE?

John Ezra G. Vargas

#### Manuscript Info

##### Manuscript History

Received: 15 March 2023

Final Accepted: 18 April 2023

Published: May 2023

##### Key words:-

Orag, Sorsogon, Vice, Virtue, Historical Aspect, Cultural Aspect

#### Abstract

This study finds out the abstraction of the semantic 'orag' by Bicolanos, specifically Sorsogoneños, either being vice or virtue. The study determined the usage, perception and coinage of the term from informants all over the province. Qualitative method was used in this study with an approach utilizing Critical Hermeneutics. The researcher viewed the interpersonal experiences and reactions of the informants to the semantic. There are two common perceptions to the term, positive and negative. Informants referred to it as being 'matibay' or 'maabilidad' (strong and willful). This positive coinage can also refer to a person who is intelligent and good at everything. However, it was perceived with an echoing meaning where the negative connotation arises. Boastfulness, ill-manner, arrogance and meanness are some of the negative connotations. But the prevailing coinage is that it is understood as a term linked to lust and sex. When asked about the origin of the term and how Bicolanos became known as 'oragon', the respondent's perception can be categorized into three (3): (1) that it is a 'pure Bicol' term used by ancient Bicolanos; (2) that Bicolanos are known as 'oragon' because of being brute in street fights and that Bicolanos are known to have delicacies and dishes that always include spices such as 'Bicol Express'; and (3) because the term was made famous by the well-known actor, Eddie Garcia, a Bicolano actor from Sorsogon who included Bicol terms in almost all of his movies. The historical and cultural aspects of its coinage had been revisited. It was found out that Ancient Bicol holds a rich traditional culture that embodies Bicol mindset prior to the Hispanic era. There are myths that have been believed by the ancient Bicol and one of which is that 'oragon' is 'maguinoongpanonin boot'. They were leaders of tribes who were believed to have acquired the power from 'Bathalaan' hence they are 'maguinoong-oragon'. During the Spanish colonization, however, most of the "oragons" became leaders of guerrillas. To aid this problem, Spanish friars deprived the oragons with their proper honorific titles and started preaching on the immoralities of polygamous marriage. Hence, 'maguinoong-oragon' became 'maguinoong-bastos'. From there arose all the negative coinage of the semantic: its linkage to sex and lust, boastfulness and badness. The semantic clearly has an innate goodness in its original connotation but was given a negative coinage by history. One thing is clear: it is an emblem symbolizing Bicolanos as fearless warriors, "bold yet plain to truth and with dignity", as the regional march stresses. Its pure meaning

still echoes and resonates in the different interpretations among Sorsogueños. Finally, it was perceived that 'orag' or 'oragon' is an emblem that manifests Bicol virtue. This is a call to all Bicolanos, especially Sorsogueños, to try to regain and muster the authentic meaning of orag. Striving to get back what was lost from history would mean enrichment to a restored culture. People must not be satisfied with the present status of the semantic for if not, it will forever be lost. As a recommendation, Orag as Bicol virtue is a recognition of a deeper understanding of the rich culture and tradition of the once 'maguinoong-oragon'. Whatever meaning it conveys now, it definitely is a virtue that Sorsogueños symbolize and carry as persons of worth and of values.

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### **Introduction:-**

Words, these days, are given meaning depending on the cultural use or jargoned perspective. There are words that are misused to give another meaning contrary to the real definitions. In these instances, meaning-making and signifying become attuned that it gives plurality in meaning.

Philosophically speaking, there are idealisms that play language game. It was the term first coined by the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (Stumpf and Feiser, 2005). The use of ordinary language becomes superficial in a sense when the truth is accompanied by the use of accepted words to understand common facts. But this problem is not only seen in the veracity of language use. It can also be found in certain aspects of the Filipino culture.

Having multi-meaning and coined-term diversion as a distortion to signify other connotation is greatly affected by the territorial domain of the Philippines. These claims are true to the Filipino culture. Because of the country's geographical location, we can see plenty of constraints and diversity. Language, religion, ethnicity and multiculturalism happen to be the reasons, respectively (Zaide, 1994). There have been many researches that proves our difficulty in having one authentic culture. But despite the diversity, Filipinos learned to be united through respect and understanding each other.

'Oragons' are known to be brute in street fights; they are strong and never a coward. If you go to Manila and you tell people that you are 'oragon', they will already know that you come from the Bicol region (Gerona, 2001). However, others think of the word as somewhat connected to the vulgar word lust and sexuality. In Sorsogon, one has to be very careful in saying it, for it connotes many different meanings. It often means mating or copulation or boasting.

If a person is very proud of himself, people will call him 'maorag'; same thing if a man achieves something good, he will also be referred to as 'maorag'. In this sense, it seems that the word is used interchangeably. 'Maorag' here means strong or in tagalog term, 'matibay'. However, it can also refer to those who are arrogant. 'Maorag' here then pertains to a negative meaning. In some other cases, if we see dogs mating in the streets we say, 'nag-ooragnaayam'. In the scenario, 'orag' became a term that connotes sex or lust. With this, the researcher had the urge to do this study. If Bicolanos are known to be 'Oragon' then why is it that the term is expressed in many meanings? Can the word be our identity as Bicolanos? Is there any cultural bias in the term? Can 'Oragon' be our source of Bicol virtue or vice?

There is an urgency that these concerns must be given address. The ironic coinages in the semantic generates concepts that broaden the assumed thought of the term. This creates multiplicity in meaning-making which leads to the further loss of its genuine thought of the semantic. Hence, actualizing the endeavors of this study is truly a need in order to extract the original thought of the term and get the original and authentic usage of it. Answering these concerns will boost the rich socio-cultural aspect of Bicolanos particularly Sorsogueños.

Having a full grasp of the concept will boost the education of Bicolanos. A deeper understanding of the behavior and customs of the ancient Bicolano will be better understood and appreciated by the younger generations, creating a more valuable perception on the importance of our culture.

This will also affect the tourism industry of Bicol, particularly Sorsogon. Having a deeper knowledge of a visited place, understanding its history and sympathizing with its culture will embed and inculcate a deeper appreciation and gratefulness in the minds of tourists.

In the end, nevertheless, policies that will help in the administration of the tourism industry of Sorsogon, particularly in the semantic 'orag', will be constructed in order that Sorsogon language and socio-cultural understanding may be well appreciated.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study presented the understanding of the semantic 'orag' by the Sorsoguenos. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What does the term 'Orag' mean particularly for Sorsoguenos?
2. What are the historical and cultural aspects that help in the coinage of the term?
3. How should Sorsoguenos perceive the concept of 'orag'?
4. What can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

### **Methodology:-**

#### **Research Design**

This paper aimed to showcase the current use and coinage of the semantic term 'orag' in the Sorsogon mindset, and to present the subject matter as a true Bicolano term. After which, the paper tried to represent it historically using Habermas' critical hermeneutics. Finally, interpreted 'orag' whether as Sorsogon vice or virtue.

From here it must be clear to understand that the word 'orag' is assumed to have its pathologies which gave birth to many other meanings it possesses. The method would be to look into its meaning and resonance, and clean the path in understanding its real essence. Hence, different coinage will be exposed; leaving 'orag' a pure understanding of its real distinctiveness.

#### **The Informants**

The source of data of this study were the selected informants from the different municipalities of Sorsogon. The researcher used simple random sampling in choosing the informants. This is the easiest type of sampling wherein data gatherers only selected old aged persons in each municipality as informants. There were a hundred (100) informants in this study, gathering data from all the municipalities of Sorsogon province and city (maximum of 10 from each municipality). This was to ensure that quality data necessary in the success of this paper will be acquired. Selected key informants (KI) were interviewed so that a reliable source takes part in the presentation process.

#### **Data Collection Procedures**

In order to get the needed information and data related to this study, the following procedures were followed:

A group of interviewers were formed and organized in order to conduct the data gathering. A permission letter to conduct and record an interview was secured and was given to the informants before the interview was done. They were briefed to ask permission to record the interview. During the interview, they were tasked to only ask questions and just let the informants speak continually. When the answer seemed to be broad they asked the informants to specify answers. Finally, after the interview they thank the informant for the cooperation and time. After which, all data were consolidated.

It was ensured that the safety of the interviewers was of utmost priority, hence their residence was first identified. Having the data, the researcher assigned a research leader to each municipality of Sorsogon. They were residents of the municipality assigned to them, while others have relatives in the municipality that could assist them. After identifying group leaders, the rest were grouped into teams.

The researcher then consolidated all the data and classified them based on themes. Data gathering was not hard because it was done year 2016 where there is still no pandemic threat.

#### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The researcher examined thoroughly the results of the interview. The data were analyzed and were grouped into themes. The data were also recorded and transcribed so as to make a reliable source of citation. The frequency of the

information given out of the data was also given importance and they were collated into clusters. The whole conversation with informants were analyzed and salient points for the first theme of the paper were searched. The emergent themes were listed and the researcher linked the connection between each data and the analysis of frequency of information. Similarities and contradicting answers were noted.

The critical hermeneutics of Habermas was the approach in the analysis of this research. The following steps guided the plan for data analysis:

The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews to make it a text-based format reference. It made the data easier to analyze and interpret. From the data, coinage and perceptions of the informants were identified in order to see the status quo of their understanding.

Interpretative meanings were arranged into categories for the themes to emerge. Validation were ensured to avoid discrepancies and repetitions in themes. Themes were structured based on the categories integrating all clustered data from each municipality.

The themes were then integrated with the literature and studies to adapt them as an exhausted description. The researcher produced a concise statement of the exhaustive description and provided sub-title based on fundamental statements based on coinage.

The exhausted description was presented in order to verify conclusion and develop an idealism. If discrepancies were to be seen, the researcher should go back to the coinage and themes in order to address concerns.

### **Results and Discussions:-**

This philosophical study aimed to produce a paper that would give importance to the semantic ‘orag’ along its cultural and historical coinage through Habermas’ Critical Hermeneutics. All data gathered were recorded and transcribed to ensure quality output of the authentic voices. Data were analyzed and themes emerged to present the genuine perceptions. It was then represented through various philosophical lenses which generated an interpretation output.

#### **Findings**

The term has variety of understanding. It could both mean as positive or negative depending on the context of its use. Based on the findings, it meant strength and goodness but the prevailing coinage is that of boastfulness, arrogance and meanness, and that which is inclined to sex and lust. The last coinage was the most perception of the informants. In the end, they believed that it must be used and perceived in a positive connotation and abhor from meaning it to in a negative sense.

There is no known origin of the term as informants did not know any story about folklores and myths that can be thought of as the birth of the semantic. Even the senior citizens who were interviewed could not recall any story that would justify the existence of ‘orag’. And in the slightest glance, they did not have any idea of where the term originated from. One informant said that it was just there, in the realm of Bikol dialect as far as they can remember when they were still young.

When asked how Bicolanos became famous as ‘oragon’ there were various answers which may be categorized in three (3) concepts: (1) it is an old Bicol term which originates either from Legazpi City, Naga City or other languages; (2) it is because of the capability of Bicolanos in eating chili commonly known as ‘lada’ or ‘sili’ in a Bicol express or in other dishes; and (3) popularized through the late actor Eddie Garcia in his movies.

Most Sorsogueños believed that the semantic ‘orag’ is a pure Bicol term that are used by ancient Bicolanos. Popularized in many expressions and through many Bicolanos who excelled in different fields in the whole country, Bicolanos became known as ‘oragons’. Since one of best quality of being strong is the capability to eat spicy foods, Bikol folks were named ‘oragon’ because they always put lots of spices in their dishes. These (quality) are all integrated in almost all of the movies of the late Eddie Garcia. In most of his movies, he depicted strong person who can eat spicy foods and are good at what they do; they were called oragon. He also made famous some of the Bikolnon terms which became famous all over the country, and orag/oragon is one of them.

When cultural and historical aspects were revisited, it was seen that history molded the coinage through the Spanish era. It was seen that in the pre-Hispanic era, ancient Bicol was rich with mythology that affected their daily lives. They had different rituals and belief system. Among them was the authentic concept of 'orag' as a person full of 'boot'. It was meant to pertain to the fearless warriors who were courageous and possesses an 'anting-anting'. They were called as 'maguinoon' or 'oragon'. When the second world war happened, most of these oragon became leaders of guerrilla and so to stop the support of the native locals to them, the friars made the step in giving different meaning to their honorifics. Since then, 'orag' was linked to lust and sexual prowess and other related behavior unacceptable to a good crown. This brought about the echoing of the semantic in the present days.

With the distortion of the past, the genuine and authentic 'orag' was lost. It is hard to change and revert back the current trends in its usage. But through studies and researches relative to this, a hope of bringing back the original and honest meaning of the semantic 'orag' is conceivable.

'Orag' must be perceived as good and therefore must be used in like manner. Going back to the past, oragon as a 'maguinoongpanonin boot' should be the oragon that we see today. People should now understand that the meaning of 'orag' and 'oragon' conveys a fearless fighter who is bold yet plain to truth and dignity.

### **Conclusion:-**

The original and authentic meaning of 'oragon' was 'maguinoonapanonin boot' or a fearless warrior full of courage. It can't be rewritten but the coinage may be changed. 'Orag' possesses an innate rich aesthetic. Bicolano must transcend beyond traditional acceptance and make a leap towards emancipatory interest of knowledge. The word must pertain towards goodness and must mean strong as an emblem of Sorsoganon as well as Bicolnon.

A Coffee Table Book, which is the output of this paper is also deemed to be helpful in the germination of the proper perception of the semantic. Tourism in Sorsogon will not just include spots which are great for relaxing, but will also include culture and tradition inculcations through this output.

Above all, other relevant studies particularly the rich culture of Bicol, respectfully that of the Sorsoguenos, will be revived and slowly be taught once again to this generation. It will continue to flourish until it becomes part of the daily lives as we ourselves becomes part of the history.

### **Recommendation:-**

The results of the study show that 'orag' has a rich aesthetics that is now coated with different perceptions and coinages. History may not be repeated and its original and authentic use may be lost but changes in perception may be done in order to obtain and see more clearly the beauty it hides. It is therefore recommended that:

This paper may be of use in the academe teaching and inculcating Bicol values to the students.

Sorsoguenos may have deeper philosophical perspective of the semantic that may enlighten the locals to understand, act and use the word based on its original meaning.

Researchers may be inspired to conduct deeper and other different researches that would help in building a stronghold of knowledge of Bicol culture, language and philosophy particularly the rich Sorsogon socio-cultural norms and values.

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