

## Bunawan: The Heart of Caraga

By: FTAParedes

(Ongoing Study)

The home of Lolong, the world's biggest crocodile. (NatGeo, 2011).

Published in the website of the Province of Agusan del Sur (2012), Bunawan is a small settlement in 18th century inhabited by Manobos, an ethnic group found all over the central and eastern portion of Mindanao. The term “Bunawan” came about when visitors, Spanish Missionaries asked a woman along their way the name of the place. The woman who was fixing her gold jewelry misunderstood the question thinking that the visitors would want to know what she was holding, told the visitors that is Bulawan, the local term for gold. Not contented, the missionaries asked the husband for a clarification; if indeed this is Bunawan and the husband said yes. Since then, the settlement has been known as Bunawan.

Bunawan has an affix -an like Bayugan with root word Bayug which was either derived from a Manobo term for “pathway” or from the bayug tree (AdS, 2012); thus, the rootword is Bunaw with 'aw' which means 'water' in Minanibai ISO 639-3 mcv, a language of Papua New Guinea. Alternate names are Eme-eme, Hei, and Pepeha with 300 speakers (Wurm and Hattori, 1981) and decreasing, (Ethnologue, 2017). Water in some Austronesian languages is 'ai' in Araki (Southwest Santo), 'oe' in Muna, 'wa' in Andra, 'kao' in Kwai, 'dano' in Tonsea, 'rano' in Tontembuan and 'ae' in Ende.

Though Minanibai is a Trans Papuan language, Austronesians might have left/influenced them the term 'aw' when they arrived approximately 3500 years ago in New Guinea. Somewhat Austronesian cosmopolitanism in McWilliam (2007).

Bunawan is one of the oldest places in Caraga Region.

Caraga < Karag-a < Karag. In Biliau language of New Guinea (Simpson and Simpson, 1977), Karag means Wind from the East. Other version of the meaning of Karaga mentioned in Almeda (2009) and references is Kalagan with affix -an and root kayag (spirit) making Caraganons spirited people of Caraga region. In Mandaya language, karagan is river (EdgeDavao, 2014). If so, Caraga region is the region of rivers. We can find Agusan river with root agus (flow) and affix -an.

Both synchronic and diachronic study of language are vital in toponymy. In Conant (1911, 1912), Philippine languages (PLs) were classified according to R, L and D like Ranao, Lanao and Danao which

means lake. Another classification was of changes in vowels like Tag: Tinik and Ceb: Tunok which means thorn.

The book of our very own Surigaonon historian Fernando A. Almeda Jr. (2009), *Story of a Province - Surigao Across the Years* 5th Edition, a must read book, interests me in learning the meaning and origin of our place Surigao.

Sir Almeda (2009) quoted Dr. Casiño who said that the name Surigao might be a variant of Surogon with affix -on which means 'full of current'. Another word from Spanish "surgir" or in English "spurt, spout; anchor" was mentioned.

The affixation in PLs, and Austronesian Root Theory in Atalla (xxxx) cited by my then Grade 11 student D Jay Madria Gilsano et.al in their paper "Austronesian Roots in 100 Inalegria Words" claim that there are syllable roots e.g. `ah with cvc pattern. The affix m<in>- in min-suba', min'atras, min-kaun, min-dyagan is possibly same with Min-danAO which could possibly mean someone/something went to the lake. In Atalla (xxxx), I learned that kamot has the root -ot and other words or stems were derived from it e.g. ku-ot, kay-ot, gun-ot, kab-ot, kuyap-ot, kun-ot, all these were done using kam-ot (hands).

If AO means water in a member of Austronesian language family, then if Surig using Pepet law in Conant (1911) is SuRog and SuYog (current) using RLD/Y in Conant (1912) or spring in Mandaya language (learned from sir Louward Zubiri), then Surigao might mean Water Current or Spring Water. Either of the two is acceptable. The many, the merrier.

The words with aw as evidence of its strong connection with water are kabaw (with tungaw), an animal or the only of its kind? to bathe in tunaan. Ambaw (Rattus rattus or Rattus argentiventer) which are best swimmers. Bakhaw and Anahaw, trees which grow in watery or near watery area. Opaw which means that a place in drought or no water, uhaw means in need of water and amaw which means lack of appropriate nous. Lim'aw, linaw, tignaw, sabaw, mabaw, hunaw, aw tuod by mon Hex.

In Bunawan, our students in TCC shared to us that they have a delicacy produced from onaw which grows in watery area. Understanding the environment of Bunawan as I have gathered information from the people who lived here for many years "this place looks like a basin" to them in heavy rain season. Thus, if Bunawan is a basin and Agusan is a path of water then what is the function of Butuan? Butuan has root Butu and affix -an. The root butu has the phoneme voiceless glottal fricative [h] at the final position which is not graphemically represented in its orthography. So Butu[h]-anan or Buthanan of water from Agusan river which is contained at Bunawan where Agusan marsh is. If not Butuhanan,

Butua`[a]n might be. Butua or butwa means exit, thus Butuan might mean exit point. Thank you sir Lou.

All these are product of enjoyment in reading and not of an expert in the field of historical linguistics. Happy to learn that I belong to the Karagans, the spirited people of Caraga, the region of many rivers, and to discover the vital importance of the term Bunaw-an, Agus-an, Butu[h]-an/Butua-`[a]n and Karag in the environment of this region.

Further study on this aspect of PLs must be conducted by Pinoy linguists who are expert in Austronesian languages.