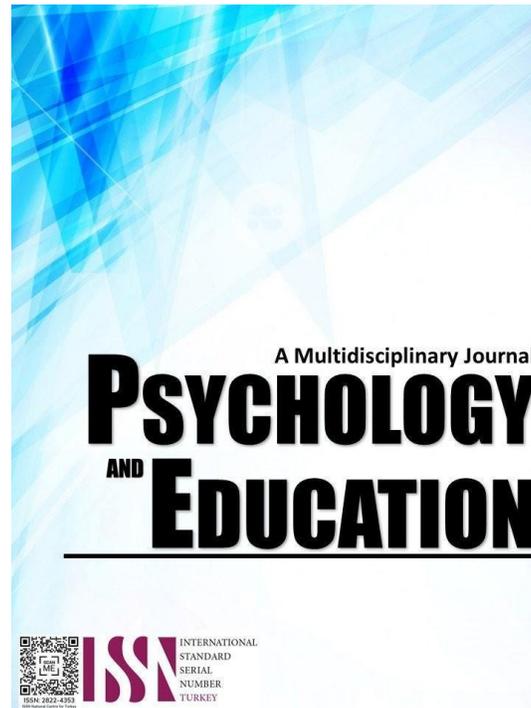


# ANG PINAGMULAN: UNVEILING THE ROOTS OF BARANGAY NAMES IN OPOL, MISAMIS ORIENTAL THROUGH THE DYING NARRATIVES OF THE ELDER NATIVES



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## Ang Pinagmulan: Unveiling the Roots of Barangay Names in Opol, Misamis Oriental through the Dying Narratives of the Elder Natives

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### Abstract

This study explores the origins, meanings, and cultural significance of barangay names in Opol, Misamis Oriental, through narrative analysis of elder accounts, barangay officials' insights, and archival records. Findings reveal that place names are deeply rooted in environmental features, such as rivers, vegetation, and coastal landscapes, reflecting the community's close relationship with nature. Historical events, including colonial influence and wartime experiences, have left lasting imprints on local identities and toponyms. Oral traditions and folklore preserve cultural memory and emphasize themes of resilience amid hardships like droughts, pandemics, and armed conflicts. Socio-political changes, including barangay mergers and indigenous governance, further shaped communal identities. Economic livelihoods tied to agriculture, fishing, logging, and mining also influenced the naming and development of these communities. Overall, the study highlights how the barangay names of Opol encapsulate a rich tapestry of history, culture, and enduring spirit, serving as vital markers of collective memory and identity.

**Keywords:** *toponyms, barangay history, cultural heritage, oral tradition, indigenous identity*

### Introduction

Place names, or toponyms, carry meanings that extend far beyond their role as geographic identifiers. They offer valuable insights into the rich intersection of history, culture, mythology, and geography that shape a given place. According to Mutschman (2012, as cited in Fekete, 2022), these names function as living narratives, reflecting the experiences and identities of the people who once inhabited those areas. In the Philippine context—a nation characterized by deep cultural roots and linguistic diversity—barangay names serve not just as labels but as cultural artifacts that embody community identity and connection to the land.

Opol, a second-class municipality in Misamis Oriental, lies between the coastal waters of Macajalar Bay to the north and lush mountain ranges to the south. It consists of fourteen barangays: Awang, Bagooboc, Barra, Bonbon, Cauyonan, Igpit, Limunda, Luyong Bonbon, Malanang, Nangkaon, Patag, Poblacion, Taboc, and Tingalan. While the municipality is supported by various sectors such as farming, fishing, tourism, and light industry, each barangay carries a name with a unique historical and cultural background. Unfortunately, many of these stories remain undocumented or have faded from collective memory due to rapid modernization.

Barangay names in Opol serve as cultural touchstones that bridge the past and the present. As Edwards (2003, as cited in Kakati, 2022) explains, place names can originate from mythological beliefs, religious references, or figures of cultural importance. In multilingual societies like the Philippines, translation of place names also plays a role in maintaining their original meaning across different languages. According to Crystal (2010, as cited in Badi et al., 2021), the sound of place names alone can evoke emotions or associations, even when their exact meanings are unclear. Furthermore, some toponyms are derived from the names of notable individuals, such as founders or local leaders, embedding their legacy in the landscape (Waldman, 2003, as cited in Schwartz et al., 2021).

However, the study of toponyms in the Philippines is not without challenges. As Medina (1992, as cited in Romero, 2023) emphasizes, the country's vast ethnolinguistic diversity and colonial history have led to a complex web of indigenous and colonial place names. In many rural or undocumented areas, a lack of written records poses a threat to the preservation of indigenous culture and tradition.

This study explores the origins and meanings behind the names of the barangays in Opol. Despite the limited academic attention given to this topic, this research aims to uncover the stories, values, and cultural significance embedded in these toponyms. Through interviews with native elders and consultation with barangay officials and local records, the study hopes to preserve these oral traditions in written form. More than just an academic pursuit, this initiative underscores the importance of cultural preservation and highlights the need to document local histories before they are lost to time.

### Research Questions

This undertaking is to provide substance to these murmurs, converting them into enduring narratives that resonate with future generations. This investigation allows for a deeper understanding and heightened admiration of the diverse cultural fabric and distinctive characteristics of Opol. Specifically, it sought to shed light on the following questions:

1. What is the historical significance and cultural context behind the barangay names in Opol, Misamis Oriental, and how have these meanings evolved?
2. How does the lack of awareness about the origins of barangay names impact the sense of community identity among the residents of Opol, and what potential benefits could arise from uncovering and sharing this historical knowledge?

3. How do the narratives of elderly natives shed light on the linguistic and cultural heritage embedded in the barangay names, and how can this knowledge contribute to a deeper understanding of the region's history and identity?

## Literature Review

### *Opol as a Municipality: A Brief History*

In 2022, Rufus Rodriguez published *The Historical Data on Misamis Oriental, Its Cities and Municipalities: A Compilation of Sources*, which is based on Executive Order No. 486. This order, issued by President Elpidio Quirino on December 7, 1951, mandated the collection of historical data on barrios, towns, cities, and provinces. Rodriguez's work offers significant historical insights into Opol, initially an uninhabited area settled by Boholanos led by a datu during pre-Spanish times. They cultivated crops, notably the white squash, or "opo," leading to the area's name. A mispronunciation over time transformed "opo" into "Opol."

Geographically, Opol is a protected cove in Macajalar Bay, characterized by land accretion due to sea wave protection. The rugged terrain and marine life fossils suggest that the area was submerged under seawater at some point. Limestone formations, similar to coral reefs, are prevalent in the region.

The Higaonons, an offshoot of the Manobos, were early settlers along the seacoast. When Spanish conquistadores arrived, some Higaonons relocated to the hinterlands, preserving their culture, while others intermarried with foreigners, leading to the emergence of Spanish mestizos. Initially a barrio of Pueblo de Yponan, Opol became a Pueblo on January 11, 1895. Sitio Pigtao dissolved and joined Pueblo de Yponan in 1885 due to poor yields. Chinese traders and settlers from Bohol and Cebu also contributed to Opol's diverse cultural landscape.

The Spanish church, constructed with limestone from the seabed, was the only architectural legacy from the Spanish era. It was destroyed during the Filipino insurrection in the late 1890s. In the early 1900s, during the transition from Spanish to American rule, local patriots, including Col. Apolinar Velez, resisted American forces in Mindanao. Velez's battalion, headquartered in Opol, fought American forces until the latter's successful occupation of the Philippines.

On July 4, 1900, Col. Velez used a house in Poblacion, owned by Alejo Serina, as his quarters and office. Following the American victory, Opol lost its pueblo status and became a barrio of Cagayan de Misamis. During the American occupation, education became a focal point, with the establishment of Opol Central School in 1901. Land for the school was acquired in 1902, and additional parcels were donated in 1917 and 1920. By 1905, elementary schools were also opened in Barra and Igit.

Although not significant in national history, Opol gained recognition for its mineral deposits. The Americans established a gold mine in Tagculot, Nangaon, in the early 1900s, and German capitalist Muller operated a chromite mine in Awang. Though both mines closed during World War II, the chromite mine reopened in 1948, attracting workers from Masbate, some of whom settled in Opol.

### *Toponyms and Their Cultural Significance*

Toponyms, or place names, are rooted in the history, culture, and beliefs of the people who initially inhabited a place (Room, 2024). These names reflect the relationship between the land and its people, offering insights into their way of life. Room (2024) emphasizes that toponyms embody cultural and historical significance, revealing the deep connection between land and people. They preserve heritage and serve as crucial elements of cultural memory, passed down through generations.

Baso (1996, as cited in Susilawati, 2022) argues that toponyms encompass more than geographical markers; they carry language, thoughts, and environmental knowledge. Indigenous communities often rely on oral traditions to preserve history, with place names being integral to these narratives (Thomas et al., 1997, as cited in Armstrong, 2022). Toponyms, by connecting people to their ancestral lands, preserve vital knowledge, sustain cultural identity, and foster a sense of belonging and continuity.

### *Mythology and Folklore in Toponymy*

Mythology and folklore play a significant role in the origins of place names (Meirbekov, 2023). Legends associated with a place often provide deep insights into the local toponymy, revealing social, religious, and cultural relations. For instance, the tale of Lamòling, which explains the Abui toponymy, sheds light on the social and religious relations among the Papuan people of Alor, Indonesia (Tyan Gin et al., 2021). Such stories link toponyms to specific events, people, or beliefs, enriching our understanding of the region's heritage and linguistic evolution.

In the province of Antique, research has shown that twenty-three town names are associated with folklore. For example, the name Cabriwan is derived from a local plant called baliw, which grows abundantly in the area. The dense baliw palms made cultivation difficult, prompting locals to clear the land, after which the name Cabriwan was chosen (F. L. Jocano et al., 1965, as cited in Duza, 2023). These myths shape toponyms, often reflecting cultural narratives, heroic figures, or supernatural events tied to specific locations. They not only preserve the region's history but also honor cultural values.

Toponymic legends are essential elements of the spiritual and cultural heritage of a community. They embody the community's worldview and reflect historical truths, cultural values, and national identity (Kenbaeva et al., 2022). By preserving such legends,

toponyms offer invaluable insights into regional heritage, honoring both the past and the people who shaped it.

### ***Cultural Identity and Place Names***

Place names are vital markers of cultural heritage, identity, and history, reflecting the worldviews, lived experiences, and collective memory of the communities that inhabit a region (Castro & Piovesan, 2021; Nasimiyu Namunguba & Ong'onda, 2022). They are linguistic artifacts that serve as key elements of cultural memory, making them invaluable for fields such as cartography, linguistics, public services, and cultural geography (Kurban & Aliddinova, 2023; Anderson, 2021). In regions like the Far North of Cameroon, toponyms carry deep historical, religious, and cosmogonic significance. They function as intangible cultural heritage, often preserved through oral traditions and at risk of being lost over time (Maura, 2022). The study of toponyms, also known as toponymy or toponomastics, uncovers complex relationships between people, places, and identity, underscoring the dynamic and evolving nature of cultural landscapes (Basik, 2023). Moreover, toponyms can carry political weight, often serving as instruments of identity assertion and reflecting power dynamics in culturally diverse settings (Maura, 2022). The preservation and scholarly study of place names are crucial for maintaining cultural identity, historical awareness, and continuity across generations (Nasimiyu Namunguba & Ong'onda, 2022; Maura, 2022).

### ***Importance of Understanding Place Names***

Understanding the origins and significance of place names is crucial for fostering a deeper connection to cultural heritage. As noted by the Department of Social Development (2003, as cited in Singh, 2023), exploring the meanings behind toponyms allows individuals to appreciate the struggles, triumphs, and beliefs of their ancestors. This appreciation fosters a strong sense of belonging and cultural pride, enriching our connection to both the land and its people.

Toponyms, as linguistic artifacts, capture the history, culture, and geography of a region (Suvankulov, 2024). They serve as invaluable sources of historical information and preserve the collective memory of communities (Maura, 2022). Understanding toponyms is key to fostering cultural exchange and learning, as evidenced by Chinese students' perceptions of Russian place names (Dmitrieva Lidiya M., & Zhang Yunfey, 2021). The study of toponyms spans multiple disciplines, including linguistics, history, ethnography, and cultural studies (Rasulov et al., 2021). In regions like Far-North Cameroon, toponyms play a vital role in affirming political boundaries and shaping collective identity (Maura, 2022). However, toponyms are fragile cultural phenomena rooted in oral traditions, making them vulnerable to loss and emphasizing the need for preservation and standardization (Maura, 2022).

A strong sense of cultural identity, nurtured through an understanding of place names, can lead to personal happiness and a sense of belonging (Department of Social Development, 2003, as cited in Singh, 2023). When individuals embrace and celebrate their cultural heritage, they connect deeply with their roots and community, which fosters positive emotions, self-esteem, and a sense of purpose. Cultural identity provides a framework for understanding one's place in the world, promoting self-awareness and self-acceptance. The bonds formed through shared traditions and values enhance emotional well-being and create a supportive network. A robust cultural identity not only enriches one's life but also nurtures happiness and a profound sense of belonging in an interconnected world. Additionally, Yang et al. (2023) argue that preserving indigenous place names is vital for recognizing the contributions of marginalized communities. Colonial powers often imposed their own toponyms, erasing local heritage and reinforcing colonial dominance. Restoring and understanding original place names can rectify this historical injustice and empower these communities, enabling them to reclaim their history and assert their identities.

The importance of understanding place names cannot be overstated. From preserving cultural heritage to fostering geographic literacy, promoting cross-cultural understanding, and enhancing environmental awareness, place names are a treasure trove of knowledge and connection. Place names are not static labels but dynamic expressions of human experience, geography, and culture. By valuing and understanding place names, we honor the past and pave the way for a more enlightened and harmonious future.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The research design employed for this study is narrative analysis, a qualitative method that focuses on the collection and interpretation of stories or personal accounts to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences (Riessman, 2008). Narrative analysis primarily examines non-quantitative data, uncovering the histories and meanings behind events or phenomena. Within this framework, the researchers gathered and analyzed narratives detailing how the barangays in Opol, Misamis Oriental, derived their names. This approach is instrumental in elucidating the origins and cultural significance of barangay names within the municipality. Given the specific nature and objectives of this investigation, narrative analysis is considered the most fitting methodology for capturing the depth and richness of community memory and identity.

Further, narrative analysis represents a paramount facet of qualitative data analysis within scholarly research. It centers on the profound interpretation of fundamental narratives derived from the personal anecdotes within a study group. The first-person approach employs a narrative approach; this methodology facilitates data acquisition and meticulous organization, thereby enabling researchers to gain profound insights into individuals' experiential dimensions. Distinguished from a narrow focus on the verbatim content of interviews,

narrative analysis encompasses a comprehensive examination. It entails the systematic compilation of data about the linguistic choices employed by individuals in articulating their experiences and their manner of self-expression. It delves into the intricacies of their language to describe specific events or emotions and the underlying cognitions and motivations that influence their narratives. Furthermore, narrative analysis delves into the intricate process by which research participants construct their narratives, thereby contributing to a holistic comprehension of the complicated storytelling dynamics inherent in qualitative research endeavors.

## Participants

The participants of this study consisted primarily of elders who are native residents of each barangay in Opol, Misamis Oriental. These individuals were selected based on their long-term residency and their in-depth knowledge of the historical origins and cultural narratives surrounding the naming of their respective barangays. Their lived experiences and oral histories served as crucial sources of information in understanding the etymology and significance of local place names. In addition to the insights provided by these elders, the researcher also consulted barangay officials and examined archived records maintained at the barangay level. These official documents and perspectives from local leaders offered supplemental historical data, validating and enriching the narratives shared by the elder participants. This diverse yet focused group of informants ensured a comprehensive and culturally respectful exploration of the toponyms within the municipality.

## Instrument

This study employed a comprehensive approach to uncover the historical origins of the barangay names in Opol, Misamis Oriental, primarily through focused group interviews. The researchers created an open and engaging environment that encouraged participants to share rich narratives, insightful perspectives, and valuable viewpoints related to the naming of their barangays. Interviews were conducted in person to foster rapport and active participation.

To ensure accuracy and depth, data were documented using both traditional and modern methods. Notes were meticulously taken by hand to capture the nuances of the conversations, while video and audio recording devices were employed to preserve verbal and non-verbal cues. This combination allowed for a thorough and detailed collection of the diminishing oral histories surrounding barangay nomenclature.

By integrating conventional documentation with advanced recording technology, the study ensured the comprehensive preservation of these culturally and historically significant narratives. This approach not only enriches the present understanding but also safeguards the heritage embedded in these stories for future generations.

## Procedure

To ensure the quality and reliability of the research findings, the researchers followed a systematic protocol for data gathering. They first wrote and sent letters to the barangays in Opol, Misamis Oriental, to seek permission for the study. Upon receiving approval, the researchers then wrote letters to selected participants to invite them to take part in the research. Data were collected through narrative interviews and consultations with elder participants and barangay officials, allowing the researchers to gather rich oral histories and insights on the origins of the barangay names.

## Data Analysis

The collected narratives from various participants across the barangays were carefully transcribed and analyzed to uncover the social, historical, and thematic layers embedded within the place names. The researchers employed a narrative analysis approach, focusing on understanding the etymology, cultural significance, and historical context of the barangay names. This method allowed the researchers to interpret how these toponyms contribute to the community's identity and heritage.

The analysis began by examining the origins and meanings of the place names to determine their etymology and significance. The researchers explored notable historical events, influential figures, and landmarks associated with each barangay, providing a deeper understanding of how these factors shape the collective narrative. Cultural insights were then extracted by identifying traditions, myths, and legends tied to the toponyms, revealing how these elements reflect the cultural identity of each community.

Geographical features related to the names—such as rivers, mountains, and other landmarks—were also analyzed to contextualize the setting and environment underlying the narratives. Symbolism embedded in the toponyms was assessed to understand how they convey particular emotions, conflicts, or values, enriching the thematic depth of the narratives.

A comparative investigation was conducted across the different barangays' stories to identify common patterns or changes that align with broader community experiences or character development within the narratives. The researchers consolidated and synthesized the responses from multiple participants per barangay, focusing on narrative content without applying statistical treatment, to maintain the richness and authenticity of the oral histories.

This comprehensive narrative analysis framework enabled the researchers to interpret how the barangay names function as integral components of the local stories, culture, and historical memory, providing a multifaceted understanding of their significance.

## Ethical Consideration

The researcher wrote formal letters and secured permission from the Mayor of the Municipality of Opol, as well as from the barangay officials in the selected areas, before initiating any research activities. Upon receiving the necessary approvals, letters of consent were issued directly to the selected participants. The researcher upheld strict ethical standards by ensuring the anonymity of all respondents; no names or identifying information were recorded or disclosed in the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. Furthermore, the researcher committed to observing and respecting the cultural norms, traditions, and practices of the Higaonon community throughout the research process. Sensitivity to indigenous knowledge systems and customs was exercised to avoid cultural misrepresentation or harm.

## Results and Discussion

### History of the Barangays

Awang derives its name from a mispronunciation by Japanese soldiers of the native term "Uwang," referring to a freshwater shrimp abundant in the local river. This reflects the community's close connection to its natural environment and the subtle impact of colonial encounters on place names. Early settlers, such as the Kanaugans and Babatidos families, are remembered as foundational to the barangay's development.

Bagooboc was formed in 1964 by merging the barangays of Tagsulip and Limatukon. Its name comes from the cogon grass ("bagooboc") that covered the area and served as cattle feed. The original barangay names were closely tied to agricultural and environmental features—Tagsulip from a type of sweet potato and Limatukon from a leech species—highlighting the importance of local flora and fauna in naming.

Barra, once part of Iponan, earned its name from its role as a natural coastal barrier that protected inland communities from storms and waves. Another explanation for the name comes from the frequent use of crowbars ("barra") during a period of consecutive deaths, symbolizing both the barangay's geography and its cultural memory of hardship and resilience.

Bonbon was named after its fine, sandy coastal terrain, which attracted settlers, particularly from Bohol. The community thrived through fishing and farming, especially cultivating the opo plant. Over time, the area's name evolved to "Opol," signifying linguistic shifts that reflect the community's growth and changing identity.

Cauyonan takes its name from the Visayan word "uyon," meaning agreement, reflecting the tribal elders' communal governance and lawmaking through the Batasan. Its economy traditionally centered on farming, hog-raising, and gold-panning, using indigenous tools and methods, symbolizing a community deeply rooted in self-rule and resourcefulness.

Igpit is geographically enclosed between the Bungkalalan and Iponan Rivers, which made it prone to flooding and physically "trapped." Its name reflects this entrapment, a characteristic that extended during World War II when Japanese forces occupied the area. The barangay maintains cultural rituals linked to harvest thanksgiving, demonstrating resilience amid natural and wartime adversity.

Limunda began as Sitio Tan-awon, inhabited primarily by the Higa-onon people. Its intended name, "Dimunda" meaning "won't stop," was changed by clerical error to "Limunda," yet the community retained the spirit of resilience the original name implied. It survived pandemics and armed conflict and continues to uphold indigenous beliefs alongside newer religious influences.

Luyong Bonbon was once a sitio known as Chromite due to mineral deposits and later became a logging hub called Lagpan. As its population grew with migrants from Leyte and Bohol, it separated politically from Bonbon in 1969. The name "Luyong Bonbon," meaning "behind Bonbon," reflects its geographic position and preserves a rich tradition of folklore and community healing.

Malanang received its name from an emotional event during a severe drought involving two sisters tasked with fetching water. The phrase uttered by the younger sister became the barangay's name, symbolizing endurance and the community's shared struggle against environmental hardship.

Nangcaon is named after its abundant jackfruit trees, symbolizing the area's natural wealth. The barangay prospered through gold trading and attracted settlers from distant regions. Its lush forests, streams, and mineral deposits contributed to its reputation as a prosperous and resource-rich community.

Patag was the site of a Japanese military camp during World War II, which led to the displacement and scattering of its indigenous Lumad inhabitants. The name combines "patay" (dead) and "nagkatag" (scattered), memorializing the tragic losses and resilience of the community after wartime devastation.

Poblacion serves as Opol's town center, a name inherited from the Spanish colonial period signifying the urban core or population center. It has historically been the municipality's political, social, and religious hub, retaining its importance as the focal point of governance and community life.

Taboc derives its name from the Visayan word "tabok," meaning "to cross," referring to the barangay's location between two rivers and the historical absence of bridges, which made crossing a defining aspect of daily life. This geographical feature influenced both its

name and early isolation.

Tingalan commemorates a tragic event where farmers were silenced by invaders using the brutal “tingal” method, placing sharp wood in their mouths. Despite this painful history, Tingalan was known for its agricultural productivity and the bravery of its people, with the name serving as a reminder of sacrifice and resilience.

## II. Thematic Analysis of Barangay Names and Cultural Significance

Table 1. Thematic Analysis

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Supporting Ideas / Examples</i>
Environmental and Geographic Foundations	Barangay names often derive from natural features such as rivers, coastal sands, vegetation, and terrain.	Names like Igpit (between two rivers), Bonbon (sandy coast), Bagooboc (cogon grass), Patag (topography) show the community’s close bond with the environment.
Historical and Colonial Influences	Place names reflect the impact of colonialism and wartime experiences.	Awang’s name from Japanese mispronunciation; Patag’s name memorializing WWII tragedies; oral histories showing colonial impacts on identity and naming.
Cultural Memory and Oral Tradition	Oral histories, folklore, and rituals preserve community identity and shared heritage.	Stories of Malanang’s drought, Barra’s death-related folklore, Luyong Bonbon’s healing rituals illustrate the importance of transmitted cultural narratives.
Socio-Political Evolution and Community Formation	Political changes, barangay mergers, and indigenous governance shape identities.	Bagooboc’s formation by merging two barangays, Luyong Bonbon’s separation, and Cauyanon’s tribal Batasan reflect dynamic governance and social organization.
Economic Livelihood and Resource Use	Livelihoods such as farming, fishing, logging, and mining influence place names and community development.	Agriculture in Bonbon and Taboc, gold-panning in Cauyanon and Limunda, logging in Luyong Bonbon show the economic roots of local identities and names.
Symbolism of Resilience and Endurance	Many barangay names and stories embody survival amid hardship and reflect communal strength.	Limunda’s “won’t stop” spirit, Patag’s war survival, Igpit’s flood resilience, and Malanang’s drought story emphasize perseverance as a core identity.

The analysis of Opol’s barangay names shows how environment, history, and culture shape local identity. Names often reflect natural features like rivers and forests, while colonial and wartime events leave lasting marks. Oral traditions preserve stories of resilience through hardships like droughts and conflicts. Changes in governance and economic activities such as farming and mining also influence community identity. Overall, these themes highlight the people’s enduring strength and connection to their land and history.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, "Ang Pinagmulan: Unveiling the Roots of Barangay Names in Opol, Misamis Oriental Through the Dying Narratives of the Elder Natives" sheds light on the invaluable significance of barangay names as vessels of cultural heritage and historical identity. Through the narratives of the elder natives, a rich tapestry of stories emerges, connecting the present to the roots of each barangay. These names, often dismissed as mere labels on a map, prove to be repositories of collective memory, encapsulating the struggles, triumphs, and unique characteristics that have shaped each community over time. The research underscores the urgency of preserving these dying narratives, as the elders who hold these stories are passing away, taking with them a wealth of knowledge that cannot be retrieved once lost. The study encourages a deeper appreciation for the linguistic, cultural, and historical nuances embedded in barangay names, emphasizing their role in fostering a sense of belonging and continuity for future generations. By unraveling the layers of meaning behind each name, communities can strengthen their identity, fostering a greater understanding of their roots and contributing to the preservation of local heritage.

Ultimately, "Ang Pinagmulan" serves as a call to action, urging communities to actively engage with their elder members, document their narratives, and safeguard the linguistic and cultural treasures woven into the very fabric of barangay names. In doing so, we ensure that the unique stories of Opol, Misamis Oriental, and countless other locales, continue to resonate through time, fostering a deeper connection between the past, present, and future.

Out of the fourteen barangays in Opol, Misamis Oriental, this study successfully covered eleven: Awang, Bagooboc, Barra, Bonbon, Igpit, Limunda, Luyong Bonbon, Malanang, Patag, Poblacion, and Taboc. However, barangays Nangaon, Cauyanon, and Tingalan remained unexplored due to the resistance of their datu and native elders, who safeguard the historical narratives embedded in their place names. These barangays are predominantly inhabited by the Higaonon community, the most influential indigenous group in Opol, who regard their oral histories as sacred and protected by cultural and legal traditions.

Given these challenges, future research should prioritize respectful engagement and trust-building with the Higaonon community. Collaborative efforts are essential to uncover and preserve the rich, yet closely guarded, histories of these barangays. Urgent initiatives are needed to document the oral histories of elder natives, especially from Nangaon, Cauyanon, and Tingalan, as these narratives risk being lost with the passing of the older generation.

To address community skepticism surrounding historical narratives, a public awareness campaign is recommended. This campaign should emphasize the importance of preserving oral histories and promote critical engagement with such narratives as a means of

cultural understanding rather than dismissal. Partnerships with local educational institutions can further aid in preserving and sharing research findings by integrating these narratives into school curricula, thereby fostering cultural pride and awareness among younger generations.

Moreover, community empowerment programs such as workshops, seminars, and storytelling events should be initiated. These platforms will encourage active participation in cultural preservation and cultivate a collective sense of responsibility toward safeguarding Opol's rich heritage.

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