

## A Note on the Orthography

In orthographic systems that have been used to write Ilocano since the 1600s, two systems have predominated. The older system is based on Spanish orthography and the newer system is the standardized alphabet accepted for the Tagalog language, as used in the weekly Ilocano magazine, *Bannawag*. The orthography is mostly phonemically based for the consonants, but not for the vowels. Among the five vowels (a, e, i, o, u) used in Ilocano writing, the letter *e* corresponds to two separate phonemes in the Southern dialects, a mid front vowel, and a high back unrounded vowel. The orthographic symbols *o* and *u* originally represented one phoneme with alternative pronunciations in specific environments (*o* word-finally). Due to the large number of foreign loans in the language and high degree of bilingualism, however, these letters now represent two contrastive vowel sounds, e.g. *oso* 'bear' vs. *uso* 'use, in fashion'.

### The older Spanish system vs. the modern system

Although perhaps the majority of Ilocanos continue to use the older Spanish spelling system, I choose to abide by the conventions accepted in most modern publications and the *Bannawag* magazine. Here, I briefly outline the two systems:

Vowels are the same in both: *a, e, i, o, u*; where *e* represents two distinct sounds in the Southern dialects (see Phonology).

Consonantal representation varies as follows. Differences between the systems are highlighted in boldface. The starred consonants in the second (Spanish orthography) column are used only in loanwords:

Ilocano sound [IPA]	Spanish orthography	Standardized orthography
p	p <b>*f</b>	p <b>p</b>
b	b <b>*v</b>	b <b>b</b>
t	t	t
d	d	d
k	c <b>qu</b>	k <b>k</b>
kk	ck	kk
g	g	g
ge, gi	gue, gui	ge, gi
s	s <b>*z</b>	s <b>s</b>
se, si	ce, ci	se, si
ch [tʃ]	ch	ts, ti + vowel
j [dʒ]	di + vowel	di + vowel, dy
h	<b>*j</b>	h
he, hi	ge, gi	he, hi
l	l	l
ly + vowel [lj]	<b>*ll</b>	li + vowel
r	r <b>*rr</b>	r <b>r</b>
m	m	m

n  
ny + vowel  
ng [ŋ]  
w  
y

n  
ñ  
ñg, ñg̃  
o, u, w  
y

n  
ni + vowel  
ng  
w  
y

Examples of words:

Old Spanish spelling

acero  
tucac  
dackel  
achara  
fiesta  
ginebra  
daguiti  
trabajo  
taller  
ñgata  
vaca  
zapatos  
pizarra

Modern Ilocano Spelling

asero  
tukak  
dakkell  
atsara  
piesta  
hinebra  
dagiti  
trabaho  
talier  
ngata  
baka  
sapatos  
pisara

Gloss

steel  
frog  
big  
pickles  
party, fiesta  
gin  
plural article  
work  
car repair shop  
perhaps  
cow  
shoes  
chalkboard

The idiosyncrasies of the older Spanish-based system are eliminated in the modern system as follows:

The letters *c* and *g* used in the older Spanish spelling system no longer represent two sounds. In the old system, *c* and *g* before a front vowel (*i*, *e*) represented [s] and [h] respectively. In other environments, they represented [k] and [g], respectively:

Old Spanish spelling

gelatina  
ginebra  
hacendero

Modern Ilocano spelling

helatina  
hinebra  
asendero

Gloss

gelatin  
gin  
estate owner

The velar stops [k] and [g] before front vowels used to be represented in Spanish orthography as '*qu*' and '*gu*', respectively. They are now represented without the '*u*'.

Old Spanish spelling

daguiti  
manggued  
naganaquen  
baquet

Modern Ilocano spelling

dagiti  
mangged  
naganaken  
baket

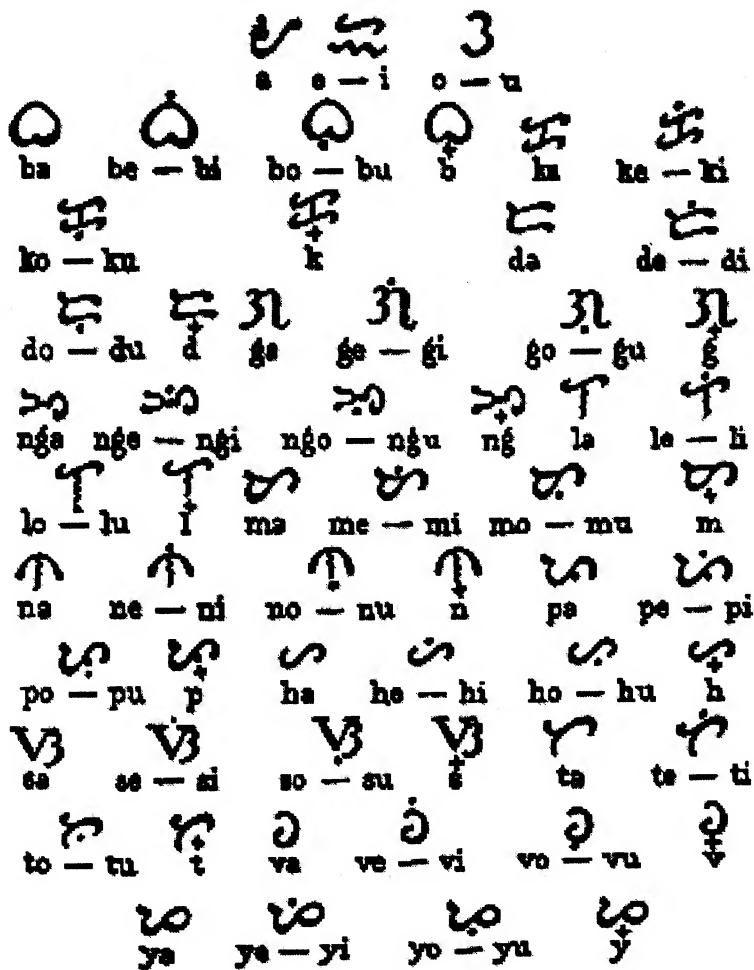
Gloss

plural article  
worker  
gave birth already  
old lady

## The Pre-Hispanic Syllabary

Before the arrival of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, the Ilocanos employed a syllabary resembling the Vedic scripts of India used in various other languages found throughout the Philippines and Indonesia. It is similar to the scripts used by the Tagalogs and Pangasinenses, although unlike these, the Ilocano script was innovated to designate coda consonants. In the Tagalog script, readers were expected to supply the coda consonants from the context, as only consonants in initial syllable position were written, with a diacritic representing the appropriate vowel. Although this script is no longer in use in modern Ilocano, I show it below, taken from the Ilocano *Doctrina Cristiana* of 1621.

### The Ilocano Syllabary



Rubino, Carl. 2000. Ilocano Dictionary and Grammar. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

V	W	3	Q	S	S	3I	S
A,	E vel I,	O vel U,	B,	C vel K vel Q,	D,	G,	L vel R,
V	A	L	B	S	P	S	II+
M,	N,	P vel F,	S,	T,	Y,	Ng,	21.

# ILOCANO ALPHABET

The accompanying alphabet is that of P. López and is taken from the Ilocano dictionary of P. Carro<sup>11</sup> and employed also in the *Belarmiano* of P. López, a specimen page of which is shown as Fig. 16, facing page 74 of this volume. This vocabulary is very much stylized when compared with other Philippine alphabets. It should be noted that Ilocano lacks *h* and *w*. Apparently, *w* is substituted by *u*, as would be the case in Spanish, since P. Carro's<sup>11</sup> Vocabulary contains a section in which initial *u* is employed before *a*, *e*, and *o* to form words which would employ *w* in other Philippine languages. Another peculiarity is the innovation introduced by P. López, which consists of a small cross appended to a character which annuls the vowel and permits a word to end in a consonant. This is repeatedly shown in Fig. 16, referred to above.

Fig. 17.—P. Francisco López.<sup>20</sup>

Gardner, Fletcher. 1943.  
Philippine Indic Studies.  
San Antonio, TX: Witle  
Memorial Museum.