



Post-War and Pre-Migration Experiences of Mid-1940s Ilokano *Sakadas* Bound for Hawaii

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to examine the postwar and pre-migration experiences of mid-1940s Ilokano *Sakadas* bound for Hawaii, with particular attention to their socioeconomic conditions in Ilocos, recruitment and preparation processes, voyage experiences, and the axiological meanings embedded in their narratives. Using a descriptive qualitative phenomenological design, the research was conducted among Ilokano *Sakadas* from Region I, Philippines, and knowledgeable relatives, with expert validation through the Delphi technique. Data were gathered through validated semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis and were analyzed using phenomenological thematic procedures, including in vivo and structural coding. The study was conducted over several months, with data collection continuing until thematic saturation was achieved. Findings revealed that *Sakada* migration was primarily a family-centered survival strategy shaped by postwar poverty, limited employment opportunities, and war-related dislocation rather than individual ambition. Recruitment and preparation were marked by intense competition, financial sacrifice, reliance on kinship networks, and adaptive strategies to overcome bureaucratic and structural barriers. The transpacific voyage aboard the SS *Maunawili* was characterized by overcrowding, physical hardship, and emotional strain, yet was mitigated by camaraderie, mutual support, and emergent leadership among the *Sakadas*. Across all phases, core values of resilience, sacrifice, familial responsibility, perseverance, solidarity, and hope consistently emerged. The study concludes that the pre-migration experiences of mid-1940s Ilokano *Sakadas* reflect a deeply human and moral dimension of labor migration, contributing to a more nuanced, human-centered understanding of Filipino transnational migration and enriching local and diasporic historiography.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Every December, the Filipino community in Hawaii commemorates *Sakada* Day, an annual gathering that honors the resilience, labor, and enduring cultural legacy of Hawaii's Filipino plantation workers. *Sakada* Day is recognized as a collective remembrance of the struggles and contributions of Filipino migrants who helped build the plantation economy of the islands (Center for Philippine Studies, University of Hawaii at Mānoa [CPS-UHM], 2024). Contemporary celebrations highlight not only their economic significance but also their historical and moral importance to Filipino and Hawaiian heritage (Burgos & Hawaii News Now, 2024; INQUIRER.NET U.S. Bureau, 2022).

The *Sakada* narrative is inseparable from the broader history of Philippine–American relations and labor migration shaped by colonial policies and global economic demands. From the first arrival of Filipino workers in 1906, Hawaii's plantation system increasingly relied on Filipino labor, particularly Ilokanos, whose reputation for endurance and adaptability made them the preferred workforce. Over time, these migrants became central to the growth of the sugar and pineapple industries and to the formation of a distinct Filipino diaspora in the Pacific. As De Leon (2019) argues, the *Sakada* was not merely a laborer but a

corporately produced subject, disciplined and positioned within plantation systems that shaped Filipino identities, expectations, and forms of compliance in Hawaii's racialized labor order.

A critical yet underexamined episode within this history is the final large-scale *Sakada* recruitment in the aftermath of World War II. The mid-1940s *Sakadas* migrated at a moment of profound disruption. The Japanese occupation devastated the Ilocos region, leaving communities marked by material destruction, food shortages, and social dislocation (Fariñas, 2025). Nationally, the Philippines faced the immense challenge of postwar economic rehabilitation, characterized by weakened infrastructure, limited capital, and widespread poverty (Sicat, 2019; Weekley, 2006). Although Philippine independence was formally achieved in 1946 (Malloryk, 2021), political sovereignty did not immediately translate into economic security, particularly for rural populations in Northern Luzon.

Simultaneously, Hawaii's plantation economy confronted acute labor shortages caused by wartime mobilization and postwar industrial shifts. These conditions revived institutional mechanisms for Filipino labor importation, resulting in the recruitment of approximately 6,000 *Sakadas* in 1946. Unlike earlier migrants, this cohort entered a more regulated but no less demanding migration regime, shaped by the Tydings–McDuffie Act and evolving labor policies. Within this framework, *Sakadas* were subjected not only to contractual labor arrangements but also to expectations of discipline, productivity, and moral comportment consistent with plantation capitalism (De Leon, 2019).

While existing studies have extensively documented *Sakada* labor conditions and plantation struggles, much of the literature privileges structural and institutional perspectives. The subjective, pre-migration experiences of the mid-1940s Ilokano *Sakadas*—particularly their postwar realities in Ilocos, their recruitment encounters, and their expectations during the journey—remain largely underrepresented. De Leon's (2019) analysis foregrounds the corporate and ideological construction of *Sakada* labor yet leaves room for further inquiry into how *Sakadas* themselves interpreted, negotiated, and gave meaning to these conditions prior to plantation work.

This gap is especially evident in local historiography, where Ilokanos have a very limited, fragmented, or subsumed knowledge of pre-migration narratives. As a result, the lived meanings and values embedded in Ilokano *Sakada* experiences risk being lost to generational memory, despite their relevance to contemporary discussions on labor migration, resilience, and cultural identity.

Anchored on this context, the present study aims to examine the migration process from the perspective of the *Sakadas* themselves. Specifically, it seeks to analyze the postwar social and economic conditions in Ilocos that motivated migration, to examine the recruitment and preparation processes, to describe the voyage experiences and expectations, and to interpret the core values manifested in these pre-migration narratives. By foregrounding Ilokano voices, this research contributes to the enrichment of Philippine local history and advances a more human-centered understanding of Filipino transnational labor migration.

1.2 Objective

This study aims to examine the post-war and pre-migration experiences of Mid-1940s Ilokano *Sakadas* bound for Hawaii. Specifically, it seeks to: Analyze the post-war social and economic conditions in Ilocos that motivated Ilokano *Sakadas* to seek plantation employment in Hawaii; Examine the recruitment and preparation processes of Ilokano *Sakadas*;

- 1) Describe the pre-migration experiences and expectations of Ilokano *Sakadas* during their voyage; and
- 2) Interpret the axiological meanings and themes manifested in the post-war and pre-migration experiences of Ilokano *Sakadas*,

1.3 Theoretical Framework

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the study, the researcher anchored the investigation on relevant theories that guided the exploration of the experiences of mid-1940s Ilokano *Sakadas*. This phenomenological study is primarily framed by Everett Spurgeon Lee's Push-Pull Theory of Migration (1966) and Otis D. Duncan's Theory and Consequences of Mobility of Farm Population (1940).

Push-Pull Theory of Migration (1966). Lee's theory categorizes migration factors into four groups: factors associated with the area of origin, factors of the destination area, intervening obstacles, and personal factors. In the context of this study, the aftermath of World War II served as the major push factor from the Philippines, while employment opportunities in Hawaii represented the pull factor. Intervening obstacles included geographical, logistical, and regulatory challenges, while personal perceptions shaped the *Sakadas*' decisions to migrate. These categories provide a framework to analyze the *Sakadas*' motivations, struggles, and personal reflections throughout the migration process.

Theory and Consequences of Mobility of Farm Population (1940). Complementing Lee's framework, Duncan's theory emphasizes the impact of agricultural labor mobility, highlighting economic, social, natural, personal, and other causes of migration. Economic and technical factors include agricultural methods, wage changes, and market conditions, while social causes relate to population growth, institutional changes, and family needs. Natural causes encompass environmental and health challenges, and personal causes involve individual preferences, aspirations, and social experiences. Other factors include labor-related problems and opportunities. Together, the two theories illuminate the complex interplay of structural, environmental, and

personal factors that shaped the Ilokano *Sakadas*' decision to leave the Philippines for Hawaii, offering a holistic understanding of both the push and pull dynamics and the consequences of migration.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study employed a descriptive qualitative phenomenological design to examine the post-war and pre-migration experiences of Mid-1940s Ilokano *Sakadas* bound for Hawaii. Phenomenology was appropriate as it seeks to uncover the meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences and to describe the essence of a shared phenomenon. Guided by the procedures of bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and describing, the researcher systematically interpreted participants' narratives and constructed textual and structural descriptions, thereby identifying the core themes and meanings that characterize *Sakadas*' post-war conditions and migration preparations prior to their departure for Hawaii.

Population and Sampling. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, appropriate for qualitative studies requiring information-rich cases. The primary participants were Ilokano *Sakadas* who originated from Region I, Philippines, and were directly employed in Hawaiian plantations in mid-1940s. Due to the limited number of surviving *Sakadas*, the study also included key informant relatives who had directly shared in, witnessed, or were knowledgeable about their *Sakada* family member's experiences. In addition, experts were engaged through the Delphi technique to supplement and validate the findings. The inclusion criteria for experts required that they have conducted scholarly studies on the life, history, or migration experiences of *Sakadas*. Assistance in identifying participants and experts was obtained from organized organizations engaged in the preservation of the heritage of the *Sakada* history.

Research Instrument. Data were gathered primarily through a validated semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions, designed to elicit in-depth personal narratives. The instrument was reviewed by experts and pilot-tested prior to use. Virtual interviews (Zoom/Google Meet) were conducted with *Sakadas* and, when necessary, with close relatives to corroborate accounts. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent, and in vivo coding was employed to preserve participants' original expressions.

Data Gathering. Virtual interviews were scheduled at participants' convenience and typically lasted about one hour per session, with accommodations made due to participants' advanced age and the sensitivity of recollections. In addition to interviews, supplementary documentary evidence was analyzed, and the Delphi technique was employed to obtain expert consensus and validate emerging themes, particularly in cases where participant accounts were limited. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, and all digital records were securely stored and scheduled for disposal after the study.

Data Analysis. Data analysis followed a phenomenological thematic procedure that involved verbatim transcription, translation where necessary, and iterative coding using in vivo, descriptive, holistic, and structural techniques. Significant statements were clustered into categories and subsequently refined into themes, from which textual and structural descriptions were developed. The analysis culminated in the interpretation of core meanings that characterize the post-war and pre-migration experiences of mid-1940s Ilokano *Sakadas* bound for Hawaii. To ensure confidentiality, no personal identifiers were included in the results, including the names mentioned by the participants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section examines the post-war and pre-migration experiences of mid-1940s Ilokano *Sakadas* as they prepared for their journey to Hawaii. It explores how they understood and made sense of their lived realities before migration, focusing on their socio-economic conditions, motivations, and the complex challenges they faced. The discussion highlights how these individuals' navigated hardship and uncertainty as they risked everything in pursuit of what they perceived as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in Hawaii.

3.1 Lived Realities in Ilocos: Socioeconomic Experiences Before Migration to Hawaii

The decision of the Mid-1940s Ilokano *Sakadas* to enter plantation labor in Hawaii emerged from a convergence of deeply constrained post-war socioeconomic realities. Participants consistently framed migration not as personal ambition, but as a family-centered survival strategy shaped by poverty, war dislocation, and the absence of viable local employment. Their narratives resonate with national conditions described by Agoncillo (1990), Sicat (2019), and Weekley (2006), who emphasized that the immediate post-World War II period in the Philippines was marked by economic devastation, fragile state capacity, and widespread rural insecurity. The Ilocos region, in particular, experienced severe disruption during the Japanese occupation (Fariñas, 2025), intensifying the structural pressures that compelled outward migration.

Participant A situated his motivation within intergenerational economic stagnation:

"Narigat ti biagmi idia y Pilipinas idi. Kasla awan asensoan. Mannalon ti amak, ket kasla siak ti mangtawid no aniaman ti nagbalin a kadawyan ti pamiliami. Kunak idi iti bagik, masapul ti sabali a wagas tapno maitag-ay ti kasasaadmi. [sic]" (Life was hard in the Philippines then. It felt like there was no progress. My father was a farmer, and I thought I would simply inherit the same life. I told myself there must be another way to uplift our condition.)

Participant C echoed similar sentiments regarding intergenerational poverty and limited educational opportunities:

“Ni tatang ken nanang ket agtaltalonda laeng. Kayatko a pagbasaen dagitay kakabsatko, ngem daksang-gasat ket umanay lang tay sapolda ti masapulmi iti inaldaw-aldaw. [sic]” (My parents were simple farmers, and I hoped to send my siblings to school, but fortune revealed that our daily income was only enough to meet our basic needs for the day.)

This common experience was further contextualized by Participant B, who intertwined the political backdrop of survival during the onset of World War II with vivid descriptions of wartime scarcity:

“Adda dua a balaymi idi, maysa idiy ili ken maysa idiy away, amiananen ti ili, bale Salsalamagui. Addaak idiy Vintar idi nangrugi ti gubat idi December 7, 1941. Gapu iti daytoy, kasapulan nga agsapulkami iti kanenmi ta narigat ti magatang idi. Inkam agliwliw ti ikan idiy karayan. Saanmi met maparti dagiti animalesmi ta dagitoy ti pannaka-makinami a makatulong kadakami idiy taltalon. [sic]” (Before the war, we had two houses—one in the town proper and another in the countryside north of the town, in Salsalamagui. When the war broke out on December 7, 1941, I was in Vintar. From that point on, we had to find ways to secure food for our family. Purchasing basic food items became difficult, so we also relied on fishing in the river. We could not afford to slaughter our beasts of burden because they were our “machines,” essential for working the farm.)

The Japanese occupation of the Ilocos region from 1941 to 1945 created severe economic disruptions, with agricultural production significantly hampered and communities forced into subsistence survival strategies (Farinas, 2025). Participant B emphasized the depth of sacrifice required, forgoing personal ambitions and intimate relationships for family welfare:

“Linipatko pay ket ti bagik idin, ken pinanawak daydi nobiak ta mas importante idi a matulongak dagiti pito nga addik ken dagiti nagannak kaniak. [sic]” (At that time, I even forgot about myself and parted ways with my girlfriend because supporting my seven siblings and parents was my greater responsibility.)

These narratives clearly demonstrate that family welfare and improved social conditions constituted the primary motivations for joining the *Sakada* migration. This aligns with documented patterns of Filipino migration to Hawaii during this period, where economic necessity drove agricultural workers to seek opportunities abroad (Sharma, 1984; Remollino, 2009). The participants envisioned that joining the *Sakada* wave represented a vital opportunity to alleviate the hardships experienced within their homes under the prevailing conditions of their era.

Expert 1, a writer and poet whose articles depicting the life of an Ilokano *Sakada* before his entry to Hawaii were published in a popular Iluko magazine, He conveyed with deep sentiment the pre-migration life of one of the Ilokano *Sakada* he has known.

“Inladawan ni _____ kanyak, no kasano na nga pinanawanna iti ili a nakaiyanakanna a kas maysa nga agtutubo a mangsapul iti naimbag a gasat ti biagna iti gangannaet a lugar. [sic]” (_____ described to me how he left his hometown, where he was born and raised, to seek a better life and secure his future at a young age in an unfamiliar land.)

Sakripisio iti makagapu no apay a pinanawan ni _____ ti asawa ken anakna. Iti edad nga beinte singko, linikudan ni _____ ti barrio ken ilina a San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte. Insakripisio a pinanawan ti ubing nga asawana ken anakna, karaman ti ina ken kabsatna a babai.[sic] (Sacrifice was the main reason why _____ left his wife and child. At the age of 25, he left his barrio and hometown, San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte, sacrificing the company of his young wife and child, as well as his mother and sister.)

He concluded with poignant memories:

“Kunana pay, idi pinanawan na ti barrioda, kuna kan ni lolang na kenkuana, ket isun ti naudi a balikasna kenkuana: “Anakko, mabalin a dikanton makitan,”. Isu kanu ti kanayun na nga malaglagui nga sao nil ola na. Saan na kano met ng ani namnama, a daydi a balikas nil lola na ket pimmudno. [sic]” (He also said that when he left his barrio, his grandmother told him, and those were her last words to him: 'My child, I may never see you again.' He said that those words from his grandmother were the ones he remembered most vividly. He did not expect that her words would turn out to be true.)

His testimony reveals how *Sakadas* selflessly pursued opportunities in Hawaii to improve their living standards while leaving behind personal plans, pleasures, and contentment. They set aside familial affection, emotional ties, and nostalgia, including romantic relationships—a pattern consistent with other participants' experiences. These perceptions substantiate the claims regarding their motivations, aspirations, and objectives.

Participant E, a native of Santo Domingo, Ilocos Sur, also remarked:

“Narigat ti panagbiagmi nga ag-_____. Agrabtrabaho ni Tata a kas maysa nga agpanpanday. Ni Nana met, aglaklako no ania man ti mabalina nga ilako. Ket akintengngaak nga inanak iti lima nga agkakabsat. Nagasawa met dagiti dua nga in-inauna ngem siakon uray menor de edadda pay laeng idi gapu ta saan met a masuportaran dagiti nagannak kadakami amin a masapulmi. Tiempo ti gubat idi. Siak laeng ti makatulong idin kadagiti nagannak kaniak. Sapay ta natay ni Tata idi. Insangit ni Nana nga saanakon agpangadua a mangawat iti diaya a mapan agubra iti Hawaii. Diak pay naipapas ti nagbaro idi.[sic]” (We, the _____, lived a difficult life. My father was a blacksmith, and my mother sold whatever she could to make ends meet. I was the middle child among five siblings. My two older siblings married and settled early, even though they were still minors, because my parents could not support all of our needs. It was wartime then, and I was the only one who could help my parents. Later, our father passed away, and my mother urged me not to hesitate in accepting the offer to work in Hawaii. At that time, I didn't even fully feel the weight of being a young man.)

This response illuminates how family struggles regarding economic conditions, livelihood, family cohesion, and composition constituted motivating factors for considering employment in Hawaii.

Participant F confirmed the sociological landscape of Ilokanos during the post-war period:

“Kalpaskan ti World War II, napankami idiay Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur tapno mapanmi bisitaen dagitay kakabagianmi. Iti kaaddami iti Santa Maria (Ilocos Sur), nairana met a addada agrek-rekrut a pannakabagi ti Hawaiian Sugar Plantation Association. Kadagita a panawen, awan ngamin makuna a nasayaat a panggedan wenno pagserkan a trabaho ditoy pagilantayo ta halos kalkalpas ngamin ti gubat. Gapu ti kaawan trabaho, ditan a inawatmi ti awis ti plantasion ket nagpirma ti kontrata nga mapan agrabaho idiay Hawaii. [sic]” (After World War II, we traveled to Santa Maria (Ilocos Sur), where representatives from the Hawaiian Sugar Plantation Association happened to be recruiting workers. At that time, there were very few decent jobs or employment opportunities in our country, as the war had just ended. Faced with limited means of livelihood, we accepted the plantation company’s offer and signed a contract to work in Hawaii.)

The period following Philippine liberation in 1945 and eventual independence in 1946 was characterized by economic devastation, with infrastructure destroyed and agricultural systems disrupted (Malloryk, 2021; Sicut, 2019). The nation-building challenges faced by the newly independent republic created conditions where overseas labor migration became an attractive alternative for rural populations (Weekley, 2006). These responses substantially reflect participants' perceptions of their economic conditions before migrating to Hawaii, revealing their motivations and reasons for accepting such employment. Table 1 summarizes the participants' central themes of perceptions about their Socioeconomic Experiences Before Migration to Hawaii.

Table 1. The central themes highlight the lived realities on the socioeconomic experiences of Ilokano Sakadas before their migration to Hawaii.

Themes	Axiological Meaning
1. Life then was very poor and economic sustenance of the family is difficult.	Highlights the value of resilience and perseverance in the face of poverty, emphasizing the importance of enduring hardships to survive and provide for the family.
2. Family needs are the primordial considerations above anything else.	Reflects the deep-rooted Filipino cultural value of familial responsibility, prioritizing family welfare over personal desires.
3. During the war and post-war periods, there are scarce to no choice engagements in terms of employment opportunities.	Reveals the recognition of adaptability and pragmatism as core values, where individuals make difficult choices under constrained circumstances.
4. Employment in Hawaii is first-to-none option to uplift economic conditions.	Illustrates the value of opportunity-seeking and sacrifice, showing the willingness to take risks for long-term improvement of family and personal livelihood.
5. Leaving family members in the Philippines is difficult but necessary.	Highlights the values of selflessness and commitment, acknowledging the emotional cost of migration for the greater good of the family.

The thematic patterns emerging from the narratives of the Ilokano Sakadas strongly affirm Everett Lee’s (1966) migration theory, particularly the influence of “factors associated with the area of origin” in shaping decisions to migrate. The participants’ accounts consistently portray post-war Ilocos as a setting marked by severe poverty and economic insecurity, where sustaining family survival was a daily struggle. Axiologically, this theme underscores the values of resilience and perseverance, as Sakadas learned to endure material deprivation while continuously seeking ways to support their households. Poverty was not merely a material condition but a moral challenge that demanded strength of character and persistence.

Closely tied to this condition of scarcity was the primacy of family needs over individual aspirations. The Sakadas’ decisions were deeply anchored in the Filipino cultural value of familial responsibility, where personal desires were subordinated to collective welfare. Migration, therefore, was not framed as an act of individual ambition but as a moral obligation to one’s family. This axiological orientation highlights the centrality of utang na loob and shared responsibility, reflecting a worldview in which economic choices were evaluated based on their capacity to uplift the family rather than the self.

The war and immediate post-war period further constrained available livelihood options, as participants emphasized the absence or extreme limitation of employment opportunities in their communities. These accounts align with Duncan’s (1940) framework, which situates migration within the interaction of micro- and macro-level forces. At the axiological level, this theme reveals

adaptability and pragmatism as guiding values. Faced with structural unemployment, political instability, and agricultural disruption, Sakadas were compelled to make difficult but calculated choices, demonstrating a moral flexibility oriented toward survival under constrained circumstances.

Within this context, employment in Hawaii emerged as the most viable and immediate option for improving economic conditions. The Sakadas perceived overseas plantation work not as an ideal choice but as a necessary opportunity to break free from post-war deprivation. This theme illustrates values of opportunity-seeking and sacrifice, where individuals were willing to endure uncertainty, physical labor, and prolonged separation for the promise of long-term family stability. Such decisions reflect a forward-looking moral calculus that prioritized future security over present comfort.

Finally, the emotional difficulty of leaving family members in the Philippines was a recurring theme, emphasizing the profound personal cost of migration. Sakadas acknowledged the pain of separation but framed it as a necessary sacrifice for the greater good of their families. Axiologically, this theme highlights selflessness and commitment, as emotional suffering was consciously accepted as part of a broader moral duty. Taken together, these themes illustrate how the Sakadas' migration decisions were shaped not only by structural forces but also by deeply held values that transformed hardship into purposeful action, ultimately contributing to the formation of Ilokano diaspora communities in Hawaii (Agoncillo, 1990; Sicut, 2019; Remollino, 2009).

3.2 Postwar Recruitment and Preparation of Ilokano Sakadas for Hawaii

After weighing the economic, familial, and personal conditions shaping their lives, the Sakadas were eventually confronted with the formal processes of application, recruitment, and placement for employment in Hawaii. This stage of their journey was marked by heightened anticipation and uncertainty, as the prospect of migration symbolized both hope and risk. For many, recruitment represented a decisive turning point, one that demanded sacrifice, resilience, and collective family support.

Expert 2, interviewed as an external data source and a former member of the Oahu Filipino Community Council in Hawaii, contextualized the recruitment experience of the Sakadas:

“The Honolulu recruiters promised the *Sakadas* a wonderful life if they signed up for a three-year contract in the sugar cane plantation. There was a job opportunity. Some were adventurous enough to explore the land paved with gold” or “land of *Gloria*”. They found out later that it was not an easy life and not an easy task to be a plantation worker. Many were recruited as young, able bodied, single male.”

From the account of Expert 2, recruitment was perceived by Sakadas as a rare “breakthrough”—an opportunity to transcend their postwar socioeconomic status. However, the process itself proved arduous. While employment opportunities were presented as accessible, the actual procedures for application and acceptance were fraught with financial burdens, screening mechanisms, and intense competition.

Participant A narrated the financial and procedural challenges embedded in recruitment:

“*Saanda met a kasla nagbagkat iti tattao, adda immuna a bayad ti kontrata. Beinte singko pesos idi, ngem nabalar dayta a kuartan. Sapay no di adu pay ti agngayangay ngem manmano laeng ti maala. Isu nga uray rigat la ti biag, nagpatulongkami kadagiti kakabagianmi nga adda mabalinna. Daydi ulitegmi nga adda’t Hawaii, isu ti nangpabulod kadakami. Ken sabali pay diay pinag-interviewda, kitanda met ti salun-at ken kasasaadmi idi. Nammuna kaniak ket elementaria lat nalpasko. Ngem ammok met ti agbasa ken agsurat ti Ingles. [sic]*” (It wasn’t just a matter of transporting people; the contract was carefully considered. At that time, it was offered 25 pesos, which was quite valuable given the circumstances. Many people applied, but only a few were selected. Because of the hardships we faced, we sought assistance from relatives who were better off. Our uncle in Hawaii lent us money to help. In addition, we underwent an interview during which our health and overall situation were assessed. I had only completed elementary school, but I could read and write in English.)

This account highlights how recruitment was contingent not only on willingness but also on access to resources, kinship networks, and basic competencies. Financial capital, even in modest amounts, became a determining factor in advancing through the process.

Conversely, Participant B revealed that he was not selected in the initial screening due to being underage. However, circumstances favored him in an unexpected manner:

“*Saanak a napili idi ta kurang ti tawenko. Adda karrubami idi idiaiy Vintar nga isu ti naala. Idi makitana nga mas kasapulak diay tiansa nga agubra idiaiy Hawaii, ta adda metten kakabagianda a mangtultulong kadakuada, intedna kaniak diay pwestona. Ngem aminek, inusarko ti naganna ken in-fake ko ti edadko idi. Isu a dakkal nga utang a naimbag a nakemko kadaydi Manong _____ daydiay ken ti amin a kaputotak. [sic]*” (I was not selected at first because of my age. A neighbor of ours had secured a slot instead. When he saw that I needed the opportunity to work in Hawaii more, since my family had no relatives abroad to support us, he generously offered me his slot. I must admit, I used his name and adjusted my age to qualify. That is a debt of gratitude that I owe to _____, and to the rest of my generation)

The occurrence of slot switching was further corroborated by Participant C in his testimony:

“*Haanko a plano iti mapan Hawaii idi un-unanan ta kasla marigatannak a mangawat diay ilanlanad ti kontrata nga trabaho, aglalo ket ubingak idi ken awan nasayaat nga adalko. Maysa pay, masapul met latta ti kuarta a mapan. Ngem adda nangilako*

kanyak iti “approved recruitment papers” na nga agnagan ti _____. Kalpasan a kinasaritak ni baketko, immannugot nga gatangek tay ilaklako ni _____ nga approved recruitment papers na a mapan Hawaii nga aggatad iti beinte pesos (20.00). Menos presio daydiay. Inyutangak idi. Inlakok dagiti dingwenmi. Tinulungannak pay daydi nag-Gobernador ti Ilocos Sur a ni _____, isu nga alisto a naikamang iti imigrasion, check-up iti doctor ken dadduma pay a kasapulan. Ngem saan nga ti nagan a _____ ti inaramatko no di ket nagan _____. Prinaktisko dagitay dapat nga ikabesa nga panggep ken ni _____ inkaso nga awaganda daydiay a nagan iti S.S. Maunawili tapno makadanunak laeng idia Hawaii [sic]” (Going to Hawaii was initially not part of my plan, as I could not comprehend the terms and conditions outlined in the employment contract, especially considering that I was still young and had limited education. Another challenge was the financial requirement to pursue the opportunity. At that time, someone named _____ was selling “approved recruitment papers.” After discussing it with my wife, she agreed to purchase the approved papers of _____ for Hawaii at a price of twenty pesos (PhP 20.00), which was below the usual cost. We borrowed money for the amount, sold some of our animals, and also sought assistance from the Governor of Ilocos Sur, _____, which helped expedite the immigration process, medical examination, and other requirements. However, I did not use my real name, _____, but instead used _____. I also prepared to respond as _____ if they called that name upon arrival at SS Maunawili in Hawaii.)

Asked why _____ sold his slot to him at a lower price despite the stiff competition of slots, as claimed, Participant C replied:

“Nalpas ti saritaan ti familiarin idin, ngem saanna kano maibtoran a maisina iti buntis nga asawana. Gapu ta nakaperma idin iti kontrata, saannan maibabawi, isu nga nagpangadua no mabalin nga mangkita ti kasukatna a mangusar iti naganna.[sic]” (The decision within his family had already been settled, but he admitted that he could not leave his pregnant wife behind. Since he had already signed the contract, he could not withdraw, so he chose the alternative of finding someone to take his place and assume his name on the agreement.)

Despite these arrangements, Participant C admitted to prolonged anxiety over being discovered as an impostor:

“Inus-usarko ti _____ a nagan iti unos ti lima a tawen, agingga a nakaplastarak idia Hawaii [sic]” (I was using the name _____ for five years, until circumstances stabilized for me in Hawaii.)

Economic hardship and adaptive coping strategies consistently emerged across participants’ narratives. Participant D and Participant G vividly illustrated the financial sacrifices required to secure a slot:

D: “Inesponsoran ti ulitegko a _____ iti pinagpapanko idia Hawaii a kas contract laborer. Beinte singko ti nagastosko a napan ngem nabalar dayta a kuarta idin. Saan pulos pinabayadan ni ulitegko ta ammona a permi ti rigat ti panagbiagmi, aglalo ket narba ti balaymi gapu iti gubat. Naglugankami iti barko nga SS Maunawili ket nagrubbuat daytoy ti Salomague Port, Cabugao, Ilocos Sur idi Agosto 20, 1946. [sic]” (My uncle, _____, covered my expenses for traveling to Hawaii as a contract laborer. The initial cost was ₱25, which was already a significant amount at that time. He provided this support out of generosity, fully aware of the hardships we were facing, including the destruction of our home during the war. We departed aboard the SS Maunawili from Salomague Port in Cabugao, Ilocos Sur, on August 20, 1946.)

G: “Adda immay nagawis kadakami, ket idi napiliak kas maysa, ket inkalikaguman daydi tatangko ti immutang iti pagpletek kadagiti kabagianmi nga mapan Hawaii ken tapno makapirmaak ti kontrata nga agtrabaho idia Hawaii a kas maysa a plantation worker. Kalpasan a nakapirmaak iti kontrata, naguraykami ti kakaduami iti tallo nga aldaw idia Vigan. Kalpasanna ket adda libre a lugan nga inpaayda a mapan idia Salomague Port idia Cabugao. Nagadukami a naglalaban idi. Ngem ginnasatan a talaga. [sic]” (Some recruiters came to our area, and when I was selected, my father sought financial help by borrowing money from our relatives to cover my expenses for going to Hawaii as a plantation worker. After signing the contract, we stayed in Vigan for three days, after which we were given a free ferry ride to Salomague Port in Cabugao. It truly felt like a matter of luck and chance.)

When asked why he characterized it as a “battle of luck”, Participant G revealed additional details about his lived experiences in securing a slot for Hawaii:

“Inpetision daydi angkelko nga agnagan ti _____. Ket napankami kadaytay gayyemna a dati metlang nga nagtrabaho idia Hawaii iti Puerto ti Salomague (Cabugao, Ilocos Sur) tapno agreport kadagitay rekruters. Ngem idi makadanonkami idia, awan nadanunmi. Ngem saankami a naawanan ti namnama. Determinado ngamin ni angkel a tumulong a makapanak Hawaii ta saan met a napintas kasasaad ti kabibiagmi. Nagpatnagkami ngarud idia pantalan. Natnaturrogkami kadagiti sir-sirok ti narukbos a kayo ket naganuskami a naguray. Nagsubli dagitay rekruter kalpasan ti dua nga aldaw. Addada kakaduami pay a sabali a lallaki ngem kaaduanna ket saanda a nakaanus a naguray. [sic]” (My uncle, _____, petitioned for me to go abroad. We went to meet his comrade, who was working in Hawaii, at Salomague Port to report to the recruiters. When we arrived, the recruiters were not there, but we did not lose hope. My uncle was determined to help me reach Hawaii because he understood our family’s difficult economic situation. We stayed in the port area and spent the night there, sleeping under nearby trees while we waited. After two days, the recruiters returned. We were joined by other male aspirants, but many of them lacked the patience to continue waiting and eventually left.)

Participant B described the extreme sacrifices demanded by the process:

“Inkaradapmi ti nangipamusmusan ti inusarko a kuarta. Insalda ni tatangko toy balaymi sa naanakan daydi kuarta. Kaasi ti Apo, naiyaonmi met laeng idi nakaplastarak idiy Hawaii. Adu a sakripisio, aglalo idi mangrugikami nga agaplikar. Pagbasaen ken pagsaoen daka iti Ingles. Isu’t examinasionmi idi. [sic]” (We literally crawled to remedy the money that I used (for the application). My father mortgaged our house, and we paid interest on the amount that was loaned. By God’s grace, we were able to repay the money once I had already become stable in Hawaii. It involved many sacrifices, especially during the application process. We were required to read and speak in English, which served as our examination.)

Some *Sakadas* found solace in migrating alongside siblings or close kin. Participant H emphasized how shared migration eased emotional and economic burdens. Participant H said:

“Tallo kami nga taga-Davila a naala iti recruitment process ta in-isponsorannakami daydi inaunami a _____. Ken bassit kami a naala a taga-Pasquin kadaydi a batch. Naigabatanmi idi isu nga napipia laeng a maep-ep ti iliwmi, kumpara no maymaysaak koma a napan. Addada pay agkakasinsin a nagasat met a naala idi a taga-Bacarra. It kasdiay, makapagtittinnulongkami iti amin a rigat iti papananmi. [sic]” (There were three of us from Davila who were included in the recruitment process because we were sponsored by our eldest brother _____. Only a few from Pasquin were accepted in that batch. We were fortunate, and because of this, the homesickness was easier to bear than if I had gone alone. Some relatives from Bacarra were also fortunate enough to be accepted, and in that way, we were able to help one another through all the hardships of our journey.)

These illustrative responses and other accounts aligned with these premises; the shared themes related to postwar recruitment and preparation for Hawaii were synthesized and are presented below in Table 2.

Table 2. Central Themes of Participants’ Postwar Recruitment and Preparation for Hawaii.

Themes	Axiological Meaning
1. Family members and relatives extended economic and moral supports in sustaining their application and recruitment processes.	Emphasizes familial solidarity and collective responsibility as central Ilokano and Filipino values
2. Competition for slots for employment in Hawaii was very stiff for the <i>Sakadas</i> .	Reflects the value of perseverance and endurance amid structural scarcity
3. <i>Sakadas</i> struggled to pay their contract and travel expenses in boarding SS Maunawili to Hawaii.	Highlights sacrifice and economic resilience as moral imperatives
4. <i>Sakadas</i> had trouble in the procedures and processes of engaging, procuring, hiring and contracting before they boarded on SS Maunawili.	Reveals patience and compliance as adaptive survival values
5. <i>Sakadas</i> considers communicative competence (English language), health and grit as important factors in getting a slot for an employment contract in Hawaii.	Underscores self-discipline, preparedness, and physical fortitude
6. Some <i>Sakadas</i> resorted in alternative ways on getting a slot aboarding SS Maunawili, like identity switching, feigning personal circumstances (age) and intervention of persons close to the recruiters.	Illustrates pragmatic morality shaped by survival needs under inequality

The first theme reveals a strong consensus among participants regarding the indispensable role of family members and close relatives in sustaining their engagement, recruitment, and placement processes. Financial assistance, moral encouragement, and even direct intervention from kin served as the primary anchors that enabled *Sakadas* to navigate the complex and demanding recruitment system. This pattern underscores the axiological significance of familial solidarity and collective responsibility; values deeply embedded in Ilokano and broader Filipino culture. These findings strongly support Pingol’s (2002) assertion that the family remains the most vital support structure for Ilokano migrant workers, encompassing parents, siblings, and extended kin. The willingness of families to “stretch their means” in order to uplift a relative reflects a moral orientation that prioritizes collective survival over individual comfort, affirming the family as both an economic and ethical unit in times of crisis.

The second and third themes highlight the intense competition for limited employment slots and the substantial financial burden imposed on aspiring *Sakadas*. Expert 3 confirmed that recruitment was highly competitive and that the initial contract and travel

expenses amounted to ₱25 pesos—an amount equivalent to approximately ₱40,000 in present value. This sum represented only about 20 percent of the total cost, as the full \$100 transportation fee was deducted from workers' future wages, based on the 1964 exchange rate of \$1 to ₱1.30. As Buenaventura (1996) similarly observed, *Sakadas* recruited in 1946 were not granted free passage but were subjected to monthly salary deductions, despite eligibility for return passage upon completing three consecutive years of service. Axiologically, these conditions reflect the values of sacrifice, economic resilience, and perseverance, as *Sakadas* endured immediate deprivation in exchange for the possibility of long-term family upliftment.

Beyond economic constraints, participants also narrated considerable difficulties in the procedural aspects of recruitment, including documentation, screening, and contracting. Their accounts reveal experiences of discrimination, unequal access, and the necessity of enduring prolonged waiting periods, often described as a “battle of influences.” Compliance with requirements demanded exceptional patience, as aspirants navigated bureaucratic processes that were frequently opaque and exclusionary. Some *Sakadas* relied on the intervention of relatives or influential individuals to move the process forward. These experiences illuminate the axiological dimension of patience and adaptive compliance, values that emerged not from passivity but from strategic endurance within structurally constrained systems.

The fourth theme centers on the importance attributed by *Sakadas* to communicative competence, physical health, and personal grit in securing employment contracts. Although most participants had completed only elementary education, their ability to read, write, and speak English—then the medium of instruction—proved critical during interviews and examinations. This requirement aligns with the practical demands of plantation labor, which necessitated communication with supervisors and co-workers. Equally important were physical soundness and perseverance, given the labor-intensive nature of plantation work. The recruitment process itself tested applicants' endurance through lengthy interviews and waiting periods involving thousands of aspirants. These findings resonate with Alcantara's (1988) observation that Ilokano workers were favored for their patience, diligence, and gratitude—qualities that reflect the axiological values of self-discipline, preparedness, and fortitude.

Finally, some *Sakadas* acknowledged that alternative strategies—such as identity switching, age misrepresentation, or leveraging personal connections with recruiters—were employed by fellow aspirants to secure a slot aboard the SS Maunawili. While participants often chose to remain silent about these practices, citing empathy for shared struggles, such actions reveal a form of pragmatic morality shaped by inequality and survival imperatives. These practices corroborate the findings of De Los Santos (1996), as cited by Remollino (2009), that Filipinos faced systemic discrimination throughout recruitment and employment processes in Hawaii. Literature further confirms that priority was often given to applicants with relatives already employed in plantations (Alcantara, 1988), thereby reinforcing unequal access. Axiologically, these actions do not signify moral deficiency but rather reflect ethical decision-making under constrained choices, where survival and family welfare superseded formal adherence to procedural norms.

3.3 Mobilizing Labor Across the Pacific: The 1946 *Sakada* Voyage

The *Sakadas* who served as participants in this study were part of the 1946 transpacific labor movement—the final large-scale migration of Filipino plantation workers to Hawaii in the immediate post-World War II period. This migration was initiated to address the acute labor shortages that beset Hawaiian sugar and pineapple plantations following the war. During this period, plantation companies transported approximately six thousand Filipino men to the Islands through four organized voyages (Dela Cruz, 2020). These workers were conveyed aboard the SS Maunawili, a decommissioned military troopship repurposed to facilitate the mass transport of contract laborers.

As discussed in the literature review, Hawaii's post-war reconstruction efforts created an urgent demand for plantation labor, prompting renewed recruitment from the Philippines, as had been the case in earlier migration waves.

When asked to describe their experience of boarding and traveling aboard the SS Maunawili, all participants consistently characterized the voyage as “*natuok*” (inconvenient). Participant B provided a particularly vivid account.

“We belonged to the third batch scheduled to depart from Salomague Port on April 11, 1946, but our departure was delayed until April 17 due to a tsunami that struck Hawaii. At that time, we did not even know what a tsunami was (smiling). One of the main difficulties we faced during the voyage was coping with the intense summer heat while at sea. To cool off, I would bathe using water from the ship's drainage canal, while others bathed in seawater. We endured these conditions for more than two weeks, as the journey lasted a total of 17 days.”

When Participant B was asked to describe the physical structure of the SS Maunawili relative to their living conditions during the voyage, he explained in mixed English and Ilokano:

“It was a soldier's ship. *Nalawa met* (it was also spacious) but imagine a single voyage carrying about 1,500 people. The ship had three decks, and the heat from the sun was relentless. *Iti ngato a pasetna, adda linong iti kagudua a pasetna. Pasaray agummong ti tao iti bangir. Ngem agungetda ta agtingig ti barko piman. Ngem kadagiti dua a kadsaaranna, reprep, isu nga napudot. Nakatugaw ti tattao nga aggaabay a kasla naurnos a tumatayab [sic]*” (On the uppermost deck, only half of the area was covered, and passengers usually gathered in the shaded portion. However, we were often scolded because this caused the ship to become

unbalanced. In the lower decks, the space was extremely crowded, making it unbearably hot. Passengers were seated tightly side by side, as if packed together like birds.)

This distressing situation, as previously described, was corroborated by Participant C's claims and statements:

"Naglugan kami iti barko nga agnagan SS Maunawili, kaduak ti gayyemko a ni _____. Adu ti padak a nagkudaap gapu iti pudot iti panagbiyahe, aglalo kadagiti aggian iti akinngato nga paset ti barko, ata saan met nga nalinongan ti gudduana. Ngem inan-anusanmi. Ti pagsayaatanna, aggiinnawat ken agsisinnaranaykami amin. No adda makudaap, saranayen dagiti kakaduami. [sic]" (We boarded the ship named SS Maunawili, together with my friend, _____. Many of us fainted several times because of the extreme heat during the voyage, especially those assigned to the uppermost deck, which was only partially covered. But we endured it. The good thing was that we understood and helped one another. When someone fainted, our companions immediately came to help.)

Participant G further emphasized the physical strain of the journey:

"Adu dagiti nagsaksakit gapu iti pannakaikawada ti pudot, santo lumamiis iti rabii. No kasta met nga agdigos kami, danum ti baybay. Saanmin a pinampanunot ti alunapet ket angot ti ling-et ti maysa ken maysa. Awan met ketdi ti natay, ngem adu ti nagsakit iti dimmanonkami iti Hawaii, agraman tay kabsatko a ni _____. [sic]" (Many got sick because of the extreme heat, then the sudden cold at night. When we bathed, we used seawater. We no longer thought about the stickiness of our skin or the smell of sweat. No one died, but many got sick upon our arrival in Hawaii, including my brother, _____.)

These narratives collectively illustrate the limited level of physical comfort aboard the SS Maunawili. Nevertheless, patience and perseverance were consistently reflected in the participants' succeeding accounts. Participant D shared:

"Napigsa ti resistensia! Kaasi ti Apo, diak napadasan ti nagsakit bayat iti panaglayagmi. Dakami ti para bagkat idi no adda matalimudaw. Pasaray tumulongak nga agibunong ti makan. [sic]" (My body resistance is strong! By God's grace, I never experienced illness while we voyaged. We were the ones who carried those who fainted. Sometimes, I helped distribute food.)

Similarly, Participant B recounted:

"Bayat iti panaglayagmi, saanak pulos a nagsakit. Kararag kenni Apo Dios ti nagbalin a taklinko. Napigsa ti resistensia ta kabanbanuagak met idi. Adu ti nagsasakit. Addada pay ngamin nangikuyog ti familiada, ket addada ubbing nga agsasangit iti pudotna. Ngem nagan-anuskami". [sic] (During the voyage, I never fell ill. I believed that my prayers to God served as my protection, and my physical strength was high because I was still in my prime. Many others became sick, and some had brought their families with them; children cried due to the intense heat. Despite these hardships, we endured and persevered.)

Regarding food provisions, most participants agreed that while supplies were minimal, they were sufficient. They also noted that these provisions were part of the initial payments they made. Participant A explained:

"Saanda met nagliway a nangpakan kadakami, uray nanumo laeng. Ti nasken adda pamedped. Saankami a nagpilpili. [sic]" (They did not neglect giving us food, even if it was minimal. What mattered was that we had something to fill our stomachs. We were not choosy.)

Participant A further added that they were instructed to bring only essential personal belongings due to space limitations aboard the ship:

"Dagiti laeng importante ti intugotmi ta inbagada idi nga saan unay nga adu ti itugot ta limitado ti espasio ti barko. Dagiti laeng pagan-anay ken sangkabassit nga pagistimar iti bagi. [sic]" (We brought only what was important because we were told that the ship's space was limited, basic clothing and personal necessities.)

In coping with homesickness and boredom, participants consistently highlighted the companionship formed during the voyage as a cherished and enduring memory. Participant H shared:

"Uray rigat lang ti rigat, sinapulmi latta ti ragsak iti uneg ti barko a naglugananmi. Diak malipatan ti dua a nagbalin a nasinged kaniak – da _____ kenni _____. Aggiistoriakami kadagiti kabibiagmi iti kaaduan a tiempo, pasaray aglilinnaawkami. Adda met dadduma nga agay-ayamkami ti innipis. Saanmi inpalubos nga patayennakami ti iliw. [sic]" (Despite the many hardships we endured, we were still able to find moments of happiness aboard the ship we traveled on. I will never forget the two companions who became closest to me—_____ and _____. We often shared stories about our lives, exchanged jokes, and at times played cards together. Through these small acts of camaraderie, we did not allow homesickness to overcome us.)

A similarly optimistic and comforting response was provided by Participant G, with fond recollections of his comrades:

"Ay ket uray marigrigatankami idi, ikankantami iti ta adda gitarami, ken kumakanta dagiti dadduma a kakaduami a pangliwliwa iti amin. Iti unos ti panagbiagko, silalagipakto latta kada _____, _____, _____, _____, _____ kenni _____, Dua laengen ti nagbati a kadakuada. Naggapu kami iti sabalsabali nga ili ti Ilocos Norte ken Ilocos Sur, ngem kasla kami lang agkakabsat a namunganay kadagiti ibtormi iti barko nga SS Maunawili. Awan kalso nga oras gapu iti istoria, kankanta ken pasiw nga nagdadangyanami, agingga a nakadanonkami iti destinasionmi. Uray idin bumayagkami iti Hawaii, nagbalin a nasinged dagiti kaputotanmi. [sic]" (Although we endured many hardships at that time, we lifted our spirits by singing aloud. I brought my guitar, and others joined in, sharing songs to keep our morale high. Throughout my life, I will always remember _____, _____, _____, _____,

_____, and _____; only two of them are still living today. We came from different towns in Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur, yet we lived like brothers, bound together by the suffering we endured aboard the SS Maunawili. There were no dull moments, as we shared stories, songs, and playful banter throughout the journey until we reached our destination. Even after many years in Hawaii, our bond endured, and our succeeding generations remained close to one another.)

These responses demonstrate that *Sakadas* managed to endure physical and emotional difficulties through collaborative social interactions, a spirit of synergism, and gestural selflessness manifested through participation in activities designed to maintain engagement, alertness, and diversion. Consequently, the journey to Hawaii was not rendered tedious. Instead, it constructed their social support system through establishing friendships, social brotherhoods, and collegial relationships.

Regarding their expectations, all participants articulated anticipation that contractual stipulations, as signed, would be honored, particularly concerning wages and working conditions. To them, Hawaii represented the land that would elevate their social and economic status. Participant A articulated this collective sentiment:

“Aminkami, naglugan iti daydi a barko a mangnamnama iti tulag a nailanad iti kontrata. Kadaydi a tiempo a kalkapas ti nainlubongan a gubat, awan sabali a mangparang-ay ti kabibiagmi no di ti nasayaat a panagubrami idiyay Hawaii. [sic]” (All of us boarded that ship with the hope that the agreements written in our contracts would be fulfilled. After the war, we had no other way to improve our lives except through decent work in Hawaii.)

Overall, these accounts vividly depict the lived experiences of the *Sakadas* aboard the SS Maunawili and their expectations prior to plantation employment. Dela Cruz (2020) reported that the voyages typically lasted 15 to 17 days, depending on seaworthiness, after which *Sakadas* were distributed to various Hawaiian Islands for plantation work.

Table 3 presents the lived experiences of the *Sakadas* during their transpacific journey aboard the SS Maunawili, together with their expectations prior to their actual engagement in their respective plantation companies.

Table 3. Central Themes of *Sakadas*' Lived Experiences During their Transpacific Voyage aboard SS Maunawili and their Expectations before their Actual Work.

Themes	Axiological Meaning
1. <i>Sakadas</i> experienced journey inconveniences on the account of the ships overcrowding, extreme heat of the sun, and lack of some provisions (water, sanitation, etc.).	Reflects endurance and fortitude in confronting physically harsh and inhumane conditions.
2. Despite the shortcomings of their travel to Hawaii, they managed to cope with homesickness and boredom through camaraderie, socialization, and conversations with one another.	Highlights solidarity, sociability, and collective resilience as core survival values.
3. <i>Sakadas</i> experienced homesickness and emotional anxieties while aboard on SS Maunawili.	Emphasizes the value of family-centeredness and emotional attachment rooted in Ilokano culture.
4. <i>Sakadas</i> expected the full compliance of the stipulations of their contracts, particularly their wages, hours of work, conditions of work, and other provisions, as agreed upon.	Demonstrates a strong sense of fairness, trust, and hope for dignified labor.
5. Despite the inconveniences of their voyage, <i>Sakadas</i> initially developed their familiarity with each other, had an early derivative social support system, and considered such journey as a part of their indispensable experiences in going to Hawaii.	Reflects the value of mutual dependence and communal identity formation.
6. <i>Sakadas</i> learned emergent and participative leadership when some of their companions got sick and went unstable as to their conditions on the ship due to the conditions in their travel.	Reveals bayanihan, responsibility, and collective care for others.
7. The rest of the journey was a test of patience, fortitude, and health for the <i>Sakadas</i> .	Underscores resilience as a defining moral value shaping migrant identity.

All participants consistently acknowledged the multitude of inconveniences they endured during the voyage to Hawaii. These hardships are readily contextualized by the sheer number of passengers accommodated within the ship. The SS Maunawili itself was a repurposed military vessel, originally designed to transport troops rather than civilian laborers. As vividly narrated by several participants, the *Sakadas* were subjected to relentless heat for nearly two weeks while crossing the Pacific. Beyond the oppressive climate, the overcrowding of approximately 1,500 individuals within a three-deck decommissioned ship exacerbated physical discomfort. Freshwater had to be rationed, and seawater was commonly used for bathing and sanitation. These testimonies illustrate not only the material deprivation experienced during the voyage but also the *Sakadas*' remarkable capacity for endurance—an axiological expression of fortitude deeply embedded in Ilokano moral life (De Leon, 2019). This finding corroborates Buenaventura's (1996) assertion that the third wave of *Sakada* migration constituted a severe test of durability, patience, and physical stamina under post-war conditions.

Despite these adverse circumstances, participants' narratives revealed a prevailing sense of optimism and emotional buoyancy. *Sakadas* actively employed coping strategies to mitigate boredom, frustration, and anxiety, primarily through social interaction, humor, and shared storytelling. This inclination toward sociability and adaptability is a documented characteristic of Ilokano workers. Alcantara (1988), citing Judd (1948), observed that among early Asian migrant groups to Hawaii, Ilokans were regarded as the most adaptable and approachable—often appearing physically ill-prepared yet resolutely determined. Such descriptions resonate symbolically with the participants' accounts and reflect the axiological values of resilience, patience, and determination that sustained them during the voyage.

Nevertheless, beneath these gestures of optimism lay profound emotional struggles. All participants admitted experiencing homesickness and emotional anxiety while aboard the ship. Given their young ages—ranging from 19 to 26—many were navigating migration at a formative life stage. Several had recently married or were compelled to leave spouses, children, parents, and extended kin. Even among those who traveled with family members, emotional longing persisted due to the inherently close-knit structure of Ilokano families, as emphasized by Pingol (2002). In the immediate aftermath of World War II, familial bonds served as crucial sources of emotional and psychological strength, making separation especially painful. This theme foregrounds the axiological importance of family-centeredness in shaping *Sakada* consciousness and emotional experience.

Alongside emotional struggles, *Sakadas* also articulated clear expectations regarding the fulfillment of their employment contracts. While aboard the ship, participants expressed collective hope that plantation companies would honor the agreed stipulations, including wages ranging from one to three dollars (\$1–\$3) per day, working hours of 10 to 12 hours, weekend rest days, and the provision of housing, meals, tools, and equipment over a three-year employment period. These expectations reflect an axiological commitment to fairness and dignified labor, rooted in trust that migration would yield tangible improvements in their lives (De Leon, 2019).

Furthermore, the voyage aboard the SS Maunawili facilitated the early formation of social bonds that evolved into derivative support systems. Participants realized that beyond their families, fellow *Sakadas* could serve as vital sources of strength and companionship throughout their employment journey. This realization emerged during the voyage itself, transforming the ship into a space of communal identity formation. For many, friendships forged aboard the SS Maunawili endured across generations, underscoring the long-term significance of these early social ties. Such dynamics exemplify the positive social attitudes of Ilokano workers described by Judd (1948), as cited by Alcantara (1988).

The voyage also revealed *Sakadas*' capacity for emergent and participative leadership. Participants recounted instances where companions fainted, became ill, or experienced physical instability, prompting collective responses of care and assistance. These acts of mutual aid—often described as expressions of *bayanihan*—demonstrate the pooling of effort and shared responsibility to ensure collective survival. Axiologically, these behaviors reflect moral worthiness, compassion, and readiness to endure extreme labor conditions, foreshadowing the physically demanding plantation work awaiting them in Hawaii.

Taken as a whole, the *Sakadas*' lived experiences aboard the SS Maunawili serve as a figurative prelude to their three-year labor sojourn in Hawaii. The voyage itself constituted an arduous rite of passage—a profound test of patience, fortitude, health, and moral resolve. After approximately two weeks at sea, the *Sakadas* reached their respective destinations, where they were received by sugar and pineapple companies, carrying with them not only physical fatigue but also deeply internalized values that would shape their migrant lives (De Leon, 2019).

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the lived experiences of mid-1940s Ilokano *Sakadas* from their post-war socioeconomic conditions in Ilocos, through recruitment and preparation, to their transpacific voyage aboard the SS Maunawili in 1946. The findings reveal that *Sakada* migration to Hawaii was neither an impulsive nor purely economic decision, but a deeply moral and family-centered response to extreme structural constraints brought about by war, poverty, and the absence of viable local livelihoods.

Prior to migration, participants consistently described post-war Ilocos as a space of deprivation, insecurity, and limited opportunity. Migration emerged as a survival strategy rooted in familial obligation rather than individual ambition. *Sakadas* framed their decisions within the moral imperative to support parents, siblings, spouses, and children, reflecting the primacy of

family-centeredness, resilience, and perseverance as guiding values. These conditions strongly affirm migration theories emphasizing “push factors” associated with the area of origin, while simultaneously revealing the axiological dimensions of choice-making under hardship.

The recruitment and preparation phase further demonstrated that access to migration was mediated by family support, social networks, and economic sacrifice. Competition for limited slots, financial burdens, bureaucratic challenges, and unequal access compelled *Sakadas* to rely on kinship solidarity and, in some cases, pragmatic coping strategies such as identity substitution. Rather than indicating moral deficiency, these practices reflected adaptive ethics shaped by survival needs and structural inequality. Values of patience, endurance, sacrifice, and collective responsibility emerged as central to navigating this phase.

The transpacific voyage aboard the SS Maunawili constituted a critical rite of passage. Participants endured overcrowding, extreme heat, limited provisions, illness, and emotional strain. Despite these hardships, they coped through camaraderie, mutual aid, humor, and shared faith, leading to the early formation of social support systems and communal identity. Homesickness and anxiety coexisted with hope and trust that contractual promises would be honored. The voyage revealed emergent leadership, *bayanihan*, and collective care—values that would later sustain *Sakadas* in plantation life.

Taken together, the major findings demonstrate that *Sakada* migration was shaped by the interplay of structural forces and deeply held moral values. Poverty, war, and labor scarcity provided the context, but it was resilience, familial responsibility, sacrifice, solidarity, and hope for dignified labor that transformed hardship into purposeful action. The 1946 *Sakada* voyage thus stands not only as a historical labor movement but as a moral journey that forged Ilokano migrant identity and laid the foundations of enduring Filipino communities in Hawaii.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no competing interests.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

DJLM conceptualized and designed the study, conducted the interviews, performed the data analysis, drafted the study protocol, and wrote the initial manuscript. He also performed data analysis and managed the literature searches. The author reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

CONSENT

The author declare that written informed consent was obtained from all participants. An orientation was conducted prior to data collection to inform them of their rights as participants. Due to their advanced age, relatives were also involved and provided assistance. Copies of the written consent forms are available for review by the Editorial Office, Chief Editor, or members of the Editorial Board of this journal.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study adhered to recognized ethical standards for qualitative research and strictly followed the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) protocol. Due to the advanced age of the *Sakada* participants, their close relatives were informed about the study and invited to be present during each interview to ensure participants' comfort, safety, and understanding. To reduce physical and emotional strain, interviews were limited to 30–45 minutes and scheduled at times most convenient for the participants, following a pre-orientation on the interview process and questions.

Participants were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any penalty or consequence. They were informed that all data would be used exclusively for academic purposes and not for commercial or other benefit claims. Confidentiality was maintained by omitting personal identifiers in all reports and publications, and participants were given sufficient time to respond, with support from family members as needed.

Disclaimer (Artificial Intelligence)

The author(s) declare that generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies were utilized during the writing and editing of this manuscript. Specifically, ChatGPT (Version: GPT-4; Model: OpenAI GPT-4) was used to review, refine, and improve the

language, coherence, and clarity of the text without altering the data, results, or interpretations of the study. In addition, the AI tool assisted in verifying the accuracy of statistical computations to support the reliability of the findings.

All prompts provided to the AI were limited to language enhancement and technical clarification, ensuring that intellectual ownership, methodological decisions, and analytical interpretations remained the sole responsibility of the author(s). The use of AI was conducted in accordance with ethical research and publication standards, and full transparency regarding AI assistance is hereby declared.

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DEFINITIONS

For clarity and precision, key terms used in this study were defined both theoretically and operationally:

Axiological meanings. These refer to the philosophical values or virtues derived from the phenomenological themes representing the lived experiences of the participants.

Experiences. This pertains to personally undergoing or encountering events. In this study, it specifically refers to the significant lived experiences of Mid-1940s Ilokano Sakadas before and during their work in various Hawaiian plantations.

Mid-1940s Ilokano Sakadas. This denotes the Ilokano migrant workers who were employed in Hawaii's plantations between 1940 and 1946.

Perception. This refers to the awareness, comprehension, or understanding of a phenomenon. In this study, it pertains to the way Mid-1940s Ilokano Sakadas perceived and interpreted their lived experiences in Hawaiian plantations.

Phenomenological themes. These are the main ideas or general insights drawn from participants' experiences that the researcher identifies as significant. In this study, they refer to the overarching patterns or concepts emerging from the pre- and post-migration experiences of the Mid-1940s Sakadas in Hawaii's sugarcane plantations.

Sakadas. This term refers to low-paid Filipino migrant laborers—predominantly Ilokanos—recruited to work in Hawaii's sugarcane and pineapple plantations through the Hawaiian Sugar Plantation Association (HSPA) and related companies. The term originates from the Ilokano phrase “sakasakada amin,” meaning “those who work barefooted” (De Leon, 2011). In this study, it specifically refers to the group of Ilokano workers employed under plantation labor contracts in Hawaii during the mid-20th century.