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EDITOR'S COLUMN

Transcending Boundaries: A Global Academic Discourse on Culture, Faith, and Ethics

In the pursuit of World-Class University (WCU) status, the current global challenge is intricately tied to upholding stringent academic standards and fostering a robust research profile. Esteemed ranking systems, such as those curated by Shanghai Jiao Tong University, TIMES Higher Education, and the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan, consistently underscore the indispensability of impactful research output in achieving esteemed WCU status.

However, the Philippines currently faces challenges on multiple fronts, hindering its standing in the global university rankings. The Times-QS ranking for 2023 positions the Philippines as a middle power in Asia, ranking 16th out of 26 countries and territories in overall comprehensive power.

The challenges include measly support for education and research from the state, a lack of/minimal budget for research among HEIs, and no/insignificant incentives for research. The resulting dismal research output from graduate schools further exacerbates the problem. The systemic nature of these challenges underscores the need for multifaceted solutions.

To address this, it is imperative to scrutinize the challenges to research in Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and implement comprehensive interventions. The implementation of CHED Memorandum Order Number 15, Series of 2019, marks a transformative milestone. This mandate compelling graduate students to publish or substantiate acceptance of their research studies in reputable journals signifies a commendable leap towards aligning the Philippine higher education system with stringent international standards.

National interventions, such as the requirements outlined in the CHED Memorandum Orders of 2012 and 2019, establish criteria for research engagement in universities seeking autonomous status. These requirements emphasize the percentage of full-time faculty engaged in scholarly works, patents or publications, and the importance of publications in indexed journals or reputable presses. These national interventions are crucial steps towards fostering a culture of research.

Institutional interventions play a pivotal role in addressing the challenges to research. Ongoing capacitation for faculty, faculty engagement in research through grants, and long-term incentives for research and publication are essential components of institutional support. Graduate school innovations, such as refocusing towards more research and publications and the incorporation of mentoring and research assistantship, contribute significantly to enhancing research capacities.

In the quest to enhance research capabilities and secure a commendable position in global university rankings, the Philippines has embarked on a comprehensive approach, involving capability-building, program innovations, policy development, and financial investments. This focused effort underscores the necessity of elevating research quality in Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as a crucial component of internationalizing standards. Responding to this imperative, *Religion and Social Communication* presents a special issue featuring scholarly articles mostly centered on the Philippines context, addressing challenges and contributing diverse insights. This collection aims to foster a culture of research, propelling Philippine HEIs onto the global academic stage. Through these contributions, the special issue serves as a catalyst for transformative action, emphasizing the urgency of advancing research endeavors in the nation.

In Joefrey M. Almazan's exploration, titled "*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong:* An Inculturation of the Eucharist in Ilocano," the Ilocano celebration of the Eucharist is depicted as a distinctive and deeply ingrained cultural phenomenon. This work delves into the intricate integration of Ilocano cultural elements into the sacred act of the Eucharist, presenting it not as a mere replication of universal

Christian traditions but as a dynamic fusion of faith and culture. Almazan emphasizes the necessity of preserving and celebrating cultural diversity within religious rituals, challenging the notion that such distinctiveness deviates from religious norms. By revealing the layers of meaning in Ilocano religious practices, the article advocates for a broader appreciation of the interplay between faith and cultural nuances in the Eucharistic celebration, recognizing diversity as a source of spiritual richness within the Ilocano community.

Fred F. Antonio, Jr.'s investigation, titled "The Significance of Food in the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14 and the *Kanyaw*," establishes connections between the Biblical tradition and the Cordillera tradition by comparing the Parable of the Wedding Feast in the Gospel of Matthew with the *Kanyaw* ceremony. This study illuminates the deep cultural meanings inherent in both narratives, providing insight into the parallels between Biblical and Indigenous traditions. The article contributes to a more profound understanding of religious texts by bridging the gap between these narratives and highlighting the cultural contexts that influence their interpretations.

Marisa Basiwal-Ao-wat and Carmelita Tovera-Ayang-ang's work, titled "Roles of Indigenous Peoples Leaders in the Indigenization of Education," is particularly relevant within the context of the Indigenous Educational System in the Cordillera region. This research addresses a crucial dimension of education – the indigenization process – which involves incorporating Indigenous knowledge, values, and cultural perspectives into the educational system. By specifically emphasizing the roles of Indigenous leaders in this process, the article advocates for a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to education tailored to the unique needs of the Cordillera's Indigenous communities. This perspective contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse on decolonizing education, promoting a shift away from Eurocentric models towards educational frameworks that honor and integrate the rich cultural heritage of the Cordillera's Indigenous Peoples. The work serves as a valuable resource for educators and policymakers seeking to foster an educational environment that respects and reflects the diverse cultural identities within the Cordillera region.

George Canilao Tumbali's study, "The Impact of the Cityhood of Tabuk on Human Development," is particularly relevant to the people of Tabuk in Kalinga, Philippines, as they seek a progressive living environment. Examining the repercussions of Tabuk attaining cityhood status, the research offers a localized perspective on broader human development challenges. Tumbali's comprehensive analysis contributes valuable insights to the discourse on urbanization and its effects on well-being. For Tabuk residents, this research guides them in navigating the changes brought by urbanization, facilitating assessments of the impact on social, economic, and environmental aspects. As the community strives for progress, Tumbali's work aids informed decision-making and the formulation of policies tailored to address specific needs and aspirations, advancing human development in Tabuk.

Jeramie N. Molino's study, "Ecofeminist Perspectives and Familial Dynamics: Exploring Women's Roles in Environmental Sustainability and the Filipino Concept of *'Ate,'*" is crucial for understanding the intricate connections between ecofeminism, familial dynamics, and environmental sustainability in the Philippines. By delving into the unique cultural significance of the Filipino term *"Ate"* (elder sister), Molino's research reveals how Filipino women, embodying nurturing qualities associated with elder sisters, play vital roles in fostering environmental consciousness and sustainability. This work significantly contributes to the broader discourse on ecological care in the Philippines by intertwining ecofeminist perspectives, familial dynamics, and the cultural nuances shaping women's impactful contributions to environmental conservation efforts.

"Taflurut Nit: Towards an Inculturated Theology of the Communion of Saints for Kei People in Eastern Indonesia," Longginus Farneubun and Rico Casta Jacoba delve into the religious beliefs of the Kei people in Eastern Indonesia. Their article provides insights into the inculturated theology of the Communion of Saints, offering a bridge between theology and local cultural practices. This study is a valuable addition to the growing body of literature on the intersection of faith and culture.

Dennis M. Placido's work, titled "Jumpstarting Ethno-philosophy in Context: Ethics Discourse on *Gawis ya Ngawi,"* serves as a gateway into the realm of ethno-philosophy, specifically within the cultural context of the Indigenous People of the Cordillera, particularly among the Kankanaey community in the Philippines. Placido's research delves into the ethical discourse surrounding *Gawis ya Ngawi,* a concept deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of the Kankanaey people. The Kankanaey people are an Indigenous people of the Northern Philippines. They are part of the collective group of indigenous people known as the Igorot people. By engaging with this ethical discourse, the article prompts a reevaluation of philosophical perspectives, urging us to consider and appreciate the diverse worldviews embedded in the indigenous traditions of the Cordillera. Placido's work encourages a deeper understanding of the ethical frameworks within the Kankanaey culture, fostering a respectful exploration of their unique philosophy and contributing to the broader discourse on ethno-philosophy.

In the study done by Ronald O. Ocampo and Rema Bascos-Ocampo they presented how Marag Valley in Apayao, Philippines residents destigmatized the aftermath of the Communist Party of the Philippines – New People's Army (CPP-NPA) occupation. Through qualitative research focusing on narratives from local leaders, the study identifies eight sub-themes, including the effectiveness of government peace agreements, inter-agency collaboration, positive community image creation, education's importance, using Marag Valley as a tourist destination, incorporating ethical values, and leveraging social media. The findings highlight the interconnectedness of governmental initiatives, community values, education, and media in reshaping the narrative around the war's aftermath in Marag Valley, offering valuable insights for policymakers, community leaders, and researchers interested in post-conflict recovery and community resilience.

In the context of a study in Delhi on the ethical use of social media by religious organizations, Sudeep Paul's "Ethical Considerations in Social Media Utilization by Religious Organiza-tions" presents a globally relevant discourse. As technology and faith intersect in today's landscape, the ethical dimensions of online

engagement are crucial. Paul's work challenges researchers and readers to consider these issues not only in the local context of Delhi but on a global scale. In our interconnected world, where social media impacts transcends boundaries, there is a pressing need for ethical considerations in the digital realm. This article compellingly advocates for a global perspective, emphasizing collaborative efforts to address ethical challenges at both local and global levels where technology and faith intersect.

In our quest for knowledge, let us answer the summons to surpass borders, whether they be local or global, in our research pursuits. The showcased articles span a spectrum of topics, from investigating indigenous celebrations in the Philippines to examining the inculturated theology of the Kei people in Eastern Indonesia and exploring the ethical use of social media in the National Capital Region, Delhi, India. Together, they emphasize the wealth that arises when a myriad of perspectives come together.

The imperative to challenge ourselves as readers and researchers is clear – to break free from intellectual silos and engage in collaborative efforts that bridge cultural divides. As we delve into the intricate tapestry of human experiences across different regions, let these articles serve as a testament to the transformative power of collaboration, fostering a global dialogue that not only enriches our collective understanding but also propels us towards a more interconnected and harmonious world. In an era where information knows no bounds, the responsibility to explore, learn, and collaborate on a global scale becomes not just an academic pursuit but a shared commitment to the advancement of knowledge and the promotion of unity amid diversity.

Rico Casta Jacoba
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Guest Editor

Naindayawan-A-Rambak-Ti-Gimong:
An Inculturation of the Eucharist in Ilocano

Joefrey M. Almazan[1]

ABSTRACT

This study aims to elevate the discourse on the imperative of Liturgical Inculturation and propose general suggestions on how to shape a more relevant and meaningful Ilocano celebration of the Eucharist. It emphasizes Vatican II's liturgical reform while maintaining fidelity to the nature of the culture – the Ilocano culture. The study was conducted with the parishioners of Our Lady of Fatima (OLF) in Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya, shedding light on the inquiry: "Is the liturgical rite prescribed by the Catholic Church still meaningful and relevant among Ilocanos at present, particularly the parishioners of OLF?"

The results of the study revealed that the Eucharist holds an ambivalent significance for many Ilocanos, particularly the parishioners of OLF. Undoubtedly, Ilocanos regard the Eucharist as the center – the source and summit – of their Christian life. However, the Ilocano Catholics of OLF lack a proper understanding of how the Eucharist operates or

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functions in their lives. Furthermore, many Ilocanos display ignorance or a lack of proper understanding about the Eucharist. Additionally, many Ilocano Catholics tend to separate the Eucharist from their daily lives. Given these alarming situations, liturgical inculturation becomes relevant at this juncture. The full, conscious, active, and fruitful participation of Ilocanos in the Eucharist can be achieved through a mutual integration of the rite prescribed by the Church and their native culture. This approach respects the process of integration, allowing both the Eucharist and Ilocano culture to evolve through mutual insertion and absorption while preserving their identities. Thus, the Eucharist, ritually expressed in a Roman form, is assimilated and reformulated in a language and form that Ilocanos can understand and actively participate in. It is here that genuine integration takes place.

Keywords: *inculturation, contextualization, dynamic equivalence, worship, liturgy, Ilocanos, Catholic liturgy*

1. Introduction

The sixteenth century was a time of tremendous reform. Martin Luther criticized the Church's use of indulgences, the exaggerated cult of saints, and a liturgical practice that had become pompous and removed from the people. His treatises exposed three aspects of the Church's slavery: the denial of the chalice of the laity, the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the doctrine of the sacrificial character of the Mass. As Power explained, during the Middle Ages, theological reflections on the Eucharist did not increase people's participation. People were still reluctant to receive communion, and Mass gradually became a celebration dominated by the priest. Private Masses abounded, celebrated for intentions paid for by the people, and it was common to find several Masses going on at the same time at different altars in one church. This was the situation that greeted Martin Luther.

He saw the way Mass was celebrated as superstition and attacked the practice of Mass stipends and private Masses (Power 1987).

Moreover, Luther called for a vernacular liturgy and emphasized the priesthood of the baptized, hence giving rise to the prominence of public theology and worship. The absence of one of the pillars – ritual and action (experience and context) – had caused serious problems in Catholics' understanding and experience of the Eucharist. In fact, the world now is declaring the "liturgical disinterestedness" (Power 1987). This "liturgical phenomenon" was brought by liturgical estrangement/alienation, elitism/exclusivity, and idealism.

The Second Vatican Council called the Eucharist as the "true center of the Sacred Liturgy and indeed of the whole Christian life" (Flannery 1975). Indeed, it is a beautiful statement but has many challenges. It can be justified theologically, but the facts of the matter are quite otherwise. Most of the Christian world – and the Catholic world as well – does not internally display the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life. Christians do not celebrate the Eucharist regularly and do not see it as providing much direction for understanding their lives. Some Church leaders indict those who do not celebrate regularly as having little fervor. More likely, they simply demonstrate that the celebration provides no essential link between Liturgy and their lives. Their faith and belief in Christ is such that the Eucharistic celebration plays but a minor role (Bernier 1993). It should be noted that on another level, official Church policy itself does not give primary emphasis to making the Eucharist accessible. More importance is placed on maintaining an elite, all-male priesthood than on ordaining a sufficient number of people to remain a Eucharistic Church.

Whatever their agenda for the Eucharistic sacrifice, Ilocano Catholics still highly regard the Eucharist – a crest and crowning glory of their faith. Churches are still crowded on Sundays and holy days of obligations, as well as on some days of Lent, particularly during Holy Week. However, despite the solemn statements about the Eucharist, this has not been demonstrated in the life and practice of Filipino Christian Catholics. Looking at the life of the Catholics, even those

who regularly attend the weekly Mass lack a proper understanding of the Eucharist. Some participate only as spectators, merely watching the priest, commentators, and readers doing their own thing. Others are solitary worshippers, unmindful of anything besides their private practice of devotion. Catholics are often quite vague or confused about the Mass. The Eucharist itself became another devotion.

With this pressing problem, the researcher wishes to address the primary question: *Is the Liturgical rite of the Eucharist prescribed by the Catholic Church still meaningful and relevant among Ilocanos*? This research highlights the possibility of realizing the Second Vatican Council's agenda of liturgical reform yet maintaining fidelity to a native culture – the Ilocano. The historical hermeneutical method is a basic tool to arrive at the findings and desired conclusions. This method is based on descriptive and expository analysis of data, which is suitable to rediscover Vatican II's liturgical agenda and can be a promising and powerful approach as we try to reflect on how Ilocano people can have a full, conscious, active, and fruitful participation in the Eucharist.

2. Findings and Discussion

2.1. The Ilocanos and the Eucharist

This section wishes to pay attention to the Ilocanos' understanding and practice of the Eucharist – What is the Eucharist for the Ilocanos? This is vital for the realization of the objectives of this study – to reappropriate the Eucharist in the life of the Ilocanos at the present.

Ilocano Christianity, like any other lowland Filipino Christianity has been influenced greatly by the friar colonizers. Agoncillo (1990) testifies:

> The friars control all the fundamental forces of society in the Philippines. They control the educational system, for they own the University of Sto. Tomas, and are the local inspectors of every primary school. They control the minds

of the people because in a dominantly catholic country, the parish sectors can utilize the pulpit and confessionals to publicly or secretly influence the people.

This situation in the Philippines during the Spanish regime is called *la soberania monacal* (monastic supremacy) or *freilocracia* (friarocracy) because the Spanish friars or monastic orders ruled supreme. Filipino Christianity received its doctrines, teachings, and even beliefs from these colonizers. As the friar colonizers implanted and embarked the seed of Christianity in the Filipinos' mind with their guarantee of holiness, Filipinos also experienced a growing cultural identity crisis. Filipinos were asked to embrace a foreign culture and turn away from their native culture. This is called the Westernization of the Filipinos. As a result, this Westernization of the Filipinos had also influenced the Filipinos' "know-what" and "know-how" of the Eucharist.

To support these claims as a case in point, the tables below will show a better view of the Ilocano understanding of the Eucharist, especially the parishioners of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya.[2]

Table 1: Frequency Distribution Regarding the Meaning of the Eucharist/Mass Among the Ilocano Catholics in Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya.

What is for you the Eucharist/Mass?	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
a. It is a meal in memory of Christ's passion, death and resurrection.	93	84.54%	3.5

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[2] Details of this discussion particularly the empirical data were taken from the results of floating questionnaires from the community of the researcher – Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya. It was administered among 50 parishioners of our Lady of Fatima Parish, Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya and 150 third- and fourth-year high school students of our Lady of Fatima High School last December of 2019. The researcher personally administered the data gathering and results were interpreted by a statistician from Saint Louis University.

b. It is an opportunity to celebrate as a family.	79	71.81%	6
c. It is a great moment to ask God forgiveness and blessings.	97	88.18%	1
d. It is a great sacrifice of thanksgiving.	95	86.36%	2
e. It is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet prepared by Christ to those who love Him.	90	81.82%	5
f. It is the central celebration of the Church meant to build the Body of Christ.	93	84.54%	3.5

The Holy Mass is treated among the Ilocanos of Villaverde as the most popular and significant celebration of their faith. The majority of them treat the Eucharist as the primary source of strength and energy to face the daily challenges. Given their poverty and struggles as people, the masses become their stronghold and inspiration. Indeed, it is the summit and source of their Christian life. Further, the Eucharist becomes an opportunity to be with God. Since most of the Ilocanos in Villaverde are untiring field/farm workers, they see the celebration of the Eucharist as an occasion to find rest in the source of their strength – God, whereby being with God becomes a relief with them in their day-to-day routine. Hence, without this occasion, many of them feel emptiness in life. For a better understanding of the importance of the Eucharist to the Ilocanos, see Table 2 below:

Table 2. Frequency Distribution Regarding the Importance of the Eucharist/Mass in the Life of the Respondents in Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya as a Student and a Catholic

What is the importance of the Eucharist to your life as a student and a Catholic?	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
a. I feel empty if I did not celebrate the Eucharist.	88	80.0 %	3
b. It is my primary source of strength and energy to face the daily challenges in life.	102	92.73%	1

c. My week will not be complete if I miss participating in at least one celebration.	75	68.18%	5
d. Through the Mass, I am receiving the favors I am asking from God.	87	79.09%	4
e. It provides me an opportunity to enter in a communion with God.	94	85.45%	2

Although there are many beautiful and sweet words that the Ilocano Catholics in Villaverde claim about the Eucharist, some alarming realities that affect their full and active participation in the Eucharist must also be considered. In the table below, an intriguing revelation was displayed. While it is true that they consider the Eucharist as the source of their Christian life, they do not know the primary factors affecting their significant experience with the Eucharist. While a significant number of people claim that participating in the celebration is meaningful either because it is done in their native dialect, they are involved in the event, or they find inspiration in the priest's homily, the majority simply respond with "No comment." Analyzing this powerful statement, this can mean, "I do not know."

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of the Significant Experiences by the Respondents with the Ilocano Eucharist.

What are some of the significant experiences?	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1. Clear understanding and active participation of the celebration because it is done in our native dialect or language.	23	20.91%	2
2. Participation to the celebration through involvement in Church's ministry.	19	17.27%	3

3. When the priest has a good homily.	17	15.45%	4
4. It helps me to become better.	12	10.91%	5
5. Unity of the Christians.	11	10.00%	6
6. Fidelity and sincerity as a Christian is manifested.	2	1.82 %	7
7. No comment	26	23.64%	1
T O T A L	110	100%	

These prevalent problems in the Ilocano understanding of the Eucharist can be possible for the following reasons: First, until this time, many Ilocanos display ignorance or lack of proper understanding about the Eucharist. On one hand, this may be due to the disinterestedness of many of the youth in their native or local dialect. Many opt to give importance to the medium of instruction (Tagalog and English). Even in Ilocano text communication, Tagalog is always the medium. That's why many would complain that they cannot understand Ilocano; thus, it affects their participation. And since the Mass is often crowded due to the lack of priests, church workers,[3] and facilities, the crowd will eventually not participate in the celebration. Thus, many become spectators or merely watch the priest, commentators, and readers doing their thing. Others are solitary worshippers, unaware of anything besides their own private devotions (saying the novena and praying the rosary while the Mass is going on).

On the other hand, the practice of reductionism[4] can also be a reason for this lack of proper understanding. For instance, in the Eucharist, many Ilocano churchgoers think that God, in Christ, is encountered only during the consecration. This is why many Ilocanos find it acceptable to arrive late as long as they can participate in the

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[3] In my local community alone, Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya, there are approximately close to 10,000 Catholics who are being catered by one priest and few volunteers.

[4] *Reductionism* is the tendency to reduce ideas into things that can represent them, often in a limited way. In the Eucharist, it is a tendency to give importance to one part or symbol whereby it becomes the totality of the Eucharist.

consecration. Furthermore, they feel comfortable leaving the church early, specifically after the communion. In that manner, God among the Ilocanos is met through an isolated element – the host. However, one must remember that the test of the fruitfulness of the Eucharistic celebration lies in what happens after the celebration. Bishop Bacani insisted, "Do the people who have acted as Church during the celebration still act as one Church outside the church building? The Second Vatican Council insists that the Eucharistic celebration to be full and sincere ought to lead, on the one hand, to the various works of charity and mutual help and, on the other hand, to missionary activity and various forms of Christian witness" (Bacani 1987). The table below gives insight into these problems:

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of the Problems/Difficulties Encountered in Understanding & Celebration of the Ilocano Eucharist.

Problems/Difficulties Encountered in understanding and celebrating the Ilocano Eucharist?	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1. Deep Ilocano words.	32	29.09%	1
2. Poor participation and concentration because I can hardly understand.	30	27.27%	2
3. Our Church cannot accommodate all parishioners.	25	22.73%	3
4. Poor understanding of the words because the priest is a foreigner.	18	16.36%	4
5. Ilocano and English are used at the same time leading to confusion of people.	10	9.09%	5
6. Ilocano Mass is not usually conducted.	4	3.64%	6
7. Boredom.	1	0.91%	7

Second, many Ilocano Catholic Christians still lack a sufficient understanding of how the Eucharist operates. Some attend merely out of a sense of obligation to avoid mortal sin or to comply with parental wishes. Others attend out of habit, social conformity, to be with their circle of friends, or even to showcase their new clothes. Many Ilocanos, hence, perceive the Eucharist as a dispenser of divine goods or products that can be delivered as soon as one requests it. Tad Guzie

claims that the sacraments (inclusive of the Eucharist) are rhythms that make life human (Wostyn 2004). Guzie proposes that it is not enough to go about our daily and routine celebrations. If one desires to be human, he/she must reflect on those actions and celebrations. Bishop Teodoro Bacani claims, "When we strive to make the Eucharist the summit of our Christian life, we will experience it as the source of that life. When we open our lives generously to the Lord in self-giving, the incomparable grace of self-giving will fill us" (Bacani 1987).

Third, just like many Filipino Catholics, Ilocano Catholics separate the Mass from their daily lives. This is the most serious Eucharist problem that Ilocanos should consider. There is always a gap between the faith we profess in the celebration and the life we proclaim outside the celebration. Many Filipinos (including the Ilocanos), hence, see the Eucharist as a celebration without or with little impact on their daily moral activities, especially any form of social action for poor people with low incomes (ECCCE 365). The Eucharist is a celebration of life.

As such, it is not to be detached from life, especially from the life of the people – the Church. Bishop Bacani beautifully remarks:

> And if indeed the Eucharist is seen as divorced and isolated from the rest of our week and our everyday lives, it is impossible to experience it as the apex of our Christian lives. However, if it is regarded as being all of one piece with the rest of our lives – our joys, sufferings, toil and recreation, successes and failures, etc. – and as an expression of our longing to meet the Lord and to offer Him our whole lives, then despite its simplicity and ordinariness it can be perceived meaningfully as the summit of our lives as Christians. (Bacani 1987)

2.2. Ilocano Inculturation of the Eucharist

With these alarming situations about the Ilocano Eucharist, an attempt must be made to translate the demand of incarnating the Church's worship in Ilocano. This is so to allow the Eucharist to be transparent to the worshipping community. It aims to answer the need among Ilocanos not only for cultural identity but also for the

promotion of traditional religious values that have kindled the faith of the Ilocanos. It tries to capture the message of the Eucharistic celebration in the ritual and language of the native people – the Ilocanos.

Inculturation during the last few years has gained remarkable popularity. It has become a byword in Theology, Missiology, Christology, and Liturgical Studies (Antonio 1995, 10). The importance of this paradigm is that it brings integration between the two poles of theology: the Judaeo-Christian tradition and human cultural experiences. One cannot do Theology with just one pole without considering the other (De Mesa 1987). Resultantly, gospel message become meaningful, and at the same time, they challenge and affirm a certain cultural experience. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, in its fidelity to the renewal process of the Second Vatican Council, conceived that the heart of Liturgical Renewal is the restoration of people's appreciation of the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life.

The Fourth National Eucharistic Congress in 1987 urged the faithful to return the Eucharist to its rightful place – "at the center of our private, ecclesial and societal lives and not at its fringes, where it is considered as a mere personal devotion or obligation or merely as means of gaining favor" (ECCCE 365). In doing so, the Church cannot ignore the cultural traditions of the people who constitute it. It has to respect the indigenous cultures of people lest they be alienated from it. For the Church, as the social prolongation of Christ in space and time, it has to bind itself to the social and cultural conditions of the people, Antonio stresses. This means that the local Church has to transform her language, structures and rituals according to the ways of the people who make it up as a contribution to the wider ecclesial communion. For faith becomes universal only when it is assimilated and expressed in the particular symbols, thought and language patterns of the peoples (Chupungco 1976).

2.2.1. The Imperatives of Culture in Inculturation

In the task of liturgical inculturation of the Eucharist, the principle that has been firmly established is the necessity of taking

seriously the culture of every local Church. Among others, it is important to consider the issues of worldview, cultural identity (values and language) and the struggle for communal liberation. Indeed, these dimensions constitute the most essential aspects of being a person or community.

Earlier, we took note that Ilocanos, even before the coming of Christianity, had been enjoying already a so-called Ilocano religiosity. Pre-colonial Ilocanos had already believed in a Supreme Being. This Supreme Being, whom they call *Kabunian* is seen as the creator of the universe. Though the name given to Him remains controversial, to an Ilocano mind, this Supreme Being is all-wise and reigns supreme in His kingdom, "*Langit*" in the sky above. The early Ilocanos positively believed in the life hereafter. They may not have the essence of the Christian concept, but they also entertain ideas of heaven. "*Langit*" is from the beginning an exclusive term for the sky before it came to mean heaven. Furthermore, Ilocanos believed that under this Supreme Being are lesser or inferior spirits or gods *(anitos or saan-nga-katataoan),* who had also power over nature and humanity (Andres 2003). Through these realities, it is proven undoubtedly that Ilocanos are known and marked by their deep religiosity. Hence, this religious belief and view of the Ilocanos must be taken into account in the inculturation of the Eucharist in Ilocano. Through the Eucharist, Ilocanos are given the opportunity to have a joyful encounter of God in the community through the memory of Jesus. Indeed, the Eucharist becomes an avenue for the Ilocanos to bring God back to His rightful place – the core of every Ilocano heart. In this manner, the Eucharist is a celebration that restores an Ilocano community centered in God.

What makes the Eucharist a holy celebration is not the ritual neither the day when it is celebrated or the presider but, the coming together of people commemorating the love of God to His people through Jesus' body and blood. Hence, in the inculturation of the Eucharist in Ilocano, the basics[5] of the Eucharist must be given

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[5] I take the word *basics* to mean the primary reason or essence of a reality. In the Eucharist it is taken to mean as the primary reason why people come together and celebrate.

emphasis – that people gather together because of God Himself (*naindiosan*).

In inculturating the Eucharist in Ilocano, special attention must be given also to the Ilocano language – the first stage of inculturation. Iloco is a flamboyant language. It makes use of a lot of metaphors and is often very ornate. Circumlocutions and elaborate poesy are not uncommon. Even in casual conversation, the Ilocano ordinarily uses the third person or the more polite second person plural. When he/she communicates, he/she prefers the "indirect style" as a sign of respect. Further, a careful study of Iloco language reveals structures and expressions that can reveal the social characteristics of a people. In view of this, inculturation of the Eucharist in Iloco must capitalize the richness of Ilocano language. Thus, the inculturation of the Eucharist in Iloco must therefore consider the flamboyancy of the Ilocano language (poetic expressions and metaphors must be considered) (Nydegger and Nydegger 1966). Further, the Ilocano polite expression of using the second person plural must replace the usual first person plural expression in the Ilocano Eucharistic rite, especially in the Lord's Prayer and Eucharistic prayer. Ilocano style of communication is subtle, rich, and effective. The Eucharist, hence, becomes a way for the Ilocanos to express the genuineness of their "*nakem*" (*loob*). This is the heart and essence of Ilocano communication. In Ilocano communication, it is a way of expressing his/her own being. This is an aspect which could be an important and unique contribution of the Ilocano in inculturating the Eucharist. Honed and developed, it could give a new depth to the Ilocano Eucharist.

After having understood the Ilocano worldview and language, it is essential to attend to the Ilocano's concept of "*nakem*" (inner self). "*Nakem*" is what makes the person who he/she is; it is the core of his or her personhood and it is where the true worth of the person lies. "*Nakem*" is a relational concept. When one does something good to another, he is referred to as having a *naimbag-a-nakem* (good willed, but it may also mean kindness, generosity, benevolence or helpfulness). The recipient is understood to have *utang-a-naimbag-a-nakem*, which, as far as the Ilocano is concerned, can never be repaid. Given the richness of the term, it should be possible to take this as a point of departure in re-expressing, shaping, or creating a new Ilocano

rite of the Eucharist. The Eucharist may be expressed as the anamnesis of Jesus, the exemplar of God's *naimbag-a-nakem*. Further, recognizing the Ilocanos' *utang-a-naimbag-a-nakem* to God, through the Eucharistic celebration, they are being empowered (epiclesis) by Jesus as the exemplar of God's *naimbag-a-nakem* to reach out to their fellow persons – to be agents of God's graciousness and goodness. When Christ is remembered as the exemplar of this quality, it is enriched by the culture itself. Hence, it is proposed that the Ilocano Eucharist must incorporate the Ilocano value on *naimbag a nakem, dayaw* and *bain* in the penitential rite and Eucharistic prayer.

In the process of inculturating the Eucharist in Ilocano, it is also important to consider the prevailing situation of poverty, oppression, sin, inequality, graft and corruption, and the need to liberate the Ilocanos from their colonial mentality and other negative attitudes. In this problem, the method of contextualization as a serious consideration can be a promising approach. Henceforth, the Eucharist in its over-all implication must embody this Ilocano craving for human liberation.

Contextualization of the Eucharist would require a study of the people's fundamental symbolic modes of perceiving and experiencing reality as first step. In this process, attention should be given to bodily expressions, keywords, images, stories, and myths because they are constitutive of the people's identity and world of meaning. These are the elements of culture which need to be considered in the dialogue and should be transformed by the Gospel message in order to merit integration into the Eucharist. Moreover, we also need to consider the Ilocano struggle for liberation from the oppressive human situation which is wedded to their search for true identity as Christian Filipino Ilocanos. The Ilocano of today is still suffering from the stigma of the colonial experience. Colonization had led, among other things, to the depreciation of the Ilocano native culture and consequently of the people's dignity. A contextualized liturgy of the Eucharist should facilitate the Ilocanos' retrieval of their "*dayaw*" or *tan-ok* (dignity) as human beings and hasten the process of liberation from the captivity of low self-esteem and of the colonial mentality (anything that is native or local is considered inferior to what is foreign).

Taking culture seriously does not, however, mean that we absolutize culture so that everything in it is arbitrarily accepted as good. Certainly, there are elements which need to be purified, or modified as the Ilocano culture dialogues with the Gospel. In contextualization, the Gospel challenges, enriches, and transforms the culture from within. We consider here, for instance, the Ilocano value of *bain* (shame), which is closely connected with personal *dayaw* (dignity). In its encounter with the Gospel message, it can be transformed in a way that the Ilocano experiences *bain* because of his/her sins. Hence, the celebration of the Eucharist as joyful encounter with God in the memory of Jesus becomes an opportunity for the Ilocano to restore the dignity that had been lost due to sinfulness (*naindayawan-a-gimong*) – an opportunity to restore one's *dayaw* as a child of God.

With the abovementioned findings, one can argue therefore, that the Eucharist becomes meaningful and relevant in and through the Ilocano "world of meanings." In and through the Ilocano culture, the Eucharist is situated in its context and mediated by it. It is in this situation that the Ilocano culture contributes to the meaningfulness of the Eucharist. The next section, hence, tries to apply this mutual interaction between the Ilocano culture and the Eucharist.

2.2.2. Ilocano Inculturation of the Eucharist

Liturgical inculturation is a theological and pastoral imperative arising from the principle of incarnation. If the word of God became a Jew, the Church in the Philippines must become Filipino. This is the principle that must underlie theological reflection, catechesis, and sacramental life of the Church in the Philippines. The refusal for inculturation results in the denial of the universality of salvation (Chupungco 1976).

But liturgical inculturation also has its imperatives or principles. Some of these require absolute fidelity because of their relation to the basic content of divine revelation. Others have a certain fluidity and tentativeness. The Church, like humans and their culture, is never static; the Church is forever in the process of transition from one phase of existence to another. That is why attempts at liturgical

renewal in general and inculturation in particular can never be final. One must take them for what they are – attempts.

2.3. Dynamic Equivalence Model

It is in this challenge that the study wishes to capture the message of the Eucharistic celebration in the ritual and language of the Ilocanos. It is clear in the earlier discussions on the Eucharist that it is a celebration in memory of Christ's Passover. Hence, the community gather together to celebrate that commemoration. Among the Ilocanos, the Eucharist is treated as the epitome of their Christian life. If there is a heart and crowning glory of the Ilocano Christians' faith, that is the Eucharist. The popularity of the Eucharist can be seen in the Ilocanos' way of living. However, the Ilocanos until this time still do not have a clear perception, celebration, and practice of the Eucharist. This situation had motivated the researcher to make an attempt to propose for the dynamic equivalence of the Eucharistic celebration into Ilocano. Of course, "*Misa a Sangkagimongan*" (Ilocano Mass) already exists. But the "*Misa a Sangkagimongan*" is a faithful translation of the Roman Eucharistic rite. The word "*misa*" (a Spanish word) as defined by Fr. George Gelade, CICM, in his *Ilokano-English Dictionary* strictly means a ritual, or simply, a celebration. Hence, faithfulness to the "*Misa*" as a foreign word for the Ilocanos does not bring a full grasp of what Eucharist means and, at the same time, it continues to alienate the Ilocanos from their native culture. Furthermore, though in the existing Ilocano Eucharistic rite, the word "*gimong*" (community) is already mentioned, a problem can be seen. The word "*gimong*" is connected with the prefix "*sangka*" (always, often, entire, or whole). Hence, saying that the Eucharist is "*sangkagimongan*" is tantamount to saying it is a celebration of all people. Thus, it goes back once more into the monolithic and uniform celebration – the universal Church through uniformity.

This attempt for the inculturation of the Eucharistic celebration into Ilocano will maintain the true spirit of the Eucharistic Liturgy, that is, a communal celebration in memorial of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection. At the same time, it also acknowledges the locus of liturgical renewal that is the native culture of the Ilocanos.

"*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*" (Celebration of the people) is an attempt to find an equivalence of the "*Misa ng Bayang Pilipino*" in the Iloco context. "*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*" can be described as a methodological adaptation of Chupungco's "*Misa*." It translates the meaning of the Eucharistic celebration conveyed by Anscar Chupungco in his "*Misa*" into Ilocano dialect and expressions. Hence, the basic structures, forms, and principles of the "*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*" were adapted from the "*Misa ng Bayang Pilipino*." In fact, Anscar Chupungco had been encouraging other Filipino Christians to translate the "*Misa ng Bayang Pilipino*" in their native culture: "Although written in Pilipino for Tagalog, it can be easily translated into other Philippine languages because of their affinity to one another" (Chupungco 1976). The principal aim of "*Naindayawan- a- Rambak-ti-Gimong*" is to offer to the Ilocanos a form of worship or celebration, which reflects their native culture and which they can identify as their own. "*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*" must not be treated as a corruption of the "*Misa ng Bayang Pilipino,*" but rather it reflects what the Eucharist exactly means to the Ilocanos. "*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*" is a combination of three positive Ilocano elements – "*naindayawan,*" "*rambak,*" and "*gimong.*"

The word "*naindayawan*" (venerable, laudable) captures how important and how special the Eucharist is among Ilocanos. "*Naindayawan*" is a combination of three dynamic Ilocano words – "*na,*" "*in*" and "*dayaw.*" "*Na*" is an Ilocano prefix which means full of being. This prefix "*na*" hence, manifests a dimension of totality and wholeness. "*In*" is an Ilocano infix meaning "to go." Hence, the infix "*in*" depicts movement; it is an active word. "*Dayaw*" literally means honor or glory. However, "*dayaw*" is not a mere appreciation of the person but it entails the recognition of the person's good reputation. There is respect (appreciation) because the person possesses an honor or reputation that is worth respecting. Thus "*dayaw*" means honor, reputation primarily and the appreciation that goes with it secondarily (Ramos 1995, 29). In recent developments, Ilocano Catholic Christians adopted the term "*dayaw*" as a word of praise to God – "*Madaydayaw ka O Apo*" (Glory to you O Lord). However, the usage of the term can also be synonymous with the term "*raem*" (to glorify, to praise).

The word "*naindayawan*" in relation to the Eucharist means a meaningful or significant event or occasion; hence, reputable, venerable or laudable. What makes the Eucharist meaningful or significant is because it is a time or event to give praise and glory to God (*Padayawan ti Apo*). In the Eucharistic celebration, the Ilocanos see the opportunity as a time to honor or glorify God because of the wonders He had done for the people. In fact, God deserves the entire honor and praise because the Ilocanos believe that through the Eucharist they can repay the "*utang a naimbag a nakem*" (debt of gratitude or good self) they owe from Him. The successes in life, strong family, being healthy, prosperity and productiveness are all attributed as "*utang a naimbag a nakem*" from God. As a consequence, those who go to the Eucharistic celebration also attain a degree of "*dayaw*" – "*Madaydayaw da nga annak ti Apo*" (Honorable children of God.)

"*Rambak*" is also a word to consider in the Ilocano reappropriation of the Eucharist. In fact, Ilocanos are known to be festive people. They are faithful in celebrating the cycle of their life as people – birth, adolescence, marriage, and death. Fiestas, Christmas, and Lenten Season must also be included in the Ilocano celebrations. Every key moment in Ilocano life is accompanied by rituals which are often complimented by songs and chants. One good example of this is the Ilocano celebration of a birthday. For the Ilocanos, birthdays are happy occasions wherein the "*Padapadakam a Siraragsak*" (We are Full of Joy) is sung. This is a song in which stanzas denote acts to be done by those present, to show their love and affection, like the laying of a crown of ferns and flowers on the celebrant's head and the offering of a bouquet and palm branches. Then, handful of rice grains, also referred to as "*gracia*" (blessing, grace), are showered on the celebrant, symbolizing wishes for more grace-filled years ahead (Antonio 1995).

Since the Eucharist is also seen as festivity, the Ilocano "*rambak*" (feast, festival, festivity, celebration, ceremony, merry-making, and solemnity) becomes a vital element of the Eucharist. For the Ilocanos, the Eucharist as a "*rambak*" connotes dual function. First, it is a way of making believers feel the presence of the sacred and remember his acts for the human person. Second, it allows the

believers to express what their feeling of the sacred means for their life in the world. In other words, the Eucharist as "*rambak*" fosters religious experience and the expression of religious beliefs. For traditional Ilocanos, "*rambak*," which they understand to be participated in by God , is a part of their everyday activities, such as planting, harvesting, fishing, and hunting. In the Ilocos regions, Ilocano "shamans" play an important role. Aside from acting as medium, healing, and guiding the dead to the afterworld, they play the role of keeping myths and rituals in the community alive. Among these rituals, rites of passage have a special place. Rites of passages are the ceremonies of the life-cycle. They are religious dramas for birth, puberty, marriage, and death.

The Ilocano deep reverence for their celebrations and ceremonies made the Eucharist as their crowning celebration (*naindayawan a rambak*). Indeed, it is a time to celebrate through the ritual of the cycle of their Christian life – that is, the experience of the love of God through Jesus. In this way, the Ilocano "*rambak*" becomes an anamnesis of Jesus – a remembrance of Jesus' salvific acts through his passion, death and resurrection.

Second, the Ilocanos are known for their social trait as *mannakikadua* (companion-oriented); that an Ilocano is "*nalaing a mannakikaddua*" (can easily go with). This value denotes their characteristics as social beings. The word "*kadua*" (companion), like "*kabagis*" (brother/sister), connotes a "being with" and 'being-a-part-of-a-whole." Ilocanos do not feel secure nor complete without the "*kakadua*" (companions). They always seek the members of their families (*kapamilia*), a "*kapada/gayyem*" (peer/friend), and a "*gimong*" (community). Ilocanos do not suffer or celebrate their successes alone. A concrete example of this trait is the Ilocano "*tagnawa.*" "*Tagnawa*" is an invitation to work in the spirit of togetherness and to eat and drink at discretion. Hence, it is a symbol of the self-motivation of the Ilocanos. The "*tagnawa*" often favors the less privilege for they can have their farm planted and harvested gratis or their house built as long as they provide the materials.

It is not, however, a one way alley. It is instead a two-way traffic. Herein lies the beauty. For when by the same token, there arises

a need for help by those who rendered the same, the "*tagnawa*" recipient is duty bound to return the favor by joining other volunteers. In short, "*tagnawa*" is "all in the spirit of camaraderie" (Anima 1976).

Summing it up, *Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong* is a situation of fellowship among Ilocanos. The Eucharist is essentially the "sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal Banquet," whereby, through the Eucharist, all become one in God.

2.4. Contextualization Model

After making an attempt to propose for the dynamic equivalence of the Eucharist in Ilocano, it is also necessary to consider how "*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*" will address the Ilocano concerns and issues. Indeed, "*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*" must affect the life of the Ilocanos to be become relevant and meaningful.

It was earlier claimed in the background of this study that Filipinos (included are the Ilocanos) today have been experiencing "*kahirapan*" (*kinarigat*), suffering. The reason for this experience of meaninglessness is because of the prevalent problem of graft and corruption, a continuous weakening of economy, the increasing rate of criminality, the booming population, the corruption of morality and spirituality, and the many cases of injustice and oppression. These experiences are unequivocal; they are factual and real. But we cannot be silent about it – we need to take a stand and shout, "*tama na, sobra-sobra na*." We need to stop the beast, to rise and recover. We need to dream; dream for a new seed of hope to be implanted in a new soil that will make the sprouting of a new plant – "a new world, a new Philippines" possible.

It is in this challenge that the researcher wishes to apply the method of contextualization (the blending of the Eucharist and the Ilocano experiences) as a hope in the Ilocano "meaning-search." Indeed, the Eucharist as a summit and source of the Ilocano Christian life offers hope for recovery and transformation. To cite a few cases:

2.4.1. *"Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong"* Restores the *"Naindiosan a Gimong"*

Teodoro Bacani had called this age as the "generation of absence" and the "grab generation." Grab generation refers to the person's desire to accumulate wealth as much as he/she can. Hence, now this becomes a reason for the rampant graft and corruption in many offices of the government, much cheating and unfair practices in business, and frequent robberies. Furthermore, he defined the generation of absence as the non-presence or absence of the people who matter most to us in the moments and situations when we need their presence the most (Bacani 1987). Ilocanos had also witnessed the dawning of these generations. Many of them are even involved either as victims or victimizers. In the eyes of the Ilocanos, these experiences are meaningless (*awan kaeseskanna*) and shameful (*nakababain*). How can the Eucharist then bring back the meaning and sense in the life of the Ilocanos? It was affirmed earlier that the Eucharist is a celebration of presence – the presence of Jesus. In the Eucharist, Christ who loves us, and whom we should love even more than our very selves, make himself present, really present to us, in at least four ways. He is present when we gather to celebrate the Eucharist. He is present in his Word since it is he himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are proclaimed in the Church. He is also present in the person of his minister who acts with the Person of Christ. He is present finally in a most excellent way, in his own body and blood under the appearance of bread and wine, after the consecration (Bacani 1987).

Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong as presence, hence, offers God's gift of presence in the life/presence of Jesus to the Ilocanos. Jesus embodies the presence of God – a gift of compassion. Compassion is not simply the will of God, but the very quality of God. God's compassion is life-giving, nourishing, embracing: God feeds the birds, clothes the lilies, makes the sun rise on the just as well as the unjust, and sends rain on the righteous and the wicked (Wostyn 2004). Adopting God's compassion in the context of the Ilocanos would mean that Ilocanos will no longer be divided people. The categories of attractive and unattractive, successful, and unsuccessful, deserving and undeserving, interesting and uninteresting, good and bad would no longer be the primary reason for differences. Compassion and empathy

for the Ilocanos allows them to go beyond these conventions and see people in the wider picture of an interconnected web of life which is sustained by a loving and compassionate God.

In summary, *"Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong"* restores the glory and dignity of the Ilocano communities. Indeed, the Ilocano *"gimong"* (community) becomes *"madaydayaw"* (dignified, laudable) because of God's presence. At the end, Ilocanos will be called *"madaydayaw nga annak ti Apo"* (honorable children of God) because they are *"naindiosan a gimong"* (God-centered community/people).

2.4.2. "Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong" Commemorates/ Recalls God's "Naimbag a Nakem"

First, it is essential to attend to the Ilocano concept of "*nakem*" (inner self). "*Nakem*" is what makes the person who he/she is, the core of his/her personhood and it is where the true worth of the person lies. It is the ultimate, organizing center of reality, the substratum of ideas, feelings, and behaviors. "*Nakem*" is a relational concept. When one does something good to another, he/she referred to as having a "*naimbag a nakem*" (literally, good will, but also means kindness, generosity, benevolence, and helpfulness). The recipient is understood to have "*utang a naimbag a nakem*" (debt of good self or simply, debt of gratitude), which, as far as the Ilocano is concerned, can never be repaid (De Mesa 1987). "*Nakem*" reflects the internalized capability of recognizing and actualizing what is socially, morally, and ethically good and proper to becoming human; "*naimbag a nakem*" is a "*nakem*" that harnesses its positive and creative power. "*Naimbag a nakem*" reflects good heart, behavior, words, and deeds. Hence, "*naimbag a nakem*" is a value-laden concept manifested in generosity, forgiveness, understanding, love, kindness, respect, fidelity, and mercy. Such are the qualities of "*nadiosan a panagnaknakem*" (God-oriented heart) (Valdez 2001). Thus, "*naimbag a nakem*" is "*maka-dios*" (pro-God), "*maka-gimong*" (pro-community), and "*maka-familia*" (pro-family).

"*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*" is a celebration (*rambak*) recalling God's "*naimbag-a-nakem.*" In fact, if the Eucharist is a memorial of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, it is indeed, a

memorial of God's "*naimbag-a-nakem*." Jesus is seen as a revealer of God's "*naimbag-a-nakem*"(*kagandahang-loob*). Consequently, he himself possesses this "*nakem*" (*loob*). For his life is the greatest manifestation, an outflow of God's "*kagandahang-loob*." Jesus had given himself to the people so that the people may have life – a selfless dedication of his life for others. The sacrifice he made on Calvary presents signs in our midst so that we may also offer Him to the Father and ourselves together with Him. He makes his sacrifice present in the Eucharist so that it may become our sacrifice (Bacani 1987). The Eucharist, hence, becomes the school of self-giving.

The "*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*" as a celebration (*rambak*) commemorating, through the life of Jesus, God's "*naimbag a nakem.*" It becomes a great invitation for the Ilocanos to take...give thanks…break… and give. It is therefore proper that in the "*rambak*" (celebration), Ilocanos must take a look into their lives and count the many blessings that God has given them. Then, they thank God for all the blessings that he has given them. But God is not out there in the distance or locked up in the Church. God is in the marketplace, in the streets, in the fields and everywhere, among the poor, the deprived, and the oppressed. He is among the many who have little or nothing to eat. With these realities, the Eucharist – a memory of Jesus' sacrifice – motivates Ilocanos to break themselves in selflessness and compassion. Selflessness allows them to give or share their time, talents, and treasures with others; to give their lives, in memory of Jesus, who lived his life selflessly, to bring God's message of well-being to people. The Eucharist is not just a ritual that a worshipping community offers to God. It is the selfless life of Christ that God offers to His people – Jesus as bread broken and shared among people. This vision, hence, of the Eucharist as a remembrance of God's "*naimbag-a-nakem*" (*ginhawa*) among the Filipinos. Indeed, if this can be done from Monday to Saturday, then the Sunday Mass among Ilocanos will be worth celebrating. It becomes the center of their lives – personal, ecclesial, and societal – a worth remembering celebration (*naindayawan a rambak*).

2.4.3. *"Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong"* Gives Meaning to Communion

Bacani calls this age as a split generation. By split generation, he means the different Filipino experiences of divisions seen in the various aspects of existence – politically, economically, socially, and even in the context of the family (Bacani 1987). In this time of divisiveness, how can the *"Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong"* restore the harmony in the Filipino communities, especially the Ilocano communities? It is clear in the earlier discussion, that the Eucharist is an encounter with God, not as individual or crowd of individuals but as a united people. The Eucharist emits an irresistible drive towards communion. The conviction is increasingly shared, not only among Christians but among people in general, that amid numerous contradictions, the highest good a human person can attain is to coexist in sincere mutual respect, and even better, to be united in friendship (Persico and O'Riordan 1975). Equally, it is also important to note that Ilocanos are known for their social trait as "*mannaki-kadua*" (companion-oriented); that an Ilocano is "*nalaing a mannakikaddua'* (can easily go with). This value denotes their characteristics as social individuals.

Hence, with these characteristics of the Eucharist and the Ilocanos, a certain common denominator is drawn – "*naingimongan*" (community centered). "*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong,*" therefore, brings back to the surface the fundamental need of every Ilocano today to emerge from his/her individuality (*managimbubukod*) and open himself/herself in a real way to every person (*makagimong*). This drive towards openness goes beyond person-to-person relationship. It aims at creating a Christian community and through this to the formation of an entire community of humankind.

"*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*" is, therefore, a communal act in which people commit themselves to the inclusion of all human persons in the homage of the total Christ and His Mystical Body, the Church, to God the Father. This implies that the most effective way to preach Christ today lies not in the witness of isolated Christians but in Christian communities living by the Lord's Spirit,

manifesting this in brotherly communion, and showing loving regard for companions in the faith, as well as for every human being.

3. Concluding Words

Authentic inculturation cannot occur without a thorough study of the culture. Failure in this regard leads to estrangement, where people participate in Eucharistic celebrations with elements considered alien, resulting in a diminished impact. With this principle in mind, an attempt was made to reappropriate the Eucharist in Ilocano culture. The application of two models – dynamic equivalence and contextualization – helped us discover possibilities for a meaningful and relevant Eucharist. For us Ilocanos, an authentic Eucharist must be rooted in our culture and should pay particular attention to issues of cultural identity and liberation.

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The Significance of Food in the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14 and the *Kanyaw*

Fred F. Antonio, Jr.[1]

ABSTRACT

This study delves into the significance of food in Matthew 22:1-14, specifically exploring parallels between the Parable of the Wedding Feast and the Kanyaw festival of the Igorot people. Employing a qualitative-descriptive approach, the researcher adopts a hermeneutical spiral methodology involving the sequential steps of "See, Discern, and Act." The research emphasizes five key themes that draw parallels between the biblical parable and the indigenous festivity. Firstly, the study highlights the importance of the invitation in both contexts. Whether it is the divine call in the parable or the cultural invitation of the Kanyaw, there is a common thread in the significance of extending and receiving invitations. Second, the celebration emerges as a significant theme, suggesting shared elements between the joyous gatherings depicted in the biblical narrative and the cultural festivities of the Igorot people.

The third theme revolves around the crucial role and preparation of food. This underscores the centrality of food in both the biblical narrative and the Kanyaw festival, shedding light on the cultural and spiritual

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dimensions associated with preparing and sharing meals. The fourth theme explores the responses of those invited, drawing parallels between the biblical account and participants' reactions in the Igorot celebration. Lastly, the study delves into the social implications of the feast in both contexts. By examining how the feast influences social dynamics and relationships, the research aims to offer an inculturated understanding of the feast in the parable's context. In essence, the study provides a nuanced exploration of the parallels between the biblical narrative and the indigenous festivity, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural and spiritual dimensions of food and celebration in these contexts.

Keywords: *Parable, Kanyaw, festivity, Igorot, food, kosher, non-kosher, wedding feast, Jesus, Jewish, thanksgiving, ritual, garment, exegesis, mambunong, mankotom, fiesta.*

1. Introduction

Filipino celebration centers on food. Every festivity that thanks their patron saint or deities for a good harvest or for being saved from a natural disaster is highlighted with a banquet. These banquets manifest the abundance and the gratitude of every Filipino to God and showcase the camaraderie of a community. Even early Filipinos offered food to their gods to see the future or an omen to ask for signs of a great harvest. Food, for the Filipino, has been linked to religious experiences since time immemorial. Montoya (2012) said there is a need to rediscover the significance of food in religious experience. He argued that food is not "just food" and is a vital factor in spiritual experience. He focused on the significance of food in line with the Eucharistic celebration. In his open-ended discourse, he said there is more to taste regarding our Christian faith.

Food is one of the most basic human needs; it plays an essential role in our lives and our religious practices. The reality of eating and

drinking is taken up and given a new, extraordinary significance through the eyes of faith. Our daily meal can provide access to the ultimate reality and become a channel of transcendent meaning. In some respects, food is linked to spiritual purity and holiness that connects with religious identity and membership (Gwynne 2009). Korsmeyer (1999) believes one significant role of food in our life is social: in rituals, practices, and special ceremonies that knit together the communities.

Wirzba (2013) added that food is a system of communication that reveals what we believe and value about people, knowledge about things, our bodies, cultural and inherited traditions, shared time, money, and places. He gave a twofold idea about how we should understand food in a broader scope. First, food is not merely a substance; it always includes the social aspects of meal-sharing and meal preparation. Second, food reflected the sharing of life. In this, the beauty of Christ's teaching regarding the kingdom of God on earth can easily be understood. In his article "Eating in Heaven," he discussed the consummating communion as part of food related to the parables of Jesus: the great banquet. Eating is the primary way to enact connections with others, a fellowship that takes the form of a meal. It is vital for theological reflection because, in this mundane practice, people communicate, sometimes more honestly than by their verbal piety, what they believe about themselves, their world, and their God.

Wirzba (2013) argued that food is not reducible to commodity; instead, God's love made food delectable. Enriching the food on the table will respond to the consumer culture, where food is a system of communication that reveals some aspects of our identity and community. Mann (2013) challenged our food production and consumption. He said in his article that God is the source of all food and controls the weather and seasons in which food comes in due time. Likewise, we give thanks before we eat the food on the table. People are behind the food planting, harvesting, and selling the products. With this, he challenged us to eat responsibly. Webster (2013) pointed out that feeding the less fortunate is an act of self-sacrifice and emphasizes our role as Christians to feed the hungry. She said we can only overcome this problem by learning to give or share food with others.

Furnal (2011) explored the gospel of Mark, especially the meal scene, where he examined the theme of Divine Hospitality in the Old Testament. In his presentation, he said the kingdom of God is represented as a table fellowship. This is manifested especially in the times that Jesus eats with his apostles, disciples, and the outcasts of his time. Table fellowship for him is a membership open to all. Reading all these previous studies shows there are some points to address, that food is not simply a gustatory and physiological need of man. Instead, there is something more that food brings to our lives. The works mentioned above will no doubt elucidate the vastness and richness of literature about food. I attempt to explain how the Matthean text and *Kanyaw* practices are theologically explained.

Furthermore, the *Kanyaw* of the Benguet Province is a feast that exemplifies the characteristics mentioned above of food. It is deeply rooted in the life and customs of the people as a community and reflects what food brings to the people's lives. *Kanyaw* is a "festival," ceremony, liturgy, service, rite, or ritual offering. The feast is a socio-religious ceremony in which some animals are sacrificed and feasted. This feast signifies many things to the Cordilleran people. Anything that is in between life and death or even the two previous gives highlight to them. It lies in the center of the culture, tradition, or even in the life of this people, for it opens the doors of heaven to receive an omen to the gods, to share life, for crucial decisions, and for many other reasons. This feast shares parallelism with the parable of the wedding feast in the gospel of Mathew, which the researchers need to cultivate and enrich.

The Gospel of Matthew presents the Parable of the Wedding Feast as a sign of salvation through a banquet. This parable will be used as a guiding principle to develop a new perspective related to the *Kanyaw*. This gospel passage is unique in how food is presented as a symbol of the kingdom of God. The Igorots provide an excellent example of realigning and deepening the value of food, that food is more than membership in a community.

The researcher follows the developed hermeneutical spiral methodology (See, Discern, Act) that will serve as a tool for addressing the three central questions presented earlier. In the "See"

part, we will encounter the bigger picture of the history of food. The "Discerning" part will discuss how the *Kanyaw* exemplifies the parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14. To begin with the parable of the wedding feast, exegetical interpretation will be used to clarify some questions about the parable. Books, articles, and interviews are used to present the significance of the study in Kanyaw's cultural context. Lastly, in the "Act" part, the researcher will give the pastoral implication of the significance of food to all Christians. For some theologians, it is noteworthy that food has become phenomenological. In this sense, food has a significant impact on our daily lives.

In essence, the paper attempts to present a new perspective and re-alignment regarding the significance of food. Importance This will lead us to rediscover the significance of food, answering these questions: First, what is the relevance of food in Matthew 22:1-14 and *Kanyaw*? Second, how does *Kanyaw* exemplify the Matthean text, and third, how may the Christian community actualize the insights regarding the significance of food in Matthew and *Kanyaw* from a particular aspect of Christian Life? In addition to this presentation, some tools are needed to develop a new approach. This paper delimits itself on the significance of food in the parable of the Parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22: 1-14 and in *Kanyaw*. The exegetical approach in this paper may vary due to different translations and interpretations of the study's focus.

2. SEE: The Relevance of Food in Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14 and
Kanyaw?

Looking at history, we can see the significance of food in different cultures. Scholars could trace in the daily general books of the Romans and Greeks a detailed report of when they ate, what they consumed, and how they partook of the meal (Wilkins and Hill 2006). For the Greeks and Romans, festivals brought a sense of solidarity and identity. The role of food is expounded in several Greek festivals, which brought together much of the citizen body in an affirmation of civic identity (Wilkins and Hill 2006).

The Symposium (fourth century BCE to second century CE) or 'talk feast' was joint in the Greco-Roman world (Raphael 1972). This is an organization of all-male groups, aristocratic and egalitarian at the same time, which affirm their identity through ceremonialized drinking. Plato's Symposium, in which Socrates and several chosen companions, the 'rabbis' of ancient Athens, gather for a relaxed evening of talk, not about rivalries but on a set theme. This classical gathering generated philosophical reflection. Food and drink were served lavishly to the privileged participants at these symposia, but the talk was important (Rohrbaugh 1996).

In the Jewish culture, Jews typically ate two meals daily, whereas Greeks and Romans ate three. Pervo (1985) presents the reader not only with a clever analysis of Trimalchio, in which food was a social substance and currency. What you, the guest, are offered is a measure of your standing in the eyes of society and your host (Rohrbaugh 1996). Some literature on meals in antiquity has also been added to several specific types of meals, like the symposium, the Passover meal, and funerary meals. The Passover was an influential meal that was important to Jews and Christians and perceived and structured other liturgical events. The origin of all the rituals of Passover seems to center entirely on the events of the Exodus (12:1-28). According to Rabbi Adam (2014), what truly makes food Jewish is not who eats it, cooks it, or produces it; instead, food may be Jewish by those who value its memories, relations, and connections. *Jewish food stays in the heart of the person who shares it due to its sensory experiences and associated memories.*

Meanwhile, funerals and commemorating meals are other types that historians and interpreters of biblical text should address. Even in the Hebrew scripture, there is controversy over food offerings left on the tombs of the dead. In the book of Amos 6:1-7 and Jer. 16: 1-9 and Phoenician texts, the funeral meal is called the *"marzeah"* at which guests recline to eat a banquet (Rohrbaugh 1996). Philip Kinmusic and interpretation of the banquet contains a summary: it was a meal at which one reclined, was anointed by oil, consumed a meat meal, accompanied by singing and other music, and climaxed with excessive drinking of wine. A study was made by Charles A. Kennedy (1987) of commemorative meals consumed at funeral sites. Meals

were eaten at a tomb by family and freed persons on specified days in the mild months of the year.

3. Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14

One notices some stories in the life of Jesus in the Gospel, such as how he ate and drank with the people. Jesus was even labeled a "glutton and drunkard" who ate with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). This constitutes an "acted parable" of God's particular care for outcasts. And the very highlight Jesus left is the Eucharist. Jesus' Last Supper is foremost a symposium at which He delivers a farewell address that contains primary material about new social relationships (John 13-17). One can also see the relationship between the two Gospels that has brought the kingdom of God together as a celebration. Furthermore, in Jesus' ministries, there is a different approach to how he introduced the kingdom of God. He used various literary forms of literature to elucidate the message. One good example is the use of the parable, allegorical in a sense, yet there was its canonical rendition that gives meaning to our history of salvation (Matthew 13:10-16). In the Gospel of Matthew, one encounters the parable of the wedding feast. In this story, one can observe how Jesus delivers his message. With this, the story would come across on the relevance of food in the parable story and the Kanyaw of Benguet. The text is as follows:

> *¹ Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, ² The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his servants to those invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused. ⁴ Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' ⁵ But they paid no attention and went off--one to his field, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his army to destroy those murderers and burn their city.⁸ Then he said to his*

servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come.⁹ Go to the street corners and invite anyone to the banquet.' ¹⁰ So the servants went into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, good and evil, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.¹¹ But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man not wearing wedding clothes. ¹² 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless.¹³ Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'¹⁴ For many is invited, but few are chosen." (Mt. 22:1-14, NAB).

Biblical exegeses on the parable are limited and are focused on: first, the genre and the metaphorical languages used; second, the appropriation during its time; and lastly, the response to the invitation through the meaning of the garment and feast.

A parable is a perspective of the world that uses a story to illustrate a truth or lesson. It shows a likeness between the image of an illustration and the object being portrayed. It defines the unknown using the known, helping the listener discover the more profound meaning and underlying truth of the portrayed reality. It can be a figure of speech or comparison, such as "the kingdom of God... is like a mustard seed... or like yeast" (Luke 13:19, 21). More commonly, it is a short story to bring out a lesson or moral. Jesus used simple stories or images to convey essential truths about God and His kingdom and lessons about the way of life and happiness God has for us. These stories often feature examples or illustrations from daily life in ancient Palestine, such as mustard seeds and fig trees, wineskins and oil lamps, money and treasure, stewards, workers, judges, homemakers, wedding parties, and children's games. Jesus' audience would be very familiar with these illustrations from everyday life.

A wedding is one of the most joyous celebrations of the Jewish people; this feast is even celebrated for a week. According to Jewish tradition, festive occasions are always marked with food. The

betrothed's parents generally drew up the marriage contract in Jewish society. The bride and groom would meet, perhaps for the first time, when this contract was signed. The couple was considered married at this point, but they would separate until the actual time of the ceremony. The bride would remain with her parents, and the groom would leave to prepare their home. This could take quite a while. When the house was ready, the groom would return for his bride without notice. The marriage ceremony would then occur, and the wedding banquet would follow.

Specifically, the observance of a great *mitzvah* (covenant) is celebrated with a *seudat mitzvah* (feast), a "mitzvah repast," which should include bread, meat or poultry, and wine. Thus, participating in a wedding reception that celebrates the mitzvah of marriage is an honor and a *mitzvah* in itself. During the week following the wedding, it is customary for friends and relatives to host festive meals in honor of the *chatan and kallah*. This is called the week of Sheva Brachot, and it is about the blessings said after each of these festive meals. Additionally, wine and meat bring happiness, according to the sages. Essential sacrifice recipes in the Beit Hamikdash, the ancient holy Temple in Jerusalem, included slabs of meat and libations of wine. These foods help transform an opportunity for gluttony into an exercise in holiness.

The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a wedding banquet. The story's focus emphasizes not the preparation but the response of the people invited to the feast. Marriage, compared with the covenant, is not new in the Old Testament; in the book of the prophet Hosea, God is portrayed as the faithful husband and Israel as the unfaithful wife. In the New Testament, the Messiah is frequently described as a bridegroom, which is not unusual (see John 3:29; Eph 5:25-32; and Rev. 21:2, 9). But in terms of the parable, it is the response of Israel in sending the Messiah.

Hill (1972) emphasizes the eschatological aspect of the marriage feast in the story. He added the explanation of the wedding garment with epigrammatic logion, where he refers to a small group of Jews who are the chosen ones. It is noted that this garment is their behavior and action, indicating they are worthy or not as 'chosen

ones.' Hence, every Christian must robe him/ herself in righteousness in words and deeds. Biblical scholars point out that this parable is also transmitted by the evangelist Luke in a slightly different form (Lk. 14:16-24). Luke merely speaks of a dinner that someone gives.

4. *Kanyaw*

Meanwhile, in some countries like the Philippines, traces of tradition that forbids particular food can be seen. Generally, Filipinos have local fiestas (feasts) and different kinds of big celebrations or Festivals; in all these events, food has become part of it. So, the fiesta became a rather lavish teaching aid and more. The missionary archives contain reports in the friars' hands telling how they used these festivals to attract the people to church (Roces 1978). The festival is generally rejoicing and takes the form of partaking in ceremonial meals (Posner 1973). Filipino culture is not based on contradiction but on integration. As a unique entity, how do Filipinos gather and unite as one, especially during festivity?

Benguet is known to be the "Salad massive bowl of the Philippines" because of its vast vegetables. Its geographical location lies in the southernmost of the Cordillera Administrative Region, and its capital is La Trinidad. The province of Benguet has a total land area of 261,648 hectares. This province has 13 municipalities and 140 barangays, and two prominent dialects are used in this province: *Kankana-ey, Ibaloi,* and *Kalanguya*. The *Kankana-ey* are the indigenous people who live in the western, northern, and southeastern *Ilocos* Sur, while the *Ibaloi* mostly live in the southern part of Benguet Mountain Province. Furthermore, this province has preserved its cultural practices and traditions well. This region has caves used as catacombs, and some well-preserved mummies have been discovered. These mummies can be found in Kabayan; they are placed in capsule-shape coffins and buried in caves or on high cliffs.

Another custom is their cultural celebration of *Kanyaw* (Feast). Tumilang (2007) defined *Kanyaw* as a "festival," ceremony, liturgy, service, rite, or ritual offering. In this feast or gathering, there must be these three components: (1) a substantial supply of food that includes,

(2) a free flow of "spirits", preferably *tapuy* or rice wine, and (3) Igorot dancing to the music of gongs. All this to last for at least a day. *Kanyaw* is a feast, staying for at least a day, where plenty of food and drinks are served, with dancing to the music of gongs. This is also how Peterson (2010) defines *Kanyaw* in his article emphasizing dance in *Kanyaw*.

Kanyaw is a socio-religious ceremony in which some animals are sacrificed and feasted on. This is also done during marriage, healing, birth, burial, and voyage, where prayer plays a significant role. Baucas (2003) mentioned some important roles of Kanyaw in preventing sickness or illnesses, which can make them prosperous or progressive. It can also bring back the inhabitants of the people, especially enemies. *Kanyaw* satisfies two communal functions*: (1) it carries a reputation to the family,* and (2) it sustains and reinforces the existing social organization and extended family ties. In his survey, all five leaders fulfilled the ritual requirements by offering thirteen native pigs with white and black nails. This prestigious celebration begins with three pigs, then the second ritual requires five, seven, and so on. The *Kanyaw* plays a vital role in reaffirming the existing order and status determined in the spiritual world. It also influences the gods and spirits to maintain the existing order. In addition, the Igorots believe that *Kabunyan* and the Ancestral spirits grant fame, material blessings, and good health. Therefore, they naturally view present wealth as a reward for their religious piety expressed through many *Kanyaw* sacrifices; today's *Kanyaw* ensures tomorrow's blessing. It may be performed in individual homes, public places, familial, or communal (Roces 1980). They invoke the spirits with offerings of animals, food, and other materials prescribed by the *mambunong* (native priest). Within this ritual, they asked for the blessing of their ancestors and other god spirits to answer their prayers. This also validates a person's standing in the Igorot groups.

Sacla (1987) mentioned that Benguet people believe in unseen beings emanating from the sky world and the underworld. He added this group has "apprehension or conviction of the existence of the supernatural being." They believe spirits have power over human beings, but men can control them. They try to win the Favor of the spirits through prayers and material offerings in a ceremony. This

mentality is reflected in the celebration of the *Kanyaw*. These are two significant groups of Benguet: the *Kankana-ey*, called their feast *pedit* (rich man's feast), and the Ibaloy *pechit*.

The preparation involves the young people in the neighborhood who come to help. *Bayanihan* is still observed in this activity. It manifested how these people shared their time without expecting a fee or anything in return. This tradition demands careful preparation to avoid bad omens. Older women prepare the *tapuy* (a fermented rice wine used as wine offering in ritual). The last stage of preparation is procuring sacrificial animals like pigs (the color must be pure black), cows, and carabaos (water buffalo), free from abnormalities. Another element before the feast starts is the mediation of a *mambunong*, an indigenous priest of Benguet, administering the prescribed ritual at the feast. He is the intermediary between the spirits and man. He is the chosen spiritual leader in the community. With the *mambunong,* you will see the presence of the *mankotom* (wisemen or native elders who interpret the meaning of dreams and omens) in the community. These are composed of the wise men who are usually consulted to specify the appropriate procedure in the ritual (Sacla 1987). They also consider the movements of the moon before they complete the ritual. They can be determined by the formation of the moon and twelve seasons (12 months of the calendar), as Sacla discussed the planning and preparation for the feast. The right time to hold the feast is once the moon emerges in a half circle. They believe the moon is in progress, and the next cycle is a full moon.

At this moment, the whole community is working hand in hand together. There are tasks given to each member of the community. Men, relatives, neighbors, and friends are assigned to gather firewood for cooking and grasses needed where the butchered meat will be placed. Some are in charge of looking for black pigs and other animals needed. Community women prepare the *tapuy* (rice wine), cooking rice and root crops. The celebration will start once the *mambunong* has arrived and will signal the start of the feast. He will ask for some wine, native blankets and clothes, and old coins arranged in a basket. These are the old belongings of their ancestors, which they invoke their presence and other spirits to come.

When everything is prepared, the first pig will be butchered. The pig will pray in front of the *mambunong* before cutting an incision at the side of the pig. They use a sharpened wood stick directly to hit the heart. Then, they cut the pig and take out the bile and liver. This will be presented to the *mambunong* and *mankotom* of the community. They interpret the position of the bile and determine if the feast is a good omen. When the pig is half-cooked, the hairs are scraped, the skin surface is washed, and the carcass is split open to remove the entrails. Care is observed, especially in taking out the liver and the gall bladder. In practice called 'in-partisan,' the elder or priest will examine whether these are healthy and how these are situated as the positioning could spell good fortune for the people sponsoring or conducting the feast or otherwise. Should there be a bad omen, the elder may ask for another animal sacrifice to ward this off. They will start slicing and cooking the beef in plain boiling water.

After the long ceremony and prayers, the most awaited part is the feast-eating time. Everyone will get a slice of *watwat* (boiled meat). They will offer some to the spirits and the sick members of the community. While eating, the men prepare the musical instrument like the *gangsa* (gongs made of brass or iron by the natives themselves used to produce music during the feast) and *solibao* (elongated drums made by the natives themselves played with gongs to have music during the feast) is tuned for dancing. The community was allowed to dance, especially the hosting family. Then, the second pig is butchered for another set of thanksgiving. Butchering the third pig indicates that the feast is about to end. They believe that the ancestor going back to *Kabun-yan*. At the end of a *Kanyaw*, the guests from each region are allotted a *carabao* to slaughter and divide among themselves (Roces 1980).

5. DISCERN: How Does *Kanyaw* exemplify the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14?

The feast of *Kanyaw* can be compared to the story in the parable of the wedding feast. Narrowing down the story would make capturing the message into five aspects easier. First is the significance of the invitation or the call; second is the significance of the

celebration; third is the importance and preparation of food; fourth is the response of those invited; and lastly, its social implication.

First, there is a significant invitation in the parable and Kanyaw; in the parable, the king sent his slaves to call his guest. Accordingly, an invitation during a wedding feast in the Jewish context is sent personally. Only those who are close to the host are invited to the banquet. Yet upon the rejection of those first asked, the invitation became universal: all are accepted. It is a universal call to salvation. To partake in the feast that was set for all. We are called to be sharers of the salvation brought to us by Christ, the bridegroom, and God as the one who calls the banquet.

Like in Kanyaw, they have different ways of inviting guests and visitors. Sending personal invitations or messages is a common way to inform people, yet the tribe has an ancient method of inviting its community. The crude sound of the *gangsa* is played to remind people to assemble and that the ritual is being solemnly celebrated. The feast is a universal calling to share and partake in the feast and food with the community; although some do not heed the invitation and will not attend the said celebration, all are called to join and participate.

Second, the significance of the celebration in the parable and *Kanyaw;* the king sent out his messenger to invite the selected guests to share in their happiness in the marriage of his son. For Jewish people, a wedding is one of the festive celebrations for it relives the great *mishya* or the covenant between God and man. Yet, exegetes remind us that the parable is the celebration of salvation where Jews and Gentiles are called to partake in the heavenly banquet.

The reason for the *Kanyaw* varies in purpose and meaning. *Kanyaw* is a highlight of religious celebration. It is offered for various purposes: to celebrate as a religious, as part of a funeral rite, and to secure healing. Or others to express gratitude for a bountiful harvest, the birth of a new community member, a wedding, or just about anything worth celebrating.

Within this feast, the Igorots incorporate their ancestors and invoke other spirits to come and bless their gathering. Though it was not mentioned in the parable of the wedding feast, they invoke spirits. However, once digging more deeply into the wedding rites of the Jews, it is observed that there are the same structures as *Kanyaw*. Jewish practice has minor ceremonies before the wedding day as part of their customs. According to Schneid (1973), this practice originated from fear of the evil eye or spirits. This site is designed to protect the couple and invoke blessings on the couple aside from paying the dowry and contract between the consenting groups.

Nonetheless, the feast is nothing without a sense of belongingness; the feast is an excellent venue for knowing people and a sort of reunion for others. Furthermore, the parable story has something to do with belongingness; God still accepts us despite our weaknesses. This is how Hultgren gave his exegetical interpretation of the text.

Third, the importance and preparation of food in the parable and *Kanyaw;* Wilson (2014) has presented five phases in his book discussing how the gospel of Matthew sees the access of food: The production, distribution, preparation, consumption, and finally, the cleaning-up after the meal. This is also the reason Wilson (2014) has decided to expound further on the gospel of Matthew since he believed the scholars neglected a discussion of food practice in the Gospel. The king said calves and fattened cattle were slaughtered, and the feast was ready. Though there is only a short verse in the parable that talks about food, food preparation is essential for Jewish people. They are very conscious about which food to take; this is also highly observed in *Kanyaw*.

The history of food is further seen in the books of Deuteronomy (14: 3-20) and Leviticus (11:1-47). These books refer to specific rules about Kosher and non-kosher foods, prescribe regulations on how to slaughter the animals, and provide some types of foods. This makes sense; a culture has a set of rules to make its celebration authentic. Both feasts gather the best food: in the parable, the king has chosen his best calves and fattened cattle, prescribed by law.

Respect for the feast has its purpose and role for the Benguet people. That is why they ensure the feast is appropriately followed by the help of their *mambunong* and *mankotom* of the community. In *Kanyaw,* natives of Benguet do not simply use ordinary swine but a local domestic black pig. Once the offering of the swine has started, people gather to witness the rite. The *mambunong* will observe the bile size and position, consulting and soliciting comments from the elderly members of the community. They will determine if the bile is usual, a good omen. If they find abnormalities, they will seek comments from the *mankotom* for confirmation. As observed and interpreted, the omen is the basis for predicting the future (Sacla 1987). After this presentation, the meat will be sliced and cooked plainly in boiling water.

After a long period of preparation, there is a much-awaited part. People gather to eat and share food. Then, the highlight of a *Kanyaw* is the eating time. Each person will be served rice and slices of meat called watwat. They serve the internal organs of the elders. After eating, musical instruments are set for dancing. The host is privileged to dance the *tayaw (the native dance performed during the* feast). Then, another pig is currently being butchered.

Fourth is the response of those invited to the parable and *Kanyaw;* there are two responses people give to the invitation. The first one is the negative response of the people. It is where those whom the king invited did not respond to the call. Worst, they mistreated the messengers of the king, even to the point of killing them. The ruthless act of those who ignored the invitation and killed the messenger is a sign of their insurgency and disrespect to the host. Thus, those actions were condemned by the host, resulting in the killing and burning of their cities.

On the day of the ritual, the hosts and other relatives wake up early to prepare for the festivity. Men and women in this community have designated tasks to carry out. Men of the tribe are usually in charge of selecting cattle, pigs, chickens, and firewood, while women are busy preparing the rice wines and some utensils needed for the occasion. Women cook rice while men prepare pots, knives, and musical instruments such as gongs and *solibao*. The quantity of rice to be cooked is measured by sacks. Camote would also be prepared as

this would be offered to guests upon arrival. No coordinator is needed in such a big event. Everyone performs tasks out of his initiative – an attitude facing extinction. It exemplifies how the Jewish culture and Benguet tradition have much in familiar resemblance, especially in the book of Leviticus on how food is prepared.

The whole community shows their cooperation through *Bayanihan*. People offer their time and help without expecting fees or anything in return. The act speaks more about food because of its closeness and unity. By all means, food has transcended its daily meaning. Looking back on the experiences of *Kanyaw,* I can say this is a voluntary commitment and combined effort of its immediate community. It is a feast molded by their shared stories and experiences of joy and suffering, which makes it authentic because of their geniuses to one another. Likewise, Wirzba (2013) suggests that food carries multiple layers of our identity, including moral, cultural, ecological, and religious significance.

In contrast, as mentioned above, that initiative is an attitude facing extinction due to some people not responding to the call anymore. It is saddening that people participating in the *Kanyaw* will attend the ceremony and take their share without even helping. Others will not even interact with other people. The sense of volunteerism in the meaning of the feast is slowly fading in the new generation. Older people in the community try to preserve the tradition, but the lack of initiative and responsiveness to the call might have made *Kanyaw* history in the past.

Fifth is the social implication of the parable and Kanyaw; a traditional Jewish wedding meal means no one goes hungry. Plan for lots of food; leftovers can go home with guests or to a home for older people after the wedding. "Charity saves from death" (Proverbs 10:2, 11:4). A table would be, and still is, set out for poor people during the wedding meal. Their presence brought the gift of long life to the newlyweds. Poor people will not know how to get to distant wedding halls. But it's no excuse not to think of people experiencing poverty on a wedding day. Give to t*zedaka* or charity in honor of a new marriage. It's the right thing to do.

Furthermore, *Kanyaw* speaks more about how this feast binds and heals divisions. This does not mean that eaters are fully aware of what they do or communicate when they eat.

6. ACT: Implementing Lessons on Food Significance from the Parable of the Wedding Feast and *Kanyaw* in Christian Life Demands Intentional Action.

Food defines community; Webster (2013) stressed Jesus' principle of feeding others. Jesus redefined the traditional understanding of community when he ate with tax collectors, sinners, and Pharisees. This is how Jesus introduced the kingdom of God, where everybody is invited to the feast prepared by his Father. Webster concretizes this idea by stating that this new community does not include the family as we usually define it. Hence, it extends to the broader community. Story (2012) says that meal-setting establishes and maintains trust and solidarity. He added that this ritual shows a social relationship, and food is employed as an instrument, a sustaining or destroying mechanism of sociability. Jesus engages the host and guests with table talk, like a symposium. This should not at all be a surprise that Jesus spent much time eating with others. Jesus lets us feel that we also belong to his Father.

So that the Christian community may actualize the insights regarding the significance of food in Matthew and *Kanyaw* from a particular aspect of Christian Life, it will deal with the three facets of food in the Filipino context: First, Daily food; second, Fiesta; and lastly, the Eucharist.

First, the significance of daily meals for Filipino society: *Kanyaw* is a big meal. We can see characteristics such as the sense of belongingness, the exchange of stories and traditions, the unity, and the "Bayanihan." It is an expression of celebration like marriage and baptism, grief for the death of a loved one, negotiation for tribal war, or any other purpose it is used for. It is an activity of the community where everyone is nourished and formed. It is an identity. It is where everyone becomes one in meals and celebrations.

In the Filipino family meal, it has been customary for the family to eat together as an event or family affair. The table of food becomes the center of Filipino families. It is expected that every mealtime, every member of the family eats together. At the table, while eating, stories are exchanged, problems are solved, secrets are told, and traditions are passed on. Also, before, during, and after mealtimes, every family member helps prepare the meal. During the meal is the sharing and exchange of life lessons. After the meal, everyone benefits from cleaning up the table, yet stories are still exchanged. It is here, at mealtimes, that the sense of being a family is being nourished and molded. At the table, you can feel the sense of belongingness and the sense of community. Sadly, we can frequently see that family come together during mealtime. It became a trend for family members to eat individually. Yet the daily meal plays a vital role in strengthening a family and forming its young members.

Second, during celebrations, especially the fiestas, one of the purposes of *Kanyaw* is thanksgiving. The Igorots believe that material blessing and prosperity come from Dios Adi Kaila, Kabunyan, and the ancestral spirits. It is a thanksgiving to deities and spirits of the ancestors for a good harvest or any celebration worth thanking for. In return, the people give back to them the portion of material possessions that are granted to them by the deities. The focal point of the people's celebration is Thanksgiving. It is a way of celebration. It is a way of thanking the gods and the ancestors for blessing and guiding them through the season. It is also their expression of blessing the gods for tomorrow's blessing.

Meanwhile, fiesta in the Catholic context is also focused on thanksgiving. It is a celebration that is thanking God through San Isidro Labrador for a bountiful harvest, San Jose for his paternal protection during calamities, etc. The highlight of the celebration is the nine days of praying, and on the tenth day is the thanksgiving, often celebrated on the feast day of the saint whose intercession guided and helped them. Sadly, due to modernity, the theme of the celebration shifted from thanksgiving to social gathering or showing off. Fiestas are sometimes no longer centered on Thanksgiving but become drinking sprees, discos, and pageants. There is nothing wrong with the joyful event, but if it replaces the true meaning of the celebration, it

becomes secular rather than religious. *Kanyaw*, however, never loses its centrality in thanksgiving. We should rethink the fiestas' rationale and ask whether they are there for Thanksgiving or entertainment.

Lastly, the Eucharist is the heart and summit of the life of every Christian and the whole People of God (Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11). This makes Christian belongs to Christ as they gather and participate in the Eucharistic celebration. Indeed, it makes every Christian feel the ones they share in Christ's life, death, and resurrection in the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. Montoya (2012) challenges us to reorient our daily experience and covenant of God's gift-as-bread. The Eucharistic banquet makes it more evident that the food should not be a fetish but should primarily be offered to provide physical and spiritual nourishment.

However, in a Eucharistic celebration, Filipinos received modernized bread, which is foreign to some cultures. Some theologians and scholars would say the theology of food is deeply rooted in the food we eat and the culture to which we belong. So why can't we use our own cultural or native delicacies? This will authenticate and reaffirm how we understand the value of food we take. The natives of Benguet, in their simple meal, can unite and reunite the community. Why not apply this method in our province, city, or country? This is probably why Montoya said in his book that it is not enough to submerge oneself in preparing the Mexican Molli (a Mexican food); instead, the art is making it. The preparation takes a long time. Likewise, in *Kanyaw*, people are helping one another and listening carefully to the rites.

Henceforward, each individual is excited once they get their share during the meal. Simple boiled meat and pining (blood sausage) make their feast meaningful, not because they are present, but because the food they eat is a prayer from the ceremony. The totality of the helping hands of those who prepared makes everyone crave a piece. They feel the satisfaction of each present in *Kanyaw*. This is why the researcher emphasized the importance and the symbolic meaning of our food. Belongingness makes us feel we are secure. Moreover, *Kanyaw* has more than to offer in understanding the theology of food.

A sense of belongingness that addresses each issue they have, personal or communal, where it heals, restores, enhances, and nourishes the community's relationship. Christ's mission was to unite God's people. Probably that's the reason why he said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

Furthermore, Zanchettin (1997) elaborated on the parable of how the sacrament of the Eucharist is connected; God invites his people to taste his great love. With this, he challenges every Christian to participate in the liturgy actively: how do we respond to the call or invitation to the wedding feast of his son Jesus Christ? "The participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2182). A meal, especially with family and friends, particularly on an occasion of celebration, is an opportunity to deepen closeness, bonding, communion, and even union. It is an intimate occasion. Scola (2005) remarked that:

> The social implications of the Eucharist action call for the Christian's contribution to building a civil society in the various cultural areas of humanity. Based on the solidarity and subsidiarity principles that form the Church's social teachings, Christians promote a civil society based on the dignity and rights of the person, especially the right to religious freedom and all intermediate bodies, the family in particular.

In short, the parable of the feast is an invitation calling everyone to robe each one in righteousness and holiness manifested in action. The likening of the Eucharist in the parable challenges every Christian to respond to the social dimension of the sacrament. It has a purpose: to worship God and reap the harvest of solidarity by living out charity, immersing ourselves in the least among us. It summons us to build the catholic community where everyone is invited and acting for God's greater glory.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, food identifies people, gives memory, and builds relationships with the people and the Divine. As Fernadez (2003) states, food mirrors Filipinos' identity. It allows self-knowledge rooted in personal experience, embodied knowledge, and memory that is personally and collectively experienced or shared. *Kanyaw* identifies the Cordilleran people of the Northern Philippines. It is a festivity that is a living memory of the people that everyone shares in the community. It is a collective effort that conforms to tradition handed down from generation to generation. It exemplifies the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew wherein it shows how both feasts showed significance and importance of food because they include the social dimension of preparing the meal, meal-sharing, and that food reflects the sharing of life thus, showing the salvific and unitive aspect of food in one's culture.

Kanyaw and the story in Matthew 22:1-14 are parables that must be lived out. It serves as an invitation to all to share not only the food but life itself; it serves as a purpose to celebrate and save life. As in the Eucharist, it is a celebration of life-giving and sharing. The food, which is Christ himself, unites and nourishes us as a Christian community and, therefore, asks us to do the same. Christ said that the grain must fall and die for it to bear much fruit (*cf*. John 12:24). We are also asked to share ourselves, especially with the poor and the needy. Kanyaw and the parable challenge us to be inclusive, for both (*Kanyaw* and the parable) were summoned and prepared for all without race, class, or distinction. It gives us the foretaste of the Kingdom of God that is already but not yet. A kingdom where all are summoned to be as one community, like the first Christian community that shares everything in common (*cf*. Act 2: 42-47).

In short, both *Kanyaw* and the parable are life-giving stories that breathe life into the people experiencing and living it. It is a great challenge to reflect on our Christian identity that we are bread that needs to be broken down and shared. We need to move as one community to embrace, care for, and look after our brothers and sisters who are unloved, the *anawim*. It is a challenge and a life-long mission to bear witness to Christ's life and generosity.

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Roles of Indigenous Peoples Leaders in the Indigenization of Education: Basis for an Indigenous Peoples Education

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ABSTRACT

This basic qualitative study delves into the pivotal role of Indigenous Peoples (IP) leaders in the indigenization of the curriculum, acting as the cornerstone for the development of an Indigenous Peoples Education Program. The study investigates the multifaceted responsibilities undertaken by IP leaders, assuming roles such as translators, facilitators/ resource persons, coordinators, and narrators in the intricate process of curriculum development. Additionally, the research scrutinizes the various issues and challenges that these leaders encounter in fulfilling their crucial roles. Key challenges identified include a lack of awareness regarding their rights as integral members of the indigenous community, insufficient educational and training opportunities, limited access to pertinent sources for IPs, and a deficiency in knowledge, skills, and representation within the

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Department of Education (DepEd). These challenges underscore systemic barriers that impede the effective participation of IP leaders in the indigenization of the curriculum. In response to these findings, the study advocates for the implementation of a comprehensive Indigenous Peoples Education Program. This proposed program aims to address the identified challenges by focusing on providing education and training for IP leaders, raising awareness about their rights, and advocating for their active representation within the educational system. It is anticipated that the implementation of the recommended IP Education Program will contribute to a more inclusive, culturally sensitive, and representative curriculum that aligns with the diverse perspectives of Indigenous Peoples, fostering a harmonious coexistence between traditional knowledge and mainstream education.

Keywords: *Indigenous Peoples, indigenization, contextualization, IP education*

1. Introduction

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 declared in Article 8, that "Indigenous Peoples have the collective and individual right to maintain and develop their distinct identities and characteristics, including their rights to identify themselves indigenous and to be recognized as such." Further, Article 3 stipulates that "Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

According to Minority Right Groups (2020), there are approximately 11.3 million Indigenous people in the Philippines, which is equivalent to 11-12% of the total population. Among 11.3 million, 33% are from Northern Luzon, 61% are from Mindanao and

the remaining 6% are from the Visayas regions (United Nations Development Programme 2013). That is why the Philippines needs to look for the development of IP education.

The Philippine government enacted Republic Act 8317 or the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) Law, which recognizes the rights and development needs of the IPs. Indigenous teachers are prioritized with support from experts or elders as resource persons for cultural topics. The community or ancestral domain is the learning space using indigenous materials, and indigenous teaching and learning methods. IPAs intervention include basic literacy numeracy to children and adults to learn, read, write, and count for their daily interactions in the society as well as to exercise their right to suffrage. Adult-based training like livelihoods, health, and the like to expand livelihood options and access to health services; provision for school supplies, tutorials, scholarships and health services; and provision for facilities, resources, and infrastructure similar to mainstream education to facilitate IP education towards self-determination (Victor and Yano 2018).

The Department of Education adopted this Indigenous Peoples' Participation Framework for the Teacher Effectiveness and Competencies Enhancement Project to support the rights of indigenous peoples to basic education and as part of its mandate to provide inclusive basic education for all by the 1987 Philippine Constitution and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997. The National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework is in line with this framework, which was established by the Department under DepEd Order No. 62, s.2020. This is the commitment of the Philippine government to achieving its Sustainable Development Goals in 2011.

The K–12 Basic Education Curriculum, which adheres to the following standards and principles, among others, is supported by the IPEd Program. It is inclusive, culture-sensitive, and flexible enough to allow schools to localize, indigenize, and improve it by the educational and social context of the community (DepEd Order No. 22 s. 2016). In this order, it is further stated that a Program Support Fund (PSF) shall be given to regional and school division offices in FY 2016 to increase DepEd's ability to respond to IP learning demands in a flexible,

demand-driven, and evidence-based way. When the program is implemented in 2016, the PSF must only be used for IPEd-related activities that support three (3) thematic focus areas, namely: (1) the creation of curricula and learning resources; (2) capacity building; and (3) IPEd education planning. These focus areas are intended to increase the institutional capacity of DepEd offices in addressing and managing the complexity of IPEd implementation, assisting with the indigenization of the curriculum at the school/division level, and developing education plans that are responsive to and relevant to cultures at the division and school levels. These thematic focus areas' activities incrementally expanded upon the priority activities from earlier years.

There are studies on Indigenous Peoples Education particularly on approaches, but there is a dearth of studies on the roles of IP leaders in the implementation, except that on the role of Aeta leaders of Zambales.

A few studies were conducted on the role of IP leaders in indigenization, but no one has focused on the role of IP Leaders on the Indigenization of the curriculum among the Malin-awa tribal community. Because of this, the researchers conducted this study in order to raise consciousness among educational administrators about the overlooked efforts and behaviors of teachers in the tribal community, as well as to have a basis for IP Leaders' Development Program.

1.1. Research Objectives

The study determined the role of IP leaders in the indigenization of education. It specifically gathered responses on the profile of IP leaders and parents in terms of age, gender, position in the Community and highest educational attainment; the roles/responsibilities of the IP leaders in the indigenization of education; and the issues and challenges encountered by the IP leaders in the indigenization of education.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The results of the current study will provide an information that can be used by the Department of Education in the formulation of a plan on how to engage the IP leaders in the indigenization of educational materials. It will also be helpful to the school heads who are responsible for designing interventions to make the learners motivated to learn. It will be advantageous for the teachers in that these IP leaders can be enlisted to guarantee the educational materials' quality. Additionally, because the learning materials to be used are based on the localized setting of knowledge, the pupils will be assisted in improving their understanding of their lessons and will be encouraged to actively participate. The IP parents will realize their roles and responsibilities toward the school and the community.

1.3. Underpinning Theory

The study is based on socio-cultural theory of human learning by Vygotsky (1978) which describes learning as a social process with the origin of human intelligence is the society or culture. This theory also has its basis in interacting with other people. When this happens, the information is integrated on the individual level. Socio-cultural theory focuses not only on how adults and peers influence individual learning, but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes took place in the teaching-learning process. Each culture, however, provides what is referred to as tools of intellectual adaptation. These tools allow children to use their basic mental abilities in a way that is adaptive to the culture in which they live. This theory is appropriate for the present study being conducted since, with IP education, the cultures, traditions, beliefs, and values, as well as how IPs interact with others, are considered integral to their way of life.

1.4. Literature Review

1.4.1. The Indigenous Peoples

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 (Article 1.1) in 1989 defines IP as "tribal people in independent

countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations." It entails recognition of their presence, their historicity, and cultural indelibility (May and Aikman 2003). IPs are populations of specific geographical locations whose institutions were preserved even after colonization of the country. Their ways of life and living are not changed, differentiating them from populations shaped by modern and complex socio-political and economic structures. Their "being different" from the majority places them in vulnerable situation, hence, articulation of their identity and rights became increasingly prominent in the past decades. IPs are now at the forefront of promoting respect for their societies, their ways of existence, and their holistic social constructs – all of which are part and parcel of affirmation to their collective and individual rights (May and Aikman 2003).

The expression of IP rights has become clearer as outlined through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. In Article 8, it is stated that "Indigenous Peoples have the collective and individual right to maintain and develop their distinct identities and characteristics, including their rights to identify themselves indigenous and to be recognized as such." Further, Article 3 stipulates that "Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development." Hence, policies and actions of mainstream society to assimilate them are forms of unequal power and betrayal to their identity and self-determination. However, various social mechanisms such as migration, colonization, conflicts, and environmental problems inevitably expose the IP on the verge of cultural and historical loss. It is important to reclaim their collective and individual right; central to this is education. May and Aikman (2003, 141) stressed education as a "key arena in which indigenous peoples can reclaim and revalue their language and cultures."

IPs are significant groups of people in communities. When properly "recognized" and given positive attention through holistic Education, they could be useful toward national development. There

is a lack of a definitive, universal description of "indigenous" but Cobo (1983) mentioned that IPs are those having their historical continuity developed within their own territories.

When referring to Education, the term "Indigenous" generally pertains to the first or original inhabitants of a later colonized group by a group of powerful people who imposed their own culture and language on the original inhabitants (Reyhner and Singh 2015). This historical definition of "indigenous" prompted institutions to implement policies aimed at protecting the rights of IPs and ensure that their culture and traditions are preserved. The integrity of this protection, however, is sometimes questionable, as it is consistently challenged by the need to adapt to mainstream culture. Various constitutional provisions grant the IPs the rights to Education along these lines: (a) to establish and control their education; (b) to receive protection of the State without discrimination; and (c) a mandate for the state to take measure to ensure children of IPs have access to Education using their own language and culture (The 1987 Philippine Constitution). To this end, the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 was enacted. It further recognizes the state's obligations to ensure the continuity of the unique cultural expression of IPs/ICCs by assuring their full participation in the activities and endeavors toward health, education, and other areas of services making them responsive to the demands of their unique communities. However, the study of Eduardo (2017) showed that there is a limited mechanism to promote awareness among IPs on the framework of IPRA of 1997.

The IPs deserve holistic education that represents their beliefs, feelings, principles, and general ideas that share a family resemblance (Forbes 2003; Hare 2010). According to Hare (2010), education focuses on the whole person, encompassing both cognitive and affective aspects. In this connection, an IP education is described by Section 28 of the IPRA of 1997, as one that provides comprehensive system of education relevant to the needs of the children and young IPs/ICCs through the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). The concern of IP education is both global and international in scope. IPs are mostly deprived of access to quality education. The current curriculum of education programs is incapable of addressing the special needs of the IPs/ICCs. Despite the reality that very few

Indigenous students can do well in the education methods that do not consider the uniqueness of Indigenous culture, the system of Education still assumes universality of application, disregarding the distinctive nature of IP students' cultural orientation and social experiences. To address the issue, the Education International (EI), including the Working Group on Indigenous Populations and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (WGIPPFII), passed resolutions that recognize the peculiarity of the IP culture and language in terms of Indigenous Education. It highlights the need to enrich and protect Indigenous cultural heritage and identity (Eduardo and Gabriel 2021).

1.4.2. Roles of IP Leaders and Members

Some divisions that provide IPED curricula, such as the Division of Kalinga, where the Senior High School offers Backstrap Weaving, Tattooing, and Pottery, asked IP leaders to certify the instructional materials used in the institution. By DepEd Order No. 22 to improve DepEd's ability to meet IP learning demands in a flexible, demand-driven, and evidence-based way, funding was made available in 2016. In 2016, the utilization of the PSF is restricted to activities associated with IPEd, specifically supporting three key thematic areas: (1) developing curricula and learning materials; (2) enhancing capacity; and (3) planning IPEd education. These areas aim to enhance the institutional capacity of DepEd offices, enabling them to effectively address the intricacies of IPEd implementation. Additionally, the focus is on supporting the incorporation of indigenous elements into the curriculum at the school/division level and formulating culturally relevant and responsive education plans at both division and school levels. Progressively expanding on the key activities from preceding years are the activities under these thematic focal areas.

Tecson (2020) highlighted the indigenous elders' key role as mentor and guide in the education of children in their communities in Central Luzon during the pandemic. They serve as the partner of the Department of Education (DepEd) in addressing the distance learning barrier. They underwent online training on IPED learning materials development based on IP alphabet primers to equip them with the necessary knowledge on how to guide and mentor their children on

their studies, according to Lacson (2020). Aside from this, according to Montemayor (2020), the focal person said that the IP leaders joined the consultative advisory body and participated in the curriculum contextualization required by IPED. They (referring to IP leaders) are their partners, especially in the matter of contextualization. There are also orthographies, alphabet primers, storybooks, and IP lesson plans that can be used to teach IPED in the region.

With these current issues in IP education that significantly concern their identity and self-determination, there is a dimension that is usually neglected in state-run programs and IP education practitioners – the elderly of Ips. It is very unfortunate that the IP elderly have miniscule role in IP education. The elders are the most important resource in the classroom formal schooling and research in curriculum development (Ismael and Cazden 2005). The elders are the vessel of their history, indigenous language, and cultures. They have the "lens" in imparting the appreciation of their identity and contextual relevance of their traditions even in the present. In an Aeta community in Pampanga, Aeta children attend formal schooling in a nearby DepEd accredited IP school. There is a rewarding feeling among Aeta parents and non-IP community leaders when they are able to send their children to formal schools. However, signs of fleeting indigenous language and cultures are already evident in the community, leading to cultural conflicts between Aeta elders and non-IP collaborators. One Aeta mother, who sends all her children to the formal IP school, expressed joy that her children are learning and is hopeful that formal schooling could provide them with better opportunities in life. However, she admits that her children's lessons are not familiar to her. Although her children can speak their indigenous language, they can no longer perform their traditional system of writing. In the school, they speak their indigenous language with awkwardness. Aeta students shared that they only use their language when communicating among themselves, adjusting when communicating with non-IP students.

During interviews, the observation was made that social and cultural traditions are scarcely practiced in the village. Nonetheless, there is a willingness and attempt to preserve their language and cultures, especially among the elders. In the community, four Aeta elders are still knowledgeable about their stories, language, and

traditions. In their desire to impart this knowledge to the younger generation, they occasionally gather Aeta children to share stories and teach traditional songs and dances. The knowledge and efficacy of the elderly toward their indigenous identity are valuable family resources that must be shared and transmitted to the children. Indigenous education should support this process rather than disrupt or deprive the family of this resource. Hence, there is a conscious effort to revitalize their Identity and promote self-determination among the young Aeta population in the community.

The teachers at Pagsanjan Elementary School in Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija, have a limited understanding of the cultural practices of the place. To address this, they sought the guidance of tribal elders to educate students about these cultural practices. The process of education also emphasizes the revitalization of the indigenous language. However, the lack of written materials poses a hindrance for teachers in preserving and effectively transmitting the language (Mercado 2021).

Endowed with rich history and cultures, IPs, particularly the elderly, should oversee the shaping and controlling of their education system (Tolentino 2017). Todal emphasizes the significance of linguistic maintenance in IP education, requiring the participation of both IP families and non-IP groups connected in strategizing and implementing IP education (as cited in May and Aikman 2003). Hornberger et al. (2018) refers to this as a "bottom-up language process" that promotes local decision-making, control, and participation.

Additionally, the DepEd order specifies several activities that must be carried out, including curriculum contextualization and learning resource development sessions, consultations, and workshops with IP elders, leaders, and culture bearers (who may be invited as resource persons); community representatives; and other relevant stakeholders. Moreover, it emphasizes the production of learning materials with content that has been duly validated with concerned IP communities. The most valuable resource in formal education settings and curriculum development is the older generation (Ismael and Cazden, 2005). Their history, indigenous language, and cultures are

transmitted through the elders. They have the "lens" to communicate the value of their identity and the contextual applicability of their traditions even now (Tolentino 2017).

1.4.3. State of Indigenous Education in the Philippines

In a survey of IP situations in different countries show that indigenous peoples are already given due recognition and importance as part of the bigger community. In an earlier study on indigenous people in the Philippines in 2000, it was revealed that most of them were only done with their elementary education, and only few have gone higher in the educational ladder (Soriano 2008).

The EFA conferences held in Mindanao and the Cordillera in 2002 to 2007, revealed that the education program brought up by the indigenous themselves focused on priority task for the people to learn the modern/dominant languages, knowledge, and skills that would further empower them to assert their rights.

The tribe people learn within the corners of their ancestral domain, similar to the 'lifelong learning' concept of education. Their elders believe that anyone is a possible source of knowledge and companions in the learning process like their grandparents, parents, elders who have recognized expertise. The knowledge passed on to the next generation of young people is called traditional knowledge (Castellano 2000, cited in Steinhauer 2002, 2).

Indigenous peoples education is similarly given priority and attention. In line with its thrust to promote culture-based education, the DepEd through its Indigenous Peoples Education Program continues to strengthen the Indigenous Peoples communities especially in the contextualization of the K to 12 basic education curriculum.

1.4.4. Issues and Challenges in IP Education on the Roles of Leaders

Some of these issues include the strain between the traditional and formal schooling; the disappearing indigenous peoples' language; and the fading voice of the IP elderly in transmitting their historical

and cultural resources (Arquiza 2006; Ismael and Cazden 2005; May and Aikman 2003). This task is important to be able to collect, validate (by the elders), transmit, and revitalize indigenous cultures in an educational system. On the other hand, education practitioners can train elders and parents to become teachers to their fellow indigenous peoples.

Only a little amount of studies have been conducted explicitly in the Philippines, even though many studies have looked at the indigenization and localization of teaching materials. Additionally, the majority of study articles did not specifically address how IP elders helped in the indigenization of education. To better understand the role and experiences of IP, it is deemed necessary to conduct this research.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

Basic qualitative design was employed in this study. The researcher inquired about the IPs' roles, challenges, and issues in their roles in the indigenization of lessons in Malin-awa Elementary School. The information was gathered from the IP leaders and members during the personal interview, which was conducted following the interview guide. The replies of the participants were coded to support the respondents' spoken responses.

2.2. Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were IP leaders and members of the Malin-awa community who were chosen through purposive sampling. Age of the respondents was the primary basis for choosing them where only those whose ages range from 50 years old and above and who are actively involved in the indigenization program of the school. The study concentrated on how IP leaders helped in the indigenization of education.

2.3. Instrumentation

The Interview Guide was the primary tool used to gather the data required to carry out the study. In Part I, the researcher collected data on the IP leaders' demographics, including their age, gender, position in DepEd and highest educational attainment. The second part dealt with the participants' roles in the indigenization of the curriculum. The third part was about the issues and challenges encountered by the IP leaders in the indigenization that the IP leaders faced when indigenizing education.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher sought the permission of the District Supervisor of Western Tabuk District to conduct the study as it involved indigenization of the curriculum. The researcher interviewed the IP leaders and the parents who are also members of the IP community. Another letter of request was sent to the barangay leader of Malin-awa that they would be allowed to reach out the participants. She used a tape recorder to capture their comments in Tinongrayan, the local dialect that is widely spoken by the IP leaders and parents. The respondents were given the freedom to express themselves. The participant's comments were coded with the letters IPL.01, IPL.02, etc. (Indigenous Peoples' Leader Elder) to maintain their anonymity. The members were given the same letter code as IPL.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The researchers asked permission respectfully from the participants for their participation in the study.

For the researcher to contact the IP leaders, the barangay captain's consent was requested. To ensure their active involvement in the focus group discussions and interviews, parents' and the IP leaders' approval was requested. The participants affixed their signatures to a letter of consent. Their privacy was specifically protected in the interests of protection and security. All information collected were treated confidential and were used in the study's purposes only, wherein codes were utilized to identify each participant

as a substitute to their name for the anonymity, in order to secure their privacy.

2.6. Data Analysis

The data were organized into themes in order to identify relevant information that characterized the roles played by the IP leaders and members in indigenization of lessons, and after the data were categorized, the researcher analyzed them.

2.7. Rigour of Qualitative Research

To confirm and validate that the respondents' rephrased statements in the dialect were accurate, the researcher went back to the participants in the barangay hall to conduct focus group discussion. This was done to ensure the correctness of the information given.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
50-60 years old	6	40.00
61-70 years old	5	33.33
71 years old and above	4	26.67
Sex		
Male	13	86.67
Female	2	12.33
Position in the Community		
IP Leader	3	12.33
IP Member	12	80.00
Educational Attainment		
College Graduate	3	20.00
High School Graduate	7	46.67
Elementary Graduate	5	33.33
Did Not Attend School	0	0

Most of the respondents were 60 years old and above, majority were males, IP members and leaders and high school graduates. In an earlier study on indigenous people in the Philippines in 2000, it was revealed that most of them were only done with their elementary education, and only few have gone higher in the educational ladder (Soriano 2008).

The data reveals that they are much aware of their roles as IP leaders since they are already of old age. The data also reveal that in the community, most of those involved in IP activities in school are males.

3.1. Roles of IP Leaders in Indigenization

3.1.1. Theme 1: Translator

One of the roles identified by the informants was to help the teachers translate the difficult words used by the IP community so that they could be in turn translated to English or Filipino when they teach. The following are the statements:

IPL 1: *Fumachanga san mansursuro way mangikenga san kenga ni.* (I help the teachers in the translation of our dialect.)

IPL 2: *Fumachanga san mansursuro way mangitudtuchu san man-chacharok way kenga*. (I help the teachers in explaining the difficult words in our dialect.)

IPL5: *Fumachanga way mangammaan san ustu ukud yak mamawa.* (I help in the preservation of our language by providing the proper terms.)

One important concern in the indigenization and contextualization of lessons is language. Teachers have difficulty in translating lessons especially those that were prepared by Curriculum developers of the DepEd so they have to seek the assistance of the IP elders. Because the elders want to preserve the authenticity of their dialect, they are very willing to help the teachers. Valenzuela et al. (2022) also found that that there is willingness and attempt to preserve the language and culture of the Aetas by the elders.

Indigenous language is also highlighted and revitalized in the process of education. The lack of written materials, however, is a hindrance for teachers to preserve and effectively transmit the language (Mercado 2021).

3.1.2. Theme 02. Facilitator/Resource Person/ Coordinator

The IP elders and members are culture bearers of the community. They perform roles as facilitators/resource persons as told by the following:

IPL 2: *Fumachanga waymangacharan san tudtucho nu maisuro nan ugali nan Tinongrayan*. (I help facilitate the lessons when a Kalinga practice is taught.)

IPL 1: *Osak way maayakana nga mangifingay san ugalini*. (I am invited to explain our practices.)

IPL 5: *Ipailaknan inaawi way oyoyooni way masiput pak uchum waymakmakwa.* (I demonstrate our indigenous practices in farming and other activities.)

IPL 9: *Ifusway u nan inaawi way tufag isu nan ogkayam, salichummay yak chanchanag*. (I sing our native songs oggayam, salichummay and chanchanag (song for the dead).

IPL 4: *Mangatocha as user as mangil-an man acher.* (I give examples of our material culture for instructional purposes.)

IPL 6: *Makaukucha san papangat nu achan inoni way mangifillay san inaawi wau ug-ukali yak mamawa*. (I coordinate with other leaders how we can share our indigenous culture and practices.)

The IP leaders and members were happy to narrate the they do in school. Facilitating learning in Araling Panlipunan is done especially when the topic is about their cultural practices. In their Science and Health, part of their contextualization is showing or demonstrating planting and harvesting of palay and other crops. The teachers invite an elder to illustrate what they are doing.

In Music, PE, and Health, the IP elder is happy to sing the native songs so that the learners can understand the messages of their songs. No one said that somebody demonstrates native games. Perhaps, the children are aware of these games as they observe them during community fiestas.

The material culture such as the bamboo instruments or crafts are brought to school by an elder for the demonstration of their uses. The bamboo musical instruments are then donated to the school, anyway, they can easily make and give for free. They just look for bamboos in the forest to dry before making instruments. All of these are part of the contextualization and localization of lessons.

As specified by DepEd order no 22, S of 2016, activities must be carried out such as curriculum contextualization and learning resource development sessions, consultations, and workshops with IP elders, leaders, and culture bearers (who may be invited as resource persons); community representatives; and other relevant stakeholders; and production of learning materials with content that has been duly validated with concerned IP communities.

Montemayor (2020) observed that the IP leaders of Pampamga, Region 03 joined the consultative advisory body and participated in the curriculum contextualization required by IPED. They are their partners especially in the matter of contextualization. There are also orthographies, alphabet primers, storybooks, and indigenous IP lesson plans that can be used to teach IPED in the region.

One leader said that he coordinates with other members of the community how they can share their indigenous culture and practices. Since they are looked up as helpful partners in the indigenization or contextualization by the school, they generously work together on what they can share the teachers so that their children will learn better.

3.1.3. Theme 03. Narrator

Narrating events and stories to the teachers and children are claimed by the elders as one of their roles as expressed by the following:

IPL 8 :*Ul-ullituk nan mamawa san mansursuru yak man-acher. (I narrate events of importance to the teachers and children.)*

IPL10: *Ifillay unan ul-ullit nan chachakker.* (I share stories narrated by our old folks.)

The IP leaders and members, especially the older ones, share events that happened in the past and tell stories such as legends, myths, short stories and poems to the teachers, parents and learners. They are a repository of folklore that are worth integrating in the curriculum. That is why Ismael and Cazden (2005) consider the elders as the most important resource in the classroom, formal schooling and research in curriculum development.

Tecson (2020) in her article highlighted the indigenous elders' key role as mentor and guide in the education of children in their communities in Central Luzon during the pandemic. The elders serve as the partners of the Department of Education (DepEd) in addressing the distance learning barrier. But even during normal times when they can also move freely to the school or wherever they are invited.

As a whole, Valenzuela et al. (2022) observe that among the Aeta community, the knowledge and efficacy of the elderly towards their indigenous identity are family resources, thus they must share and transmit to the children. Indigenous education should aid this process and not disrupt or deprive the family of this resource. Hence, there is a conscious effort to revitalize their identity and promote self-determination.

3.2. Issues and Challenges of the IP Leaders and Members

3.2.1. Lack of Knowledge of Their Rights as Members of the IP Community

It is sad to note that the IPs of Malin-awa in Tabuk City do not have enough knowledge on their rights as expressed by IPL 1 who said:

Kinafuwat nan agamun nan papangat nan indigenous people (IP) sa karobfongan cha han lintog. (Insufficient knowledge of the rights of IPs guaranteed by law.) This can be attributed to the low educational attainment of most informants and they might not have attended orientations or symposia conducted by the NCIP.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 clearly outlined the expression of IP in Article 8, which states that "Indigenous Peoples have the collective and individual right to maintain and develop their distinct identities and characteristics, including their rights to identify themselves indigenous and to be recognized as such." Further, Article 3 provides that "Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development." However, it was found by Eduardo (2017) that there is a limited mechanism to promote awareness among IPs on the framework of IPRA of 1997.

3.2.2. Lack of Education and Training/ Lack of Sources for IPs

The informants gave the following statements to imply their lack of education and training:

IPL 5. *kinakurang way magifaka san kulturan nan anchanaya way indigenous people ya kinakurang nan laing cha han pangkop nan pulitika.* (Inadequate skills in verbalization of the culture of IPs and their indigenous political structure.)

IPL 8. *Kinakurang nan akammon nan papangat way Indigenous People way san pangkop san   way mamawa isun nan*

kultura ya maususer way kenga san uswelaan isun nan mother tongue. (Insufficient skills of IP leaders in vocalizing their knowledge of IP indigenous knowledge systems and practices, culture, customary norms in the languages used in normal education).

IPL 9. *Anghan nan kenga tau way mansikab as ikenga han English ya Pilipino.* (Many of our terms are difficult to translate in English and Filipino.)

IPL 11. *Maid o-on u akammu way mansuru san indigenous lesson.* (I do not have enough skills in teaching indigenous lesson.)

IPL 15. *Kinakurang cha way magisurat nu ngachan ininon nan Indigenous People (IP) un Malin-awa.* (Insufficient writings about Indigenous People in Malin-awa.)

IPL 14. *Manmanu nan manginap san osa way fanag pangkop na* (IP). (Inadequate references on the Ips.)

An informant admitted that he lacks the ability to articulate their culture and their political structure that many times they could not explain well to the teachers especially those who are not from Malin-awa or Tinglayan. This is due to the fact that there are terms that could not be translated into the medium of instruction which are English and Filipino. According to the teachers, they have terms that could not be translated to either Filipino or English.

The researcher agrees with the claim that there are not enough written resources about the people of Malin-awa. However, there are materials that were written about the iTongrayan and other ethnic groups of Kalinga by the Belgian missionaries and other foreign and local researchers who came to the province of Kalinga like Barton (1949) who wrote about the Kalinga institution and customs, Billiet (1970) the first Belgian missionary stationed in Lubuagan, Kalinga who wrote the Kalinga Ullalim. Local scholars also followed documenting the Kalinga Hilltribe of Northern Luzon. (Sugguiyao, 1990), the Kalinga Bodong (Dang-awan, 1971; Ayang-ang 1973; Maslan 1980; Sallidao 1982). All of these authors covered the

Kalingas in general and the Malin-awa sub-tribe is a part of their documents.

3.2.3. Lack of Coordination by the DepEd

The respondents expressed lack coordination as their challenge. The following statements were given:

IPL12. *Maid usto as man-uukuchan nan papangat nan education*. (Lack of coordination by education officials.)

IPL 09. *Kinafuwat nan umoy magifaka way papangat nan IP san papangat nan education.* (Lack of real representation in special bodies in education.)

IPL 14. *Masapur way awad magifagfaka han papangat nan education pangkop san inun nan manfalin pangat nan Indigenous People (IP).* (There must be a coordination of education officials regarding to the Indigenous People.)

Successful implementation of IPED can be attributed to close coordination between the IP leaders and school authorities. However, the informants believed that coordination with them is not enough.

They play an important role in the contextualization of lessons. The DepEd order specified some activities that must be carried out, including curriculum contextualization and learning resource development sessions, consultations, and workshops with IP elders, leaders, and culture bearers (who may be invited as resource persons); community representatives; and other relevant stakeholders; and production of learning materials with content that has been duly validated with concerned IP communities. The fading voice of the IP elderly in transmitting their historical and cultural resources is also evident in other studies (Arquiza 2006; Ismael and Cazden 2005; May and Aikman 2003). These important roles really need close coordination by the department through the school heads if successful indigenization or contextualization is desired.

3.2.4. Protection and Promotion of One's Culture

The respondents' concern was on how they can protect or promote their cultural values and practices. The leaders have these statements:

IPL 11. *Usa ah` way maseknan san inon way mangammaan han kachawyan way ukali*. (I am concerned on how I can protect our culture.)

IPL 15. *Piok way itudtuchu san adchachakher/uswila nan khinapatog nan Fain, Ngilin ya Paniyaw*. (I want to inculcate to the young learners our core values of Fain, Ngilin, and Paniyaw.)

IPL 10*. Matakinayunon nan kachawyan nu` manfifinnachang ta.* (We need to foster our practice of helping one another.)

On the protection of the indigenous culture of the IPs of Malin-awa, the elderly feel and observe that their cultural practices are becoming modernized. Because of this they want to preserve them. However, this cannot be controlled as the impact of education and social media is strong. Among these are indigenous peoples' language (Arquiza, 2006; Ismael and Cazden, 2005; May and Aikman, 2003), their dances, and songs.

One respondent also expressed his desire to inculcate the Kalinga core values of fain, ngilin and paniyaw. These are the core values of the Kalinga people. "*Fain*" is a value where one should not do something that will put him/her or family and relatives to shame, thus maintains his/her integrity or a person. "*Ngilin*" is another value of following a practice within a certain period of time. Literally, it is having "holiday" to avoid criticism from the community. An example of *ngilin* is the avoidance of a father to go to his farm after the wife has given birth so that nothing will happen to the baby. A widower does not have his haircut or will not get married for a year after his wife dies. *Paniyaw* is a belief of not doing and acyion because it will rebound to te person. Example of this is criticizing a person from an inborn disease otherwise such illness will be experienced by members

of the family. A widower for example does not have his haircut or will not get married for a year after his wife dies.

Another expressed the need to strengthen their culture of cooperation in their community. Like other Filipinos, this old value of "bayanihan" is practiced by the people of Malin-awa and they want to be retained. Helping one another in the community lightens the burden of the concerned member. Older people want this practice to be learned by the young members.

The Indigenous Education Accord supports indigenous identities, cultures, languages, values, ways of knowing, and knowledge systems. Among the goals are to respect and welcome learning environments, inclusive curricula, culturally responsive pedagogies, value and promote indigenousness in education, culturally responsive assessment, affirm and neutralize indigenous languages, indigenize education leadership, and respect indigenous research (Ganal 2017).

4. Conclusion

The IPs of Malin-awa have indispensable role in shaping the IP education. They are valuable sources and transmitters of their traditional learning, linguistics, and social practices essential development. They play very important roles in the indigenization of the elementary education of Malin-awa Elementary School as translator, facilitator/resource Person/ coordinator and narrator. In spite of these role they encountered issues and challenges such as lack of knowledge of their rights as members of the IP community; lack of education and training/ lack of sources for IPs; lack of knowledge, skills and representation in the DepEd and protection and promotion of their culture. An IP Education program is highly recommended '

5. Recommendations

Conducting orientation program for the IP leaders of Malin-awa may help to instruct and educate them with regards to their

responsibility as in guiding and helping their children in terms of learning.

The tribal community is also recommended to continue playing their roles as it helps the elementary teachers to discover and learn new strategies on how to teach the pupils

Awareness campaign for all IPs of Malin-awa enlighten their minds regarding IP education as they may influence and educate the youth.

Implementation of the Proposed IP Education Program is highly recommended.

The desirable values of the IPs of Malin-awa be preserved.

A study that will use observation and more in-depth interview with elderly, school collaborators and IP students are recommended to future researchers.

6. Proposed IP Education Program

IPs' Journey to Curriculum Indigenization

Goal: IPs as competent partners of the school in contextualization of the curriculum

Objectives	Activities and Topics	Time Frame	Champions	Expected Outcome
to orient the IPs on their rights as members of the IP Community	Symposium	May 2023 (1 day)	IP leaders and member NCIP Resource Person(s)	Increased awareness of IP rights.
to enhance language literacy of the IPs in	Formal classes/ Basic English and Filipino	3 hours once a week	IP leaders and members	Increased proficiency in English and Filipino

English and Filipino.		(May-June 2023)	School head Teachers	
to equip the IP leaders and members with basic skills of teaching.	Lecture with Demonstration classes/ Strategies of teaching	3 hours once a week (May-September 2023)	School Head Master Teacher Teachers IP leaders and members	Acquired basic teaching skill
to improve one's skills in planning for indigeniza-tion	Planning workshop on indigenization	3 days (July 2023)	School Head Master Teacher Teachers IP leaders and members	well planned indigenization of lessons

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The Impact of the Cityhood of Tabuk
on Human Development

George Canilao Tumbali[1]

ABSTRACT

The study analysed the impact of Tabuk's transition to cityhood on various aspects of development, including economic, socio-cultural, political, and environmental dimensions. It sought to understand the demographic profile of respondents, encompassing age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and employment status. It examined the city government's demographic profile, including population, land area, income, and internal revenue allocation. The study evaluated the city government's delivery of services and facilities and assessed the level of impact of Tabuk's cityhood on economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental development.

The research employed percentage analysis for respondents' demographic profiles, documentary analysis for the city government's profile, mean to gauge service and facility delivery, and regression to determine the cityhood's impact on economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental development. Data collection primarily relied on questionnaires. Diverse groups, including business, agriculture, healthcare, education, professionals, transportation

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sectors, and community groups, participated in the survey. Key findings revealed that a significant proportion of respondents were under 24 years old, with the majority being female, married, and holding at least a bachelor's degree. A substantial portion of degree holders reported unemployment. The Internal Revenue Allotment of Tabuk City exhibited substantial growth, and local income sustained growth. Population increased, and land area expanded.

The study affirmed the city government's effective provision of services and facilities, fostering socio-economic, political, cultural, and environmental development. Respondents' demographic profiles, particularly age and employment status, significantly influenced service delivery. Moreover, service and facility delivery significantly predicted the city's impact, particularly in infrastructure, tourism, low-cost housing, tourism promotion, and support for education, police, and fire services. Based on these findings, recommendations were made, such as crafting comprehensive communication plans, developing public-private partnerships, investing in green initiatives, promoting waste segregation, supporting entrepreneurship, initiating reforestation projects, creating a cemetery office, and establishing a gender and development office to enhance gender equality and inclusion.

Keywords: *Tabuk cityhood, human development, service delivery, demographic profile, impact assessment.*

1. Introduction

The conversion of a municipality into a city has always been the aspiration of every local government entity in the Philippines. Local government units are noted to go in such a direction, particularly

given that a virtual competition sanctions their functioning. The promised growth and development offered by "cityhood" is particularly tempting to all local government bodies. Accordingly, urbanization draws investors because of the belief that individuals in the city have greater buying power. Establishing different business entities in the city would result in greater work possibilities for those in that region. Consequently, the amount of money the local government entities produced in taxes would also increase.

1.1. Motivation for Cityhood

The primary reason towns or municipalities aspire to be promoted to cityhood status is the higher internal income allocation from the national government. The above arguments contribute to the thesis that growth happens after a town or municipality has attained cityhood status. Studies have shown (Pacoy and Balais 2005) that budgetary differences in how the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) was divided were the main reason for the rush to become a city, but political factors also played a role.

1.2. Migration Challenges in European Nations

One challenge the European nations face concerning the fast rise of cities is "migration." People came to cities in America owing to economic opportunities. Industrialization has been viewed as the primary factor that stimulates offshore migration. The traditional life of the people was being destroyed by the shift of the inhabitants from agriculture to industry. The movement of economic supremacy from farming to industry led to the migration of personnel from the country to the city. With their diverse economic systems, expanding labor markets, busy streets, and bright lights, the great cities attracted a disproportionate share of millions fleeing farms and towns for a better life (Hamerow 1989).

1.3. Social Impact of Urbanization

George Hansen, a German sociologist, was very worried about how lousy city life was for young people. Since both parents had to work all day, children were typically left to themselves. They grew up

in the narrow, muddy lanes of the working-class sections of the great metropolis. Finally, urbanization, or cityhood, was regarded as accountable for the increased pursuit of pleasure and the deterioration of morals. The city, with its brilliant lights and garish distractions, fosters self-indulgence; it stimulates a restless drive for conspicuous luxury and physical fulfillment. The moderating effect on human behavior exerted in the village by the church, family, and community collapsed in the city – the loosening of behavioral restrictions that the urban environment created was also reflected in a more significant crime rate. Moreover, expanding varied activities in the metropolis contributes to psychological confusion. More people in metropolitan settings commit suicide than in towns (Casant and Helbich 2022).

1.4. America as a Nation of Immigrants

America is regarded as a nation of immigrants because a large number of people come from other countries. The challenges they experience include severe traffic, smog, noise, crime, filth, pollution, and slums (Pettinger 2022).

1.5. Tokyo: A Model City

Japan, Tokyo. The history of the city of Tokyo stretches back some 400 years. Originally named Edo, it had grown into a massive city with a population of over a million by the mid-eighteenth century when it was renamed Tokyo. Thus, Tokyo became the capital of Japan. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government is now one of the world's best cities, where a balance between economic affluence and quality of life has been achieved, and anyone can fully enjoy life.

The Three Faces ("Cities") of Tokyo are: first, it is a safe city; it protects the lives and assets of the Tokyo residents from all kinds of disasters. Second, it is a diverse city; it embraces diversity and is full of kindness and warmth, where everyone can lead vibrant lives and be active in society. Finally, it is a smart city because it creates a sustainable Tokyo that can solve the problems facing the megalopolis and keep growing to win the international competition between cities.

1.6. Legislative Creation of Cities in the Philippines

Cities in the Philippines are legislative creations. The Congress of the Philippines gives life to a city through a legislative charter enumerating its functions, responsibilities, and powers as a social and political subdivision. Because of their services, cities today exert a significant socio-political influence on a nation's life. Calapan, the bustling provincial capital of Oriental Mindoro, marked a significant milestone as it celebrated its 20th cityhood anniversary and the Kalap Festival from March 2 to 21, 2019.

1.7. City Transformations: Calapan, Makati, and Baguio

According to Mayor Arnan Panaligan, Calapan has experienced significant improvements in commerce and industry, infrastructure, social services, and governance since attaining cityhood. In 2014, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry put Calapan in its Hall of Fame for being the most business-friendly city in the country three times (Supetran 2018).

Makati City, a first-rate, highly urbanized city in Metro Manila, had a citywide health care program that gave its residents full membership in PhilHealth, providing access to health care even for those who could not pay for it. The city now prides itself on spending more on health services (which include discounts on laboratory tests and medicine) than any other city in the Philippines. Makati was transformed from an ordinary municipality to its preeminent status as a modern city and the center of business, finance, and communications. Even the poor and underprivileged have an equal chance to receive quality education, health care, and employment opportunities. The City Government of Makati is now recognized as a leader in public service and innovative governance, constantly exploring new approaches and pursuing innovations that will help better serve its constituents. The National Nutrition Council also said that the city had the best programs for feeding babies and young children regarding how the nutrition program was set up and run.

Baguio City, formally established in 1909, is geographically located in the northern Philippines on Luzon Island. Although it

functions independently as a chartered city, Baguio, with a land area of about 57.49 km^2, is physically situated within the province of Benguet. Politically and administratively, it is divided into 129 barangays (villages). As the only American hill station in Asia and the only hill station in the Philippines, Baguio City, the country's summer capital, has been economically, politically, and socially significant for over a century. According to the study conducted by Estoque and Murayama (2011) on Baguio's spatio-temporal urban land use, a significant finding is that the city has undergone a major physical landscape transformation in the last 21 years. Through the years, rapid population growth, the availability of basic and essential urban services and facilities, and economic opportunities have transformed the hill station into a highly urbanized city, suggesting that there has been an increase in residential space and other infrastructure developments like public facilities and business establishments in recent years (Estoque and Murayama 2011).

It is reasonably evident that the experiences of cityhood conversion both here and abroad tell stories that reflect the apparent effect of the conversion and its concrete and visible influence, such as growth in commercial establishments and fancy residential units. It is important to remember that these stories cannot discuss more profound effects, like how the change affected people and their well-being.

1.8. Tabuk: A Case Study

Tabuk is the capital town of Kalinga Province. With a land area of 64,170 hectares, Tabuk is agricultural mainly due to its vast plains and abundant water supply for irrigation. Tabuk delivers quantities of rice to Manila, Baguio City, and other adjacent regions. Booming with business establishments, Tabuk is the commercial and educational core of the province.

The name "Tabuk" is derived from the word "*tobog*," which means "a living spring." It has 42 barangays. Ten barangays are mostly made up of Kalinga natives, and thirty (30) barangays are made up of people from different ethnic groups, including Ilocanos, Igorots, Tagalogs, Bagos, Ibanags, Muslims, Pampangos, and others (Tabuk City Government 2021).

During the 11th Congress (1998–2001), 33 bills were enacted into law, transforming 33 municipalities into cities, and Tabuk in the province of Kalinga was one of them. After Baguio, Tabuk became the Cordillera's second city on June 23, 2007. Some of the changes observed reflect the effect of cityhood on infrastructure initiatives. Newly constructed roads are concrete and enlarged, including city and barangay roads. Big enterprises, such as well-known fast-food chains, were launched in the city.

Moreover, the city has also been noticed to have affected the tourism economy of the place. Tabuk is currently reaping the rewards of becoming a city. Not only did Tabuk gain from economic development, but social development was also found to have changed significantly due to the city's growth, especially in human development.

1.9. Research Gap and Objectives

Pacoy and Balais (2005) completed a study on the impact of cityhood on human development: The Case of Tagum City in 2005. The study's primary goal is to present a perspective on how a municipality's conversion might influence its citizens' lives, notably in the area of human development. The study of Pacoy and Balais (2005), is similar to the present study in two ways. Firstly, both looked into changes in the fiscal and workforce resources of the LGU. Secondly, these investigations looked into the impact of cityhood on human development. However, they differ significantly in that the earlier study dealt with three years post- and pre-conversion, whereas the present study supplied additional years with nine (9) years post- and pre-conversion.

Another element of difference resides in the field of study. The researcher employs an input-output-impact procedure, whereas the former employ various methodologies. Pacoy and Balais (2005) focused on the general indicators of the human development index. At the same time, the researchers' study is directly related to the city government services that affect the people's social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental development. In the previous studies conducted by Pacoy and Balais (2005) on the impact of cityhood on

human development, there was a problem with the approach or studies they made. They did not include the city government as the main driver for human development; instead, they used Human Development Index indicators to look at cityhood's impact on the people's well-being. It should be the Local Government Unit (LGU) that will be the center of the study as it looks at the conversion of the municipality into a city; hence, this research was made to fill in the gap between the LGU as the primary provider of services and its impact on the well-being of the people.

1.10. Research Questions and Methodology

The researcher would like to study how cityhood has impacted the development of the people of Tabuk, using the Human Development Index to know whether the people have felt the consequences of cityhood on their well-being. Part of the study also aims to assess the changes in the fiscal and workforce makeup of the local government after gaining cityhood status, with the assumption that the expected improvement in the financial standing and the increase in the workforce structure of the local government would have an impact on the development of the locality and its people.

1.11. Significance of the Study

The outcomes of the study will be immediately advantageous to all LGUs in enhancing their capabilities to address the requirements of their residents. It will undoubtedly help them reassess their priorities and raise their developmental agenda by offering them ideas on where to increase expenditures and expenses to attain the desired human development in their jurisdiction.

This study will assist in shaping the financial priorities of the city's Social Services Department and update demographics, e.g., assess social service needs, use, and satisfaction, and seek community opinion on housing, health, education, employment, and economic variables. LGUs will have a reasonable basis for urban profiles and development agendas. LGUs would eventually gain from policies and strategies addressing cityhood challenges and issues. LGUs can examine and make prescriptions based on this study as they relate to

the numerous areas of local government finance, delivery of essential services, urban poverty, and thriving local governance. Therefore, the study's findings enable the LGUs to formulate policies that would be insightful in need-driven development in terms of health, education, and employment that fit the requirements of the people. Urbanization is a phenomenon that is particularly important to politicians and planners. Trends and patterns of urbanization have significance for socioeconomic development and vice versa.

It may also expose some of the best practices in "governance" being adopted in the province of Kalinga and the city of Tabuk, which might be duplicated by other government units in the Philippines. Furthermore, it could disclose particular strengths of the government that they can develop and some shortcomings they can improve when delivering essential services.

1.12. Policy Implications

The study "The Impact of the Cityhood of Tabuk City on Human Development" gives essential information about how Tabuk City becoming a city has affected different parts of human development. The results of this study can be used in several ways to help make decisions about policy, planning, and growth in the city.

1.13. Some Possible Uses

Policy Making: The study's results can help policymakers develop specific policies and strategies to deal with the challenges and possibilities in Tabuk City's human development. For example, if the study shows gaps in schooling or health care, policymakers can make plans to improve access to and quality of these services.

Allocating Resources: The study can help successfully allocate resources by pointing out the most critical areas for investment and development. The results can help decide how to divide up resources to meet specific goals in human development, such as building infrastructure, providing social services, or creating economic opportunities.

Program Design and Implementation: The study's results can help design and implement specific programs and initiatives in Tabuk City to improve human growth. For example, if the study shows high unemployment or poverty rates among a particular group, programs can help those people find work or escape poverty.

Monitoring and Analyzing: The study's results can be used as a starting point for monitoring and analyzing the effects of policies and programs in Tabuk City that aim to improve human development. By comparing success to the set indicators regularly, policymakers can see how well their plans are working and make any necessary changes.

Advocacy and Awareness: The study's results can be used to raise awareness among government officials, community leaders, and civil society organizations about the unique challenges and opportunities for human development in Tabuk City that can help get people on board with changing policies, allocating resources, and making focused interventions.

Collaboration and Partnerships: The study's results can make it easier for government agencies, NGOs, academic schools, and community groups to collaborate and form partnerships. The study's findings about the problems and possibilities can help people work together to solve the problems.

Benchmarking and Comparing: The study's results can be used as a standard to compare the human development indicators of Tabuk City with those of other cities or areas. This comparison can help find best practices, lessons learned, and places to improve, which can help people share and learn from each other's knowledge.

Getting the study results out to as many people as possible, such as policymakers, government officials, community leaders, and civil society organizations, is essential, ensuring the results are used in decision-making, program development, and policy implementation. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and changes based on the study's results can help with ongoing attempts to improve human growth in Tabuk City.

2. Conceptual Framework

The study operates based on the paradigm illustrated in Figure 1. It uses the "input-output-impact" approach to determine the impact of the cityhood of Tabuk on the political, sociocultural, and economic development of the residents of Tabuk.

INPUT

PROFILE OF THE CITY GOVERNMENT
- Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA)
- Local Income
- Land Area
- Population

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS
- Age
- Gender
- Civil Status
- Educational Attainment
- Position/ Designation
- Years of Service

OUTPUT

DELIVERY OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES
- Extension and on-site research services related to agriculture and fishery activities;
- Health Services;
- Social Welfare Services;
- Information Services;
- Solid Waste Disposal System or Environmental Management System;
- Infrastructure Facilities;
- Public Markets, Slaughterhouses, and other Municipal Enterprises;
- Public Cemetery;
- Tourism Facilities and other tourist attractions;
- Industrial Research and Development Services;
- Programs and Projects for low-cost housing and other mass dwellings;
- Investment Support Services, including Access to credit Financing;
- Upgrading and Modernization of Tax Information and Collection Services through the use of computer hardware and software and other means;
- Tourism Development and Promotion Program
- Adequate Communication and Transportation Facilities; and
- Education, Police, and Fire Services, and Facilities

IMPACT

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
- Citizens' participation in governance
- Activities ensuring good electoral processes
- People empowerment activities

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
- Health
- Education
- Housing
- Preservation of culture, values, and heritage
- Participation in cultural development

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- Increased rice production
- Better Access to employment opportunities
- Increase in entrepreneurial undertakings
- Visible increase in the income
- Reduction in the number of poor people

ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT
- Forest Management
- Biodiversity Protection
- Waste Management
- Resilience Adaptation

Figure 1- The Research Paradigm

3. Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach involving quantitative surveys and documentary analysis. Four primary research objectives guide our investigation:

1. Assess the demographic profiles of respondents and the city government.
2. Evaluate the delivery of services and facilities by the city government.
3. Examine the influence of demographic factors on service delivery.
4. Analyse the overall impact of Tabuk's cityhood on various dimensions of development.

3.1. Population and Sample

The study population consists of Tabuk City residents from 2002 to 2019, totalling 121,033 individuals. A random sample of 782 respondents was selected to ensure representation across different societal sectors.

3.2. Data Gathering Instrument

Data was collected using questionnaires and documentary analysis. Questionnaires gathered demographic information about respondents, city government service delivery assessment, and impact assessment. Documentary analysis involved reviewing population data, land area, internal revenue allotment, and local income records.

3.3. Data Gathering Procedures

Ethical research practices were followed:

1. Authorization was obtained for data access.
2. Questionnaires were administered in-person with opportunities for clarifications.
3. Google Forms facilitated data collection from various groups.
4. Face-to-face interviews utilized quota sampling for sector representation.

3.4. Statistical Treatment of Data:

Data analysis employed various statistical tools:

1. Frequency distribution for demographic profiles.
2. Mean and standard deviation for impact indicators.
3. Mean for assessing service delivery.
4. Multiple regression analysis to understand variable relationships.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. What is the Demographic Profile of the Respondents?

1. *Age:* Tabuk City, Kalinga, boasts a youthful population, with a significant majority (29.41%) under 24 years old, reflecting the city's youthful vigor.
2. *Gender:* Females dominate the respondent pool, constituting 70.97% of participants.
3. *Civil Status:* A substantial portion (57.93%) of participants is married, indicating family-oriented demographics.
4. *Educational Attainment:* An impressive majority (64.96%) hold undergraduate degrees or higher, reflecting a well-educated populace.
5. *Status of Employment:* Significantly, 38.49% of respondents are unemployed, highlighting the need for employment-focused initiatives.

Socio-demographic factors	f	%
Age		
18 - 24 years old	230	29.41
25 - 34 years old	139	17.77
35 - 44 years old	153	19.57
45 - 54 years old	148	18.93
55 - 64 years old	93	11.89
65 years old and above	19	2.43
Total	**782**	**100.00**
Sex		
Male	227	29.03
Female	555	70.97
Total	**782**	**100.00**
Civil Status		
Single	290	37.08
Married	453	57.93
Widowed	39	4.99
Total	**782**	**100.00**
Highest Educational Attainment		
No Schooling	14	1.79
Primary Level (Elementary)	56	7.16

Secondary (High School)	108	13.81
Vocational (Skilled)	7	0.90
Tertiary Level (College)	508	64.96
Postgraduate (Masteral or Doctorate)	89	11.38
Total	**782**	**100.00**
Status of employment		
Unemployed	301	38.49
Self-employed	288	36.83
Employed	193	24.68
Total	**782**	**100.00**

4.2. What is the Profile of the City Government of Tabuk After Its Conversion?

1. *Internal Revenue Allotment:* Tabuk City witnessed substantial growth in Internal Revenue Allotment, rising from 69.32 million pesos in 2002 to 1.1 billion pesos in 2020. This financial upswing signifies the city's developmental potential.
2. *Local Income:* Tabuk City's local income reached 179.69 million pesos one year after achieving city status, demonstrating consistent growth and financial stability.
3. *Population:* Over the last 18 years, Tabuk's population surged by 108,659 individuals, indicating a thriving community and opportunities for further development.
4. *Land Area:* The city's land area expanded from 64,170 hectares to 77,447 hectares since becoming a city, offering space for urban planning, infrastructure, and land use development.

Population

Years	Population	Classification
2002	78,663	Municipality
2007	87,912	Municipality
2010	105,912	Municipality
2011	106,614	City
2012	111,880	City
2013	120,083	City
2014	126,018	City
2015	132,242	City
2019	152,367	City
2020	187,322	City

Source: City Planning and Development Office- City Government of Tabuk

Land Area

Years	Land Area	Classification
2002-2007	64,170 has.	Municipality
2008-2010	77,447 has.	Municipality
2011-2021	77,447 has.	City
2022-Present	77,447 has.	City

Source: City Planning and Development Office- City Government of Tabuk

Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) of Tabuk City

Years	Municipality	Years	City
2002	69,326,836	2011	150,348312
2003	75,611,884	2012	482,036,460
2004	74,002,611	2013	526,461,782
2005	78,743,204	2014	592,506,560
2006	92,909,449	2015	677,963,888
2007	96,831,643	2016	742,272,361
2008	255,935,095	2017	838,965,098
2009	255,935,095	2018	901,236,782
2010	139,035,043	2019	999,316,166
		2020	1,122,497,634

Source: Department of Finance-Bureau of Local Government Finance

Local Income of Tabuk City

Years	Municipality	Years	City
2002	77,990,498	2011	179,693,381
2003	85,407,414	2012	514,399,918
2004	83,254,404	2013	560,194,231
2005	78,743204	2014	633,737,344
2006	105,228,665	2015	724,653,266
2007	127,322,805	2016	785,052,108
2008	401,109,392	2017	900,631,356
2009	257,690,132	2018	957,763,230
2010	139,488,539	2019	1,070,743,605

Source: Department of Finance-Bureau of Local Government Finance

4.3. What is the Level of Delivery of Services and Facilities of the City Government of Tabuk?

Tabuk City's performance in delivering services is commendable, with "good" ratings in various areas, including agriculture and fishery services, health, social welfare, information

services, environmental management, infrastructure facilities, public markets, and more.

Summary of the Mean Ratings on the Delivery of Services

Services	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. Extension and On-Site Research Services Related to Agriculture and Fishery Activities	3.17	Good
2. Health Services	3.17	Good
3. Social Welfare Services	3.18	Good
4. Information Services	3.15	Good
5. Solid Waste Disposal System or Environmental Management System	3.17	Good
6. Infrastructure Facilities	3.17	Good
7. Public Markets, Slaughterhouses, and other Municipal Enterprises	3.16	Good
8. Public Cemetery	3.02	Good
9. Tourism Facilities and other tourist attractions	3.16	Good
10. Industrial Research and Development Services	3.15	Good
11. Programs and Projects for low-cost housing and other mass dwellings	3.08	Good
12. Investment Support Services, including access to credit Financing	3.14	Good
13. Upgrading and Modernization of Tax Information and Collection Services through the use of computer hardware and software and other means	3.08	Good
14. Development and Promotion Programs	3.16	Good
15. Adequate Communication and Transportation Facilities	3.21	Good
16. Support for Education, Police and Fire Services, and Facilities	3.21	Good
Overall	**3.16**	**Good**

4.4. What is the Level of Impact of the Cityhood of Tabuk in Terms of Economic, Socio-Cultural, Political, and Environmental Development?

1. *Economic Development:* The city's economic development is considered "moderately developed," reflecting positive progress but also highlighting areas for further enhancement.
2. *Social and Cultural Development:* Tabuk's social and cultural development is also "moderately developed," indicating promising growth opportunities in these dimensions.
3. *Political Development:* The city's political development is assessed as "Moderately Developed," suggesting areas for improvement and strengthening of political processes.
4. *Environmental Development:* Tabuk City's environmental development is considered "Moderately Developed,"

emphasizing the need for continued efforts in environmental protection and sustainability.

Summary of the Mean Rating on the Impact of the Cityhood of Tabuk

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
A. Economic Development	3.04	Moderately Developed
B. Social and Cultural Development	3.07	Moderately Developed
1 Health	*3.00*	*Moderately Developed*
2. Education	*3.14*	*Moderately Developed*
3. Housing	*3.03*	*Moderately Developed*
4. Cultural	*3.18*	*Moderately Developed*
C. Political Development	2.97	Moderately Developed
D. Environmental Development	3.06	Moderately Developed
Overall	3.04	Moderately Developed

4.5. Does the Profile of the Respondents Significantly Influence the Level of Delivery of Services and Facilities?

1. *Age Significance:* Age (t-value = 2.246, p-value = 0.025) significantly influences the level of service and facility delivery by the city government, underlining the importance of tailoring services to different age groups.
2. *Gender Inconclusive:* Gender does not significantly impact service and facility delivery, ensuring equitable service provision regardless of gender.
3. *Civil Status Inconclusive:* Civil status does not significantly affect service and facility delivery, indicating consistent service quality across marital statuses.
4. *Educational Attainment Inconclusive:* The level of education does not significantly affect service and facility delivery, affirming equitable service quality across education levels.
5. *Employment Status Significance:* Employment status (t-value = -4.437, p-value = 0.000) significantly influences service and facility delivery, with unemployed individuals more likely to express lower satisfaction.

Regression Analysis on the Level of Delivery of Services and Facilities in Tabuk City and the Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Beta Coefficients	t-value	Sig.	Remarks
(Constant)	3.258	38.640	.000	Significant
Age	.033	2.246	.025	Significant
Sex	-.024	-.824	.410	Not Significant
Civil Status	-.040	-1.123	.262	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	.019	1.442	.150	Not Significant
Status of Employment	-.088	-4.437	.000	Significant

Dependent Variable: *Level of Delivery of Services*
Model Summary: *R = 0.1812, R² = 0.0328*
F-value = 5. 269, F-prob= 0.000

4.6. Does the Delivery of Services and Facilities Significantly Influence the Level of Impact?

1. *Infrastructure Facilities Significance:* Infrastructure facilities *(t-value = 2.030, p-value =.043)* significantly influence socio-cultural, economic, political, and environmental development, emphasizing their pivotal role in overall city development.
2. *Tourism Facilities Significance:* Services related to tourism facilities and attractions (*t-value = -2.963, p-value =.003*) significantly influence various dimensions of development, underscoring their contribution to Tabuk's progress.
3. *Low-Cost Housing Programs Significance:* Programs for low-cost housing and mass dwellings *(t-value = 2.492, p-value =.013)* significantly impact socio-cultural, economic, political, and environmental development, addressing housing needs.
4. *Tourism Development and Promotion Programs Significance:* Tourism development and promotion programs *(t-value = 2.034, p-value =.042)* significantly influence multiple aspects of development, promoting Tabuk's tourism potential.
5. *Support for Education, Police, and Fire Services Significance:* Services supporting education, police, and fire departments *(t-value = 3.641, p-value=.000)*
   Significantly contribute to socio-cultural, economic, political, and environmental development, enhancing public safety and education.

Regression Analysis on the Level of Impact of Cityhood of Tabuk City and the Different Services

Variable	Beta Coefficients	t-value	Sig.	Remarks
a. Extension and On-Site Research Services Related to Agriculture & Fishery Activities	.080	1.790	.074	Not Significant
b. Health Services	.040	.842	.400	Not Significant
c. Social Welfare Services	-.030	-.500	.617	Not Significant
d. Information Services	.044	1.059	.290	Not Significant
e. Solid Waste Disposal System or Environmental Management System	.000	-.008	.994	Not Significant
f. Infrastructure Facilities	.118	2.030	.043	Significant
g. Public Markets, Slaughterhouses, and other Municipal Enterprises	.015	.394	.694	Not Significant
h. Public Cemetery	.028	.870	.384	Not Significant
i. Tourism Facilities and other tourist attractions	-.149	-2.963	.003	Significant
j. Industrial Research and Development Services	.010	.238	.812	Not Significant
k. Programs and Projects for low-cost housing and other mass dwellings	.105	2.492	.013	Significant
l. Investment Support Services, including access to credit Financing	-.009	-.156	.876	Not Significant
m. Upgrading and Modernization of Tax Information and Collection Services	.037	1.024	.306	Not Significant
n. Development and Promotion Programs	.083	2.034	.042	Significant
o. Adequate Communication and Transportation Facilities	.014	.407	.684	Not Significant
p. Support for Education, Police and Fire Services, and Facilities	.205	3.641	.000	Significant

Dependent Variable: *Level of Impact*
Model Summary: $R = 0.5811$, $R^2 = 0.3377$
$F\text{-value} = 24.380.\ 269$, $F\text{-prob} = 0.000$

These findings collectively highlight Tabuk City's dynamic demographics, robust financial growth, population expansion, and significant influence of service delivery on various development dimensions, laying the foundation for informed policy and decision-making to ensure continued progress and prosperity.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Demographic Insights (Profile of Respondents)

This study provides valuable demographic insights into Tabuk's population. Notably, a significant portion of respondents are under 24 years old, with a majority being female. A substantial percentage of respondents are married, and most hold at least a bachelor's degree. However, a significant portion of degree holders

reported unemployment, highlighting the need for tailored employment initiatives.

5.2. Demographic Insights (City Government of Tabuk)

5.2.1. Internal Revenue Allotment Growth

Tabuk City's transition from a municipality to a city has led to a remarkable increase in its Internal Revenue Allotment (now National Tax Allotment). The allotment surged from 69.32 million pesos in 2002 to 1.1 billion pesos in 2020, signifying substantial growth and providing ample financial resources for public services and infrastructure projects.

5.2.2. Local Income Surge

The study reveals significant growth in Tabuk City's local income one year after attaining city status, reaching 179.69 million Philippine pesos. This upward trajectory continued until 2020, showcasing sustained progress and economic development. This capacity to generate revenue from various sources underscores financial stability and potential expansion.

5.2.3. Population Growth

Over the past 18 years, Tabuk City has witnessed remarkable population growth, with an increase of 108,659 individuals, from 2002 to 2020. This surge highlights the city's burgeoning community and its potential for further development. The data suggests a continuous rise in population, indicating improved living standards, increased job opportunities, and attractive amenities that draw people to settle in Tabuk City.

5.2.4. Expanded Land Area

Since its transition to a city, Tabuk's total land area has expanded from 64,170 hectares to 77,447 hectares. This expansion signifies the city's growth and development, opening doors for urban planning initiatives, infrastructure projects, and land use

developments. The increased land area provides space for residential, commercial, and industrial purposes, accommodating a growing population and fostering economic activities.

5.3. Government Performance

The evaluation affirms that the Tabuk city government excels in providing services and facilities. Tabuk's city administration does a decent job of delivering its many services to its citizens. This is demonstrated by the overall mean rating of 3.16 that the respondents gave. Tabuk's populace generally expresses a high level of contentment with the quality of services the city government provides.

5.4. Impact of Cityhood

The Tabuk City government plays a pivotal role in fostering development across various dimensions—economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental. Its influence is distinctly significant, as exemplified by an overall mean rating of 3.04, signifying a "moderately developed" level of impact. This underscores the city government's capacity to consistently deliver high-quality services, thereby positively shaping the city's socioeconomic fabric, cultural richness, political landscape, and even contributing to environmental growth.

5.5. Demographics as Predictors

The respondents' demographic profile, particularly age and employment status, significantly predicts the level of service and facility delivery by the Tabuk city government. This is supported by statistical findings age (t-value = 2.246, p-value = 0.025) and status of employment (t-value = -4.437, p-value = 0.000), emphasizing the importance of tailored services for different demographic groups.

5.6. Service Delivery as a Predictor

The delivery of services and facilities by the city government of Tabuk emerges as a strong predictor of the city's overall impact. Notably, infrastructure, tourism facilities, low-cost housing programs,

tourism development, and support for education, police, and fire services (*infrastructure facilities (t-value = 2.030, p-value =.043), tourism facilities and other tourist attractions (t-value = -2.963, p-value =.003), programs and projects for low-cost housing and other mass dwellings (t-value = 2.492, p-value =.013), development and promotion (t-value = 2.034, p-value =.042), support for education, police and fire services, and facilities (t-value = 3.641, p-value=.000)* play crucial roles in shaping the city's development trajectory.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Improve Communication and Outreach

To enhance communication and outreach in Tabuk, a comprehensive strategy must be implemented, focusing on tailoring messages to engage with diverse demographics, including low-income families, displaced individuals, and seniors. Collaborative efforts with community leaders and local celebrities will be employed to endorse city government services and boost their credibility across various platforms. Additionally, daily outreach programs such as town hall meetings, community forums, and mobile service centers will be organized to facilitate in-person interactions for residents to ask questions, offer feedback, and exchange personalized information. User-friendly feedback channels, such as dedicated phone lines and online forms, will be introduced to gather suggestions and address concerns promptly, nurturing trust within the community. Moreover, acknowledging Tabuk's linguistic diversity, the city will provide information in multiple languages through translated messages, bilingual social media content, and multilingual materials in public spaces, aiming to create a more inclusive and accessible environment for all residents.

6.2. Enhanced Public Services

To improve the overall quality of life in the city, a comprehensive strategy should be implemented. This strategy entails the establishment of cemetery office to regularly assess and enhance the city's public cemetery, generating employment opportunities and

government revenue. Additionally, a needs assessment will be conducted to address the specific requirements of low-income families, exploring mixed-use building options to provide housing and stimulate economic growth. Housing projects will prioritize eco-friendly and sustainable features, incorporating energy-efficient materials, solar panels, rainwater collection systems, and green spaces to ensure long-term cost savings and community well-being.

Furthermore, collaboration with NGOs and the private sector will be actively pursued to bolster resources, community development, and housing project expertise, with residents actively engaged in decision-making processes to foster a sense of ownership. Public-private partnerships will also be explored to efficiently provide essential services such as centralized public transportation, contributing to economic growth. Additionally, investments will be made in green and sustainable projects, including waste-to-energy programs and renewable energy sources like solar farms, reducing reliance on non-renewable resources and promoting environmental sustainability. Lastly, collaboration with educational institutions will enable the provision of vocational training and workshops tailored to local business needs, empowering residents with employable skills and strengthening the local economy.

6.3. Waste Management and Environmental Conservation

To promote effective waste management, a multifaceted approach must be adopted. This approach involves launching public awareness campaigns to emphasize the significance of waste segregation and the "No Segregation, No Collection" policy, with workshops, seminars, and information sessions conducted across neighborhoods through various communication channels. Clear rules and standards for waste separation at homes and businesses will be developed, accompanied by guidance on sorting different types of waste, and fees or fines will be enforced for non-compliance. Routine checks and audits of waste collection and disposal practices will be conducted to identify and rectify non-compliant areas. Furthermore, reward and incentive programs will be established to recognize and motivate residents and businesses for their consistent waste separation

efforts, with success stories shared to inspire broader participation in the initiative.

6.4. Empower Small Businesses

Introduce training and mentorship programs to equip individuals with entrepreneurial skills, coupled with access to low-interest microloans and grants to support business start-ups.

6.5. Enhance Environmental Stewardship

To enhance environmental sustainability and address ecological concerns, a comprehensive strategy must be implemented. This strategy entails the initiation of large-scale reforestation and afforestation projects, with a focus on planting native trees to stabilize soil and engage local groups, schools, and organizations. Additionally, the promotion of organic farming practices will reduce chemical pollution in land and water bodies, contributing to improved environmental health. Flood control infrastructure, including levees, dams, and retention ponds, will be developed to mitigate flood risks and protect communities. Furthermore, regulations and enforcement measures will be strengthened to address industrial emissions, vehicle pollution, and open burning, ensuring enhanced air quality for the region.

6.6. Establish Gender and Development Office

Create a Gender and Development (GAD) office within the city government to prioritize gender equality, address gender-based issues, and empower women in the local community. This office will serve as a hub for gender analysis, awareness campaigns, and collaboration with civil society organizations.

These strategic recommendations encompass a holistic approach to address diverse community needs, enhance services, promote sustainability, and empower residents in Tabuk City, ultimately fostering inclusive and progressive development.

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Ecofeminist Perspectives and Familial Dynamics: Exploring Women's Roles in Environmental Sustainability and the Filipino Concept of "*Ate*"

Jeramie N. Molino[1]

ABSTRACT

This essay explores women's role in environmental sustainability drawing from the Filipino concept of "Ate." Through a contrapuntal analysis, it unveils the convergence and divergence between women's roles in formal environmental advocacy and as caregivers within the family, emphasizing the interconnectedness of these roles. Examining birth order in Filipino culture reveals the early-age responsibilities, particularly for first-born females, highlighting their leadership, teaching, and caregiving roles. The study underscores women's significant role as environmental stewards, both locally and globally, aligning with the biblical concept of overseeing and caring for the Earth.

The exploration of women as promoters of welfare, within Filipino culture and through environmental protection efforts, demonstrates diverse contributions to community and planetary well-being. The study intertwines biblical perspectives with cultural insights, emphasizing shared responsibility for Earth stewardship. In conclusion, it calls for a comprehensive

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understanding of women's contributions in environ-
mental and familial spheres, recognizing their pivotal
and interconnected roles. As the world faces urgent
environmental challenges, leveraging the diverse
perspectives and actions of women emerges as crucial
for sustainable and equitable solutions. The study
contributes valuable insights to discussions on gender
roles, environmentalism, and cultural contexts, advo-
cating for the recognition and promotion of women's
roles in shaping a sustainable future.

Keywords: *ecofeminism, environmental sustainability,*
gender roles, caregiving, "ate" concept, formal
advocacy

1. Introduction

In recent times, the Filipino woman has been celebrated and glorified in both local and international fashion magazines. She is often hailed as a symbol not just of Asian elegance and beauty but also of a modern, liberated form of womanhood, striving to embody both avantgarde qualities and, if possible, a fusion of the traditional "Maria-Clara-ish" persona, as described by Carmen Guerrero Nakpil (Tagumpay-Castillo and Hilomen-Guerrero 1969) .

The intriguing trait exhibited by the Filipino woman sparks my curiosity to delve into the roles women play in promoting environmental sustainability. This involves comparing worldwide views on formal advocacy and initiatives with the age-old Filipino notion of *"Ate"* – the eldest sister or first-born daughter undertaking caregiving duties within the family. The examination delves into the points of alignment and deviation between these two frameworks, highlighting the various ways in which women actively contribute to both caregiving and leadership roles.

On the one hand, this essay on environmental sustainability highlights women as active participants in formal advocacy, engaging in projects that transcend familial boundaries and impact communities

and ecosystems. On the other hand, the Filipino concept of *"Ate"* centers on informal leadership and responsibilities within the family, particularly in domestic spheres and sibling care symbolizing an elder sister, extends its nurturing presence to environmental care and sustainability. In this context, *"Ate"* embodies the responsibility and guidance needed to foster a harmonious relationship with the environment. As an older sister to the principles of ecological well-being, *"Ate"* encourages practices that prioritize the health and longevity of our planet, promoting a sustainable and caring approach towards the environment.

While both paradigms underscore the importance of women in caregiving roles, the essay emphasizes broader environmental sustainability, showcasing formal empowerment and advocacy. In contrast, the *"Ate"* concept embodies familial dynamics, featuring informal leadership and responsibilities within the household. This contrapuntal analysis reveals the nuanced intersection between gender roles, responsibilities, and cultural contexts, providing a comprehen-sive understanding of women's diverse contributions to both environmental and familial spheres. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on gender roles and environmentalism, offering insights into the intricate balance between formal advocacy and informal leadership within diverse cultural settings.

Le Duc (2018) argues that environmental degradation is a pressing concern for the Catholic Church. In his article, he highlights efforts by Church leaders and theologians to address ecological issues, rooted in biblical scholarship and teachings, especially in response to historical criticisms, such as Lynn White Jr.'s claim of Christianity's anthropocentric role in the ecological crisis (Le Duc 2018).

Le Duc (2017) further argues that the promotion of environmental sustainability within the religious context in Asia necessitates an approach that considers spiritual dimensions inherent to the Asian religious worldview, addressing not only sociological and ethical aspects but delving into the deepest aspects of human reality. For Le Duc (2017), religions offer a framework for assessing actions in the context of ultimate desires for authentic happiness, requiring a creative

examination of millennia-old traditions to effectively contribute to environmental sustainability without compromising their integrity.

In this article, I aim to delve deeper into Le Duc's perspectives on environmental stewardship in Asia. As the world faces increasing environmental challenges, it is imperative to underscore the pivotal role of women in actively seeking sustainable solutions. From formal advocacy initiatives to grassroots movements, women have emerged as influential leaders and caregivers, actively contributing to the preservation of our planet. This article aims to explore the multifaceted dimensions of women's involvement in environmental care, transcending international boundaries to delve into the specific context of the Philippines.

At the global level, women have spearheaded campaigns and initiatives addressing pressing environmental issues (Shinbrot et al. 2019), ranging from climate change mitigation to biodiversity conservation. Their leadership in formal advocacy has proven instrumental in shaping policies and fostering international cooperation for a sustainable future (Alonso-Población and Siar 2018). As the urgency of environmental concerns continues to mount (Pope Francis 2015), understanding the diverse roles women play on a global scale becomes imperative.

Zooming into the Philippine context, this article will intricately examine the local manifestation of women's environmental stewardship, with a particular focus on the cultural concept of "*Ate.*" In Filipino families, the eldest sister, or "*Ate,*" traditionally assumes caregiving roles and responsibilities. This unique familial dynamic intertwines with the broader global narrative, showcasing how women's roles in environmental care find expression within the intricate tapestry of Filipino culture.

This article seeks to provide a simple overview of the reality of women's environmental leadership, gradually narrowing the focus to the specific and culturally rich context of the Philippines. Through this exploration, we aim to unravel the various layers of women's contributions, from global advocacy to local caregiving, in the ongoing endeavor to safeguard our planet for future generations.

2. Birth Order in Filipino Culture: Sibling Roles and Responsibilities

Among Filipinos, the family is the source of identity, support, and focus of one's primary duty (Roseberry-McKibbin 1997). Children in the Philippines are distinguished by birth order and sex in a manner which has no counterpart in English: *ate,* the eldest girl; *ditse,* second oldest girl; *sanse,* third eldest girl; *kuya,* eldest boy; *diko,* second oldest boy; and *sangko,* third eldest boy (Stoodley 1967). Individuals are expected to sacrifice for the good of the family, like the older siblings will typically spend much of their salaries for the education and support of younger siblings. In terms of childcare, older siblings (especially the girls) are usually caretakers of younger ones (Stoodley 1967).

Responsibility training varies according to birth order and greater responsibilities and expectations are typically issued to first-borns, especially the females (Liway et al. 1998). Thus, first-born child engages in leadership, teaching, and helping roles, particularly the older sister (Howe et al. 2014). They are expected to help with household chores including looking after their younger sibling/s. In the context of Filipino families, it is observed that older sisters are more inclined to assume caretaking and supportive roles compared to their older brothers (White et al. 2014; Kramer 2014; Kramer and Hamilto 2019). Parental reports indicate that boys tend to display more aggressive behavior towards their siblings than girls during childhood (Dirks et al. 2019).

However, gender or age gap differences in sibling relationships in early childhood are generally inconsistent. As second-born siblings progress in cognitive, linguistic, and social competencies during their early years, they tend to adopt more active roles in interactions with their siblings. This may involve initiating games or imparting knowledge to their younger siblings (Howe 2016). Consequently, the initial power imbalance that exists among siblings appears to diminish as they age, leading to more equitable interactions.

In the Philippines, many children shoulder responsibilities at an early age, especially when various obligations arise within the

family, necessitating parents to engage in economic activities. Consequently, children are trained and involved in household duties, with a particular emphasis on daughters. Elders often impart the wisdom that "a child is considered good when they know how to assist their younger siblings, fulfill chores, and contribute to the basic needs of their family members."

The delegation of responsibilities to children stems from the family's need to collaborate in maintaining their livelihoods. Assigning these tasks to children, especially girls, is deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric, with the belief that a child's ability to support and actively participate in home-related responsibilities reflects their moral character. In traditional Filipino culture, a child's proficiency in caring for younger siblings, completing household chores, and aiding in the family's needs is regarded as a commendable virtue.

This practice reflects the interconnectedness and interdependence within Filipino families, where collective effort is crucial for the overall well-being of the household. In essence, children are seen not merely as recipients of care but as active contributors to the family unit, instilling values of cooperation, responsibility, and compassion from a young age. For this reason, children must be trained and involve in household duties accordingly, particularly the daughters. Elders would say that a "child is good when one knows how to help the younger sibling, fulfil chores, and help provide for the basic needs of their family members" (Durbrow et al. 2001).

3. *"Ate"* Chronicles: Navigating Leadership and Responsibility in Sibling Dynamics

My younger siblings often refer to me as their *"Ate"* since I am the eldest and the firstborn in our family. Embracing the title of *"Ate"* comes with a profound sense of responsibility, as it entails being their designated "overseer" – a role of dominance and leadership within the familial hierarchy. As the "Overseeing *Ate*," I acknowledge this responsibility with a sense of accountability and approach it with courage. This role requires me to perform my duties with a combination of tough love and unwavering commitment.

As the eldest sibling, my role transcends that of a mere sister; I am a guiding figure dedicated to the welfare and development of my younger siblings. The title *"Ate"* holds a profound meaning, signifying a commitment to nurture, protect, and offer guidance. This responsibility has cultivated within me a profound sense of duty, contributing to the creation of a familial atmosphere where support and leadership harmoniously coexist.

The challenges inherent in being the *"Ate"* are embraced as opportunities for personal and familial growth. Leading by example, I endeavor to establish a nurturing environment where my siblings can not only survive but truly thrive. This role entails more than just overseeing; it involves fostering an atmosphere that encourages individuality, learning, and mutual support. Through my continuous efforts, I aim to embody the essence of the *"Ate"* role, fostering a familial bond that becomes a source of strength and encouragement for each member.

My character of being an "overseer" portrays as caretakers of my younger siblings and serves as the right hand and next in command over the entire household if my parents are away from home. Being the right hand of my parents tested my ability to protect, guide, or watch over their actions and behaviors.

4. Empowering Eco-Leadership: Filipino *'Ate'* and Environmental Stewardship in Sibling Dynamics

In the intricate tapestry of family dynamics, the role of the *"Ate"* extends beyond a simple title; it is a mantle of leadership and guidance. This position involves not only overseeing but actively nurturing the well-being and development of younger siblings, embracing the responsibility with a commitment to family welfare. The essence of the "Overseeing *Ate*" is encapsulated in a delicate balance of tough love and unwavering commitment. To effectively fulfil the duties associated with the title, a unique blend of firmness and dedication becomes crucial.

The commitment to family welfare is a cornerstone of the *"Ate's"* role, reaching beyond the conventional boundaries of oversight. It evolves into the creation of an atmosphere where support and leadership seamlessly coexist, establishing a familial environment where each member thrives. Embracing challenges takes on a transformative dimension for the *"Ate."* Rather than obstacles, these challenges become catalysts for personal and familial growth. It reflects a resilience and adaptability that characterize the essence of the role.

Central to the *"Ate's"* mission is the creation of a nurturing environment. This goes beyond the conventional notion of oversight, delving into the realms of fostering individuality, promoting learning, and encouraging mutual support. The *"Ate"* becomes a catalyst for the development of a familial bond – a source of strength and encouragement for each member, echoing the timeless values of leadership, responsibility, and love.

5. Ecofeminism: Woman-Nature Connections

The resounding message from the 4th U.N. World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in September 1995, as articulated by Hillary Rodham Clinton, is that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights once and for all. It is crucial not to forget that among these rights are the right to speak freely and the right to be heard (Aragon and Miller 2012). Clinton's message carries significant implications for the role of women in environmental sustainability. By asserting that human rights are inherently linked to women's rights, and vice versa, the statement underscores the importance of recognizing and empowering women as key agents in environmental conservation.

Aragon and Miller (2012) contend that women play a crucial role in overseeing natural resources at the familial and communal levels, and they are disproportionately impacted by environmental deterioration. For Aragon and Miller (2012), women are responsible for managing water sources, fuel, and food, as well as overseeing both forests and agricultural landscapes. In developing countries, women

contribute from 60 to 80 percent of food production. However, restrictive inheritance laws and local traditions often hinder their ability to own or lease land, and they face obstacles in obtaining loans or insurance. From international summits like the 1992 UN Earth Summit to grassroots movements such as India's Chipko movement and Kenya's Green Belt Movement, the significance of women's voices and perspectives in sustainable development has been underscored.

According to Cate (2012), women globally are crucial to sustainable development, peace, and security. As the primary resource managers for their families in many parts of the world, their active involvement in addressing and adapting to climate change is vital. Women, deeply reliant on natural resources for necessities like food, fuel, and shelter, can be disproportionately affected by environmental changes. Their pivotal roles in managing natural resources, biodiversity, and ecosystems make their experiences and perspectives essential for formulating sustainable development policies and actions at all levels, aiming to ensure a healthy planet for future generations.

Given women's central role in managing natural resources for their families and their vulnerability to environmental changes, their active involvement in sustainable development becomes imperative. Ensuring women's right to speak freely and be heard not only promotes gender equality but also acknowledges the unique insights and experiences women bring to environmental policymaking. This holistic approach recognizes that advancing women's rights is integral to achieving comprehensive and effective strategies for environmental sustainability, ultimately contributing to a healthier planet for present and future generations (ESCAP 2017).

Ecofeminists contend that there is a direct link between women and nature, with the female being connected to nature and immanence, while the male is associated with culture and transcendence (Peracullo 2015). Both women and nature are marginalized, exploited, and subjected to control. Addressing the societal issue of sexism requires challenging the patriarchal perception and treatment of nature. The unfortunate outcomes of linking women and nature have affected both humanity and the environment. Despite this, some feminists propose a

positive transformation by embracing feminine values like care, openness, and nurturing (Birkeland 1993).

6. The Role of *"Ate"* in Parallel with Biblical Women as Overseers

The term "overseer" encompasses the responsibility of overseeing and guiding others, extending beyond observation to active engagement in directing activities. This role involves a dynamic engagement with tasks and individuals, emphasizing meticulous observation, thoughtful guidance, and effective direction.

The concept of Filipino women being the "Ate" of the environment, overseeing the sustainability and growth of all God's creation, draws a profound parallel to the biblical narrative in Genesis. In Genesis 1:28, both men and women are given the responsibility to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and exercise dominion over all living things. This divine charge can be understood as an invitation to be caretakers, humble leaders, and promoters of welfare, emphasizing a harmonious relationship with the Earth despite the challenges humanity faces.

The biblical passage from Genesis signifies humanity's stewardship over the environment, entailing both the privilege and responsibility of caring for God's creation. The comparison to being caretakers aligns with the idea that women, as overseers of the Earth, are entrusted with the task of nurturing and preserving the environment and its resources. Describing women as humble leaders reflects the nuanced approach needed in fulfilling the divine mandate. Humility implies recognizing the interconnectedness of all living things and acknowledging the Earth as a shared home that requires cooperative and respectful stewardship. Women, in their role as humble leaders, are called to guide with a sense of reverence for the intricate balance of nature.

In the context of Filipino culture, the term *"Ate,"* denoting the eldest sister, reflects the overseer's dedication to the well-being and assistance of the family. The biblical concept of the overseer

corresponds to the portrayal of a *"Ate,"* underscoring the duty to supervise and lead a community with strength of character, coupled with nurturing and compassionate care. This characteristic is exemplified in the numerous narratives of women in the Bible. Among the many remarkable women leaders in the Bible is Deborah. Characterized by her immense faith and bravery, Deborah fearlessly stood up for her convictions even in the face of opposition. When the Israelites faced oppression from the Canaanites, Deborah exhibited exceptional leadership by guiding them into battle and securing victory over their adversaries.

Her story in the book of Judges portrays her as a prophetess and the wife of Lappidoth, leading Israel during a crucial period. Notably, she held court under the Palm of Deborah, resolving disputes for the Israelites in the hill country of Ephraim (Judges 4:4-5). Deborah's character serves as a compelling illustration of a resilient and audacious woman of faith (Judges 4:4). Relating her character to environmental care, one can draw inspiration from Deborah's proactive stance in leading her people and resolving conflicts. Applying this to environmental concerns, it underscores the importance of courageous leadership and proactive decision-making to address and overcome challenges related to environmental issues. Deborah's example encourages a sense of responsibility and stewardship for the well-being of the community and the environment, reflecting the values of strength, courage, and faith in the context of environmental care.

Another woman with an exemplary character is Esther who shows great courage by risking her life for her people and navigating palace dangers with bravery. Despite her elevated status, she remains humble, devoted to God, and displays selflessness in saving her people. Esther's wisdom and obedience to God transform her from an orphan to a revered heroine in biblical history (Esther 2:5-7; 4:1-17; 6:1-11; 10:2).

While the biblical story of Esther is not explicitly focused on environmental care, one can draw metaphorical parallels that emphasize the importance of courage, responsibility, and stewardship for the well-being of communities and the broader world. Esther's courage in

confronting King Xerxes and revealing a plot against her people can be likened to the bravery needed to address environmental challenges (Esther 1:1-22, Esther 2:1-23, Esther 5:1-14).

In the context of environmental care, Esther's selflessness and compassion for her people can inspire a similar commitment to the well-being of the planet and future generations. Her loyalty to her roots and willingness to sacrifice personal comforts align metaphorically with the need for individuals to prioritize sustainable practices, even in the face of potential sacrifices. Esther's wisdom in navigating the complex political landscape of the palace reflects the importance of intelligence and strategic thinking in addressing environmental issues (Esther 4:3; 8:5-17). Just as Esther used her limited influence to bring about positive change, individuals can use their resources and influence to advocate for environmental conservation and sustainable policies. While the socio-politcal situation pertaining to Esther's context is not related to environmental concerns, the themes of courage, responsibility, compassion, and strategic thinking in this narrative can serve as metaphors to encourage individuals to take proactive roles in preserving and nurturing the environment.

Another woman in the Bible that has a remarkable character worth immolating is Ruth. Ruth embodies virtues such as faithfulness, loyalty, and love. Her selflessness and compassion are evident in her decision to stay with her mother-in-law, Naomi, even after the death of her husband. Ruth's commitment to caring for those around her, as seen in her famous declaration, "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God," (Ruth 1: 16) serves as an inspiring example of goodness. In the context of environmental care, we can draw parallels by emphasizing the importance of loyalty and commitment to nurturing our surroundings, treating the Earth as our shared home, much like Ruth's commitment to her chosen family and faith.

Similarly, in the Philippines, the pivotal roles of women, commonly addressed as *"Ate,"* in overseeing family resources highlight the critical need to advocate for gender equality in environmental resource management. This underscores the significance of empowering women in their capacity as guardians of the environment (Illo 1991), as they actively contribute to sustainable practices that

enhance the welfare of both their families and the care for our "common home."

In the realm of environmental sustainability, Filipino women, who may be deeply connected to natural resources for their families' well-being, can find empowerment and acknowledgment in their role as stewards of the environment, or in Filipino the *"Ate ng Kalikasan"* (Sister of the Environment). Moreover, the call for the right to speak freely and be heard resonates strongly in a cultural context where women's voices have historically played crucial roles in community decisions. Recognizing and amplifying the perspectives of Filipino women in environmental policies not only contributes to sustainable development but also reflects a commitment to inclusive and equitable practices that benefit both individuals and the broader community.

Several Filipina women actively contribute to environmental welfare. Anna Oposa leads the Save Philippine Seas group, focusing on coastal and marine protection through education and community projects (Ashoka Fellow 2022). Sanne Sevig manages the Siargao Recycling Art Studio, turning trash into eco-friendly items (De La Cruz 2016). Joanna Sustento uses her Typhoon Haiyan survival story to garner public support for climate change (Voices of Youth 2019). Desiree Danos Lee, Greenpeace Southeast Asia's Climate Justice Campaigner, engages in climate policy and grassroots activism (Tan 2022). Actress and blogger Saab Magalona advocates for renewable energy and volunteers with Greenpeace (Fernandez 2017). Former Environment Secretary Gina Lopez emphasizes a "green economy" and urges unity among environmental advocates for sustainable development, highlighting the crucial role of Filipino women in environmental care (DENR 2024).

Like Lopez, in the global community there are several women that exemplify the role of *"Ate ng Kalikasan"* (Sister of the Environment). These women are actively involved in initiatives promoting environmental conservation and sustainable development. For example, Laura Riavitz, a Marine Biologist from Austria residing in San Juan, La Union, Philippines, contributes to reef ecology and water conservation through mangrove planting and educating locals about avoiding plastic use in wet markets. Initially, Gela Petines, aspiring to

be a sports doctor, shifted to environmental science, developing a passion for the ocean during coral reef research. She founded the skin-diving organization ISDA, advocating for marine conservation and empowering fisherfolk.

Tina Antonio, a volunteer for Coastal Underwater Research Management Actions and president of La Union Conventions and Visitors Bureau, organizes beach clean-ups, advocates against single-use plastics, and plans sustainable livelihood projects for La Union Soul, a community-driven ecotourism movement. Camille Pilar, through her coffee shop Clen Beach in La Union, promotes eco-friendly products like reusable tumblers and bamboo or steel straws. Marja Abad, co-founder of the Siargao Environmental Awareness Movement, addresses Siargao's waste management issues and raises awareness among residents through placards with catchy statements like "Plastic is Not Fantastic" (De La Cruz 2018).

Aleksandra Koroleva, a Russian environmental activist effort to study, preserve trees as botanist in her region, and to protect citizens from dangerous environmental pollution. She also urges everyone, whether children, teachers, officials, activists not only to think but to do something concrete and humbling (Milovanov n.d.). Elma Reyes, a fisherman in coastal municipality of Alabat, Quezon and a survivor of Typhoon Glenda, led community mobilization and started the Human Rights and Climate Change Petition (Fernandez 2017).

Climate change affects everyone, but women often bear more of the crisis. Since women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, Zandice Gumede, the first female Mayor of Durban, South Africa challenges women to likely be educated as scientists or represented on committees that make decisions about environmental sustainability (The Philippine Star 2017).

Women must be informed as well as be educated about alternative methods in the household purposes like cooking, cleaning, also in farming, family planning, and waste disposal. Their collective ideas and actions in addressing resource management problems is another instance of a general strategy to strengthening their lives as well as the environment (Times Reporter 2009).

The Barefoot College (2009) empower women particularly the grandmothers through solar engineer training since they have a longer history in the community and have less incentive to migrate. Barefoot College has increased community awareness of sustainable practices while supporting traditional knowledge. They give workshops on how to dispose of plastic responsibly, use solar cookers, improve management of water resources, including rainwater harvesting and other good practices that are kind to the environment and enhance the quality of rural life.

Furthermore, women could be "promoters of welfare" as they work and serve for the good of the rich and the poor. The command to "subdue the earth" focuses on the earth, particularly working for its cultivation and service. Now a days "subduing" also means "promoting," which involves development in the created order. This process offers to the human being the task of intra-creational development, of bringing the world along to its fullest possible creational potential. Humans live in a highly dynamic situation. The future remains open to a number of possibilities in which creaturely activity will prove crucial for the development of the world.

These women not only act as *"Ate ng Kalikasan"* (Sister of the Environment) but also like the women in the Bible as mentioned above are "humble leaders," instructing, governing, directing, and serving others, especially women, to become responsible stewards of the Earth. This aligns with the divine command to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the Earth, reflecting a sharing of divine creative capacities. They actively contribute to preserving natural resources and promoting environmental awareness, embodying a sense of responsibility and leadership in the service of the Earth (De La Cruz 2018).

7. Rearticulation of *"Ate's"* Role as an "Overseer" of the Environment

Women globally encounter a spectrum of challenges, as illuminated by a survey reflecting millennial perspectives (Loudenback and Jackson 2018). These issues encompass a range of societal facets, each representing a distinct concern. The survey done by Loudenback and

Jackson (2018) indicates that 12.1 percent of respondents identify lack of economic opportunities and unemployment as a pressing problem for women. This issue underscores disparities in employment and economic prospects that women face in various regions.

Moreover, Loudenback and Jackson (2018) explain that safety, security, and overall well-being emerge as a substantial concern for 14.1 percent of respondents. This category encompasses the multifaceted challenges related to personal safety, health, and the overall quality of life for women worldwide. The lack of educational opportunities is identified by 15.9 percent of respondents as a significant challenge for women. This underscores the persistent barriers that limit women's access to education, hindering their intellectual and professional advancement. Food and water security stand out as a critical issue, with 18.2 percent of respondents highlighting concerns related to the availability and accessibility of these necessities for women. Government accountability, trans-parency, and corruption are noted as problematic by 22.7 percent of respondents. This indicates the broader societal challenges where governance issues disproportionately affect women. Religious conflicts emerge as a concern for 23.9 percent of respondents, signifying the impact of geopolitical and social dynamics on women's lives. Poverty is identified as a substantial issue by 29.2 percent of respondents. This highlights the stark economic disparities that affect women, particularly those in disadvantaged communities. Income inequality and discrimination feature prominently, with 30.8 percent of respondents recognizing this as a significant problem. This under-scores the pervasive challenges related to gender-based discrimination and economic inequities. Large-scale conflicts or wars are identified by 38.9 percent of respondents, reflecting the profound impact of geopolitical turmoil on the well-being and safety of women. Climate change and the destruction of nature emerge as the most prevalent concern, with 48.8 percent of respondents recognizing the urgent need to address environmental issues that disproportionately affect women. Loudenback and Jackson's (2018) survey illuminates the diverse and interconnected challenges that women face globally, underscoring the importance of addressing these issues comprehensively to enhance the well-being and empowerment of women across different societies (Loudenback and Jackson 2018).

Similarly, to the United Nations (UN), it is acknowledged that "Women and Environment" stands out as a pivotal focus area outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a landmark outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 (Moghadam 1996). The declaration specifically delineated three strategic objectives concerning women and the environment for governments and environmental initiatives. Firstly, it emphasized the active engagement of women in decision-making processes related to the environment across all levels. Secondly, it underscored the importance of integrating women's perspectives and concerns into policies and programs related to environmental issues. Lastly, the platform highlighted the necessity of establishing mechanisms to evaluate the impact of both development and environmental policies on women (UN Summary Report 2015).

In essence, the Beijing Declaration recognized the imperative of ensuring women's participation, incorporating their perspectives, and assessing the gender-specific impacts of environmental and developmental policies. This underscores a commitment to gender equality in environmental decision-making and the acknowledgment of the unique challenges women may face in the context of environmental policies and development initiatives. The strategic objectives outlined in the declaration aim to foster a more inclusive and gender-responsive approach to environmental governance, aligning with the broader goals of women's empowerment and sustainable development.

Furthermore, women are seen as promoters of welfare in the context of overseeing the Earth. This role extends beyond mere environmental conservation; it encompasses fostering the well-being of all living beings. The duty to promote welfare implies a commitment to social and ecological justice, advocating for equitable access to resources, and ensuring that the Earth's abundance is shared responsibly.

Despite the critical problems facing the world, women, as "*Ate*" of the environment, are envisioned as resilient and compassionate stewards. The challenges, whether environmental degradation, climate change, or social injustices, do not deter them from fulfilling

their divine charge. Instead, they rise as caretakers, using their nurturing qualities to heal and restore the environment. As humble leaders, they navigate complex issues with wisdom and empathy, promoting collaborative solutions.

This perspective emphasizes a harmonious and reciprocal relationship between humanity and the environment. Rather than interpreting dominion as domination, the role of women as overseers suggests a cooperative partnership, where humanity exercises responsible stewardship over God's creation. In this light, the concept of women as *"Ate"* of the environment reframes the narrative of Genesis, inviting a profound reflection on the interconnected roles of humanity and the divine call to care for the environment.

In the Filipino family, women are primary caregivers to children including the elderly and the sick, meaning the whole family and community rely on them. And so, they are more responsible for management and conservation of resources for their families. Thus, when natural disasters affect natural resources, their lives and their families can be intensely affected also. Women and girls are disproportionately affected according to UN, because of the distance travelled just to get water and lack of safe and private toilets makes women and girls more vulnerable to violence. For this can also be an impediment to girl's education and takes time away from income-generating activities (UN Summary Report 2015). The statement emphasizes the underrepresentation of women's perspectives in discussions surrounding critical environmental and public health issues. According to Noonan (2017), women's voices are not adequately considered or acknowledged in these domains. The author contends that the unique viewpoints and insights that women bring to environmental and public health conversations are often overlooked or undervalued.

To address this disparity, the United Nations (UN) is actively working to elevate the role of women in sustainable development and initiatives aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate change. The rationale behind this effort lies in recognizing that women's contri-butions are frequently taken for granted or not fully appreciated (Noonan 2017). By placing women at the forefront of these endeavors,

the UN aims to rectify the historical neglect of their perspectives and leverage the diverse and valuable insights that women can offer in shaping policies and strategies related to environmental sustainability and climate change.

In essence, the acknowledgment of the need to prioritize women in these contexts stems from a commitment to inclusivity and recognizing the often-overlooked contributions that women make in addressing complex challenges. Involving women in decision-making aims to generate better solutions for environmental and public health challenges. The call to place women at the forefront underscores the importance of diversity in perspectives and experiences in formulating strategies for a more sustainable and resilient future.

Women possess the capacity to express their opinions, take meaningful actions, and contribute to environmentally conscious decisions, both at the household level and on a global scale. The biblical narrative in Genesis emphasizes that women were placed in the garden by God, with the responsibility to work the land and care for it. This divine command to "subdue the earth" is outlined in Genesis 2:15: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Murphy 1994). Importantly, this role extends beyond mere maintenance or preservation; it involves active participation in the creative process itself.

Drawing parallels to the role of a shepherd, women are positioned to "oversee" God's creation by adopting the role of "caretakers." Similar to a shepherd who protects, guides, watches over, and assumes authority or dominion over a flock, women are called to fulfill a similar role in relation to the environment. The term "stewardship," when viewed through this perspective, suggests an understanding rooted in care, nurture, and responsible stewardship rather than exploitation.

The concept of having "stewardship" over the environment implies a responsibility aligned with caregiving and nurturing, reflecting the image of God in human beings. This understanding encourages individuals to relate to the nonhuman elements of creation in a manner consistent with how God relates to them. In essence, it

introduces the idea of idealized notions of royal responsibility, wherein individuals become stewards and caretakers, assuming roles that echo the care God extends to all elements of creation, including animals.

This perspective underscores the notion that women, in their role as caretakers and overseers, play a crucial part in embodying responsible and ethical interactions with the environment. It challenges exploitative approaches, emphasizing a more harmonious and nurturing relationship with the Earth, rooted in a deep sense of responsibility and care. The biblical narrative serves as a foundational framework that encourages a holistic understanding of humanity's role in the ongoing creative process and the imperative to exercise dominion with a sense of reverence and ethical consideration.

8. Conclusion

Examining the Filipino notion of *"Ate"* in the context of environmental care and sustainability not only encourages a commitment to preserving the environment but also acknowledges the capability of Filipino women to actively contribute to sustainable environmental practices. It recognizes that embracing the responsibilities associated with the role of *"Ate"* extends beyond familial contexts to encompass a meaningful role in broader environmental stewardship.

This perspective emphasizes that Filipino women, embodying the nurturing qualities associated with *"Ate,"* possess the capacity to make significant and positive contributions to the ongoing efforts for sustainable environmental care. It challenges stereotypes and underscores the importance of recognizing and leveraging the potential of women in promoting a more sustainable and ecologically conscious future.

In the same vein as the resilient women depicted in the Bible, Filipina women exhibit the capacity to take a lead in environmental conservation. Their nurturing and caring qualities, akin to the role of an *"Ate,"* equip them to be responsible stewards of God's creation.

This highlights that Filipina women, drawing from their inherent characteristics, are well-suited to play a crucial role in overseeing and safeguarding the environment. The reference to being an *"Ate"* underscores the significance of their tender and compassionate approach, emphasizing the need for such qualities in the responsible and ethical management of the Earth's resources. It reinforces the idea that, like their Biblical counterparts, Filipino women can make valuable contributions to environmental preservation through their caring and attentive stewardship.

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Taflurut Nit:
Towards an Inculturated Theology
of the Communion of Saints for Kei People
in Eastern Indonesia

Longginus Farneubun[1] and Rico Casta Jacoba[2]

ABSTRACT

*Ancestor veneration is considered by some to be a primitive custom, outdated, and with no relevance to modern society. In this study, however, the researcher will show that ancestor veneration is alive and practiced in various cultures, especially among Kei people in East Indonesia to this day. This research focuses on ancestor veneration (*Taflurut Nit*) of the Kei people vis-a-vis the Catholic teachings on the Communion of Saints. Both the Kei ancestors and the Christian saints are revered because they are believed to be role models and wisdom figures for the members*

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[2] ***Rico Casta Jacoba***, a dedicated faculty member at Saint Louis University in Baguio, Philippines, possesses a diverse academic background. His qualifications include a bachelor's degree in philosophy (AB), Master's Degrees in Special Education (MA), Religious Studies (MA), and a dual Ph.D. in Educational Management and Applied Theology. With this extensive educational foundation, Jacoba brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to his role in the academic community.

of their respective communities. Kei religious and cultural practices that focus on remembering, honoring, and expressing love for their ancestors and the saints have an important role in the lives of Kei Christians. The dissertation uses the process of inculturation to explore the potential of using the practices and beliefs of ancestor veneration among Kei people in re-articulating an aspect of the Christian faith. With the mutual interaction between the Judeo-Christian Tradition on the Communion of Saints and the present experience of ancestor veneration (Taflurut Nit) among Kei people, an inculturated theology for Kei Christians in East Indonesia is being proposed in response to the new evangelization envisioned by the Church.

Keywords: *ancestor veneration, kei people, communion of saints, inculturation, culture*

1. Introduction

Inculturation[3] is the encounter between the Gospel and the local culture. As Pope John II said in his encyclical *Remptoris Missio*, through inculturation, the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces people, together with their culture, into her own community.

In this sense, inculturation is the embodiment of Christian life and mission in a particular cultural environment. This means that this experience is not only embodied in certain elements of the culture (this is only a superficial accommodation), but becomes the principle that

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[3] The Second Vatican Council did not use the term inculturation directly but instead used the term adaptation (*Ad Gentes*). Robert J. Schreiter, C.PP.S. *Constructing local theologies*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015), 2. The Second Vatican Council encourages the spread of the Gospel through various forms of local cultural approaches. As a cultural event, the Second Vatican Council teaches the urgency of the issue of inculturation. See, Herve Carrier, *Evangelizing the Culture of Modernity* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 1-5.

animates, guides, and unites the culture by transforming and renewing it. Thus, inculturation creates something new (Heuken 2009). In inculturation is the idea that in the encounter with other cultures, the Church needs to make an incarnational movement into their culture but at the same time renew that culture through the redemption of Christ (Gallagher 1997, 1008). As Horacio de la Costa says, "Christianity is not only expressed but also thought and lived within the framework of the cultural traditions of the people to whom it is proclaimed (De Mesa 1987, 14).

Inculturation is not a new endeavour in the life and mission of the Catholic Church but was taken up again by the Second Vatican Council in 1965 to give birth to a meaningful and relevant theology for the people. The Second Vatican Council's push for renewal also called *aggiornamento* made the Church more open to the world and paved the way for the emergence of inculturation or contextual theologies for local Churches that were commanded to make the proclamation of the Gospel rooted in the culture of the people and relevant to contemporary Christians. This paper seeks to investigate the concept of ancestor veneration in Eastern Indonesia, which is a popular cultural practice in Kei, and consider its potential to re-articulate the Church's teaching on the Communion of Saints.

In the light of inculturation, the purpose of this paper is to enquire about how Kei Catholics seek to reconcile the veneration of ancestors embedded in their culture with their worship of God as taught by Jesus in Scripture. The Kei people use the term *Taflurut nit et sob Duad* (honour ancestors and worship God). This paper offers a way in which Kei Catholics can celebrate their Catholic faith without insulting their ancestors insofar as different elements in their traditions and beliefs can be brought together rather than pitted against each other so that new possibilities can be created to deepen and strengthen their faith. Faith and culture can be brought together in a way that enhances rather than diminishes all aspects of human life.

The Second Vatican Council through (See. *Gaudium et Spes,* in Kroeger, ed., #57 & 58, 318-322) *Gaudium et Spes*, pointed out the need for mutual respect between faith and culture as an important process in doing a theology of inculturation for local churches. Jose de

Mesa uses the term "listening heart" to describe this aspect of respect for local cultures. He states that "given the fact that the decree speaks of the 'treasure' that God has given to a particular culture, it is appropriate that in the theological task one should take a 'listening heart,' that is, a deep and sincere attitude of respect and appreciation" (De Mesa 1987, 19). Therefore, dialogue between the Christian faith, particularly the theology of the Communion of Saints and the Kei cultural practice of *Taflurut Nit* (ancestor reverence) is essential in doing inculturation theology for the Kei people.

Since the Catholic mission spread in Indonesia, especially in Kei during the colonial period, it was realised that Christian missionaries had difficulty proclaiming the Gospel in dialogue with the Kei culture, which is famous for its many religious ceremonies and rituals. While the Kei people saw their rites and rituals as based on the traditions of their ancestors, and therefore a sacred aspect of their lives, the missionaries who brought Christianity to Indonesia at the time thought these paganistic rites and rituals should be removed to pave the way for Western Catholicism to be planted in Kei soil. Kei cultural practices at the time were often condemned as evil, superstitious and heretical.[4]

Jose de Mesa, an Asian theologian from the Philippines, best known for developing contextual theology from a cultural perspective, where culture serves as the locus theologicus in initiating theological

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[4] When Christianity entered Kei around the 18th century by missionaries from the Netherlands, traditional Kei practices such as statues were partially destroyed and others brought by missionaries to the Netherlands. Until now, several statues are still stored in the mission museum in Tilburg, Netherlands. Places of reverence and worship for ancestors such as caves, large stones, trees were transformed by missionaries into places of prayer for Christians by building churches, Mary caves and Sacred Heart of Jesus caves. H. Haripranata. S.J. *The History of the Catholic Church in Kei, Tanimbar and West Irian 1888-1920*, (Ceritera Sejarah Gereja Katolik di Kei, Tanimbar dan Irian Barat 1888-1920), (Yogyakarta: Gunung Sopai, 2017). See, Marlon N. Ririmase. *Ancestral Worship in the Southeast Maluku Islands: Cultural Traces of its Material and Role for the Study of Regional Archeology* (Pemujaan Leluhur di Kepulauan Maluku Tenggara: Jejak Budaya Materi dan Peranannya bagi studi Arkeologi Kawasan). Journal, https://www.neliti.com/publications/291818/pemujaan-leluhur-di-kepulauan-maluku-tenggara-jejak-budaya-materi-dan-perannya-b pdf. Accessed on October 14, 2020.

reflection says, "it is only when one is explicitly aware of his culture that we can adequately examine, assess, and utilise it to express Christian faith" (De Mesa 1987, 19). De Mesa further argues that the departure of contemporary local theology from the influence of Western theology will galvanise initiatives to consider local culture in doing local theology. He challenges Christians in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania to face the enormous task of reinterpreting the Good News to their communities in a fresh and understandable way without neglecting our faith heritage. In the face of this great challenge, we need to turn to our culture to unearth wisdom and insights that can shed light on our understanding of the faith relationship with God. De-stigmatising local cultures brought from the West is a must for those who want to contribute to the rethinking and reformulation of Christian faith in their own cultural context (De Mesa 1987).

To analyse the Kei people's attachment to ancestor veneration and ritual practices that convey the social, cultural and religious significance of their traditional heritage, we examine the Kei people's *Taflurut Nit* (ancestor veneration) tradition as a preamble to building a contextual theology of the Communion of Saints.

2. Methodology

This research follows the basic process and structural principles of doing contextual theology, particularly through a reciprocal dialogue between Judaeo-Christian Tradition and Culture (the local cultural experience of the people). The cultural heritage of *Taflurut Nit* (ancestor veneration) among the Kei people is analysed in its potential to re-articulate the theology of the Communion of Saints found in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition. The interaction between the Jewish-Christian Tradition and *Taflurut Nit* aims to explore the potential of existing cultural experiences practised and preserved by the Kei people to be considered as a *locus theologicus* towards an inculturation theology of the Communion of Saints.

Jose de Mesa in constructing his theological reflection follows a synthetic methodological model. Through the synthetic model,

people can better know and understand God in the ways and styles of the culture they are familiar with (Bevans 2003, 88). The synthetic model places a theologian "midway between an emphasis on the experience of presence (context: experience, culture, social location, social change) and the experience of the past (scripture, tradition)" (Bevans 2003, 88). Thus, the synthetic model seeks to balance the gospel message and traditional doctrinal heritage with the cultural context of today's society.

The methodology as suggested by de Mesa follows a three-step process in doing theology. *First*, we start with people's problems, questions or concerns. *Second*, the two poles, human experience and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition will interact with each other; and third, a new tentative interpretation of faith will be articulated using cultural symbols, language, or values derived from the two poles mutual dialogue (De Messa 2003).

The first stage is where questions, concerns, and relevant cultural aspects or elements serve as indicators of what theology should be. A meaningful theology should be catalysed by the context or culture in which theology is reflected upon and should be lived out. At this stage, when exploring questions, concerns, and issues, we must use socio-cultural analysis.

The second stage is a reciprocal dialogue between the two poles that are respectful and critical of the Judaeo-Christian Tradition and *Taflurut Nit's* cultural analysis. The starting point is the pole of cultural experience where the theme can be used as a theological locus or interpretative element to "see and discover the richness of the Jewish-Christian Tradition in relation to the context" (De Mesa 1999, 128). This emphasises a constructive dialogue or a respectful and critical correlation between Jewish-Christian Culture and Tradition (De Mesa 1999, 156).

The third stage is a new tentative interpretation of faith derived from the interaction between two traditions, namely the Judaeo-Christian Tradition (Communion of Saints) and Kei culture (*Taflurut Nit*). It puts forward a "tentative" theological interpretation that addresses the initial issues that triggered the theological discourse

in the first place. Through respectful and critical interaction, cultural resources (*Taflurut Nit*) and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition (Communion of Saints) are brought to address issues, questions or concerns indigenously through new interpretations of faith (De Mesa 1999, 161).

3. The Catholicisation of the Kei People and the *Taflurut Nit* Ritual

The Kei Islands, known as '*Nuhu Evav*' in the local language, form an archipelago in the Southeast Moluccas, situated in the Banda Sea, east of Indonesia. The group is geographically divided into two parts: Small Kei Island ('*Nuhu Roa*,' meaning "island or village from the sea") and Big Kei Island ('*Nuhu Yuut*,' meaning "taboo or forbidden island"). Encompassing an area of 7,856.70 km², these islands exhibit mountainous terrain, with the highest peak, Mount Dab, reaching 820 m on Big Kei.

The islands lack extensive rivers and lakes, and the soil composition varies between the dry coral soil of Kei Kecil and the challenging soil conditions of Kei Besar. The name "Kei" predates Dutch colonization, with historical references indicating variations like 'Quey' and 'Ki.' The first missionaries arrived in Kei in 1888, aiming to instigate cultural transformation, perceiving history's progression from a "primitive state" to modernity and Christianity. The missionaries introduced European Christianized culture, intertwining their faith with local practices through a process of inter-cultural encounter.

The Kei people maintained their distinct culture, worldview, and religious practices alongside the introduced Christianity. Despite the missionaries' establishment of separate mission centers, the Kei people continued living in their villages, fostering a dual worldview incorporating both Christian teachings and their own oral traditions. This coexistence resulted from historical negotiations and adaptations, allowing Kei oral traditions to align with Christian praxis.

Taflurut Nit, the Kei people's practice of honoring ancestors, involves rituals like offering betel nut and praying in the Kei language. This cultural expression persists, transcending generations, even after the Kei people embraced Christianity. Ancestor veneration, distinct from worship, involves seeking guidance and help from deceased ancestors as intermediaries to God. *Taflurut Nit* is deeply ingrained in Kei life, observed in various events, and considered a vital socio-cultural value, preserving local wisdom and ancestral heritage for hundreds of years. The close spiritual connection between the living and the deceased underscores the enduring significance of this cultural practice in the lives of the Kei people.

4. Communion of Saints

The Apostles' Creed, a foundational belief in the Catholic tradition, underscores the significance of saints in Christian faith, particularly martyrs who serve as exemplary figures in the pursuit of a relationship with Jesus Christ (Ramsey 1993, 129). The Communion of Saints, embedded in the Apostles' Creed, signifies the spiritual unity among living and deceased members of the Church, forming one mystical body with Christ as its head.

Historically, saints, especially martyrs, were revered in the early Church for emulating Jesus by enduring persecution (Flannery 2014, 421). Although influenced by pagan customs initially, Christian teachers like Polycarp, Jerome, and Augustine solidified the practice of honoring saints, gaining widespread acceptance.

The Communion of Saints encompasses the entire redeemed community, past, present, and future, united to Christ and each other through sacraments, particularly the Eucharist (Flannery 2014, 421). Baptism, the primary sacrament, signifies unity with Christ, emphasizing His immanence and redemptive sacrifice.

Saints, universally regarded as holy by various Church communities, play a pivotal role in the religious life of individuals and communities. They represent the triumph of the Church, serving as examples for the earthly Church still on pilgrimage (Flannery 2014,

421). Saints also engage in intercessory prayer, believed to have the potential for miracles due to their proximity to God. Christians seek their intercession, understanding that saints deliver petitions to God on behalf of the living.

The practical implications of the Communion of Saints involve mutual mindfulness and prayer among all united in Christ – saints in heaven, souls in purgatory, and members of the pilgrim Church. The Church, both militant and pilgrim, invokes prayer through the intercession of saints, expressing devotion and veneration in this communal spiritual endeavor.

5. *Taflurut Nit*: A Basis for Kei's Contextual Communion of Saints Theology

The mystery of the life of Jesus Christ cannot be compared with the ancestors, but there are some aspects of the life of the ancestors that have similarities with the events of Jesus Christ to help the Kei people do contextual theology. This is to emphasise that the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ through a cultural approach, that is, faith expressed according to local mindsets and language patterns, is very important because it can help the Kei people to believe in Jesus Christ more deeply (Chupungco 1987, 99-100).

According to Edward Schillebeeckx and David Tracy, "Present Human Experience" is the first source of theology, followed by Scripture and Tradition (Riyanto 2020, 77). The explanation goes on to say, "The Critical Mutual Correlation Method," places present human experience as one of the most important and primary sources for theology. The context of human life and experience must now be the point of departure for theology. Schillebeeckx criticises the traditional method of theology that starts theological reflection from Scripture and Tradition without paying attention to and dialoguing with present human experience. He sharply criticises theologians and students of theology who continue to use the old method of theology. He says, "A modern theology, a living theology must start from Human experience" (Riyanto 2020, 78). De Mesa sees the interaction between Judaeo-Christian Tradition and Culture so that one serves as

"an interpretative and critical guide for the other (De Mesa 1999, 121)." This aspect of culture is crucial for the Church to address, ensuring that the proclamation of Christ and His teachings becomes deeply rooted in the local culture. In this way, the values of culture and Christianity can mutually enrich each other (Paulus II 1990, 63).

Jesus did not hide Himself in the culture of the Kei people. If Christ is present in a place, then His presence is recognised by the people because He certainly reveals His presence through the values of the existing culture such as the ancestors. He is present so that the Kei people enjoy an abundant life (John 10:10). Thus, in accordance with the local culture, God through Christ uses various aspects of Kei culture as a medium to reveal His face, especially through the values of good life that the ancestors have shown to the Kei people.

Christ is also present and communicates with the Kei people through the local language. He was present and greeted the Kei people not as a foreigner with European physical characteristics, but He was present and greeted the Kei people implicitly through the ancestors. Thus, Christ introduced Himself to the Kei people through aspects of their culture. In this regard, the evangelist John asserts that "wherever Christ comes, he comes to his own people" (Jn 1:11). Therefore, the communication established by Christ with the Kei people did not only occur after the Church or missionaries came but had been going on for a long time through these existing cultural elements.

In response to this communication, the Kei people use everything available in their culture as a means to find the face of Christ. One of the cultural aspects used by Christ as a dialogue partner to communicate with the Kei people is His presence through the ancestors or the culture of *Taflurut Nit*. Therefore, his attention will be focused on the Kei people themselves because in accordance with the teachings of the Church, humans cannot be separated from their culture.

Starting from the explanation above, the Kei people began to reflect that before the Church came, God had already revealed Himself through ancestral figures (as the seed of the word sown in the Kei tribe), as He was present and greeted the Jews through Adam,

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph and Jesus of Nazareth as the new Adam. This statement is to emphasise that God was with the Kei people long before the Church and missionaries came (Shorter 2006, 34). This can also be seen in the context of all human beings including the Kei people being created in God's own image and likeness (Dister 1987, 44).

Therefore, it is wrong to see missionaries as the ones who brought God to the land of the Kei people. God was not imported into the land of the Kei people nor did any country export God. Rather, God brought missionaries to the land of the Kei people. God created these missionaries, sent them to the land of the Kei people, protected them on the way to the land of the Kei people, and sent them to the Southeast Maluku region. God did not wait for the missionaries before they arrived among the Kei people. Why? Because long before the missionaries arrived and the Kei people were baptised Catholic, God was already present with the Kei people through a number of positive cultural values such as the appreciation of "*duad kratat* or *duad ler vuan*" and also His presence through the ancestors (*Nit Fulfulik* = Good Spirit) and Kei rites and local wisdom.

From this perspective, the honouring of Kei ancestors (*Taflurut Nit*) is a preparation for the Gospel. In other words, if a Kei Christian chooses to believe in the Communion of Saints, then this belief is facilitated because Kei Christians have a background understanding of ancestor cults. In this sense, honouring Kei ancestors serves as a "preparation" for the Communion of Saints.

6. Ancestor Veneration (*Taflurut Nit*) and Saints

If we look at the phenomenon of ancestor veneration and Christians honouring saints, it can be said that these two honours are the same. Both ancestors and saints are honoured rather than worshipped, as the only one to be worshipped is God (*Duad Ler-vuan*). Scholars who speak of "honour" rather than "veneration" take into account cultural and religious sensitivities. Kei ancestor veneration should not be confused with worshipping deceased members of the Kei community. Ancestor veneration consists primarily of the act of

honouring and loving a deceased person whose spirit continues to live on and engage with his or her living family. Kei ancestor recognition is a construct of respect that is usually associated with intimacy between deceased ancestors and their descendants. Ancestors are honoured for their merit to their descendants.

Hippolyte Delehaye in *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography* tells us that there is a fundamental difference between the veneration of the saints of the Church and the heroes of Greek paganism (Delehaye 1961, 160). From the very beginning, there was the issue of Christian veneration of martyrs being a pagan act. St Augustine had to explain to the unbelievers and give clear guidelines to the believers distinguishing between the veneration given to the saints and the worship directed to God. This tradition has been carried on since the early churches of Christianity. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between worship and veneration in many cases. The Catholic Church recognises that crosses or statues of Mary and the saints are not to be worshipped. From as early as the time of St Augustine of Hippo, a distinction was made between the worship of gods and the veneration of saints. The one worthy of worship is God, referred to as *latria*, while the saints are honoured not in themselves but only as channels of grace from God, *dulia*, while veneration of Mary is referred to as *hyperdulia* (Wilson 1983, 4).

When the Protestant Church considers Catholics to worship idols, it does not make the Catholic Church abandon the statues of Jesus, Mary, and the saints. When we make a clear distinction between worship of God and veneration of ancestors and Saints as two different forms of religious piety, it is concretely seen for example, that the Kei people honour the fourth commandment (by respecting their ancestors) *Taflurut Nit* or Saints and do not violate the first commandment (worshiping other gods) *Sob Duad Ler-vuan*.

In various regions of Indonesia, especially Kei, it is seen that these practices of honour have always left a solid model of faith in people's lives. The model of faith is preserved from one generation to the next as a tradition. In this understanding, the practice of honouring ancestors and saints can be clearly seen as a manifestation of the model of faith brought by humans from previous generations. According to

Jebadu, there are two truths that form the basis for the practice of honouring ancestors and saints, namely: *first,* the belief in life after the death of the body. *Second*, the belief in the existence of God as the sole source of all life, both the temporary life of humans on earth and the eternal life after the death of the body (Jebadu 2009, 9). This means that religious practices centred on veneration, love, and remembrance of ancestors and saints indicate the continuity of life after bodily death and faith in God as the sole guarantor of man's eternal life after death.

Taking into account what has been said above, it becomes clear that the theme around the honouring of ancestors and saints, is not new in the history of human life, but is a reality of human life that exists and continues to be practised, maintained, and preserved by human-kind. For the Kei people, *Taflurut Nit* is a popular cult that emerged from Kei and is practised by almost all Kei people. This is also the case with the practice of honouring saints. Saints are venerated by Christians since the early centuries of Christianity, or since the martyrs.

Ancestors and saints are honoured for their supernatural excellence based on the belief that they are in heaven. The living believe that ancestors and saints intercede for the living with God (*Duad*). The living faithful or descendants perform many rituals in glorifying and invoking the help of God (*Duad*) through the inter-cession of ancestors and saints. The faithful or descendants perform praise and emulate the virtues of ancestors and saints, private and public prayers, and take their names.

The basis for honouring ancestors and saints is the same, filial love. The aim is to maintain a good relationship between the living and the dead, both ancestors and saints, so that their safety and well-being are well preserved. Ancestors and saints are honoured because they have a relationship or closeness with God. They become friends of God and can play the role of God's messengers. Because of their close relationship with God, deceased ancestors and saints are believed to be able to communicate God's will and His saving grace to people still living in the world. Saints are intrinsically joined to Christ, which makes them one with the Church on earth and provides an eschatological destiny for all the faithful. The Church on earth,

following old practices, honours the memory of the saints; the saints, on their part, reveal the divine face of God.

Christians honor the saints out of love for their exemplary lives. Saints serve as role models of faith and morals, demonstrating God's generosity and love for the faithful. The saints, having experienced God's generosity in their lives, dedicate themselves entirely to the Lord. Recognizing their holiness, the Catholic Church believes that saints, who were good people in life, are now in Heaven. Pobee, in his analysis of Pauline theology, writes that "the loyalty of the saint to Christ by accepting persecution guarantees a place in the kingdom of God, in heaven" (Pobee 1985, 67). Thus, the Catholic Church recognises and believes in their holiness, and they deserve to be honoured.

Furthermore, honoring the saints is a crucial aspect of the faithful's spiritual development. When the Church designates November 1 as a feast day for all the saints, it underscores the significant role saints play in fostering the growth of the faithful's faith. The veneration of saints signifies the Church's celebration of the triumphant grace of the only salvation found in Jesus Christ. The essence of Jesus' salvation lies in God's love for humanity, created in His own image and likeness. Despite man beings' pride and disobedience leading to their fall into sin and separation from God, God's love for humanity remains unwavering. God does not desire humankind's destruction. In the fullness of time, He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to atone for the sins of all humankind, from the first to the last. Through His incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus restored human's relationship with God. Through the merit of Jesus Christ, humanity can once again enjoy a life united with God in eternity. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6). And this is also the conviction of His followers, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). Paul, in his letter to Timothy, says that God from the beginning wanted all humans to be saved (cf. 1 Tim 2:3-6). The Gospel of John states that "he who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him ... and those who have done good will go out and

rise to eternal life, but those who have done evil will rise to condemnation" (Jn 3:36; 5:29). This is the meaning of salvation, being redeemed from the state of sin to life in eternal bliss in heaven. In this sense, the Church wishes to give thanks for the fruits of Christ's salvation that the saints have enjoyed.

Ancestors and saints have become role models in good things. In the practice of ancestor veneration, living families serve deceased ancestors by making rituals of various kinds. Kei cultural practices, including food offerings, dances and other rituals, are what Karl Rahner calls "religious activities explicitly directed to God in prayer and in metaphysical reflection" (Rahner 1996, 53). The *Taflurut Nit* ritual in Kei culture, for example, may seem an extraordinary and spectacular cultural practice to outsiders. However, the Kei people see it as a natural practice that must be done as an important part of the Kei people's lives. For the Kei people, the *Taflurut Nit* ritual must be performed as an obligation of all Kei people as a form of respect for the ancestors. According to their understanding, if the *Taflurut Nit* ritual is not performed, the ancestors can become angry, and the descendants may face punishment in the form of disasters, such as illness or even death. This is different from the situation where Christians do not honor saints, as the saints do not become angry.

The belief in the power of *Duad-Nit* to organise, regulate, protect, and maintain the lives of Kei people has given birth to an attitude of respect and sincere submission to *Duad-Nit* as the source and origin of Kei people's lives. This attitude is reflected in the *Taflurut Nit* tradition and celebrated in ritual and local wisdom celebrations. The Kei people honour their ancestors through ceremonies performed both vertically and horizontally. The vertical honour ceremony shown to *Duad* such as *sobsob mehen*, which consists of *sak nit rir waung* and *sobsob yot* and *sobsob lor* consists of *sobsob yot matvhuil, urat ledar lor* and *sobsob fuun naun*. While the horizontal honour ceremony shown to the *nit* is *ledar matan vhavhain* and *belan enso ne yaat enwel*. In this honouring ceremony, *Duad-Nit* is given various offerings. While there is also a lot of local wisdom practised by the Kei people such as *Yan-ur Mangohoi* kinship, *Larvul Ngabal* customary law, *Belang, Sasi, Rinin*, etc.

These rituals and local wisdom have become an integral part of the Kei people's lives to this day. That way, they repeatedly experience that the figures of *Duad Ler-vuan* and *Nit* who they believe have lived happily in heaven continue to give them protection, blessings, and become protectors of their daily lives. The ceremonies are usually performed at homes, cemeteries, *woma,* or places considered sacred.

The rituals performed to honor ancestors, such as visiting special places (mitu=sacred places), graves, and providing offerings, are more or less similar to what Christians do for saints. Christian reverence for saints takes many forms, including pilgrimages to tombs, relics, prayers, novenas, and devotions to saints. This involves bringing offerings of food, flowers, and burning candles in front of statues of saints (Mary). In Kei, when the missionaries arrived, they not only built churches but also Marian caves and Sacred Heart caves. This practice is observed in all Catholic villages in Kei. The missionaries taught devotions and novenas to Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They formed Apostolate groups for people devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Marian Congregations for those devoted to Mary. Due to this heritage, the Kei people are very devoted in practicing their faith.

Ancestors and saints are honoured for their heroic and sacrificial roles. For the Kei people, ancestors have a formidable role for their descendants. For the Kei people, ancestors are people who are willing to die, fight to defend their village and descendants, suffer in defence of their descendants. Saints, on the other hand, are willing to sacrifice their lives in defence of their faith in God. Devotion to God by the saints means (sacrificing their own lives for God). Saints offer and sacrifice their lives for God as a form of martyrdom. Saints are people who devote their lives to sharing God's teachings with others. They are willing to sacrifice their lives just to defend their faith. They have become martyrs for the faithful. For that reason, saints deserve to be honoured.

Marco Rizzi, in Origen on *Martyrdom*, argues that Origen makes a distinction between bloody martyrdom which symbolises Christian perfection so that martyrs are associated with Christ the

saviour and "inner," or "spiritual" martyrdom, as "the ascetic practice of the life and virtues of the martyrs (Rizzi 2009, 469). Likewise, Alan Segal, in *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion*, argues that the death of saints is a common phenomenon. He submits that the authors of the Book of Daniel adopted an idea that was very popular in the ancient Near East as an answer to the age-old question of why the righteous suffer; the idea of resurrection as a reward for martyrs and saints (Segal 2004, 292).

In Kei, Bishop John Aerts and his companions have demonstrated martyrdom. Their dedication to God did not waver and it led to their martyrdom. The example of Msgr Aerts and his companions shows how dedicated and devoted the saints are to God. They were willing to sacrifice their lives for their faith. The Apostle John recorded the words of the Lord Jesus regarding the seed, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only one seed; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24).

When Kei people communicate with ancestors, they engage with something perceived as living, much like Christians praying or talking to saints. Conversations with ancestors and saints lack formality; there must be a tangible object present, allowing living beings to visualize the concerned ancestors and saints. Therefore, statues, *woma*, young coconut leaves in *rinin* ceremonies, or other relics of ancestors become objects that help families visualize their ancestors. Similarly, statues, pictures, crucifixes, rosaries, or objects representing the saints become dynamic means that bring the faithful closer to the saints.

In essence, the presence of relics or representations of ancestors and saints creates a feeling among the Kei people that the distance between the living and the dead (ancestors and saints) is narrowed, fostering a sense of unity between them. The personified ancestral figures, embodied in statues, etc., serve as the 'visual aids' of the Kei people, playing a role similar to the statue of St. Francis Xavier erected in front of the Diocese of Amboina Maluku, adorned with flowers every December 3 when people celebrate its patron's day. This

is comparable to the caves and statues of the Virgin Mary found throughout Indonesia.

8. *Taflurut Nit* as Memorising for the Dead

The results indicate that *Taflurut Nit* is a form of anamnesis or memorializing the deceased. It is believed that the departed can benefit the living with otherworldly wisdom, while the living benefit the departed through prayers, sacrifices, and memorials like *Taflurut Nit*. This ceremony, honoring ancestors, is observed in Kei culture and many Asian cultures. Kei people visit the graves of their relatives, offering food and drink (*buuk mam*), while praying for the repose of the departed souls.

Although ancestor veneration is a common practice in Asia, *Taflurut Nit* in Kei exemplifies an inculturation practice that explains the mutual interaction between Judaeo-Christian traditions and human experience. Holy Communion or the Eucharist in church liturgy aligns with the Judaeo-Christian tradition, while *Taflurut Nit* aligns with the Kei human experience of honoring their ancestors. This elucidates why the Kei people consistently remember their departed through *Taflurut Nit* – an offering of food and drink (*buuk mam*) in individual and village ceremonies combined with Catholic prayers. This is done to express communion between the living and the dead and to give thanks for their lives.

The belief in the power of Duad-Nit to organize, regulate, protect, and maintain the lives of Kei people has fostered an attitude of respect and sincere submission to *Duad-Nit* as the source and origin of Kei people's lives. This attitude is reflected in the tradition of Taflurut Nit and celebrated in ritual celebrations and local wisdom. Edmund Leach, as cited by Eller, defines rituals as behaviors that form part of a sign system and serve to communicate information (Eller 2007, 110). Meanwhile, Catherine Bell, in her book *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, argues that ritualization involves various culturally specific strategies to distinguish certain activities from others, to create and privilege a qualitative difference between the sacred (the holy) and the profane (the ordinary), and to ascribe those differences to the realm

of human reality that exceeds human powers as living actors (Bell 1992, 74). It is clear that ritual behavior or action is the most important element in people's cultural life.

Rituals performed by the Kei people are shown to the Divine *Duad* namely *sobsob memehen* and *sobsob lor* and rituals shown to *Nit,* namely *ledar matan vhavhain* and *belan enso ne yaat enwel.* Meanwhile, there are many local wisdoms practised by the Kei people such as *Yan-ur Mangohoi* kinship, *Larvul Ngabal* customary law, *Belang, Sasi, Rinin, Woma*, etc. These rituals and local wisdom have become an integral part of the lives of the Kei people to this day. That way, they repeatedly experience that the figures of *Duad Ler-vuan* and *Nit* who they believe have lived happily in heaven continue to give them protection, blessings, and become protectors of their daily lives.

In the Judaeo-Christian Tradition, Christians express their faith in the existence of a creator God, in Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit through the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist. This sacramental feast is commemorated as memories or anamneses by the Church in communion – the communio of all God's people, encompassing the Church militant, the Church triumphant, and those in purgatory. It is a communion with the Triune God. The liturgy serves as the Church's expression of gratitude as communio for God's blessings and grace bestowed upon humanity and the entire world.

Sacrosantum Concilium views the liturgy as the exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ by the Mystical Body of Christ, the Head and its members. The content of the priestly office of Jesus Christ, namely God's work of salvation, is carried out by Jesus Christ. In the liturgy, the word of God is recited, prayers are offered, and hymns are chanted and sung. The people of God, as a Communion of Saints with other creatures, are sanctified again by God through the action of His Holy Spirit. The sense of union with God in which liturgical celebrations arise is a way in which communal life between human beings (both living and deceased, including ancestors) and all of life with God will always be maintained. *Communio Sanctorum* is communal life with God through the Holy Spirit, the source of life and existence of human beings and the whole world.

People who are part of these two traditions become part of God's life as the giver of life. They experience God's presence in the rituals and liturgies they celebrate. In rituals and liturgies, prayers of supplication are offered to God through the intercession of ancestors and saints. Their practices in rituals and liturgical celebrations may be very different, as their backgrounds are different and unique. Yet they carry one common purpose, to surrender to God, to ask for His blessings and mercy, to follow what God has said through their traditions from generation to generation, and to seek His protection in times of calamity and misery.

A compelling example of this anamnesis event is the First Mass ceremony of a new priest in Kei. Two crucial points from the celebration of the First Mass are pertinent to this research. Firstly, the celebration in *woma* reflects the aspect of communion. Phrases like "*lar enbaba ne wel ensoso*" (the journey of blood relations) and the Kei philosophy of "*Ai ni Ain, Fuut ain mehe ngifun, manut ain mehe tilur, and yan-ur mangohoi*" imply that everyone present at the *woma* event is united through a common blood bond and descent. Despite coming from different villages and lineages, and even people who are not from the Kei tribe, all are united into one family during the *woma* ceremony.

The phrases of the ancestors mentioned above are integral to traditional prayers in *woma*, emphasizing that the celebration unites the living (descendants) and the dead (ancestors), those close (in the village) and those far away (overseas). The celebration of family and fellowship in *woma* culminates with the Eucharist. The Eucharistic celebration itself represents communion among all the people of the Church – the pilgrim Church, the Church of the victors (saints), and those in purgatory. The Eucharist unites all people, and Jesus becomes the focal point of that meeting and unity. The incarnated Jesus, who lived, suffered, died, and rose again, is revealed in the Eucharistic event.

The desire for communion with ancestors and saints takes on a more explicit and urgent tone during the communion rites. The theme of communion emerging from the traditional *Taflurut Nit* ritual in *woma* serves as a poignant reminder of the Eucharist in the lives of

Christians. The *Taflurut Nit* ritual serves as a call for the Christian faithful to participate in the Eucharist, where communion with the Triune God, the saints, the ancestors, each other, and nature can be enacted and renewed.

Secondly, the liturgical celebrations mentioned above emphasize the significant role of Kei ancestors as mediators. The ceremony at the *woma* serves as a thanksgiving for the fulfillment of prayers offered to *Duad Ler-vuan* and *Nit*. During this ceremony, the new priest enters the traditional house for a reception ceremony in gratitude for the successful outcome. At the traditional house, the priest receives ancestral traditional objects such as mas and partakes in betel nut and areca nut, serving as a reminder, an anamnesis, that prayers have been answered by Duad and Nit.

While performing the ceremony at the *woma,* traditional prayers are offered to express gratitude and to request the presence of *Duad* and *Nit* to partake in the Eucharistic celebration. This mediating role is further highlighted in the prayers during the Eucharistic Celebration. For instance, in the prayers of the people or songs performed in the Kei language, the role of *Duad Nit* is explicitly mentioned.

9. Jesus as Progenitor Par Excellence

9.1. Incarnation

Christ called Himself the Son of God and identified Himself with God. By addressing God as His Father, He did nothing but affirm that He is the Son of God. In fact, He equated Himself with God. He said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9), because "I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:30). The same is true of the prophets. The Old Testament prophets foretold His coming. Only Christ reveals the true face of God, which in Pope Francis' "bulla" *Misericordiae Vultus*, Jesus Christ is called the face of the Father's mercy (MV 1).

Apart from being God, Jesus Christ is also God made flesh incarnate (cf. Jn 1:1-2, 14-15). He is not only true God but also true

man. As a human being, He underwent all the experiences that human beings typically go through: being born, having a biological mother, eating, drinking, feeling emotions such as anger and sadness, socializing, and forming friendships. Jesus stands out as the most influential person in history (Keen 2007, 6). He was a Jew from Galilee, a descendant of David, and the son of Mary, the wife of Joseph, a carpenter from Nazareth (Houlden 2003, 429-430). After receiving baptism from John, Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God through His works, including miracles, and His teachings, conveyed through parables. Jesus intentionally associated with the common people, those who were suffering and marginalised.

He loved God, and this love compelled Him to serve God and others selflessly, without seeking anything for Himself. Among His disciples, He took on the role of a servant (Lk 22:26), prioritizing service over being served (Mk 10:45). His focus was on the weak, needy, and poor (Mt 9:36). Jesus performed numerous miracles and acts of kindness for those He encountered. He fed the hungry (Lk 9:13-17), healed the sick (Mark 6:53-56), restored sight to the blind (Lk 18:40-43), enabled the deaf to hear (Mark 7:32-35), made the lame walk (Lk 5:24-25), cleansed lepers (Mt 8:1-3; Lk 17:11-19), and even raised the dead (Lk 7:11-17; John 11:38-44). His mission was to seek the lost (Lk 15) and demonstrate to them that God loved them. Jesus's sole intention was to fulfill God's will in the present moment. Through His acts of service, He aimed to help people recognize the goodness of God (Mk 2:12), for God is inherently good.

The Christian theological perspective on the incarnation aligns seamlessly with the Kei cultural view, making it accessible and acceptable. In the Kei cultural understanding of God, He is acknowledged as a Spirit but can also take on a human form, a concept referred to as "*Duad kabav*" (God takes on human form or God makes Himself human). In this regard, the Kei cultural view aligns with the Christian notion of the incarnation, where God becomes human.

However, a deeper exploration of Christian theology reveals that the incarnation is intricately connected to God's Son, Jesus Christ. In this understanding, Jesus Christ incarnates His Father, as the Son and the Father are understood to be one. Observing the Son is

synonymous with observing the Father, as the Son resides in the Father, and the Father in the Son. This profound unity underscores the Christian concept of the incarnation.

The Kei culture's view of God is revealed in its myths. Actually, in Kei culture, there is one God whom they call by various names such as *Duad Ler-vuan, Duad Karatat,* and *Duad Hukum* (God who punishes). According to a legend written by Fr Hendrik Geurtjens, MSC, an anthropologist who worked in Kei for a long time, the ancient Kei people were savages who lived like animals and with animals in the forest. People did not recognise private property, nor marriage; they liked to kill and plunder. Then there appeared a *Nabi Isah* who came from the west. But this *Nabi Isah* did not bring his own teachings, but those of his master, who was greater than he, but who had been taken up to the high heavens. When he ascended to the sky where the *Duad ler-vuan* lived, there was left on a rock on the mountain where he ascended, his footprints. With great love and longing for his master, *Nabi Isah* had kissed those footprints. At that moment the spirit of his master had entered him.

The main subjects taught by *Nabi Isah* were the right to private property and the stipulations regarding marriage. As a watchdog over the implementation of these regulations, he preached the *Duad Hukum*. As a sign, *Nabi Isah* introduced people to a prohibition sign called *hawear bal-warin*. The prohibition sign consisted of a coconut branch, the leaves of which were slightly woven. In its centre were often hung some mini baskets, also woven from coconut leaves, containing some small offerings. This sign was then placed in front of the property to be protected, and also in the room where a newly married person lived, so that everyone would know that the woman living there was no longer available for marriage but had become the property of her husband. *Nabi Isah* served as a watchdog, observing people who broke the law and reporting them to *Duad Ler-vuan*. The law he brought changed the behaviour of the Kei people from bad to good. The Kei people became afraid of *Duad Ler-vuan*, so to avoid *Duad Ler-vuan's* wrath, the Kei people made offerings to please *Duad Ler-vuan*.

9.2. Jesus the True Mediator

Seeking the prayers of the saints to address one's needs is an act of entrusting everything into God's hands, serving as an expression of faith. Prayers find expression through various devotions directed to God through the intercession of the saints. People convey their prayers to God by seeking the intercession of the saints, engaging in devotions, and participating in processions dedicated to the saints. During feasts commemorating the saints, Kei Christians actively participate in processions. They adorn their homes with pictures of saints and maintain a continuous practice of burning candles for prayer.

Since its inception, the Catholic Church has upheld the practice of praying for the spirits of the deceased. Kei Catholics faithfully observe the practice of honoring ancestors and invoking their intercession for relatives still navigating the challenges of the world. For instance, in Kei, the observance of the spirit mass on 2 November serves as an example of this practice.

In the act of honoring ancestors, prayer stands out as the most prominent visible expression through which Kei Christians seek the assistance of their ancestors, believed to be in the presence of Christ in heaven. Kei Christians implore their ancestors to intercede on behalf of those still navigating the earthly pilgrimage. If the veneration of ancestors is integrated into the Holy Mass, it is suggested that the ancestors be included in the line of saints, with their names explicitly mentioned if possible.

The Catholic Church, in its reverence for all saints, also seeks their intercession, as evidenced in prayers such as the Great Thanksgiving I. The Church holds the belief that saints, having shared in the company of Jesus in Heaven, persistently invoke God's grace and favor for the Church that continues its pilgrimage in the world. This perspective extends to include the ancestors who are thought to be in the presence of God in heaven.

Similar to the saints, ancestors who have triumphed in heaven with Christ are believed to intercede on behalf of their family members still journeying on earth. Typically, these requests are conveyed

through prayers, novenas, devotions, pilgrimages, and other eccle-siastical rituals.

The Church or traditional Kei society, of course, does not replace the role of ancestral intercession that is in the process of purification or the role of the Saint with the role of the intercession of Jesus Christ. Likewise, Mary as mediator never replaces the role of Jesus. The Second Vatican Council affirmed that the essence of Mary's mediation in no way contradicts, competes, or even contradicts the mediation of Christ.

The role of the patriarchs or saints stems from the patriarchship of Christ. Christ, as the sole mediator between God and humanity, fulfills a unique and unparalleled role. In the Old Testament, God employed prophets and priests to serve as intermediaries between Himself and the people of Israel. Prophets were sent to convey God's messages to Israel, preserving the bond between Him and His people. Meanwhile, priests carried out sacrificial rituals on behalf of the Israelites to maintain communion with God. Despite the significant role played by these intermediaries in the Old Testament, it was intended to highlight the profound need for a True Mediator. The book of Hebrews explicates that Christ's role as the genuine mediator addresses all the inadequacies of the previous system (Heb 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 11:40).

Paul's perspective in 1 Timothy regarding Jesus as a mediator aligns with Catholic teaching, which asserts that this mediation includes His saints who have joined Him in heaven. Due to the intimate union of the saints with Jesus, their desires are wholly centered on Him. The saints, in their closeness to Jesus, intercede through prayers for the faithful who are still on their earthly pilgrim-age, guiding them towards heaven.

The concept of Jesus as the mediator originates from the fall of humanity into sin, which severed the relationship between humans and God. Jesus incarnated as a human to fulfill His role as a mediator, restoring the connection between humanity and God. The reasons for Jesus being the mediator are twofold: Firstly, He is the only true God and Man capable of bridging the gap between God and humanity,

accomplishing this through the redemptive work on the cross. Secondly, He alone, as the true God and Man, submitted entirely to His Father for the salvation of humankind.

The exclusive mediator between God and humanity is Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh, the incarnate Son of God. Previous forms of mediation in the Old Testament were shadows and anticipations of Christ, and their efficacy was inseparable from Christ's pre-incarnate role within them. This is evident in the Spirit of Christ speaking to the prophets (1 Peter 1:10) and Christ's role being manifested in the journey of Israel led by Moses (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).

10. Summary

This paper explores how Kei Catholics can seamlessly integrate their Catholic faith with the honoring of their ancestors. By bringing together various elements from their traditions and beliefs, the research seeks to enhance faith and cultural identity without conflict. The goal is to contribute to reconciling the worship of God and the honoring of ancestors (*Sob Duad, Taflurut Nit*), showcasing how Kei Catholics celebrate their faith within their rich cultural context.

The study delves into the integration between Kei *Taflurut Nit* culture and the Communion of Saints in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition. Despite performing Taflurut Nit rituals that predate the Catholic Church's entry, Kei people still feel a connection to Catholicism. Examining the Theology of the Communion of Saints, the research identifies coherence with Kei culture's belief system. It argues that the communion includes not only canonized saints but also all those in heaven and purgatory, forming a profound connection.

The research highlights that Kei ancestors seek acknowledgment and prayers from their living families, facilitating their purification in purgatory. Ancestors act as mediators between God and humans, analogous to the intercession of Mary and the saints in Christianity. While not rivaling the unique intercession of Jesus, the intercession of saints enhances it, drawing strength from Christ's

surplus merit. The study reveals that Kei Catholics pray both to their ancestors and to Jesus through the intercession of the saints, emphasizing the interconnectedness of their religious practices.

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Jumpstarting Ethno-Philosophy in Context: Ethics Discourse on *Gawis ya Ngawi*

Dennis M. Placido[1]

ABSTRACT

Ethnicity relates to the descriptive evaluation of culture, and when examined through a philosophical lens, it becomes ethno-philosophy. Any attempt to understand the complexities of human existence is an ongoing endeavor. Any notion of goodness and badness must emanate from a cultural milieu. Scrutinizing these concepts must be rooted in existentialism, as all experiences are continually interpreted lived experiences.. The phenomena of Gawis ya Ngawi from linguistic Kankanaey terms refer to mean good and bad. In context, the Kankanaey term "Gawis" literally expresses good things in life or well-being of the person and "Ngawi" illustrates the opposite dimensions of life; however, such distinctions evoke query regarding ethical discourse. This paper analyzes the nuances of the interpreted experiences of Gawis ya Ngawi and presents its possible ethical discourses within hermeneutics of appreciation and few implications in linguistic interpretations. Jumpstarting to interpret culture via ethical discourse opens up the need of

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contextualization. In the realm of human existence is human culture, a topic where philosophy continues to respect especially speaking about indigeneity. In philosophy, indigeneity promotes cultural reverence. This respect for cultural uniqueness necessitates a balance between philosophy and culture, continually redefining the relationship. Philosophy's primary goal is to manifest the rich traditions of cultures within the context of lived experiences. Ethno-philosophy, as an understanding of culture, centers on clarifying meanings, exploring ethical dimensions, and interpreting language etymologies.

Keywords: *Ipugaw, seg-ang (care), hermeneutics of appreciation*

1. Introduction

Postmodern culture has grown increasingly intricate. In today's world, individuals seek popularity through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, empowered by the internet. Almost every move by an individual is captured by CCTV or any electrically innovative images. They are regularly used to promote oneself – all for the sake of human adventures; nonetheless, "we still can create ourselves as something unified and only to realize that we have a messy, fragmented sequence of experiences" (Baggini 2013, 32). Despite technological advancements, the essence remains: the individual holds greater significance than using social platforms. Such neutral versions of self-image and self-engaged promotions are a glimpse of a greater reality, i.e., reflexivity of culture brought about by secularization (McLuhan 2013, 196).

In fact, the "conception of the good has been secularized that conduct of one's life is seeking to defend an individual's freedom of conscience" (Maclaure and Taylor 2011, 21). In other words, self-promotion and self-image, especially in terms of knowledge, has become the gauge of humanity and legitimation. In our postmodern condition, "knowledge has become computerized such that the

acquisition of knowledge is no longer the training of the mind (*bildung*), even of the individuals, becoming obsolete and will become even more so. Knowledge has become a commodity to be produced and consumed. Knowledge is to be produced in order to be sold. Knowledge ceases as an end in itself, it loses its own value" (Lyotard 1997, 4-5) and such loss of value still affirms a relativistic culture (Stenmark et al. 2018, 23).

To engage in self-promotion or self-image-building has become superfluous since human identities and cultural values are being challenged with trending fads on social media resulting in possible loss of self-identity. It assumes that the more pictures of oneself are engraved in media culture, the greater the possibility of human identity. But a created identity based on media culture is not enough due to passing of time. In other words, the memory of past events are forgotten and can only be recalled due to their importance in the simultaneity of significance. The art of questioning is then important for persons to take into consideration. And, when people forget their culture, there is a greater tendency to lose sight of its significance. With the influences of mass media, it is difficult to recapture the sense of our culture in shaping our identity. The fact is that "we are indeed less unified, coherent, consistent and enduring than we usually suppose, but we are still real and individual" (Baggini 2013, 36). It is then in adaptation and flexibility of human experiences that makes society changes (Joas 2008, 33) yet maintaining our cultural identity.

If culture is secondary to human nature, then it requires continuous academic discussions or meaningful conversations. While people are controlled by time, where time goes hand in hand with distance, the distance of memory for people is proportionally detrimental to its loss of identity. The truth is that "there is an interplay of articulation of experiences with meaning attached to it. It is impossible to impart cultural values if one fails to articulate them in keeping with time" (Joas 2008, 33). It further shows that the more the person studies his/her culture, the better his/her human identity is being enhanced. When we speak about the existence of our culture, our nature and morality continue to be preserved. Therefore, the less

discourse on culture occurs, the lower the possibility of promoting and preserving identity.

Culture-talk is an anthropocentric-talk. An Igorot, anthropologist, and a bishop said that "to do field work and getting a PhD degree helped me to better understand my culture. It made me feel the pulse and heartbeat of our people, our peasant farmers especially in a way, theorizing in the academy that had not been done" (Claver 2011, 7). Prescriptively, the more we talk about our cultural praxis, lifestyles, frameworks, ideals, and concepts, the more our culture becomes universally accepted and idealized. Even in a personal testimony of life, it is important to empathize and generalize our (cultural) values (Joas 2008, 34). It is then essential to speak of culture as the basis of doing philosophy. Philosophy becomes alive not only as a text to be read and interpreted; instead, it is already an object-subject of interpretation. Let us now elaborate on the fundamental function of ethno-philosophy.

1.1. Fundamental Function of Ethno-philosophy

Why talk about ethno-philosophy? The term *ethno* speaks of the core of life, natural, cultural, and the moral aspects of the community and *philosophy* is the seeking of wisdom; thus, ethno-philosophy is the seeking of wisdom in the core of life of a community. The discourse of ethno-philosophy then starts and ends in the natural, cultural, and moral aspect of a communal life. *Natural* because it is a glimpse of what is given either as a heritage, traditional, or already normal. An example is the practice of socialization and social contract – conversational or business transaction. *Cultural* because as a way of life, it had been tested by (contemporaneous) time and change. An example is the worldview on land, air, and living together, and so on. *Moral* because the discourse is about patterns of human behavior as acceptable to that community without prejudice to the moral perspectives of other cultures. An example is the view of goodness and badness, truth, beauty, and wise inclusiveness of human virtues.

Why philosophize on lived-experiences? Ethno-philosophizing is an endless endeavor of checking and balancing the nature and realms of philosophy from cultural perspectives. Our "lived (religious)

experience is mediated by culture whether communal or individual" (Joas 2008, 99). It is not only about historical investigation of facts about cultures, but also paving how such cultures can be idealized, revitalized, or even scrutinized. In the process of scrutiny of cultures, lived-experiences are intertwined reality of the process of scrutinizing. A lived-experience is one of the basis of the reality of nature, culture, and morality. In other words, one cannot interpret nature without morality, and one cannot understand morality without nature. The symbiosis of the three aspects of ethno-philosophy brought by nature, culture, and morality gives birth to idealization of society.

Why the need to interpret lived-experiences in a context of linguistic terms of *gawis ya ngawi*? Language is part of nature, culture, and morality. As nature is immersed in language so is culture, for it is one way to understand it. Morality is illuminated in language as language also invokes its real value and meaning. Any lived-experience must be linguistic so that it optimizes the possibility of acceptance. An acceptance of linguistic terms can be the beginning of idealizing nature, culture, and morality. Any linguistic terms must be contextual and thus such context must elaborate the meaning of the text in that terms.

As emerging philosophies in the context of culture, studying the Igorot worldview requires commitment in refocusing on cultural studies. The dream is "to unite Igorots worldwide" (Botengan 2011, xvii). Here, Igorot is a Kankanaey term to refer to the western part of Northern Luzon called the "*Applais*" that *literally* means 'People in the Mountains.' It was then said that an Igorot is a Kankanaey and a Kankanaey is an Igorot (Botengan 2011). Cultural studies do not only belong to the realms of sociological, ethnographical nor anthropological mindset and interpretations but also belong to philosophical investigations. Studying people is studying their culture as well. As culture is a way of life, so is philosophy, and both are never in a vacuum but rather intertwined with language, arts, mindset, or worldviews. In other words, they are but always fused within a particular milieu. And, as culture possesses philosophical underpin-nings, ethno-philosophical research is enriched to make culture continue to develop using rational discourses.

The context of '*gawis ya ngawi*' translated literally as 'good and bad' in English somehow does not capture the exact meaning of the terms. This is the reason why ethno-philosophy suggests a non-discriminatory and a non-defeating context of the terms. Clearly, an interpreter may say, "Why should I be concerned about something I don't understand?" True enough, such a claim is acceptable, but the claim also opens up another claim of saying, "If I am concerned about those things I already understand, what is the point of learning?" The second claim is a better proof of advancing knowledge, and advancing knowledge requires understanding which starts from simple terms. This goes to show that education truly starts from alphabetization to terminologies, from terminologies to sentences then paragraphs to complex essays and literary writings.

Gawis ya ngawi are powerful Kankanaey (De los Reyes and De los Reyes 2003) terms for authenticity and inauthenticity of human existence. Human existence for a Kankanaey is natural, cultural, and moral. The term '*gawis*' evokes social relationships, which normally start with authenticity in the 'self'. The sociality issue of the Kankanaey people is the idea of '*makilampok*' (to socially engage), which is normally an evidence of sharing and solidarity. For most Kankanaey people, 'to be with' is the essential nature of humanity. This means, attending a social gathering in festivities like marriage celebrations like '*kanyaw*' or the community affairs of thanksgiving for a fruitful harvest, profit, or success, is a natural, cultural, and moral obligation for support and show of solidarity.

1.2. Expository Analyses on *"Gawis"*

'*Gawis*' represents an authentic human existence. It portrays not only good intent but more so of commitment. Such commitment involves ability to work. Commitment infuses responsibility, which calls for the coinage of two terms '``response"and "ability" (Bradley and Stocker 2005). Thus, it calls for the ability to respond; and is about "doing and allowing" to which involves having reason to do something and not merely allowing it. '*Gawis*' can then entail the ability to respond particularly in an environment of *obla* (work). The old adage of Kankanaey elders states, *"men-obla ka tapno gumawis nan biag mo"* (work in order to have a better life). A *kadangyan* (De los Reyes

and De los Reyes 2003, 212) (old meaning: rich person) embodies a committed worker. Similar to most of the Cordillera tribes, the Kankanaey person gives *obla* a priority over intellectual undertaking. The use of hands is the key to a successful life. A dirty hand is the most normal thing to happen to a person. In *obla*, quality of life is assured. In *obla*, commitment to human development is encouraged and can inspire the community to help one another, especially in times of need, such as *nateyan* (during wake of a dead person) and *boda, kasar* (wedding ceremonies).

'*Gawis*' is experienced in '*kapaayan-di-ipugaw*' metaphorically embodying the worthiness of life. A worthy person is someone who uses his/her energy to help people in need. Within the ambit of natural, cultural, and moral, *"mapa-ay san ipugaw no gagawisen na nan ikkakan na ay men biag"* (a worthy person is someone who does good to live well). The person who is worthy is a natural worker, a culturally matured individual, or someone who knows where s/he came from. The facticity of 'coming from' involves knowledge of the people in the community and values to be achieved daily such as respect to the elderly and respect to inherited '*bagbaga'* or wise saying of the old folks. Someone then is called '*gawis ay ipugaw*' (De los Reyes and De los Reyes 2003) when s/he listens to the lessons of life and apply it in real life. The '*gawis ay ipugaw*' (good person) is someone who is not necessarily well-known in the neighborhood but someone who is described as, '*adinan bubukodan nan gawis*' (somebody cannot or should not keep the good things for himself/herself alone).

In the level of sociality, invitation is verbalized and then acted by one's show of support to community affairs. Unwritten laws are prevalent, especially in communal celebrations. It is called '*gawis*' when everyone participates in a communal affair. Someone who does not respond to community concern is '*tekteken*' (so indifferent). In short, it is unwritten law that you have to get involved with communal affairs because not getting involved is not the natural tendency of a person. It is not the moral of the human person to isolate himself. An invitation is not necessarily formal as in a message through a letter or a card. In *ogogbo* (sharing of burden to finish a communal task), the individual has to come out from his/her comfort zone to help in such

community concern, problem, or issue. Invitation then is implicitly embedded in the psyche of the Kankanaey person.

Observable facts of the Kankanaey Igorot are the following: wise and intelligent, honest and industrious, noble and dignified. An Igorot person is well-proportioned, big-bodied, and strong; a craft-man who knows hunting, mining, and living with the test of the environment. A woman possesses dignity of work as a weaver, rice planter, pottery maker, and a creative cook. As a social being, the Kankanaey Igorot is neighbor-oriented, believing that the world is sacred, and that everything in it is to be respected.

1.3. The Nature of *"Ngawi"* Corollary to *"Gawis"*

Speaking of '*gawis*' is speaking of its counterpart '*ngawi*' which is not necessarily oppositional all the time. Imbedded in the doing the good involves converse relation where one who practice *ngawngawi* (indifferent practice) has already an idea of what is the supposed '*gawis.*' Deterrent of doing the '*ngawi*' is still the '*gawis*' in the *semek* (consciousness) of the human person. Option to do the bad is always cultural so that natural of that which is already given becomes moral. In other words, the cultural perspective is the bias of the human person to be doing good or opting to be doing the opposite.

Ngawi is a mood of inauthentic existence. The *ngawi* attitude is observed in a person's lack of sense of community. *"Nan adina gekken nan makilampok et ngawi nan nemnem na"* (someone who does not share his time with others/sensitive to community life is someone who has bad intent). The *'ngawi ay ipugaw'* is someone who does not work. *"Nan adi bumikas"* (someone who does not use his ability to work) is in the mood of inauthenticity. To be lazy at work is bad for a Kankanaey. *"Nan adi bumadang"* (someone who never learns to help) is also an indicator of an inauthentic Kankanaey. If someone is *'kaleleget da'* (rejected or hated), the Kankanaey becomes *'ngawi.'* *"Nan adi makwani"* (someone who is unable to learn lessons in life) is someone who epitomizes *'ngawi ay nemnem'* (bad intent/ consciousness). The bad consciousness is the inability to comprehend life lessons, despite receiving continuous guidance and wise advice from various sources such as community elders, respected individuals,

and formal authorities like teachers, politicians, parents, or religious leaders in the community.

If *gawis* is to be worthy, then *ngawi* is to be unworthy despite being espoused by the *gawis ay nemnem. 'Nan adi mapa-ay ay ipugaw et san adi bumikas, adi men obla, adi makilampok, ya egay nanemneman'* (the unworthy person is the person who does not work hard enough, who does not mingle communally, and who has never learned lessons in life). The mood of *ngawi* is transitory and temporal in nature. *Ngawi* is a moral-director, an already glimpsed of *gawis*. Since no one continues to be in the mood of *ngawi* all the time, it entails a framework of mind, i.e., to be aware of moral responsibility of check and balance. Not all that which can be considered *ngawi* in real life continuously be considered really bad. The morality of responsibility takes over the mistakes of the person in his/her past. The irresponsibility is the real issue in the mood of the *ngawi*. Clearly enough, reparation and appropriate justice of *gawis* overcome the temporality of the *ngawi*.

To sum, the *gawis* is *Makilampok* (sociality), *Men obla* (committed to work), *Maki badang* (supportive), *Maki ogogbo* (solidarity), *Anapen na mengawisan di biag*, (seeking for a quality of life), *Mapaay* (worthy of goal), and *Nanemneman* (Response-ability). The *ngawi* on the other hand is characterized by *Adi makilampok* (no sense of community), *Adi men obla* (does not work), *Adi bumadang* (does not help), Adi bumikas (lazy), *Kaleleget da* (hated/rejected), *Adi makwani* (unable to learn), *Adi mapaay* (is not beneficial), and *Egay nanemneman* (unable to learn life-lessons).

2. Ethical Implications of *Gawis ya Ngawi*

2.1. The Necessity of Ethical Discourse in Ethno-philosophy

Why is ethical discourse essential in ethno-philosophy? Ethical discourse happens for a particular reason, that is, to elucidate on the value of nature, culture, and morality. In the elucidation process, it is not merely to expose the already natural practice in a culture, say the distinction between *gawis ya ngawi*, but more so of alleviating a sense

of ignorance. Ignorance is treatable by virtue of openness to other views which happen in a cultural milieu. Nothing exists in a vacuum. As ethics grapple with the issue of human act as if seemingly universalized ideals to impose what is necessary for people to a uniformed act or *telos*, it forgets of what *ethos* really is. The *telos* of *ethos* is culturally bound; and, not until such time that we espouse such *telos* of culture, it would never progress.

In other words, "What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me, and the issue of my identity is worked out, only through a language of interpretation which I have come to accept as a valid articulation of these issues" (Centeno 2007, 123). In other words, the ethics of culture and nature must be revealed so as to progress doing philosophy. As philosophy progresses, it is bounded by nature, culture, and morality.

The naturalness of *gawis ya ngawi* resides in the conjunctive nature "*ya*" (and). If *gawis* as an attitude develops in the person as the deterrent of *ngawi*, then they supplement each other. The cultural dimension of *gawis* proposes an illumination of what ethics is all about. Here, the ethos of *gawis* is fully understood not only in the context of the Kankanaey people, but of its idealization in a broader sense. The impact of *gawis* to another cultural view is a coordinate of reason in context. Thus, an Ilocano can be challenged to be adaptive to the way of a Kankanaey Igorot, without sacrificing his/her cultural norms. This would explain "why the dominant cultural attitude towards nature has two defining traits; first, it values nature primarily as a nourishing, livable, enjoyable environment for human beings, and devalues human nature when it proves to be a hostile, disobedient, malnourishing environment for human beings" (Heiseg 2003, 34).

The morality of *gawis ya ngawi* is not a delineated view as if an ethical program is already designed; instead, it is a perspective of 'understand-*ing* the wider sense' of what really good and bad is conjunctively. The *gawis* must be seen in its broadest context as the *ngawi* collapsed by the overthrow of *gawis*. The *cultus of gawis* is in its applications and how it is used often by those who knew the concept. It is neither the immorality of the *ngawi* that determines the possibility of knowledge about what is bad but instead its clarity of

repulsion and rejection by those who know the meaning of the term and its impact personally and communally. Sociologically, the mitigation of "moral duty of the human persons are assured over and above merely economic-profit oriented attitude within the community" (Heiseg 2003).

Every culture possesses a metaphysical and epistemological dimension, making it impossible to discuss metaphysics in isolation from cultural context.. The decline of metaphysics marks the emergence of ethics, always situated within specific cultural contexts. Ethics, in its continuous relevance, is inherently rooted in a specific cultural milieu. In essence, to understand ethics, one must traverse the terrain of culture, particularly within the framework of *gawis ya ngawi.* The epistemology of *gawis ya ngawi* is simple: the consciousness of goodness is inversely proportional to the knowledge of badness. Thus, learning to be *gawis* flows from its corollary counterpart in a bigger elongated picture of *ngawi*. This means that the more the person thinks in a bad manner, the greater the possibility of espousing the potency of goodness.

Why the need to interpret *gawis ya ngawi* as a possible ethical discourse? What is natural, cultural, and moral is ethical. Since *gawis* speaks of a consciousness of sociality, commitment to work and worthiness, responsibility of self and community, love and care for self and community, then it is an ethical discourse. On the other hand, if *ngawi* espoused by practices of laziness and unable to mingle with community members, and consciousness of inability to learn life-lessons, unresponsive and questionable commitment to worthiness of life, irresponsibility in caring and loving the self and community, then *ngawi* necessitates dealing with such practices and consciousness with utmost care. Since *ngawi* is the transitory and temporal mood of human existence then it must be viewed to be leveraging into recapturing one's goodness once again.

An ethical discourse is a discussion of possible ideals and reality of life. If so, then *gawis ya ngawi* as a discourse of reality in a cultural milieu is already an ethical discourse. The ideal of *gawis* and reality of *ngawi* elicit continuous scrutiny in an academic discussion. However, no amount of academic discourses will hamper how the

terms are used to mold the character of a *Kankanaey ipugaw* or individual human person. Possible nuances in how the terms *gawis ya ngawi* can be used by other cultures but the meaning can have nuances too, but the reality of ideality of the terms continue to be studied. Indeed, the tribal people or so called Igorots of the Cordillera known as Indigenous Peoples or IPs is the emphasis on the awareness or the Self referred - "people in the mountain," as traders, miners, hunters, woodworkers (De los Reyes and De los Reyes 2003, 209).

There is a need to fulfill an inadequacy of ethics (Enoch 2005, 766), which necessitates a discourse that requires the ability to understand the nature of any practice. Idealization of any usual cultural practice that promotes human identity is still needed in a multicultural setting. This is not to say that ethnocentrism is espoused where the only basis of one's appraisal or evaluation of another culture, is based on one's own culture, that is, the Kankanaey culture. Thus, any idealization of one's culture is of necessity for human survival. In other words, the use of gongs in the Cordillera region espouses preservation of cultural heritage, which can truly affect the present generation to the next. This is not only true in cultural rituals but also in trying to continue redefining the meaning of becoming human in the process of idealization.

One particular example where *gawis* as idealization is expressed by an Igorot migrant who attested, the "Igorot bridge to success to North America is the fact that they are bound together by the bond of kinship and oneness, forged by their historical experience underlying cultural similarities and the spell of their shared beautiful homeland" (Bacdayan 2011, 25).

As an ethical person, it is important to choose the *gawis*, not to be persuaded by the *ngawi.* A choice of *gawis* is a better option to desire to live a happy life. To thwart the *ngawi* is to choose the influence of the *gawis* attitude. In fact, "the nuances of experiences tell us to transcend mere sociological facts and give way to a theological or yet natural dimension of life, which in most cases, could not be totally being determined" (Berger 1997, 70). Let us now understand the necessity of the hermeneutic of appreciation on *Gawis ys Ngawi* as an ethical discourse.

2.2. Hermeneutic of Appreciation on *Gawis ya Ngawi* as Ethical Discourse

Ethno-philosophy indicates a value of hermeneutic of appreciation. By hermeneutic we mean the science of interpretation which if applied to the virtue of *appreciation*, extracted insights or pure thoughts could be generated from such a particular bias of experience; thus, the use of hermeneutic of appreciation (Centeno 2007, 123). Here, the *ipugaw* espouses *sega-ang* or care. *Seg-ang* is the character of the *ipugaw*. Care is built within the grace of the human person which is always temporal and resolute (Haar 1993, 27). The true nature of a human person is care and not even love. Love emanates from care for care is the original goodness of the person. In such a way, we can only manifest our real love when we recognize our ability to care. The nature of the *ipugaw is seg-ang* as original goodness. The authentic *ipugaw* is someone who has *'gawis nan* semek na' or true to himself, *ma-id kaistoryaan na* or someone whom no one can say anything negative about him/her. The true *ipugaw is 'wada anawen na'* of someone who cares for life. The authentic *ipugaw* also espouse the *'wedweda nan kina ipugaw'* or someone who gives priority to his identity. Someone who is *'men-obla si sumyaan di biag'* or who works for a quality of life, is a priority of an authentic *ipugaw*. The true and real *ipugaw* must be '*makilampok'* or sociable or with a sense of neighborliness, and someone who looks into the need of the community 'og-*ogbo'* symbolizing one's solidarity and commitment to community life.

No specific laws govern the practice of *gawis* or penalize *ngawi*. These concepts have evolved as social constructs over time, subject to ongoing evaluation and assessment by those who understand their proper application. Individuals from various walks of life, including politicians, students, farmers, and even street sweepers in Baguio City, who grasp the meanings of these terms, can expect scrutiny within the framework of Kankanaey ethics. Therefore, the human persona, or *ipugaw*, is believed to be nurtured by a sense of care known as *seg-ang*, which forms the core of human ethos.

Let us also realize that in as much as there is no direct parallelism of any cultural pragmatics, the unique cultural bearings to

human experience may be universalized in terms of reasonable social exchanges. In other words, we live and move and have our beings, not in vacuum, but always within the 'cultural context' which involves ethical discourses contrary to any other cultural pragmatics which explains why it is always exciting to learn the cultures of others, especially among us in Asia full of unpopular adventurous traits, belief systems, and ways of life.

3. Relevance of *Gawis ya Ngawi* on Linguistic Interpretations

Interpretation on the value of any cultural worldview and practice and in this case, *gawis ya ngawi*, is challenging. As an exploration using ethno-philosophy, hermeneutics of relevance is necessary to provide clarity in portraying a way of life. It can be a breakthrough on relevance to understand that reflection of life is a reflection of faith. And the reflection is done according to how people think and express themselves, that is, according to cultural mental categories and ways of thinking on their own. Shouldn't indigenized philosophies then be the usual mode of reflection everywhere (Claver 2009, 25)? As such, language becomes the house of our being (Polt 1995, 145).

Let us now illustrate the possibility of interpreting the meaning of *gawis* as relevant to the meaning of "salvation." The message of "salvation" has been interpreted across various cultural contexts throughout history, spanning different languages such as Greek, Latin, German, French, and Spanish, and even reaching the Filipino culture. In this context, it can be meaningfully interpreted through the Kankanaey practice of *gawis*. Salvation is dynamically equivalent to *gawis,* which is also similar to the idea of *'kaginhawaaan sa buhay,'* or wellness in life. In living a prosperous life, the Kankanaey expresses a deep joy, *"makagapu ta gawis nan inkana ay matago"* (It is because s/he lived a good life). Thus, from an affirmative proposition, salvation is a liberation from poverty expressed in Filipino as *"kaalwanan sa buhay"* (well-being in life). In being able to enjoy the wellness of life by way of hospitality and of being optimistic (Montemayor 1993, 212), we experience *ginhawa,* which is also dynamically interpreted in *gawis* when there is the enjoyment of solidarity in the community.

The meaning of dynamic equivalence in any cultural practice has a death-dealing element and at the same time a life-giving element. It is expected that the death element of a cultural practice is to be addressed and critically rectified while the life-giving element of any cultural practice will have to be promoted and enhanced. There is a need to return to ethics from such ambivalence (Butler 2000, 27). An example is the Filipino practice of *"utang na loob."* While we can be indebted to a person forever just because he had done a favor for us is itself a negative practice and while it can also speak of the positive side of "*loob*" as *kabutihan* o *kagandahang-loob"* (inner self or inner goodness) stressing the reality that social phenomena stressing plural characteristic of reality (Mercado 2006, 201). We now discuss how it could also be possible to enjoin cultural nuances of understanding such interpretations in the context of a Kankanaey way of life.

The universality of ethics is particularized in cultural context. In a way, we can appreciate ethics when we understand our cultural practices. The practice of *gawis ya ngawi* presupposes ethics in action. Faith is closely related to ethics as ethics critically clarifies faith in action. The Kankanaey practice of *gawis ya ngawi* as an expression of a people's faith to oneself and others can be said to be the seed of faith. Since faith is also a humane endeavor for the pursuit of good acts (*gawis*) and dispel of bad behaviors (*ngawi*) then there is no reason not to talk about what makes ethics explicit in culture. Any argument between a profane and the sacred, holy and the unholy, or matter and spirit, and thus of being dualistic would entail elaborations. If an experience is an interpreted experience then it must be a human experience. And any human experience is hermeneutically reflective of practical philosophy (Palmer 2007, 227). The practicality of philosophy is evidenced with an interpreted experience. The inter-preted experience of *gawis ya ngawi*, being a human experience leads to a deeper interpretation assuming that anything considered as *kaginhawaan ng buhay* is dynamically equivalent to the Kankanaey concept and practice of *gawis* which indicates well-being in the Kankanaey context.

In fact, the Kankanaey people who converted to the Christian faith by the American Protestants in the 1960s and British Anglicans, the Belgian Catholic missionaries or the Augustinian monks (1935)

(Depre 1955, 3-4) had in fact implicitly been practicing *gawis ya ngawi* as a norm. The expression, *"layden nan adi kaila nan gawis ngem kaliliget na nan ngawi"* (The sacred approves the good and discredits the bad) is an example of contextualizing the faith which also requires continuous triangular interpretation on linguistic meaning.

3.1. Relevance on Linguistic Interpretations: *"Gawis"* Reflective on Salvation and *"Ginhawa"*

At this juncture, it is important to consider three meanings, that is, in this reflection on the meaning of English dynamic sense of "*salvation*," "*ginhawa*" reflecting Filipino sense and with Kankanaey concept of "*gawis*." that reflects the role of parents in the upbringing of the Igorot sense of identity "rooted in my culture as valuable and so important, to be passed on to the next generation where my sense of belonging and responsibility" (Pooten 2011, 51).

If "*ginhawa*" is the dynamic equivalence of "salvation" within the dialogue of Judeao-Christian Tradition with Filipino culture then "*ginhawa"* vis-a-vis "*gawis*" in Kankanaey, are interrelated. It is said to be related since salvation as "*gawis*"can be seen in "*ginhawa,*" which necessitates explanation in diverse Filipino cultural traits, worldview, or practice. So, the three relations of *"salvation-ginhawa-gawis"* then become dynamically interrelated. For instance, "salvation" in English context connotes the feeling of being liberated from sin thus receiving absolute grace; on the other hand, to enjoy life as a Christian Filipino demands the sense of "*ginhawa*" as "*matiwasay na buhay*" same as well-being. Thus, the concept of "*gawis*"in Kankanaey context is liberation or salvation from being in an inauthentic mood of existence.

From a positive interpretation of *gawis, ginhawa,* and *salvation*, there also involves its negative or the opposing counterpart such as a need to triangulate '*Ngawi*' as Kankanaey concept of bad, "*Kasalanan*" for majority of Filipinos, and 'Damnation' as universal English concept. Let us interpret the opposing counterpart.

3.2. Linguistic Interpretations of *"Ngawi"* Relevant to the Concepts of Damnation and *"Kasalanan"*

Upon interpreting *gawis* reflective of *ginhawa*, let us then interpret *ngawi* in its relevance to "damnation" (opposed to salvation/ liberation), which is co-equally resembling "*masama* or *kasamaan*" (bad) in Filipino parlance. This reflects "*ngawi*" in the Kankanaey context. An example here is about being "damned" to "sin," a destruction of relationship to a divine being which similarly reflects to *"masama" o "kasalanan"* as *"pandaraya sa sarili, sa kapwa, at sa Diyos"* (lying to oneself, others, and to the Sacred). This is also dynamically similar to the Kankanaey concept of "*ngawi*" as a renunciation of good. It is normally expressed in a statement, *"ngawi nan nemnem ya semek na"* (the person has bad thoughts and bad intent towards others) or *"inayan nan mensapo si ngawi"* (It is damned to do the bad thing).

Filipinos normally look at ethics as a social commitment because they value social relations as a cultural norm (Montemayor 1993, 24). In fact, sinful acts are attached to what people say that destroy one's reputation. A stained name is something shameful. This feeling of shame (Filipino: '*hiya'*) is triggered by "losing face or deflation of one's *amor propio* or self-worth" (Montemayor 1993, 24). For instance, Filipinos have the tendency to agree that what is shameful is what is sinful or what other people say about one's bad action (Filipino: *Kung ano ang nakakahiya, siya yung kasalanan* or *kung ano ang sasabihin ng mga tao sa paligid mo*). However, contemporary understanding of *sin* as "*pandaraya*" (cheating) from the majority of Filipinos becomes a clearer expression of "*kasalanan.*" Greater weight in understanding the social dimension of sin as "*pandaraya*" such as cheating during election is considered to be a 'structured sin.'

The concept of '*ngawi*' (bad) from among the tribes of the Kankanaey people, especially among the elders, is that there is no such thing as '*basol'* or '*kasalanan'* on the personal level. Instead, *ngawi* is the inability not to keep one's word. pointed out that the "essence of being an Igorot (Kankanaey) is to keep our words (Bontoc: *"Nan kalin nan Chios Sinan kali tako"*). The Bontoc word *kali* means 'word,

speech, language but it also means '*promise, vow, and oath.*' The saying "'my word, my bond' (from Shakespeare) was very true – and more *bonding* – in our language in the fact that 'word' and 'bond' are expressed by one and the same word, *kali*" (Claver 2011, 124-125). The ethic of *kali* is that when one speaks, he must stand with it and vow to protect it, with responsibility, a bond to live it. Thus, it is bad to say something that one cannot do in action.

The basic opposing counterparts in interpretations then makes it necessary to connect meanings from three-words i.e., sin*, kasalanan,* and *kali* (*ngawi*) that clarify the importance of cultural contexts that can still be harmonized into possible dissimilar yet similar messages. As a way to understand the need for religion to be socially factual, a sociologist believes that only in the experience of self-transcendence (Joas 2008, 6-7) can our culture continue to evolve and as such, one's identity, continuity, and sociality is preserved. Such sociological understanding of religion demands an interpretation using philosophy so as to explore more on the need to evaluate our human experience, initiated within the context of self-transcendence. In fact, he believes that faith is a sociological fact that imbues interpretation of religiosity and respect for human dignity that universalizes all our efforts to theologize guided by philosophy and culture. It is then important to consider that "dialogue of faiths requires a philosophic mind to progress religion" (Joas 2008, 33).

As a jumpstart of doing philosophy through ethno-philosophy relevant to our "methodology of history and a hermeneutic of promising becomes the crucial means of preventing the passing-by of time and making a fresh start" (Joas 2008, 34). It is said that the post secular age is "to provide reason for society to live out with what is rational despite different views and that there is a need to recognize new (post secular) rather than preserving what is old" (Joas 2008, 111). It is therefore the quest of every secular person to seek something deeper, spiritual, and mysterious. This is the quest for the appreciation of the 'holy,' the Sacred in our time when we are plunged into the mystery "as well as the actual acceptance of a greater power in our lives, understood as our primary mystery of life. It is first and foremost, a positive response to wonder, with awe" (Honeygosky 2009, 77). The ethics of *gawis ya ngawi* is a manifestation of

something newer even when secularization is always there to seemingly strip the relevance of the Sacred. In short, when we express '*gawis ay agew*' (Have a good day!), it means a respect to something sacred in human relationships. Similarly, when we say, '*ngawi tay inayan sa,*' (Do not do bad because it is dangerous!) expresses a moral responsibility affirming the natural tendency to be good.

In totality, we stipulate that the context of the natural, the moral, and the cultural, is progressive. We have to realize that in the dynamic cycle of human history, the so called natural, moral, and cultural have been subjugated by the naturally given-ness of culture as already morally embedded. Our human history is always 'seeking the logos of culture related to life.' Such endeavor, to me, is a holistic view of human history for all thinkers especially among philosophers of culture, the sociologists, or the anthropologists to reveal what is already given and possibly not yet interpreted. Thus, to dwell into the realm of understanding culture, we focus on how linguistic interpretations relate to what makes life moral and so natural.

4. Concluding Remarks

Despite the challenges in the complexities of human life, identity of the Self remains relevant in time. We have understood that human culture shapes human reality, a dynamic venture relevant to doing philosophy. Philosophy progresses through ethno-philosophizing with its fundamental functions attached to nature, moral, and natural, paving a way for cultural context i.e., on the ethics discourse of *gawis ya ngawi*. *Gawis* is exposed with nature of *ngawi* corollary to it, thus summarizing their dynamic relations.

The ethical implications start first with identifying the necessity of ethical discourse on *gawis ya ngawi* with its hermeneutic of appreciation emphasizing the element of care (*seg-ang*) as ethos of Kankanaey identity; and finally interpreting the ethical relevance of *gawis ya ngawi* to linguistic analyses from universal terms of *"salvation-ginhawa-gawis"* in positive sense with opposing counterpart of *"damnation-kasalanan-ngawi."*

To sum up, there is no end to ethics discourse in jumpstarting ethno-philosophy using parameters of cultural milieu. We are always encouraged to look forward to exploring further endeavors on ethno-philosophy from any cultural traits from among varied cultures in a process of linguistic interpretations. Exploring indigenous knowledge can be explored from the context of the traditions of the *Ilocanos*, the *Cebuanos*, i-*Kalinga*, *Ibalois*, or *Itawis*, among others.

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From No Man's Land to Promise Land: Narratives on Destigmatizing Marag Valley's Catastrophic War

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the focus was on exploring the narratives of Marag Valley residents and how they undertook the challenging task of destigmatizing the aftermath of the catastrophic war following the occupation of the Communist Party of the Philippines- New Peaples' Army (CPP-NPA.) Employing a qualitative research design with a specific emphasis on the narrative method, the research delved into the firsthand accounts and experiences of eight local participants. These participants, predominantly leaders within various sectors across the three barangays *in Marag Valley, provided invaluable insights into the strategies and mechanisms they employed to destigmatize the war's impact.*

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The analysis of the narratives led to the identification of eight prominent sub-themes that encapsulated the multifaceted nature of the destigmatization process. These sub-themes included the effectiveness of government peace agreements, the role of government interventions, the significance of inter-agency collaboration, the creation of a positive community image, the emphasis on the value of education, the utilization of Marag Valley as a tourist destination, the incorporation of ethical values, and the influential role of social media promotion.

The findings underscored the interconnectedness of various factors contributing to the destigmatization efforts, emphasizing not only governmental and institutional initiatives but also the pivotal role played by community values, education, and media in reshaping the narrative surrounding the war's aftermath in Marag Valley. This study provides valuable insights for policymakers, community leaders, and researchers interested in understanding the dynamics of post-conflict recovery and community resilience.

Keywords: *promise land***,** narratives, *destigmatizing, war*

1. Introduction

War, in the popular meaning, is a struggle between political groups involving combat of considerable period and importance (Frankel 2023). In the use of social science, certain qualifications are added. Sociologists usually apply the term to such conflict only if they are initiated and conducted in accordance with socially recognized forms (Frankel 2023). They treat war as a tradition accepted in custom or in law. Military writers usually limit the term to belligerency in which the contending groups are sufficiently equal in power to provide

the result unsure for a time (Britanica 2023). Militarized battle of compelling states with isolated and helpless people are usually called pacifications (Deinla and Hall 2019), military campaign, or investigation; with small states, they are called interventions or reprisals; and with internal groups, insurrection or rebellion (Duignan 2024). Such incidents, if the opposition is sufficiently strong or drawn-out, may achieve a magnitude that entitles them to the name "war".

In all ages, war has been an important topic of analysis (Britanica 2023). In the latter part of the twentieth century, in the effect of two World Wars and in the shadow of nuclear, biological, and chemical devastation, more articles were written on the subject than ever before. Undertaking to realize the cause of war, to develop some theory of its causes, doings, and prevention, are of great value, for theory shapes human expectations and determines human behavior (Levy 1998, 139). The various schools of theorists are generally aware of the intense power they can exercise upon life, and their writings usually include a powerful standard component, for, when recognized by leaders, their ideas can expect the characteristics of self-fulfilling prediction. The effects of war on humanity include, the changing of ethical motive (Moseley 2024), the displacement of people, mental sickness developed by war, and the separation created between humanity (WHO 2021).

In the Philippines, since the Communist Party was founded in 1968 and its armed affiliate, the New People's Army (NPA), established an armed endeavor against the government (Stanford University 1), tens of thousands have died. The conflict peaked in the 1980s, under the restrictive regime of Ferdinand Marcos (De Dios 2017).

One of the most salient cases of salvaging, massacre, and forcible evacuation occurred in Marag Valley, Luna, Apayao (Belarde et al 2016). It was once troubled by the leftist – the Communist weaponed unit called the New Peoples' Army. The area became an asset base (battle ground of) and a training ground of Communist rebel in Northern Luzon (Refworld.org 2011). In the 1980s, it was proclaimed a "no man's land." The worsened peace and order conditions prompted some of the dwellers to leave their residence and farming area and move to Luna and Pamplona. Part of information of the war

years scattered in the area – booby traps, onslaught or burned houses, man-made tunnels, caves, and even land mines abound in the Valley. There are dozens of more new stories of inhumaneness, human tragedy, and crime. Residents said that they still feel the trauma, pain, and hardship of the war years. But being chased around the mountains in the tri-boundaries of Apayao, Cagayan, and Kalinga by contending forces have taught them precious lessons in survival and resilience. Literatures have been written on the stories of survival of Marag Valley residents during the catastrophic war in the 80's and early 90's. The current study delved on the experiences of the residents of Marag Valley on how they destigmatize the ill effects of the catastrophic war.

Statement of the Problem

The primary objective of this study was to analyze the narratives on how the people of Marag Valley destigmatized the mark of the catastrophic war during the CPP-NPA occupation.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

A narrative research design was used to address the research objective. Although narrative research embraces many theoretical approaches, several assumptions are shared. One of these is a consensus on the pervasive nature of stories and storytelling. Under this assumption, human beings are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. Although storytelling has historically been accorded a marginal position in research, it has emerged as an approach with considerable potential (Berman et al. 2006).

2.2. Participants of the Study

The researchers used snowball sampling in identifying the participants. In this sampling technique, one interviewee gives the researcher the name of at least one or more potential interviewees. The identified interviewee, in turn, provides the name of at least one more

potential interviewee, and so on, with the sampling growing like a rolling snowball if more than one referral per interviewee is provided. Finding the right people at the right time is crucial in collecting data that are usable, viable, and valuable. Identified participants were leaders in the *barangay* to include *barangay* officials, women and youth who were vital to the development of Marag Valley. Eight (8) participated in this study, five (5) of which were women and three (3) were men.

2.3. The Role of the Researchers

In order for the researchers to be able to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants in qualitative researches, they had to perform various roles. During the implementation of the study, they had to be the interviewer, recorder, transcriber, translator, and encoder. To reach more profound levels of understanding, as interviewers, they had to ask probing questions, listen, think, and then ask more questions. As transcribers and encoders, they would record transcribe and translate in English responses of participants in the interview.

2.4. Collecting Data

Data collection was planned and had been undertaken following several phases. Practical and ethical issues limit data collection. Data collection aims to capture a range of contexts, pers-pectives, and timeframes, and includes transcripts, interviews, field notes, memos, elicited texts, questionnaires, documents, and scholarly literature. Hence, posts from social media such as the Facebook and the like were also considered and treated as sources of data. The constant cyclic and combined processes of data collection, analysis, coding, memo writing, and direct theoretical sampling were used to identify further contexts and relevant data in this study.

2.5. Empowering Participants

During the interview, the participants and the interviewer were treated as equals. The participants selected the time and location of the interview (Bates 2004) and led the conversation. Interviews can be either individual or group (Muylaert et al. 2014). The researchers

asked broad open questions, without preconceived issues, listened to the participants, let the conversation unfold, and empowered the partici-pants to share experiences and perspectives. The researchers recorded field notes describing the context and any nonverbal clues. Despite the power bestowed on the participants, the researchers were not passive and remained facilitative to direct the course of the interview to the main topic.

2.6. Coding Data

Open coding was used line by line throughout the interview transcripts. Selective coding was used to identify core categories and themes.

2.7. Achieving Saturation

The research processes continued until a point of saturation was reached, that is "no new concepts emerging from data."(Aldiabat 2018, 248). Researchers had to "look for groups that stretch diversity, assure that category is saturated, based on widest possible range of data" (Saunders et al 2018).

2.8. Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were included in the implementation of the study, such as the following:

Conflict of interest. Upon conducting the study, conflict with two or more competing interests might arise. The researchers adhered to the institutional requirements for identifying, disclosing, and managing conflicts. The researchers conducted the study without any conflict of interest; they led the research study for academic purposes and fulfilled the course requirements.

Privacy and confidentiality. The anonymity of the respondents and the confidentiality of the data and results gathered were correctly observed throughout the conduct of the study. The respondents' identity remained anonymous by assigning codes. All documents were placed in a locked drawer.

Informed consent. In conducting the study, respondents were provided with informed consent and fully informed about the research's purpose and intended benefits. The respondents were asked to sign the informed consent after having understood the extent of their participation. Moreover, the respondents were informed about their freedom to withdraw anytime they decided not to participate in this study without being reprimanded.

Risk. Every study imposes risks on its respondents as well as the study itself. Invasion of privacy, boredom, mental fatigue, embarrassment at poor performance, or frustration is minor but common risks.

The anonymity of the respondents and confidentiality of the data and results gathered were observed adequately throughout the study. To lessen boredom and mental fatigue, the researchers gave enough time for the respondents to answer the questionnaire checklist. The researchers assisted the respondents while answering if needed, especially if they were unfamiliar with the questionnaire's content, to lessen embarrassment at poor performance and frustration.

Benefits. The study consisted of valuable and beneficial insights to the respondents that provided sufficient information. The result of this study provided important implications to the institution that can improve the areas that need improvement.

Compensation. The respondents did not receive any compensation since their participation in this study was voluntary, and the respondents had the option to participate in the study.

3. Results and Discussion

The participants described traumatic experiences that included both direct and indirect exposure to violence. It was evident that their experiences of pain and suffering were shared equally, regardless of whom the trauma was directed at. For these participants, life would never be the same. In this presentation of the findings, all names are pseudonyms.

Transcripted data from interviews were subjected to thematic analysis to reveal the experiences of residents on how they change the stigma of Marag Valley's ravaging war into a new paradise.

The occupation of the Communist Party of the Philippine-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) in Marag Valley happened in the 1980's to early 1990's. The peak of the CPP-NPA occupation was in the mid 80's, particularly in 1986. Several government efforts were done to liberate the area. Some statements from participants on how they changed the image of Marag Valley are given below.

As shared by WP-1 (woman participant-1):

No mabalbalin saan koman nga mapasamak dagidi naglabas, adu nga rigat ti nagpasaran mi ditoy Marag Valley. Adu ti nasayang nga oras ken opportunidad kangrunaan na dagiti ubbing ta lallakay dan idi agbasa iti elementary. Malagip ko pay idi no adda masakit saan nga maiyapan iti ospital wenno clinic man lang. Agpatingga kam la nga mangtaltalay no adda masakit. Adu met ketdi ti supply nga medisina kadagiti kakadua mi nga Rebelde. Umanay ti kararag iti Apo kadagiti amin nga rigat mi. Adda dagiti albularyo nga pagpindiran dagiti dadduma. Ti kaaduan na nga naglemlemmengan mi ket dita bantay Kimmalugong ta makita mi no adda soldado nga umay rumaot. No ordinaryo ka nga tao, masapul nga liklikam dagiti agsinnumbangir nga puersa. Idi nastrek ti militar ditoy tawen ti 1991 agingga na ti 1992, awanen ti rumuar no alas singko ti malem. Kaasi ni Apo, gapu ti panagtitinnulong, mapaadda dagiti kasapulan kangrunaan na dagiti taraon. Kaaduan na ket mapasamak ti panangbomba da iti aldaw wenno sumipnget. Tiansa mi ti mapan aggapas ti rabii, no panagaani. Agmula kami ti saba, aba ken balangkoy pangsuposup ti bagas.

Ti dakkel nga suporta ken tulong ti gobyerno ken ti munisipyo ti Luna nga idadaulan ni Mayor Bienvenido G. Verzola nagbalin nga natalna ken pagwadan dagiti tallo nga barangay ti Marag Valley- Marag (popular ti awag nga Bucao, Calabigan ken Cagandungan. Nagtitimpuyog kami nga naapointaran nga barangay officials tapno

maisayangkat dagiti nadumaduma nga programa ti gobyerno nga mangpasayaat ti lugar mi.

Kadakami nga makunkuna nga Rebel Returnee, adda naited nga gatad nga pangruguan mi. Agyaman kami ken President Fidel V. Ramos kadaytoy nga programa. Nasayaat ti panangtratar da kadakami. Babaan dakami latta nga makigamulo ken makipartisipar kadagiti amin nga okasyon ti barangay. Idi damo, nadutukanak nga Punong Barangay ken nangabakak idi barangay eleksyon.

If possible, we do not want this to happen again. We had a lot of struggles here in Marag Valley during the war. We missed a lot of opportunities especially the education of our children. They were already old when they entered elementary. I remember when someone was sick, we could not go to the clinic or hospital. Some folks used herbal medicines and others relied on alternative medicines usually the 'Albularyos.' There were also supplies of medicines from the rebels. For ordinary persons, they had to be cautious with both the rebels and the military. When the military penetrated the area in the year 1991 to 1992, we needed to stay in our houses at 5:00 PM. By God's grace, we were able to survive the hardships brought by the war. Through our unity and cooperation, we were able to produce our own food. Bombings were done during daytime until five or six in the afternoon. We took the opportunity to harvest our palay during nighttime. We planted root crops and banana as supplement to rice.

The strong support from the local government headed by Mayor Bienvenido Verzola made Marag Valley a peaceful and respected place. We worked as one when we were appointed as barangay officials so that we could implement various programs from the govern-ment.

For us rebel returnee, we were given starting capital. We thanked President Fidel V. Ramos for these programs. They treated us well. They encouraged us to engage and participate in all activities. In fact I was designated and later on elected as Punong Barangay.

Also shared by WP-2 (Woman):

Awan ti narigat no agtutunos dagiti umili, nangrugi kami nga nagpromote kadagiti produkto mi kas iti linaga nga labba, basket nga pataga, kallugong ken dadduma pay. Kadagiti bisbisita mi nga umay mangited ti programa da, ay ket pagsidaen mi ida dagitay best catch mi ti Marag River (referring to Zumigui-Ziwanan River) kas iti risek, bukto, kappi, udang, palileng, karpa, igat, ken tay shek mi nga ditoy la nga makita. No nateng ti pagsasaritaan, adu latta ti available nga pako, barangbang, parangipang ken dadduma pay nga adda dita bakir. Presko ti masida ditoy Marag, dayta ti maipagpannakkel mi. Uray no saan kami nga na certify nga organic agriculture, mabalin ko nga I claim nga organic dagitoy products mi.

We work as one in producing our products such as baskets, hats and others. When people visit us, we offer them fresh products from Marag River and from the forest such as freshwater shrimps, shells and fishes of various kinds. We also serve vegetables from the forests such as ferns, rattan and others. We can say that our products are safe-free from pesticides and can be considered organic.

A man MP-1 (Man Participant) participant also shared:

Idi panawen ti gubat, mapan kam agkalap ti rabii bag la pangnayon ti sidaen. Pagbibingayan mi amin. Dagiti adda tyansa na nga mapan aganup, mapan da uray asideg lang ta adu ti atap nga ayup ti aglaw-law." "Uray pay ita, agkakabsat ti turing mi amin ditoy, no pasken ti maysa pasken mi amin. Awan ti rigat no agtitimpuyog kami."

During the war, we would go fishing during the night. Some would go hunting. The caught animals would be shared by all. "We are all brothers and sisters; we work as one when somebody has occasion. Work is easier when we were together."

A woman leader (WP-3) added:

Dayta ti maysa nga sikreto mi, ta no kontes ti booth ken float no fiesta ti Luna dakami latta ti mangab abak. Manipud pay idi simmali kami ti Fiesta ti Luna, awan ti mangatiw kadakami no booth ken float ti pagsasaritaan. Siyempre adda pagbibingayan mi nga cluster barangays. Kanayon nakami pay nga imbitaran ni Mayor Betty nga mapan sumurot kadakuada no adda papanan na nga lugar tapno mapapintas mi pay ti management mi ditoy Marag.

That is our secret, we always win in float and booth competitions during Luna Town Fiesta. Our prizes are divided equally. Mayor Betty Verzola always brought us to places to benchmark so that we could improve our management here in Marag Valley. The promotion of Marag Valley as tourism destination is through the concerted efforts of the Provincial Tourism Office, the Municipal Tourism Office and Municipal Councilor Cecil Caluya.

WP- 4 said:

Ti ngayed ken buya ti kabambantayan ti Marag ket nakita dagiti leaders nga adu ti potentials na. Nakita ni SB Caluya nga adu ti mabalin nga maipromote nga tourist destinations. Inexplore mi ti Dupag Rock Formation ket nakita mi nga napintas. Base ti istorya dagiti RR, mayat ti Manacota underground river ken caves. Uray ti hanging bridge, napintas nga maisimpa nga pagpipiknikan, tapno umado ti dayo. Iti kastoy nga wagas, mas nga ti tumatak ti panunut ti tao ket ti pintas ken experience da ditoy Marag.

The grandeur and scenery of Marag was seen by our leaders. SB Cecil Caluya saw these potentials. We then explored Dupag Rock Formation. Based on the stories of the rebel returnees, Manacota Caves, Regional Botanical Garden and Underground River are also potential places to explore. We also promote Marag hanging bridge as picnic site. In this manner, people think only of the beauty of the place and their good experiences in it.

WP 5 added:

Gapu kadagitoy nga tourist destinations, pinadas mi met ti nagfiesta (Raket Festival) nga kasama ti Fluvial parade ken dadduma pay nga activities. Naaramid ti fiestaan ditoy Marag River tapno makita nga nasayaat ti pintas dagiti ramrambak. Daksang gasat ta naiyakar ti karayan gapu ti bagyo Ompong ken Lawin.

Due to these tourists destination, we tried having our barangay fiesta (Raket Festival) through Fluvial parade and other activities. We set up the fiesta at the riverbank. Due to typhoon Ompong and Lawin, the course of the river changed.

MP- 2 emphasized the importance of education:

Nagbasa kami nga nasayaat tapno adda met maipagpannakel mi nga taga Marag. Tapno makita ti ngayed ken pintas ti lugar mi, nagaramid kami ti Facebook page tapno makita dagiti dadduma. Pagyamanan mi ta adda ti Apayao State College nga mabalin mi nga pagbasaan. Maipagpannakkel mi ken napasayaat metten ti panangbiag mi gapu ti kaadda ti Kolehyo.

We studied hard so that our parents would be proud of us. For others to see the beauty of our place, we created a Facebook page. We also thank Apayao State College for providing us higher education services.

MP 3 added:

Gapu ti Apayao State College, adda dua nga naproduce mi nga Cum Laude BSEd- Mathematics. Adun ti graduate ti college nga annak ti Marag. LtCol Jose Agpuldo is the pride of Marag. Maysa nga PMAyer ken Cum Laude ti Apayao State College.

3.1. Narratives on Struggles During the War

Table 1. Theme and core ideas of the struggles of the participants during the war

Sub themes	Core ideas
Life struggles	They experienced hardship when someone was sick or would give birth; there was scarcity of food and other basic services such as health assistance, education and other government services
Coping mechanisms	They harvested during nighttime. They planted root crops, bananas and others as supplement to rice. They explored the use of alternative medicine such as herbals and Albularyos. Trained midwives usually called partera or mammaltot were consulted to by pregnant women.
Surfacing values of cooperation and unity	They would share their food and other necessities for their survival.
Belief in Supreme Being	God intervened in all their hardships; God provided them their needs and protected them from harm and sicknesses.

There are four identified sub-themes from their narratives on struggles. These are: life struggles, coping mechanisms, surfacing values of cooperation and unity, and their belief in the Supreme Being.

The hardships experienced by the participants during the war were things they would not want to happen to them ever again. Their experiences during the war caused them physical and mental torture, especially on days when there were bombings, and they had to look for refuge for protection.

When hardships were faced, men naturally looked for solutions to ease their misfortune. Alternative solutions such as consulting Albularyos, using herbal medicine and even seeking medical remedies from the rebels were done by the residents.

Filipinos are basically helpful. The *bayanihan* (cooperative undertaking) spirit surfaced during the war. The people were unified as they came together to survive the effect of the ravaging war.

Their religiosity was still in place even during the war. Their belief in the existence of the Divine Being as their protector and refuge is evident.

Table 2. Sub-themes and core ideas of the narratives on destigmatizing the catastrophic war

Sub -Themes	Core ideas
Effective government peace agreement	Start-up capital for rebel returnee. Rebel returnees were appointed as Punong Barangay.
Government interventions	Strong support from the local government headed by Mayor Bienvenido Verzola made Marag a peaceful and respected place. Government programs were started to put up livelihood and infrastructure projects such as the hanging bridge, roads, etc.
Inter-agency collaboration	Livelihood, education, infrastructure, and others were launched by various government programs.
Creation of a positive image	Working as one in almost all activities. Winning floats and booths during Luna Town Fiesta are results of concerted efforts among the residents.
Value for education	Children are sent to college. 2 Cum Laudes have been produced. The first PMAyer in the person of Jose Agpuldo is from the place.
Capitalize on tourist destination	Explored and Promoted Potential Tourist destinations- Dupag Rock formation, hanging bridge, Manacota caves and Underground River, Regional Botanical Garden.
Ethical values	Hospitality. Love for nature. Cooperation (working as one).
Social media promotion	Creation of Facebook page.

3.2. Effective Government Peace Agreement

The government has provided support to the rebel returnees after they surrendered to the authority for some valid reasons. Start-up capital was given to them. They were given key positions in the *barangay* and were even engaged in various activities not only in the *barangay* but also in the municipality.

The Social Integration Program (SIP) effectively improved rebel returnees' standard of living in all aspects of the program's components, including income, food, material goods, housing condition, employment, education, health care, and security and safety.

3.3. Government Interventions

Government agencies have come together to bring various social and economic services to the people of Marag Valley. The opening of Marag Valley road in the 90's paved way to the development of economic activity. Government agencies such as the DA, DOST, DTI, DENR, PLGU, DPWH, DepEd, ASC, DAR, DSWD, DOH, and others have their own social and economic programs for the social and economic recovery of Marag Valley.

3.4. Inter-agency Collaboration

To maximize resources, government line agencies collaborated for the development of livelihood, infrastructure, and other socio-economic programs needed to propel the socio-economic status of the residents of Marag Valley. The basket weaving industry is a project of the DTI and DOST while various agricultural programs (agroforestry, corn, rice and vegetable production projects) were under the care of the DA, DAR, ASC and DENR. To ensure the health conditions and wellness of the residents, a nurse was assigned to the area. Medical missions were conducted. Literacy programs were done as part of the engagement of the DepEd and ASC. ASC piloted the "Story Telling Project" at Calabigan Elementary School.

3.5. Creating a Positive Image

Creating a positive image of the *Bayanihan* Spirit is still in place in Marag Valley. This is manifested in the awards they receive during Luna Town Fiesta. They work as one during special occasions such as weddings, graduation exercises, fiestas, and others. Their ingenuity and unity are manifested when they conduct the yearly Raket Festival.

Amidst natural disasters, Filipinos are strong-spirited people who continue to brave each storm hand in hand. Whatever situation they are in, they rise as one (Canvas 1). Among the festivities celebrated to establish the resiliency of the Filipinos are Panagbenga Festival after the 1991 earthquake and the Masskara Festival (Logdat 253; Yuson 12).

3.6. Value for Education

One of the key elements to liberate them from the stigma of the war is through education. The presence of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) such as ASC, FL Vargas and CSU-Sanchez Mira paved way to the production of degree holders and professionals in the Marag Valley. To date, they have produced 2 cum laudes and 1 PMAyer. Jose Agpuldo of Marag Valley is part of the PMA MAndirigmang may DAngal SImbolo ng Galing at PagbangON (MADASIGON) Class 2023. He showed excellence in academics, graduating cum laude at the Apayao State College and passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (Lo-oy: 1)

3.7. Capitalizing on Tourist Destination

Nowadays, when one talks of Marag Valley, they always say Dupag Rocks, Manacota Caves and Underground RIver, Regional Botanical Garden and Hanging Bridge. The stigma of the war during the CPP-NPA occupation has changed to something remarkable and worth remembering when one climbs the Dupag Rock and experiences the cool breeze of Manacota undeground river.

3.8. Ethical Values

The *bayanihan* system still runs in the blood of the residents in Marag Valley. They work together as one to achieve a common goal. This is manifested in the various awards they received during the celebration of Luna town fiestas. Other ethical values they possess include: love for nature, hospitality, and cooperation.

3.9. Social Media Promotion

Social media, particularly Facebook page, is a potent vessel to promote the beauty of Marag Valley. With the creation of Marag Valley Facebook page, tourists from various parts of the Philippines and the world visit Marag Valley just to experience its culture and beauty.

Vloggers from all over the world visit and feature the beauty of Marag Valley. These are: Capo, Kyle Jennerman, Liwliwa Unana, Becoming Filipino, and others.
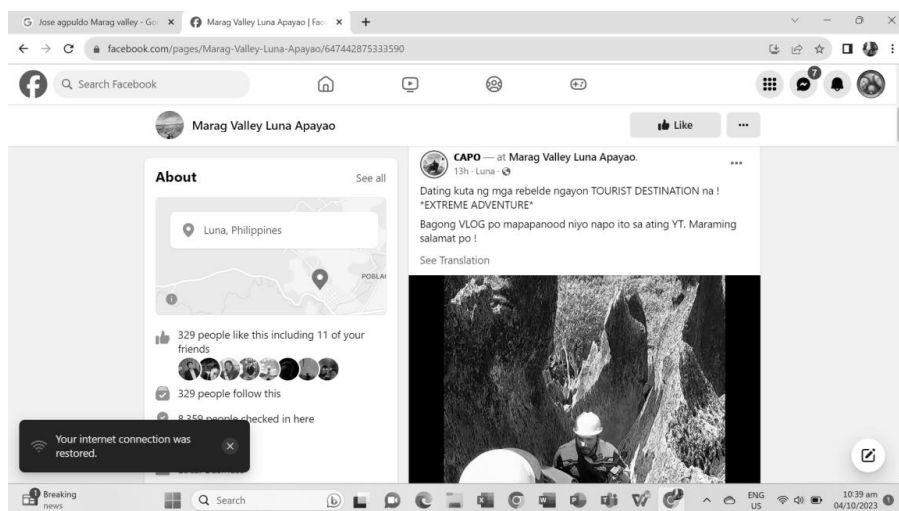
The narratives on destigmatizing the catastrophic war in Marag Valley, as summarized in Table 2, reveal a cohesive and multifaceted strategy employed by the community. The effective government peace agreement emerges as a key catalyst, facilitating the return of rebels with start-up capital and leading to their appointment as Punong Barangay, symbolizing a tangible outcome of the peace initiative. Government interventions, strongly supported by Mayor Bienvenido Verzola, played a pivotal role in transforming Marag into a peaceful and respected place. These interventions encompassed livelihood and infrastructure projects, such as hanging bridges and roads, showcasing a commitment to both economic development and community well-being.

Inter-agency collaboration becomes evident in the comprehensive initiatives launched by various government programs, covering areas like livelihood, education, and infrastructure. The creation of a positive image is woven into the community fabric, with residents working collaboratively in almost all activities. Notable achievements, including winning floats and booths during Luna Town Fiesta, underscore the positive impact of united efforts. The residents' value for education is manifested in the commitment to sending children to college, producing Cum Laudes, and boasting the first graduate of the Philippine Military Academy from the community, highlighting a dedication to educational excellence.

Marag Valley strategically capitalizes on its tourist potential by exploring and promoting attractions such as Dupag Rock Formation, hanging bridges, Manacota caves, and the Regional Botanical Garden. Ethical values form the bedrock of the community, with hospitality, love for nature, and cooperation playing pivotal roles in fostering a positive environment. The integration of social media promotion, exemplified by the creation of a Facebook page, signifies a proactive approach in shaping the community's narrative and enhancing visibility. In essence, these narratives paint a portrait of a community resiliently overcoming the shadows of its wartime past through collaborative efforts, governmental support, and a commitment to positive values and development.

3.10. Identifying the Major Themes

From the sub themes, two major themes were derived.

Table 3. Major themes on how Marag Valley's residents destigmatize the catastrophic war.

Major Themes	Sub themes
External support systems	Effective government peace agreement, government interventions, and inter-agency collaboration
Internal support systems	Creating a positive image, value for education, capitalizing on tourist destinations, ethical values, and social media promotion

In the wake of a war or natural disaster, communities need to immediately access funds to rebuild damaged infrastructure and re-establish critical government services, but the immediate aftermath is often when financial liquidity constraints are at the highest (Jacobsen et al. 3). The time gap between the occurrence of a disaster and access to funding can be costly, exacerbating poverty through impacts on health, mobility, and access to education.

Emotional distress can happen before and after a disaster. Coping strategies include preparation, self-care, and identifying support systems (Schonfeld 1). People can experience a wide range of emotions before and after a disaster or traumatic event. There's no

right or wrong way to feel. However, it's important to find healthy ways to cope when these events happen.

There are two identified support systems to retain the glory of Marag Valley after the occupation of the CPP-NPA. These are external and internal support systems. The external support systems include programs from government and non-government organizations for financing, emotional distressing, infrastructure development, social as well as economic services. On the other hand, internal support systems lead to creating a positive image through ethical values such as cooperation, unity, sense of belongingness, desire for education, sense of pride, and the like (Murray 1).

3.11. Description of the Promise Land

Dr. Mariano Marchan's advice, emphasizing the act of washing one's feet before ascending the Dupag Rock in Marag Valley, holds a symbolic resonance that draws parallels with the historic journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. In both instances, the act of washing feet becomes a poignant metaphor for purification, renewal, and the transition from a state of adversity to one of liberation and promise.

The historical narrative of the Israelites leaving Egypt, as documented in the biblical account, portrays a people who endured the harshness of slavery, facing oppression and adversity. Similarly, the residents of Marag Valley experienced the profound hardships brought about by the catastrophic war. The act of leaving Egypt for the Israelites was not merely a physical journey but a profound transformation from bondage to freedom, mirroring the arduous path of Marag Valley residents emerging from the shadows of conflict to rebuild their community.

The symbolic act of washing feet before climbing the Dupag Rock can be seen as a ritual of cleansing, shedding the remnants of the past struggles and embodying a spiritual and physical purification. This ritual aligns with the Israelites' purification rituals and practices as they ventured into the Promised Land, marking a transition from slavery to freedom.

Marag Valley's experience, echoed in Dr. Marchan's guidance, resonates with the transformative journey of the Israelites. Both narratives depict a community undergoing trials and tribulations, facing the challenges of adversity, and ultimately emerging into a promised land of renewal and promise. The act of washing feet serves as a tangible reminder of the purification and renewal process, connecting the historical and contemporary experiences and symbolizing the resilience and hope embedded in the collective narratives of Marag Valley and the Israelites.

The comparison between Marag Valley and the biblical Canaan, the promised land, reveals intriguing parallels in terms of fertility, abundance, and richness of resources. While the biblical references to Canaan do not explicitly mention specific aquatic or mineral resources, the general depiction aligns with the description of Marag Valley.

In the Bible, Canaan is often referred to as a land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8), emphasizing its agricultural prosperity. Marag Valley similarly boasts a fertile landscape with abundant water resources, including the Marag River teeming with freshwater mullet (*ludong*), gobies, eel, *tilapia*, carps, and various aquatic life. This resonates with the biblical notion of a land abundant in agricultural and natural resources.

Moreover, Marag Valley's diverse topography, featuring rivers, mountains (with Siamsiambiri as the highest), hills, forests, and agricultural lands, mirrors the varied landscapes described in Canaan. The promise of Canaan includes not only agricultural abundance but also mentions hills, valleys, and rivers. The mention of Marag Valley being the rice granary of Luna, producing significant quantities of rice and corn, aligns with the biblical portrayal of Canaan as a land of agricultural plenty.

While the Bible doesn't specifically highlight mineral resources in Canaan, Marag Valley's richness in mineral deposits, including manganese and others, adds another layer to the comparison. Canaan is often associated with a promised land where prosperity extends beyond agriculture, and Marag Valley's mineral wealth complements

this broader concept of abundance. Marag Valley's literal fertility, abundance of water resources, diverse landscapes, and mineral deposits draw intriguing parallels with the biblical Canaan. Both narratives depict promised lands character-ized by prosperity, rich-ness, and the potential for abundance in various forms, linking the tangible attributes of Marag Valley to the spiritual and historical connotations associated with Canaan in the Bible.

4. Summary and Conclusion

For more than a decade, Marag Valley was occupied by the CPP-NPA creating a negative stigma. The catastropic war which happened in the 80's and early 90's caused deterioration in the socio-cultural and economic aspect of the residents.

This study was conducted to analyze the narratives of Marag Valley's residents during the catastrophic war in the 80's and early 90's and looked into how the residents destigmatize the ill effects of the war. The qualitative method of research was employed with key informant interview as the main data gathering tool. The researchers were properly guided with ethical considerations in conducting the research.

From the gathered narratives, eight (8) sub-themes were identified on how the people of Marag Valley overcame the stigma of the catastrophic war. These include effective government peace agreement, government interventions, inter-agency collaboration, creating a positive image, value for education, capitalizing on tourist destination, ethical values and social media promotion. From the eight sub-themes emerged two major themes, which are the external support systems and internal support systems.

5. Recommendations and Implications

Based on the insights gleaned from the research and the subsequent conclusions drawn, several recommendations are proposed for consideration:

Firstly, it is advised to disseminate the findings of this study through publication, ensuring that the knowledge acquired is shared with a broader audience. This dissemination can contribute to the academic discourse surrounding Marag Valley's catastrophic war, fostering a greater understanding of the community's experiences and resilience strategies.

Secondly, there is a call for further research to identify gaps in the literature pertaining to Marag Valley's catastrophic war. This recommendation aims to encourage future studies that delve deeper into specific aspects, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the historical context and the community's responses.

The implications drawn from the study are noteworthy. The recognition that individuals, as social beings, unite during times of adversity to develop resilience strategies underscores the communal nature of coping mechanisms. Additionally, the acknowledgment that, in hardship, there is a prevalent belief in the intervention of a Divine Being to achieve the seemingly impossible highlights the spiritual aspect of the community's resilience.

Lastly, it is suggested that the lessons derived from this study hold value beyond the context of Marag Valley. These lessons, pertaining to community resilience and response strategies, can be applied and replicated in similar conflict or disaster situations. By adopting these insights, other communities facing comparable challenges may benefit from the experiences and strategies identified in this study, promoting a broader applicability of the lessons learned.

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Ethical Considerations in Social Media Utilization by Religious Organizations: An In-depth Investigation

Sudeep Paul[1]

ABSTRACT

In the contemporary landscape, social media platforms have evolved into highly effective instruments facilitating participatory communication across diverse aspects of human life. The advent of the digital revolution has introduced a novel dimension to the application of social media, extending its reach into various realms of communication, management, and development initiatives. Particularly noteworthy is the role that social media platforms play in the domain of religious communication, mobilization, and organization. Among the myriad social media platforms, Twitter and Facebook stand out as extensively utilized tools by religious organizations and leaders. Leveraging these platforms, religious entities seek to establish direct communication channels with their target groups, fostering active engagement and participation in the organizational and managerial aspects of religious institutions. This paradigm shift in communication strategies has become increasingly relevant and influential. To explore the dynamics of this

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intersection between social media and religious engagement, the present investigation was undertaken in Delhi, focusing on the National Capital Region (NCR) – a geographical area encompassing all major religions in the country. The study delves into the multifaceted ways in which social media platforms are employed for religious outreach, examining their impact on communication strategies, organizational dynamics, and the active involvement of the faithful within the diverse religious landscape of the NCR. Through a comprehensive analysis of the use of social media in this specific context, the research aims to contribute valuable insights into the evolving nature of religious communication in the digital age.

Keywords: *social media platforms, religious communication, digital revolution, national capital region, participatory engagement*

1. Introduction

In the contemporary landscape, the pervasive influence of social media platforms has undergone a transformative evolution, emerging as powerful tools that facilitate participatory communication across diverse facets of human life. The digital revolution has added a distinctive dimension to the application of social media, extending its influence into various spheres of communication, management, and developmental endeavors. Of particular significance is the integral role played by social media in the domain of religious communication, mobilization, and organization. Notably, platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook have become indispensable tools extensively harnessed by religious organizations and leaders. Through these channels, religious entities endeavor to establish direct lines of communication with their target audiences, fostering active engagement and participation in the organizational and managerial aspects of religious institutions. This paradigm shift in communication strategies holds increasing relevance and influence. To unravel the

intricate dynamics at the intersection of social media and religious engagement, the present investigation focuses on Delhi, specifically within the National Capital Region (NCR), a geographic area encapsulating the major religions prevalent in the country. The study aims to explore the multifaceted ways in which social media platforms are employed for religious outreach, delving into their impact on communication strategies, organizational dynamics, and the active involvement of the faithful across the diverse religious landscape of the NCR. Through a comprehensive analysis of social media usage in this specific context, the research seeks to provide valuable insights into the evolving nature of religious communication in the digital age.

The present study was conducted in the National Capital Region, Delhi on the ethical issues involved in the use of social media by the religious organizations. Prominent studies concerning the present topic of investigation include – Judd (2012), Judd and Johnston (2012), Tappendorf and Glink (2013), Moreno et al. (2013), Turculet (2014), Galbraith (2014), Denecke et al. (2015), Hazelton and Terhorst (2015), Villegas and Alvarez (2016), Ann (2017), Hammer (2017), Baier (2018), Berman et al. (2018), Sormanen and Lauk (2018), Swenson-Lepper and Kerby (2019), Kumar (2019), Bhargava and Velasquez (2020), Ariff et al. (2021), Kia et al. (2022), Bicher and Fathy (2022), Heinrichs (2022), Marx and Mirbabaie (2022) and Brindus et al. (2022). The synthesis of the available literature confirms that adequate scientific investigations were not conducted in National Capital Region, Delhi on the ethical issues involved in the use of social media by the religious organizations.

1.1. Significance of the Study

The literature review clearly indicates that sufficient scientific investigations have not been conducted on the ethical issues related to the application of social media, particularly concerning religious organizations. The study aims to address various questions in the area of social media centric ethical issues. A need was seen to investigate religious communication as a part of culture and not independent of it. Thus, the present study on the 'A Study of the Ethical Issues Involved in the Use of Social Media by Religious Organizations' is justified

from the viewpoint of research dealing with social media, ethical issues, and religious communication.

This study explores the idea of both benefits and ethical issues involved in the use of social media with respect to religious organizations with specific reference to NCR Delhi. This research clearly demonstrates that the research would shed light on the use and utility of social media with specific reference to religious organizations. This research will also assist the religious organizations in understanding the effective use of social media to reach their goals. Moreover, this will be highly beneficial for religious organizations in exploring the necessity of adopting social media in their organizations.

In addition, this research will also develop a new model regarding the use of social media within the context of religious organizations. At the same time, it will determine the ethical issues faced by different religious organizations with respect to NCR Delhi. Additionally, this study aims to offer various strategies and suggestions in order to enhance the use of social media with respect to religious organizations with specific reference to NCR Delhi. This research will be beneficial to adopters of social media in their organization to identify both benefits and ethical issues involved in adopting social media. Further, this research will be eye opener for religious organizations since it provides valuable insights to the future investigators and researchers.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Social media has emerged as a prominent tool of participatory communication in various fields, including religion. It has created virtual social spaces encouraging interaction among various stakeholders in religious communication. Social media interfaces through the Internet and other sources and devices have become widespread in modern society. It is necessary to understand whether social media platforms have upheld professional ethics in the present times. The present study was conducted to examine whether social media platforms can be a substitute for other modes of religious communication.

The present study was conducted by the researcher based on the following considerations:

1. India has achieved commendable progress in the development and application of social media for various purposes.
2. The National Capital Region, Delhi, has gained prominence as the political capital, media centers, and religious organizations.
3. Social media has become an alternative medium for participatory religious communication since mainstream media has serious limitations.
4. The application of social media in the processes of good governance and participatory communication has changed the profile of the stakeholders in religious communication.
5. The application of social media for religious communication has gained contemporary relevance from an ethical issues point of view.

1.3. Research Objectives

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To analyze the utilization of social media by religious organizations;
2. To assess stakeholders' access to social media within the realm of religion;
3. To examine ethical issues related to the use of social media by religious organizations;
4. To explore the role of social media in endeavors of religious communication;
5. To study ethical threats posed by social media within religious organizations; and
6. To develop a new model for the effective utilization of social media by religious organizations.

1.4. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Mukhopadhyay (2017) investigated the ethical issues in social media application. The study found that social media had served many purposes including social networking for progressive movements. The

study highlighted that social media users were required to create new ethical standards in the new dynamic social milieu. The scholar suggested that social media should be judiciously used as alternative media for religious communication in modern society. The present study was conducted on the conceptual framework offered by Mukhopadhyay (2017).

1.5. Hypotheses of the Study

The present study was conducted on the basis of the following hypotheses in National Capital Region, Delhi.

H1. The religious organizations in the National Capital Region actively use social media for religious purposes.
H2. Social media has served multiple purposes in the religious organizations.
H3. Social media application has absolute ethical impact on religious organizations.

1.6. Research Methodology

The major objectives of the present investigation were to analyze the ethical issues involved in the use of social media by religious organizations with special reference to National Capital Region, Delhi, India. In particular, access to social media, uses of social media, ethical issues in social media, role of social media in religious communication, and prevention of ethical threats with reference to religious organizations were scientifically analyzed by the researcher.

In the first stage, a pilot study was conducted to examine the appropriateness of the instrument of the study. In the second stage, questionnaire was developed and perfected to collect appropriate primary data from the stakeholders of religious communication. In the third stage, suitable statistical tests were conducted for systematic data analysis and interpretation. The present investigation was carried out on the basis of a systematic survey method.

2. Data Collection

2.1. Primary Data Collection - Field of Study and Sample

Name of the NCR zones	Religious Scholars	Religious Leaders	Religious Organizers	Religious Followers	Total
NCR - North	13	17	30	43	103
NCR-South	16	18	30	47	111
NCR-West	17	19	26	52	114
NCR-East	16	18	32	50	116
Total	62	72	118	192	**444**

NCR: National Capital Region, Delhi, India, N=444
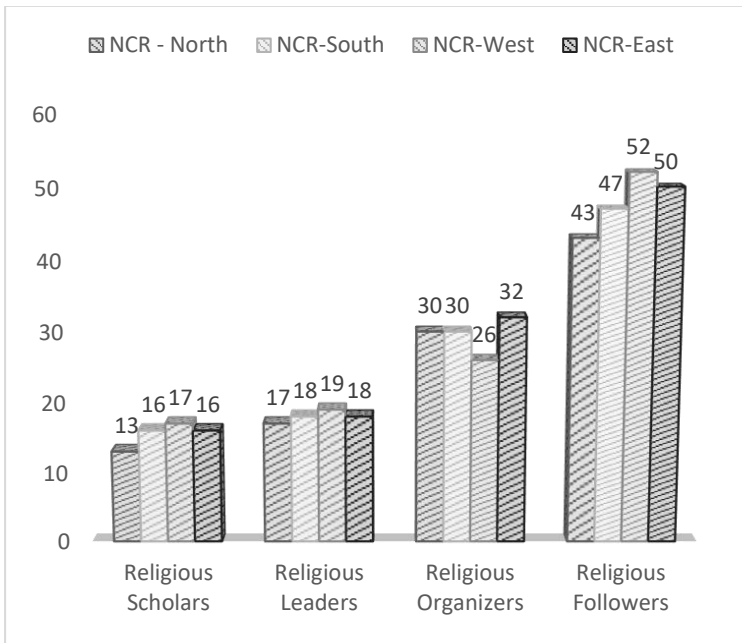
Field of Study and Sample

Primary data was collected through standardized questionnaire which was administered to various stakeholders of religion in National Capital Region, Delhi. The respondents include religious scholars (62), religious leaders (72), religious organizers (118), and religious followers (192), respectively. About 500 individuals were approached

for primary data collection. But the researcher chose to retain 444 questionnaires, which were complete in all respects. Appropriate statistical tests were followed for the purpose of scientific statistical analysis.

2.2. Secondary Data Collection

The present study was conducted on the basis of relevant secondary data available in different forms. They include scholarly writings available in professional journals, theses, dissertations, reference books, proceedings of national and inter-national seminars and conferences, media analyses, and other sources related to the research topic.

2.3. Computation of Data

The primary data gathered from the survey on the ethical issues involved in the use of social media by religious organizations located in five zones of National Capital Region. The primary data was consolidated and computed by using descriptive analysis and parametric tests, frequency counts, p-value, chi-square, and percentage distribution. These methods revealed the relationship between the social media platforms and ethical issues.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

The researcher used certain parametric statistical tests since it was a descriptive study by nature. The interpretation of the chi-square and contingency table analysis justify the assumption of independence which was primarily carried out at the 0.05% level of significance.

2.4.1. Frequencies and Percentages

The Frequencies procedure provides statistics which are useful for describing many types of variables. The primary data collected on the ethical issues involved in the use of social media by the religious organizations were analyzed by the researcher. The researcher found that the application of the frequencies procedure is an appropriate statistical test.

2.4.2. P-Value

In statistics, the p-value is a function of the observed sample results (a statistic) that is used for testing a statistical hypothesis. The *p-test* statistics typically follows a standard normal distribution when large sample sizes are used. The researchers use Z-*tests* to determine whether a hypothesis passes based on a specific significance level will be rejected. The larger the *p*-value in the *p-test*, the more likely the hypothesis is true. In statistics, the *p*-value is a function of the observed sample results that is used for *testing* a statistical hypothesis.

2.4.3. Contingency Table Analysis

The Cross tabs procedure forms two-way and multi-way tables and provides a variety of tests and measures of association for two-way tables. The structure of the table determines the nature of statistical tests. In the present study contingency table analysis was applied to find out the association between social media platforms and political communication / participation.

2.4.5. Chi-Square

The chi-square is a statistical method assessing the goodness of fit between a set of observed values and those expected theoretically. The primary data was analyzed by using chi-square method to test the hypotheses of the present study.

3. Findings of the Study

3.1. Demographic Features of the Sample

A majority of the study sample represents male respondents (58.11%), young and middle age groups (79.69%), higher educational category (70.27%), religious scholars, religious leaders, and religious organizers (56.76%), and Hindu religion (74.77%), respectively.

3.2. Use of Social Media by the Religious Organizations

The distribution of responses on the use of social media by the respondents in the religious organizations includes Facebook (100%), WhatsApp (80.18%), YouTube (77.93%), Instagram (54.05%), LinkedIn (54.95%), Telegram (57.66%), and Twitter (59.91%), respectively.

The unused social media by the respondents in the religious organizations include Viber (69.37%), WeChat (65.32%), Piscart (62.16%), Skype (61.26%), Qzone (60.36%), Microsoft teams (58.56%), Tumblr (55.86%), Facebook Messenger (55.86%), Quora (55.41%), Pinterest (54.95%), Reddit (53.60%), Snapchat (53.60%), and TikTok (52.25%), respectively.

3.3. Utility of Social Media Application by Religious Organizations

The findings from the study indicate a widespread acceptance of social media among *religious* leaders and organizations, with a unanimous 100 percent agreement on this point. These platforms have proven instrumental in shaping and advancing religious agendas, with 76.13 percent of respondents acknowledging their efficacy in persuading people to accept these agendas and promoting religious activities. Moreover, social media offers participatory communication and management opportunities to religious leaders, garnering a substantial agreement rate of 79.73 percent. They have become integral to religious institutions that rely on public relations and persuasive communication, evidenced by a concurrence of 78.38 percent.

The effectiveness of social media as online platforms for participatory religious communication is affirmed by 79.28 percent of respondents. Interestingly, 51.80 percent believe that these platforms provide better insights and strengthen religious practices in a networked society. Social media has played a role in enhancing social interaction between religious institutions and their followers, supported by a significant 71.62 percent agreement. Furthermore, they have changed the patterns of religious communication in online social networks, with a notable agreement rate of 74.77 percent.

The proliferation of social media within the religious sector has facilitated interaction between organizations and civil society, receiving a concurrence of 74.77 percent. While 54.50 percent recognize the promotion of religion-centric pro-social orientation and civic engagement, 68.47 percent believe that social media has provided new spaces of communication and impacted religious institutions, beliefs, and practices. Additionally, these platforms have connected international funding agencies, missionary firms, and outdoor ministries for the promotion of religious activities, as agreed upon by 68.92 percent of respondents. Social media has proven effective in crisis management for religious organizations (56.31 percent) and have contributed to the evolving nature of religious authority and forms of religious organizations (69.82 percent).

However, concerns are raised, with 62.16 percent indicating that social media has radicalized the young generation of religious followers. Nevertheless, they have emboldened adults to question unhealthy practices and gain a critical understanding of religion and spirituality, with a unanimous agreement of 100 percent. Social media has widened the horizon of religion, enlisting active participation from religious followers in the programs of religious organizations (50.90 percent). However, challenges persist, with 55.86 percent expressing that these platforms have not enhanced religion-centric pro-social orientation, civic engagement, and involvement of religious organizations. Additionally, 74.32 percent believe that social media has not strengthened religious communication and promoted religious interest.

Furthermore, 67.57 percent feel that these platforms have not promoted religious procedures through the extension and conception of religious organizations, and 65.77 percent are skeptical about their role in providing the benefit of mediated communication and disseminating spiritual realities and collectivities.

4. Ethical Impact of Social Media on Religious Organizations

The ethical impact of social media on religious organizations is a complex landscape marked by various concerns and challenges, as

revealed by the study's findings. A significant portion of respondents, amounting to 80.63 percent, suggests that the application of social media has influenced the trust and moral behavior of religious followers. Furthermore, ethical concerns such as information relevancy, accuracy, and privacy issues in the religious sector are acknowledged by a substantial 77.93 percent of participants. The invasion of privacy is a notable issue, with 73.42 percent expressing concerns in this regard. Privacy and confidentiality of users are deemed adversely affected by social media application, as indicated by an overwhelming 81.98 percent agreement.

The distraction caused by social media to young religious leaders from their religious duties and responsibilities is a pervasive issue, with an alarming 87.39 percent consensus. While 72.52 percent believe that ethical threats to privacy settings and data confidentiality are not posed by social media, concerns arise regarding the dissemination of inappropriate pictures and harmful contents (77.25 percent) and spamming affecting healthy communication (69.37 percent) in the religious sector. The study underscores the ethical threats associated with social media application, including trolling, harassment, and the spread of fake news, acknowledged by 72.07 percent of respondents.

An overarching concern is the unanimous agreement (100 percent) that social media application has led to social media addiction, a problem insufficiently addressed by policymakers and other stakeholders in the religious sector. Public bashing in the religious sector is acknowledged by 54.50 percent of participants, and concerns are raised about incorrect information, inappropriate comments, and integrity risks resulting from social media application (73.87 percent). Negative religious propaganda that injures the interests of followers is recognized by 68.92 percent of respondents.

The misuse of personal information, misinformation, and deep fakes in the religious sector is identified as a significant ethical challenge by 76.58 percent of participants. Additional concerns include information relevancy and accuracy (77.48 percent), dishonesty, and distortion of communication (80.18 percent). Distraction of young religious leaders, organizers, and followers from

their religious duties and responsibilities is a prevalent issue, with 82.88 percent agreement. Ethical challenges related to evidence generation in the religious sector are unanimously recognized (100 percent).

Misuse of technologies, manipulation of tools, and mismanagement of contents in the religious sector are unanimously acknowledged as increased due to social media application (100 percent). Improper anonymity in communication and transactions is flagged by 72.07 percent of respondents, and concerns are raised about the misuse of free expertise and contests in the religious sector (59.01 percent). Negative comments affecting the interest of religious organizations are acknowledged by 74.77 percent of participants. However, identity theft, creating law and order problems, and privacy constraints resulting in vulnerability are reported as not directly linked to social media application, with agreement rates of 68.47 percent and 56.31 percent, respectively.

Additionally, social media application is not perceived to lead to religious manipulation and vilification by the majority of respondents.

5. Testing of Hypotheses

H1. The religious organizations in the National Capital Region actively use social media for religious purpose.

The data which are presented in the thesis clearly reveal that the social media were used by the religious organizations in the National Capital Region. Hence, the above hypothesis stands disproved according to the data analysis.

H2. Social media has served multi-purposes in the religious organizations.

The data which are presented in the thesis clearly reveal that social media has served multi-purposes in the religious organizations.

Hence, the above hypothesis stands proved according to the data analysis.

H3. Social media application has absolute ethical impact on the religious organizations.

The data which are presented in the thesis clearly reveal that social media had limited ethical impact on religious organizations in the National Capital Region, Delhi. Hence, the above hypothesis stands disproved according to the data analysis.

6. Implications of the Study

The implications of the findings of the study with reference to the study of the ethical issues involved in the use of social media by religious organisations in specific terms are given below.

- Social media organizers should respect the freedom of religion as a fundamental right of paramount importance.
- Social media organizers should judiciously use the social media to guarantee the safety of the faithful to worship in peace.
- Social media organizers should pay attention to privacy settings and disseminate religious contents on the basis of mutual respect and concern.
- Social media organizers should promote the freedom of religion on the basis of active participation of the followers in other walks of life.
- Social media organizers should facilitate the reasonable accommodations for religious observance and practice in the workplace and civil society.
- Social media organizers should gather the most authentic information and disseminate the contents with passionate concern and responsibility.
- Social media organizers should make ethical choices in accordance with professional obligations and promote religious harmony at various levels.

- Social media organizers should disseminate religious contents which reflect on the ethical issues.
- Social media organizers should play a responsible role in dissemination of religious contents on the basis of commitment to truth.
- Social media organizers should understand the societal diversity and ethics which are the foundations of religious communication. They should deliver goods in accordance with ethical norms and social responsibility.
- Social media organizers should understand the complex ethical and human rights issues and deliver religious communication to increase the ethical competence.
- Social media organizers should develop an ethical and professional mindset to deliver constructive religious communication services to prevent ethical threats of social media application.
- Social media organizers should understand both cognitive and emotive elements of religious communication and deliver goods on the basis of professionalized approaches.
- Social media organizers should not use the media as a tool of antisemitism and religious hatred.
- Social media organizers should not target religious individuals or entities for special disabilities based on religion.

7. Suggestions for Future Research

The researcher examined the ethical issues involved in the use of social media by religious organizations based in National Capital Region, New Delhi. It was realized by the researcher that there are many areas which demand comprehensive and constant scientific investigation in this important branch of mass communication in India. The role of social media in the modernization of religion is also another vital area of research in the future. Scientific studies have focused on various aspects of ethical impact of social media application by the religious organizations in India and abroad. There is a need for establishment of linkage between social media application and integrated development of religious institutions in India. Future

studies should clearly establish how social media application affects the sustainable development in the new millennium. Further scientific research is necessary on the role of religious communication in the cultivation of human values and cultural ethos. The future researchers should carry out the formative research on the right kind of management approaches to religious communication. The process evaluation is also necessary to understand the impact of social media application on religious sector. The summative evaluation is also necessary to improve the status of social media application for the protection of religious and ethical factors in the country. Experimental research studies could also be conducted on the improvement of the contributions of social media in the process of religious communication. Authentic data based religious communication management approaches and religious communication strategies and initiatives are essential in modern times. Hence, a combination of quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, content analysis, case study, and experimental research is strongly advocated for understanding the application of social media for the promotion of ethical foundations of religious communication in India.

8. Conclusion

Social media has contributed to the development of digital platforms for the promotion of peace, tranquility, equality, and justice despite certain limitations. Ethical aspects of the application of social media by the religious organizations have attracted the attention of philosophers, communicators, and other stakeholders of religious organizations. Certain ethical concerns of social media application have created new awareness such as information is not knowledge, transparency is not credibility, convergence is not integrity, processing is not an enlightened action, and information storage is not ultimate communication. Scholars have explored corrective strategies to address the structural, ideological, and practical issues of social media application by religious organizations in the world. It is imperative for the social media organizers and users to prevent ethical threats to religious organizations vis-à-vis social media application in the new millennium.

Social media facilitates interactive communication between the service providers and users in modern society. Social media platforms Facebook, YouTube, X, WhatsApp, and so on have become inevitable tools of communication, management, development, spirituality and other spheres of human life. They have become a determining factor in shaping the religious, social, educational, economic, political and cultural life of the people. India accepted secularism as the way of life in the post-independence era. Pluralism integrates and promotes all religious groups on the basis of constitutional norms and guidelines. Secularism in India means respect for all religions and equality of opportunities to all citizens regardless of their religious background. Social media are used as a tool to propagate various religious ideologies and promote religious tolerance in India. Therefore, the ethical challenges of social media were examined in the present investigation with special reference to National Capital Region, Delhi. The study envisages that social media should not be abused as tools of antisemitism and religious hatred in a pluralistic society like India. Besides this, social media should be judiciously used to guarantee the safety of the religious organizers and followers without violating ethical norms and guidelines.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Ted Striphas. *Algorithmic Culture Before the Internet*. **New York: Columbia University Press, 2023, 352 pp. ISBN 9780231206693 (Paperback).**

University of Colorado, Boulder Associate Professor Ted Striphas brings his expertise on the interplay of language, technology and culture in his latest book, *Algorithmic Culture Before the Internet*. His previous book, *The Late Age of Print: Everyday Book Culture from Consumerism to Control* (Columbia University Press, 2009) received the Book of the Year Award from the National Communication Association's Critical-Cultural Studies Division. He is also the editor-in-chief of the journal *Cultural Studies*.

Various studies and literature have affirmed how algorithms, loosely defined as a set of rules that direct the behavior of humans or machines, have shaped our practices and daily lives. Scrutinizing algorithms as objects of human inquiry, these studies have explored their implications in various contexts such as politics, media, criminal justice, culture, and the construction of the self.

Instead of providing a straightforward historical analysis of computational processes prior to the widespread use of the Internet and how it intersects with culture in various points in time, Striphas, in this book, took an academic and interdisciplinary approach, scrutinizing the topic from the lens of cultural studies. This work, as the author himself wrote, "is about the relationship of language and experience, and it seeks to explore, historically and on a human scale, how it ever made sense to bring culture and computation together" (p. 29).

To examine the development of the concepts of "algorithm" and "culture" long before the notion of "algorithmic culture" came about in the past decades, Striphas grounded the discussion through the works of Welsh author, academic, and cultural theorist Raymond Williams, particularly *Keywords,* which was published in 1976. Here, Williams took the cultural approach in investigating the historical changes in the meaning of 109 key words, which in turn were used to

understand how society created new meanings that reflected the prevailing political and societal values at that time. In order to reflect how culturally important words change over time, a revised edition of *Keywords* with additional twenty keywords was published by Williams in 1983.

In turn, Striphas, offered to utilize the term "key-words" as "a specific practice of key words, operationalized in this book and inspired by Raymond Williams' practice of keywords, by means to explore the ontogenesis of algorithmic culture" (p. 45). In the succeeding chapters, the author dealt with the key words "algorithm", "culture" and "algorithmic culture" by uncovering their historical semantics and how they reflect society's evolving patterns of thought, expression, and behavior.

For instance, before the term algorithm became "a monument to imperialism and white supremacy" (p. 238), Striphas noted that the word has a long and complex history that cuts through South, Central, and West Asia. While acknowledging that the term refers to Muhammad ibn Mūsā al'Khwārizmī, Striphas further dug into al'Khwārizmī's life, and the historical context of imperialism, colonialism, and the ethnic and religious persecution that led the Persian mathematician to become a scholar in the House of Wisdom in Baghdad during the ninth century. "Algorithm refers to a person, then, but also to a place laden with imperial, colonial, and ethno-religious history" (p. 87). Striphas also traced how the standard al'Khwārizmī's "story" was forged under British colonialism to show al'Khwārizmī's Asia "amounted to nothing less and nothing more than Europe's pre-civilizational past" (p. 101).

Delving into how the notion and understanding of what culture is and how it has evolved through time, Striphas devoted an entire chapter to examining the British school of cultural studies. He cites again the works of Williams, particularly through his influential work, *Culture and Society* published in 1958, and probing the lives and works of other prominent English cultural critics, namely, Matthew Arnold and F.R. Leavis.

As previewed by Striphas in the introduction, while Williams discussed the relationship of language and experience, he gave little focus on the "biographical – conditions under which culture's senses and meanings are stretched out" (p. 32). Meanwhile, as for Arnold and Leavis, who were both considered elitists and did not think highly of popular culture, Striphas described them as "outsiders who observed the violent effects of state power, and in Leavis's case suffered them bodily", while also noting that "those experiences in turn led them to define culture as a flexible and critical resource for governing human relations peaceably" (p. 32).

Placing algorithmic culture in the longer history of how culture has been weaponized as a mechanism of control, the author took the discussion to the historical context of the Cold War, particularly in the establishment and development of Harvard University's Russian Research Center, while also bringing to fore the discrimination and oppression of homosexuals in government and in the academe during those times.

This latest book by Ted Striphas certainly enriches the field of cultural studies, especially in attempting to untangle the intertwined concepts of culture and computation. As pointed out by the author himself, this work "isn't a technical history, nor a history of technicians" (p. 28), which this reviewer also initially thought of when he came across this book for the first time. The book may be considered as primarily targeted to scholars of cultural studies, particularly those who already have a working familiarity with its interdisciplinary nature ranging from humanities and social sciences, as effectively demonstrated by the author in the various chapters of his latest work.

As he concluded his exploration of the historical semantics of the words in the book's title to gain an understanding of algorithmic culture through the perspectives of language and culture, Striphas aptly introduced the concept of definitional agency to his readers. Ending on a hopeful and inspiring note, he advised us, his readers, that we are empowered to explicate the terms of our individual and collective lives. "You can, however, try amplifying some of is more compelling aspects, with the objective – in this case – of pushing back against the

worst tendencies of algorithmic culture, and perhaps then of getting on good terms with a more equitable and inclusive version of it" (p. 242).

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Jonathan Jong. *Experimenting with Religion: The New Science of Belief.* **Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2023. 186 pp. ISBN 9780190875541 (Hardback).**

Religion and science are often presented as two opposing and divergent fields. Some of the divergences that science and religion share are methodology, scope of inquiry, and worldview. Religion's methodology often relies on faith, revelation, and sacred texts as a way to acquire knowledge. On the other hand, science uses empirical investigation, experimentation, and the scientific method. The scope of religion is the metaphysical, the spiritual, and questions about the divine, which frequently lie beyond the grasp of scientific investigation and human perception. In contrast, science focuses on natural phenomena and observable realities. In addition, religion may contain supernatural or transcendent components in its worldview, such as the presence of a deity or deities, miracles, and the afterlife. Science promotes naturalistic worldviews by stressing natural causes and explanations for phenomena.

However, science and religion also have convergences. The convergences between the two include the quest for understanding, existential questions, and the element of wonder. Moreover, science and religion both address fundamental existential problems. Therefore, they share a common origin in wonder, as it is through wonder that both science and religion inquire about the cosmos, the intricacies of life, and the complexities of the natural world.

To examine the potential reciprocal utility of each discipline, Jonathan Jong wrote the book titled *Experimenting with Religion: The New Science of Belief.* In the book, Jong used the scientific approach to observe, understand, and explain people who believe in a religion. The author emphasized that his book is not really a religious book; instead, it is a work that delves into the subject of religion. This book focuses on experimental psychology and its application by a group of experimental psychologists in the study of religion as a human phenomenon. *Experimenting with Religion* is a fascinating reflection on the quest for understanding, as this is one of the convergences of science and religion. Utilizing the scientific approach presented in the book provides an opportunity to gain insights into the reasons behind

people's beliefs and how these beliefs form. Surprisingly, in the book, the primary focus is not on the research subjects themselves, but rather on the scientists conducting the studies. This twist provides a complex understanding of how the exploration of belief sheds light on the human mind's proclivity for transcendent ideas. Finally, this book demonstrates that psychological studies that test spiritual beliefs are creative endeavors that hold the potential to reveal truths about the human mind's predilection for religious concepts, provided that we remain adaptable, evolve, and able to learn.

In the initial chapter of the eight-chapter book, Jong inquired into the workings of the human mind, exploring how it facilitates belief in faith stories. According to Jong, this question is essential, as it is through addressing this question that psychologists can effectively intervene. Jong remarked that the experimenters in each situation are driven by curiosity about the origins of religion in human thinking. To explore this, psychologists must delve deep into both our minds and the religious traditions that have constructed their theoretical frameworks upon the rich psychological ground. This endeavor has been met with varying degrees of success, as the widespread historical and cultural presence of religion suggests.

The remaining chapters are devoted to unraveling the inner workings of the human mind in the context of religious discourse. Jong examined the influence of intuitive and analytical thinking on individuals' belief in God. This exploration is essential because it lays the foundation for a discussion on how our thought processes can shape our belief in God. Having set the foundation, Jong proceeded to discuss various factors that influence one's cognitive processes in matters of religion. He explained how children's approval or disapproval of teleological questions can impact their predisposition toward becoming believers or atheists.

Additionally, Jong discussed the concept of divine simplicity, raising inquiries about how humans conceive of a deity with such perfection. His exploration involved looking at the possible questions that might lead to second-guessing. Moreover, Jong engaged in a discussion on souls and the idea of the afterlife in relation to children, offering a fresh perspective on how humans might develop their faith.

Moreover, Jong conducted a study involving rituals and the concept of death to assess their influence on religiosity and spirituality in individuals.

In the conclusion, Jong stated that the purpose of the book is to share stories of individuals whose interests guided them into this realm of research. It also provides insights into what it's like to engage in such research, utilizing the tools at our disposal as a means of comprehending the belief in a deity. Psychological research can be a way to grasp the intricacies of how people believe and the underlying reasons behind their beliefs.

Comprehending the phenomenon of religion, which transcends the physical realm, can indeed be challenging. It is difficult to grasp the unlimited with our finite life and cognitive capacities. However, Jong's book has effectively contributed to advancing discussions on the psychology of religion. As he emphasized, the core purpose of doing the book and venturing into the realm of seeking empirical evidence for religion is rooted in the pursuit of understanding. It underscores the fundamental role of psychologists in unraveling the mechanisms of comprehension, even when dealing with such complex and abstract subjects.

This book is a valuable addition to the ongoing discourse on religion and science. Though the two fields often collide due to their differences in method and worldview, the author did a commendable effort at bridging the gap between the two. This book is highly beneficial for researchers, students, and readers who are interested in the field of psychology of religion. It offers valuable insights into the activities and endeavors of researchers engaged in the study of religion. New students in the field of psychology will also find this book to be helpful as it illustrates the process by which psychologists pose questions and provide answers. The approach outlined in this book serves as an introductory guide for psychology students. One of Jong's objectives, in my view, was successfully achieved as he left readers with an understanding of science as a collective human effort, and even a social undertaking, aimed at comprehending both the cosmos and our own existence. Hopefully, more books like this will

be written by future scholars as they traverse about the beauty of the human mind and the intricacies of reality.

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