

***Kasiyana* as Religious Communication among the Kankanaeys in the Philippines**

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous cultures have their belief systems, including the recognition of a supreme being, and with such recognition comes their moral systems, which guide how they live their lives. As for the Kankanaeys in the Cordillera Region of the Philippines, Kasiyana is one of the practices that portrays their belief in the divine and serves as a moral guide in their relationship with other people and the environment. The pervasiveness of Kasiyana in the Kankanaey cultures makes it a viable source of reflection in religious communication. Thus, the paper aims to make explicit how Kasiyana expressions and manifestations are forms of religious communication. The paper started by extracting how the COVID-19 survivor participants perceived, expressed, and manifested the Kasiyana. With the participants' extracted manifestations of Kasiyana, the paper discussed how the Kankanaey concept of Kasiyana qualifies in some pertinent areas of religious communication. The paper also presented how Kasiyana is intertwined with Christian teachings, making it more sensible to discuss as religious communication.

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1. Introduction

Throughout history, humans have developed various modes of transmitting knowledge, meaning, and human experience.² Such developments also transpired within indigenous cultures. The generational transmission of cultural practices, knowledge, and beliefs through oral traditions, rituals, symbols, sacred texts, songs, and genealogies has been attached to how they relate to a divine being. Such relation with a divine being plays a vital role in how the indigenous people relate to other people and their environment. Therefore, religious communication has been an integral part of human civilization. It has been serving the indigenous people a means to connect with the divine, express their beliefs, and establish social norms and values.

Making sense of the world is a primary concern of every individual. From childhood, people ask questions about the world, which is the start of making sense. It is essential to meeting basic physical, emotional, and social needs and desires.³ Thus, regardless of whichever culture one belongs to, making sense is a necessity. Also, part of what people make sense of is the culture itself. How they make sense of the world includes how they phenomenologically express and make intelligible whatever their experiences with the ultimate being and other entities that they believe exist despite not being perceived by vision. Such embeddedness of making sense of the world through one's culture is the embeddedness of religious communication among the Indigenous peoples.

Religious communication is significant in indigenous cultures as it expresses the connection of the indigenous people with their gods and ancestors. They communicate and connect with their gods and

² Nepia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition: An Indigenous Perspective* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2019), 40-60.

³ Colette Daiute and Katherine Nelson, "Making Sense of the Sense-making," *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7, no. 1-4 (1997): 207-215.

ancestors through rituals, prayers, and sacred ceremonies to ask for guidance, protection, and blessings. Religious communication in indigenous cultures also plays a crucial role in establishing social norms and values. It transmits ethical ideals, moral teachings, and cultural traditions from one generation to another.

For the Kankanaeys, *Kasiyana* is one of the ways by which they make sense of the world. *Kasiyana* expresses the Kankanaeys' belief in the presence of the divine, which they believe is actively participating in their lives. Thus, this paper tries to qualify the *Kasiyana* expression by the COVID-19 survivor participants as a religious communication among the Kankanaeys. *Kasiyana* expression intertwined with other Kankanaey values, morality, and some Christian teachings makes a viable reflection in religious communication. The paper argues that the Kankanaeys have been doing religious communication through the utterance and expression of the *Kasiyana*.

The paper does not intend to discuss the presence or absence of a religion among the Kankanaeys. Instead, it aims to extract out the religious practices attached with the expression of *Kasiyana* and put it into dialogue with some pertinent areas of religious communication. Such process is also not to diminish the original understanding of *Kasiyana* but to recognize its value and pervasiveness in the lives of the Kankanaey Christians. To go deeper, the following section will introduce an overview of the *Kasiyana*.

2. A Prelude to *Kasiyana*

Kasiyana is a Kankanaey cultural concept and practice. It can be roughly translated into English as "All will be well."⁴ It speaks of recognizing one's own or others' unfortunate situations. The pitiful situation of oneself or others necessitates mercy and compassion from everyone. This is also attached to hope, faith, encouragement, and

⁴ Minnie Degawan, "Kasiyanna' - an Indigenous Community Coping Mechanism for Disasters Like Pandemics," IUCN.org, accessed January 15, 2022, <https://www.iucn.org/news/commission-environmental-economic-and-social-policy/202004/kasiyanna-indigenous-community-coping-mechanism-disasters-pandemics>

other things those afflicted need.⁵ During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people were suffering because of the virus. The word was used in the Kankanaey communities to comfort the afflicted and express hope for the future. However, understanding the term “*Kasiyana*” in Kankanaey communities extends beyond mere translation. It represents a comprehensive worldview rooted in acknowledgment of a supreme being.

Because of the scarcity of literature on the worldview and religious practices of the Kankanaeys, the author relies on accessible accounts of *Kasiyana* found on digital platforms. These accounts align with the author’s understanding and are corroborated by discussions with elders from the author’s Kankanaey community. In one instance, a Facebook article attempted to delve into the etymology of the term “Kasiyan.” Upon closer examination, the word emerges as a combination of various Kankanaey terms: “*Kaasi*,” “*Asi*,” “*Asi-asi*,” “*Ya*,” and “*Na*.” “*Kaasi*” denotes pitiful, typically describing an individual’s condition or circumstance.⁶ “*Asi*” means mercy or that which someone in a dire situation needs.⁷ “*Asi-asi*” refers to an adverse event or circumstance that has caused a person to have pitiful conditions.⁸ Another proposed etymology for the term *Kasiyana* suggests a potential religious influence from the Ilocano phrase “*Kaassia Na*,” which means “He will show mercy,” with “He” referring to the Christian God. Regardless of the preferred etymological interpretation, both explanations underscore the concept of mercy within the context of individuals or communities enduring unpleasant experiences.⁹

Furthermore, *Kasiyana* is not merely descriptive; it embodies positivity, optimism, hope, and faith. A subsequent Facebook post indicates that its usage extends beyond adverse situations to include the initiation of endeavors and the resolution of conflicts or during

⁵ Brandon Billan Cadingpal, “‘Kasiyana’ as Ordinary Theology: The Case of the Covid-19 Survivors” (MA Thesis, Saint Louis University, 2023), 21-26.

⁶ Besao NHS – SHS, “A Bit of Igorot Culture: ‘Kasiyana,’” March 26, 2020, <https://m.facebook.com/besaonhsshs/posts/2578260062411910>.

⁷ Besao NHS – SHS, “A Bit of Igorot Culture: ‘Kasiyana.’”

⁸ Besao NHS – SHS, “A Bit of Igorot Culture: ‘Kasiyana.’”

⁹ Brandon Cadingpal, “Kasiyana,” 23-24.

ritual conduct.¹⁰ Therefore, *Kasiyana* portrays a “meaningful message of hope towards the future, comfort at present, encouragement to move forward, which should be anchored in timeless faith as expressed in undergoing required rituals by the Unseen (*Kabunian-Creator*).”¹¹

This sentiment is echoed in another blog, which states that *Kasiyana* is “an expression of sympathy and encouragement, in the belief that we shall overcome any hardship or crisis and find better days ahead.”¹² A second blog article affirms the stated ideas on *Kasiyana* and adds that *Kasiyana* is “used to comfort and give hope even though everything is hopeless.”¹³ The latter article emphasizes the necessity of sincerity when uttering *Kasiyana*, as insincerity would diminish its essential message of comfort.¹⁴

Degawan translates *Kasiyana* as “all will be well.”¹⁵ She adds that the term affirms that balance will soon be achieved.¹⁶ Difficulties in life are seen as imbalances. However, with great optimism anchored in the belief of *Kasiyana*, things will soon be restored to their proper places. Similarly, others translate *Kasiyana* as “It’s alright. Things will get better.”¹⁷ These expressions signify an acknowledgment of present struggles while maintaining hope for a brighter future. However,

¹⁰ Roland Ngalob, “A Bit of Igorot Culture: ‘Kasiyana,’” Igorot Culture and Identities, Facebook, April 12, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/543461166304661/posts/551971292120315/>.

¹¹ Ngalob, “A Bit of Kankanaey Culture: ‘Kasiyana.’”

¹² Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines, “Kasiyana Series,” Philippine Task Force for Indigenous Peoples Rights & Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines, last modified September 4, 2020, <https://pikp.org/category/kasiyana-series/>.

¹³ Igorot People, “Inayan ya Kasiyana, Taboo and Hopefully,” last modified April 6, 2007, <http://igorotpeople.blogspot.com/2007/04/inayan-ya-kasiyana-taboo-and-hopefully.html>

¹⁴ Igorot People, “Inayan ya Kasiyana, Taboo and Hopefully.”

¹⁵ Minnie Degawan, “Kasiyanna.”

¹⁶ Minnie Degawan, “Kasiyanna: Particular Challenges of Indigenous Peoples in Facing COVID-19,” Cultural Survival, accessed January 15, 2022, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/kasiyanna-particular-challenges-indigenous-peoples-facing-covid19>.

¹⁷ Igorotage, “Kasiyanna (A Kankanaey Optimism),” Igorotage.com, accessed January 17, 2024, <https://www.igorotage.com/blog/p/9ykoZ/kasiyana-a-kankanaey-optimism>

embracing *Kasiyana* extends beyond passive acceptance of adversity. It entails active efforts to alleviate the current circumstances, whether through prayer, tangible actions, or the embodiment of other Kankanaey values and traditions. Moreover, *Kasiyana* embodies not just optimism but also hope, entrusting the divine to guide the way forward. The referenced sources unanimously underscore the profound significance of *Kasiyana* within the cultural and spiritual framework.¹⁸

Although *Kasiyana* exists independently of established religion, its pervasive influence among the Kankanaeys serves as a vehicle for communicating values, traditions, morals, and faith—essential aspects of religion. This phenomenon underscores the constant acknowledgment and reverence for a supreme or ultimate being, rendering *Kasiyana* a pertinent topic in religious communication. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the practice of *Kasiyana* among the Kankanaeys transcends the confines of Kankanaey culture and intersects with Christianity. These instances exemplify processes of ‘interculturalization’ and a realization of the call of synodality.

3. Research Questions

The paper aims to demonstrate how the expression of *Kasiyana* among the Kankanaeys, particularly those who have survived COVID-19, exemplify religious communication. The following questions will guide the exploration of relevant areas of religious communication pertaining to *Kasiyana*.

- 1) How was *Kasiyana* expressed and lived by the Kankanaey COVID-19 survivors?
- 2) What makes *Kasiyana*, as Kankanaeys’ expression and practice, a religious communication?

¹⁸ *Kasiyana* is not a term that can just be used as an ordinary street language since it requires sincerity, pure intentions, and respect before it can be used. The term cannot just be used in the context of fun or jokes since it is used during pitiful situations, and no one should dare laugh at others’ misfortunes.

- 3) How can *Kasiyana*, as religious communication, be constantly relevant and significant in the lives of Kankanaey Christians?

The study utilized a qualitative method to answer the raised questions. Mainly, it employed the hermeneutical-phenomenological design to disinter the wide-encompassing Kankanaey concept *Kasiyana*, especially how it is manifested as religious communication among the said indigenous group. Through an interview, the author was able to acquire ample responses, shedding light on the questions at hand. The nine individuals who participated in the study were professionals who were COVID-19 survivors. In view of ethical considerations, the participants' identities were hidden through codes (P1, P2, ...). Also, the paper ensured that the topic does not fall under the scope of the National Commission on Indigenous People's Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) Process. Despite being out of the FPIC's control, the study still employed the highest ethical standards in dealing with the participants and processing the data gathered from them by hiding their identities. Ethical guidelines for qualitative research by Creswell were also followed to ensure the integrity of the study.¹⁹

4. Results and Discussions

The nine participants' responses to the interview questions resulted in the substantial discussion below. The coding process, following a hermeneutical-phenomenological design, facilitated the organization of discussions into themes. However, only the most significant themes are presented in this paper.

4.1. *Kasiyana* Expression and Manifestation

Kasiyana, introduced earlier, can manifest in various situations, such as when reassurance, care, mercy, and compassion are

¹⁹ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (California, USA: Sage publications, 2017).

needed, embodying the values expected when interacting with others. In this context, we focus on how participants experienced *Kasiyana* during their COVID-19 recovery.

4.1.1. *Kasiyana as a Prayer*

Kasiyana, evident among the participants, served as a prayer for their own situations and for the world during times of affliction. When the word “*Kasiyana*” was heard or uttered, it immediately signified a plea for divine intervention to heal any sickness they experienced. This prayer also entailed requests to be liberated from distressing situations, such as concerns about loved ones not with them during isolation and their well-being. The following statements from the participants will illustrate this.

Kasiyana is my prayer asking for God’s intervention to bring hope, encouragement, inspiration, and well-being to someone in a difficult situation, just like how it had helped me during my recovery from COVID-19 (P3). ... I prayed to God for healing, faster recovery, and protection. I kept in mind that I would not lose hope that I would recover and that my swab test would turn out negative. Kasiyana, this COVID-19 will pass (P2). ... While in the Hospital, many people have been sending positive thoughts and prayers for me. They say Kasiyana, and hearing such a word means they are praying for my best outcome. They were the ones who became a source of inspiration and hope for me to cope with my case (P5). ... Kasiyana, likened to a prayer, asks for divine intervention for my speedy recovery and well-being (P4).

Whether referencing the Kankanaey god or the Christian God in their prayers, participants expressed *Kasiyana* as a form of worship. Some mentioned both deities, as most Kankanaeys are Christians. Nevertheless, the essence remains consistent: it is an act of reverence toward a supreme being.

Another notable aspect in the participants’ responses regarding *Kasiyana* is that their prayers were not solely for themselves. They also prayed for everyone burdened similarly, aiming to extend the same prayer offered to them through *Kasiyana*. This highlights the

Kankanaeys' strong sense of community. The following statements illustrate this sentiment.

That was when I looked up to Him and prayed for healing not just for me and the entire family but for everybody who, like me, has contracted the disease (P4). ... I know during those moments that I'm not the only one suffering. There are many. That is why I kept hoping that Kasiyana would extend to everyone in difficult situations during those times. It's not easy as I am experiencing it, so I hope everyone in need of the same prayer receives it. It means a lot (P2).²⁰

Hearing *Kasiyana* from fellow Kankanaeys, as evident in the quoted statements, provides hope not only due to the reassurance of divine assistance but also because it assures them of the community's support during times of struggle. Therefore, *Kasiyana* can be understood as a communal prayer shared by everyone, whether afflicted or not. Someone in a difficult situation hearing *Kasiyana* can be assured that both God and the community stand with them.

4.1.2. Kasiyana as Hoping

The futuristic aspect of *Kasiyana* surfaced in the participants' responses. They stated that saying *Kasiyana* or when it was said to them meant looking forward to a better situation in the coming days. *Kasiyana* also assures the afflicted not to worry that much since God is with them. Therefore, *Kasiyana* embodies hope for a better tomorrow. This sentiment is reflected in the quoted statements below.

What I'm going through will soon pass. Kasiyana. It speaks of a better tomorrow—a promising better tomorrow (P1). ... Kasiyana- this concept from the Kankanaeys has taught me to continue hoping despite the hopelessness of the situation that I encountered. It taught me that "this too shall pass." Indeed, by God's grace, I was able to cope with my situation. And I can say That I am well and healthy (P7). ... Aside from

²⁰ These statements are just few of the many statements talking about extending the hope, inspiration, and other more they have received when they were extended the term "*Kasiyana*." These answers surfaced when they were asked what help "*Kasiyana*" offered them.

Kasiyana being comforting if you hear it from others, it's more of looking forward to a better tomorrow while we help ourselves because God is there. It's like constantly looking forward; if today is not in our favor, it will be temporary anyway. One way of saying I surrender to what the situation right now is but, at the same time, expect a good turnout of events later (P8).

The hope expressed by the participants goes beyond mere reliance on God to solve all their problems. Participant 8, for instance, clarified that hope isn't simply praying and expecting improvement solely through belief in *Kasiyana*. Instead, hoping in *Kasiyana* involves surrendering what they cannot control to God, while actively taking steps towards what they can influence. This hope is rooted in faith, acknowledging a supreme being. Like faith, hope in *Kasiyana* isn't passive reliance on divine intervention; it's about entrusting what's beyond one's control to God while actively working towards realizing their hopes.

4.1.3. *Kasiyana as a Sense of Community*

The Kankanaeys value *Kasiyana* not only for its hope-giving aspect but also because it embodies vitality. Despite individual hardships, *Kasiyana* is consistently manifested as communal support within the Kankanaey community. The various values within Kankanaey society are intricately woven into their expression of *Kasiyana*. Discussing Kankanaey communities inherently involves delving into their core values, notably their strong sense of communal solidarity, which instills confidence in mutual assistance. Consequently, *Kasiyana* is perceived as a reflection of community spirit.

For instance, *Kasiyana* bolstered community spirit through *Binnadang*, also known as *Galatis* or *Ub-ubo*. *Galatis* refers to voluntary assistance provided by all community members during times of need, such as in the event of a death. Furthermore, *Ub-ubo* or *Galatis* initiatives are organized to aid affected families in recovering from such tragedies, like by aiding in the construction of a new

dwelling.²¹ Kankanaey values consistently emphasize communal support, epitomizing their collective spirit. The subsequent statements further underscore this communal ethos inherent in Kasiyana.

... Our culture is not “kanya-kanya” type, especially with my direct family. We help each other in practical, financial, and spiritual ways, which is why things went well. Even the care they’ve shown by saying Kasiyana is such a help (P9). ... “Ub-ubo,” as I stated earlier, can be one practice associated with Kasiyana. Expressing their oneness [through] Kasiyana also entails their willingness to help in any way they can. “Seg-ang”²² is an assurance of God’s mercy and compassion (P7). ... Growing up in a Kankanaey community and taking part in its cultural beliefs and traditions, which are essentially communitarian, living out Kasiyana made me realize an innate moral responsibility towards community members. Thus, one who recognizes his moral responsibility towards community members finds a way to express help or comfort (P4).

As articulated by Participant Nine, it’s essential to underscore the moral duty to support those in distress. For the Kankanaeys, if physical presence isn’t possible, conveying heartfelt wishes to those in need is considered an expression of “*Inayan*.”²³ Thus, practicing *Kasiyana* aligns with the principles of “*Inayan*,” representing a moral obligation among the Kankanaeys to assist every community member, even strangers.

4.2. Qualifying *Kasiyana* as Religious Communication

This section explores how *Kasiyana* can be qualified as a form of religious communication among the Kankanaeys. It will focus on

²¹ Brandon B. Cadingpal, “‘Tengaw’ Observance: The Kankanaeys Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication* 19, no. 2 (2021): 296.

²² “*Seg-ang*” is a Kankanaey term, which can be directly translated as mercy. It is used in this paper as the Kankanaeys’ recognition of the supreme being as always merciful and compassionate.

²³ “*Inayan*” is a Kankanaey term that speaks about the necessity to do things appropriately, just, and correctly. Otherwise, a negative consequence will arise from not doing good things.

elucidating the religious aspects of *Kasiyana* and its expressions in belief and practice. While indigenous systems encompass beliefs, perspectives, and social ties that could qualify as religions,²⁴ this paper doesn't primarily aim to delve into that aspect. Rather, its focus is to illustrate how the communication of *Kasiyana* is imbued with religious significance by examining the essential values and relationships inherent in its practice within the Kankanaey culture.

4.2.1. *Kasiyana as the Kankanaey God-Talks*

The god-talks of the people in their everyday dealings can be considered as "Ordinary Theology." Ordinary theology is a theology articulated by people without formal education or degree in theology.²⁵ Though expressed informally, the Kankanaeys' communication reveals their connection with both God and fellow humans. *Kasiyana* serves as a channel for their discussions about divinity. Participants articulated how *Kasiyana* reflects their acknowledgment of a supreme being, guiding their actions in alignment with what is just and moral. While not explicitly religious communication, this discourse embodies elements of it. Quoted participant statements further illuminate this perspective.

It is an assurance of a better tomorrow. It speaks of how we should go on with life. Difficult times will come, but Kasiyana, we can make it through with the help of God. Just know how to trust yourself and God, and Kasiyana, all will be well (P8). Kasiyana is not only a word we say and hear. It's how we do things as we go on with life. We don't know what happens in the next few hours, but we still hope that the good things we do with sufficient effort will matter. No one knows what will happen in the future, but I can be assured of God's presence through Kasiyana (P9). ... After all, we are all human beings. We all need care and love. Kasiyana is a concrete way to show those. Life will be

²⁴ Robin M. Wright, "Indigenous Religious Traditions," in *Religions of the World: An Introduction to Culture and Meaning*, ed. L. E. Sullivan (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 31-60.

²⁵ Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2002), 56.

beautiful with love and care from everyone. God is with us, Kasiyana says it. (P5).

The participants explicitly discussed how *Kasiyana* extends beyond moments of recovery, emphasizing its significance in their overall lives. They view *Kasiyana* as a spirituality grounded in their belief and trust in a supreme being, historically referred to as “*Kabunian*” by the Kankanaeys. Their statements underscore that *Kasiyana* serves as a guiding principle for living. Consequently, their discourse sheds light on how to navigate life’s challenges. As the embodiment of the Kankanaey’s discussions about divinity, *Kasiyana* can be seen as a form of religious communication.

Religious communication involves acknowledging the continual presence of a divine entity among people. It stems from recognizing a supreme being capable of actions beyond human capability. This acknowledgment isn’t merely an excuse for human limitations, but rather underscores the relationship between the divine and humanity, a relationship deeply ingrained in Kankanaey culture. As evidenced by the responses of participants, every instance of *Kasiyana* reflects their acknowledgment and connection with God. Their relationship with the divine is further evident in how they navigate and interpret the world around them. Even the enduring adherence to moral principles through “*Inayan*,” despite the influence of modern education, serves as a testament to this relationship. Such examples epitomize religious communication.

4.2.2. Kasiyana as a Prophetic Discourse

Another aspect of religious communication is the prophetic discourse, which means discourses bearing the moral responsibility to denounce injustices, remind people of their commitments, provide alternatives to current realities, call to repentance, and express the will of God.²⁶ *Kasiyana* might not be able to fulfill all the identified requirements. However, it can serve other aspects of prophetic discourse.

²⁶ Piet J. Naudé, “Is Prophetic Discourse Adequate to Address Global Economic Justice?” *HTS Theologise Studies/Theological Studies* 67, no. 1 (2011):1-8.

4.2.2.1. On moral responsibility

Moral responsibility was mentioned a few times in the previous sections of this paper. However, this section emphasizes the primacy of moral responsibility attached to *Kasiyana*. The intent is to put the demands of *Kasiyana* for moral responsibility vis-à-vis prophetic discourse as one of the fulfillments of *Kasiyana* as a form of religious communication. This purpose is elucidated through participants' statements, which emphasize that *Kasiyana* extends beyond mere comforting words or expressions of sympathy and empathy. Rather, it entails actively taking responsibility for addressing the needs of those who are afflicted.

... We are obligated to love and care for our fellow beings. That is why if we see someone needing assurance and hope, we say Kasiyana. We extend help in any way we can (P6). ... living out Kasiyana made me realize an innate moral responsibility towards members of the community (P3). ... When I was in dire need during that time, I didn't have to beg for help. When they found out about my situation, they voluntarily offered what they could to me (P8). ... We help each other in practical, financial, and spiritual ways, which is why things went well. By them saying Kasiyana, I can feel they care for me. (P9). ... Kasiyana is attached to values and practices like "ub-ubo" and "inayan." If one is genuinely concerned about their brethren, they will be one in action of helping them – that is, in the spirit of "ub-ubo." One should know what to commit and omit –practicing Kasiyana (P2).

Participants in the Kankanaey community emphasize that every member is expected to provide support when someone is struggling to recover from the COVID-19 virus. This obligation isn't enforced by community leaders but arises naturally upon recognizing others' needs. This recognition itself serves as the driving force for action. Fulfilling this obligation reflects one's moral responsibility, which is inherently in human nature's innate concern for others. This innate inclination can also be rooted in humanity's inherent intentionality and goodness. Humans are naturally oriented towards others, and this orientation is always positive.

4.2.2.2. *On providing future alternatives to current reality*

Prophetic discourse portrays the so-called “alluring vision of the future.”²⁷ It is an assurance of a better future despite the chaotic present time. However, it entails more than passively awaiting a predetermined destiny; it also involves active efforts towards realizing this envisioned future. Biblical prophets underscore the importance of proactive engagement in shaping a better tomorrow, beyond mere optimistic anticipation. As previously discussed, *Kasiyana* in Kankanaey culture similarly conveys the promise of a better future to the afflicted, rooted in the constant presence of a divine being in human affairs. Hence, *Kasiyana* serves as a prophetic concept intrinsic to Kankanaey culture, as reflected in participants’ statements.

... My God will never forsake me, even in those trying times. Because I believe in Kasiyana. Apart from this, I also think those who have already departed from this world are watching over us. The hardships are just temporary (P1). ... Kasiyana is also about “Talek”²⁸ and “Pammati.”²⁹ Though the mentioned words cannot equate to Kasiyana, they speak of hope, faith, and trust, which Kasiyana is also about. This trial will soon pass; have faith (P9). ... My belief in Kasiyana made me even stronger emotionally. I knew that someone up there would help me get through these difficult times. No matter what life gives me, He will protect, direct, and keep me away from harm. Thanks to the constant inspiration from Kasiyana (P8).

The participants’ expressions of *Kasiyana* extend beyond present circumstances. While acknowledging present responsibilities, *Kasiyana* primarily involves anticipation and active efforts towards improving future conditions. Through *Kasiyana*, individuals receive assurance and cultivate hope for a better tomorrow, thereby gaining clarity amidst current challenges. Consequently, *Kasiyana* serves as a

²⁷ Piet J. Naudé, “Prophetic Discourse,” 1-8.

²⁸ “*Talek*” in Kankanaey means trust. It can be trust to fellow human beings, events, and to God.

²⁹ “*Pammati*” can be roughly translated as faith, which may also be directed towards others, events, and God.

significant form of religious communication, particularly in its role within prophetic discourse.

4.2.2.3. *On the expression of the will of God*

Surrendering one's limitations to a divine entity is an act of acknowledging and expressing acceptance of the "Will of God." Among the Kankanaeys, communicating *Kasiyana* involves relinquishing to the divine anything beyond their control. *Kasiyana* signifies embracing the current adverse circumstances and recognizing the irrevocable nature of certain situations. As *Kasiyana* is predominantly invoked in times of despair, individuals may find solace in the divine's intervention, considering it their sole source of hope. Uttering *Kasiyana* is akin to affirming "thy will be done." However, it also entails exerting effort to help oneself despite the challenges. The following responses from participants will provide illustrative examples of this concept.

... Even though it is a struggle as days pass, I still keep my faith in God. I know He is there. He's always with me. There's nothing to fear. Though, naturally, we feel anxious about what might happen, I still know God can help me (P2).

... I was worried about so many things. Thanks to Kasiyana, which was extended to me through video calls by many people, I realized that God was with me. God will work in whatever rightful way He can. It's what kept me calm. I gained confidence that whatever happens, God's way will prevail (P1). ... Pray and let God do His part. Whatever happens, God works in ways we cannot see, but it will surely lead us to goodness. Whatever is good is what God wants, so trust him. By believing in Kasiyana, I know I trust God's way (P9).

The participants' trust in divine intervention when uttering *Kasiyana* reflects their affirmation of the will of God, which, as articulated by one participant, is inherently benevolent. Participant Two observes that individuals facing adversity may naturally experience anxiety. Nonetheless, with the reassurance of God's presence and goodness, they find solace in the understanding that the divine always seeks what is best for them and would never compromise its sacred

nature. This discourse prevalent among the Kankanaeys constitutes a significant form of religious communication.

4.2.3. *Kasiyana as a Source of Theological Reflections*

Another essential criterion for communication to be considered religious is its capacity to facilitate theological reflections. While *Kasiyana* may not feature prominently in every daily change among the Kankanaeys, when it does arise, it becomes a focal point for contemplation among both speakers and listeners. It prompts individuals to reflect on the reasons behind adversity, the workings of the divine, human interconnectedness, aspirations for the future, interpersonal relationships, environmental stewardship, and various other topics. Due to its broad applicability across different aspects of Kankanaey life, *Kasiyana* serves as a lens through which individuals engage with their world and spirituality. It encourages the Kankanaeys to discern meaning in their experiences, relationships, and broader contexts. The statements provided by participants below exemplify some of the facets of *Kasiyana* that contribute to its role as a catalyst for theological reflection.

... I always seek guidance from the knowledge transferred to me by my parents. During my recovery, I kept saying Kasiyana, and I continued reflecting on how things were changing. Kasiyana made me realize that traditional ways of thinking still work. (P5). ... Kasiyana is a unique concept of being hopeful. Its definition of hope goes beyond the definition of being optimistic. It is a retroactive/reflexive concept that when somebody says it, it is not only being hopeful for the person who is sick. Also, the one extending Kasiyana acquires hope by seeing that what they said gave hope to the sick. I just realized that when I was alone and bombarded with many things. (P3). ... Kasiyana is significant because our grandparents have passed it on, which is still precious. Before, sciences and technologies were not as advanced as today, but they made it well through life because they lived with these principles and values. Aside from being sentimental, being passed on to us speaks of how life should be lived no matter our context (P9).

Further reflections were prompted by Kasiyana when participants were asked to consider its broader impacts. Although initially posed as a question, the ensuing reflections underscored the profound relevance and significance of Kasiyana to them. Some participants recounted their earliest encounters with the term, recalling the moments when they first grasped its meaning. Others discovered new dimensions of Kasiyana, recognizing its effects on both the afflicted and those offering solace. The fact that these reflections prompted individuals to articulate insights beyond the typical usage of Kasiyana demonstrates its capacity to foster contemplation on life's complexities.

4.2.4. Kasiyana Relevance and Significance in the Lives of Kankanaey Christians

While contemporary Kankanaey communities predominantly adhere to Christianity, there has been a seamless integration of Kankanaey cultural practices with Christian traditions, values, and teachings. Consequently, this section highlights the fusion of Kankanaey culture, particularly manifested through *Kasiyana*, with Christian values and teachings. This synthesis is presented for recognition and contribution to processes of inculturation or inter-culturation.

4.2.4.1. Kasiyana manifests the theological virtues and Jesus' commandment of love

Virtues are acquired through the practice of virtuous deeds.³⁰ It is something one does with constancy to be considered a virtue. However, theological virtues are not acquired but instead given by God.³¹ The term 'theological' suggests the virtues' connection with God wherein God infuses the said values.³² Therefore, such theological virtues are God-given gifts innately endowed to every human.

³⁰ Michael D. Palmer, "Ethical Formation: The Theological Virtues," *The Holy Spirit and Christian Formation: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (2016), 110.

³¹ Joseph P. Wawrykow, "The Theological Virtues," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies (2012; online edition, Oxford Academic, 1 May 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195326093.013.0023>, accessed 7 Feb. 2024.

³² Joseph P. Wawrykow, "The Theological Virtues."

The exemplification of these three theological virtues is intended for a moral life grounded in the belief of God.^{33, 34} The participants' responses were observed to such manifestations of theological virtues.

For us Kankanaey Christians, we have faith, which I think is applied by how we live out and say Kasiyana. The Kasiyana speaks about trust, belief, and confidence because we believe that tomorrow will be better and that we trust that God will do His way of helping us while we do ours (P6). ... Trust or "Talek" and "Pammati" is what I think Kasiyana is in other terms. Though the mentioned words cannot equate to Kasiyana, they speak of hope, faith, and trust, which Kasiyana is also about. This trial will pass; have faith (P9). ... Kasiyana is Hope. As a Christian, I have hope because of God's daily presence. And because of my faith in God, everything is okay. I really believe, Kasiyana, God is in control (P4).

The statements provided simultaneously address the theological virtues of faith and hope. While these virtues may seem indistinguishable to ordinary individuals, the experiences shared by participants reveal distinctions between them. Participants discussing faith express their belief and trust in both life and God. Their trust and belief in life itself constitute human faith, whereas their trust and belief in God represent the theological virtue of faith. The unwavering faith of the Kankanaey people in God, as expressed through *Kasiyana*, motivates them to persevere towards a brighter future, even amid uncertainty. Hope, as highlighted throughout this paper, articulates their aspirations to God, specifically the Christian God, alongside their faith. The presence of the other theological virtue, love, is evident in the subsequent quoted statements.

... Kasiyana is how I felt the love of God through the love of the community extended to me during those pandemic struggles. I felt like the best way to express my love for Him

³³ Gilbert Meilaender, "The Virtues: A Theological Analysis," in *Virtue and Medicine: Explorations in the Character of Medicine*, ed. Earl E. Shelp (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1985), 151.

³⁴ William C. Mattison and William C. Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues* (Michigan, USA: Brazos Press, 2008).

is through prayer (P2). ... Kasiyana is giving hope and expressing one's love, especially to those in need. Hearing it from my friends made me feel loved because they wanted me to live longer. I'm pretty sure that those positive greetings are ways God says He loves me in human language (P3). ... The efforts extended to me by my community are how they are expressing their love for me. The others are friends of friends whom I'm not even close with, but you can see how they say their oneness with me in my isolation. I think it comes from our culture that love, like other Kankanaey values, is communally expressed and practiced (P7). ... It [referring to Kasiyana] matters as we deal with human lives. It's about our relationships as well. How we say we love God must be portrayed by how we love and care for everyone (P8).

Many participants acknowledged that the love they experienced resonated as a divine love expressed through human interaction. Others emphasized that their love was unconditional, evident even in their relationships with digital acquaintances whom they had never met in person. These depictions of love articulated by the participants reflect the theological virtue of love and echo Jesus' commandment of love as outlined in John 13:34-35. According to this commandment, individuals are called to love both God and their neighbors. Jesus not only preached this commandment but also embodied it, exemplifying the profound love he advocated.³⁵ Notably, the love Jesus espoused was radical, challenging individuals to love even their enemies and prioritize the welfare of others over themselves.³⁶ This radical form of love is evident in the Kankanaeys' portrayal of extending love to neighbors, including those with whom they may not have close relationships. The communal expression of love demonstrated by the Kankanaeys towards the afflicted reflects the same divine love advocated by Jesus, emphasizing how love for others mirrors love for God.

³⁵ William Chang, "The Love Commandment (John 13: 34-35)," *Asia Journal of Theology* 28, no. 2 (2014): 263.

³⁶ Frederick Mawusi Amevenku, "Jesus's New Commandment in John 13: 34-35: 'Love Your Neighbour More Than Yourself' in Ethical Perspective," *Biblical Studies Journal* 4 no. 1 (2022): 15.

4.2.4.2. *Kasiyana adheres to the Catholic social teachings*

The Catholic Social Teachings (CST) represent a series of moral principles that have evolved over the course of Catholic history, conveyed through church documents reminding individuals of their obligations as Christians and members of society.³⁷ However, it is essential to recognize that CST transcends mere textual pronouncements. While the Catholic Church commemorates the issuance of ‘Rerum Novarum’ in 1891, it is equally imperative to acknowledge the contributions of activists, prophets, intellectuals, and analysts who endured significant challenges in championing these social principles.³⁸ Similar to Pope Leo XIII’s scrutiny of the adverse ramifications of the Industrial Revolution, questioning the detrimental effects on human well-being and the environment catalyzed the emergence of CST. Today, Catholic Social Teachings serve as a foundational framework for Christian ethics, highlighting the nexus between religious conviction and societal engagement. The imperatives outlined within CST warrant discourse and reflection, as they delineate the ethical responsibilities incumbent upon individuals and institutions alike.

In the Kankanaey cultural milieu, the *Kasiyana* tradition serves as a poignant reminder of moral imperatives centered on solidarity with others, preferential treatment for the marginalized, and the inherent worth of every individual. While acknowledging that *Kasiyana* may not comprehensively embody all facets of Catholic Social Teachings (CST), it is nonetheless pertinent to recognize its alignment with CST principles. Several participants remarked how *Kasiyana* functions as a channel for fulfilling these moral obligations.

Growing up in a Kankanaey community, taking part in its cultural beliefs and traditions, essentially communitarian, and living out Kasiyana made me realize an innate moral responsibility towards community members. For example, “inayan” is still a firm belief or practice in the community

³⁷ Thomas Massaro, S. J., *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action* (Washington DC, USA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023), 35-46.

³⁸ Marvin L. Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (Connecticut, USA: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 1-5.

(P4). *Who else will care for our brothers and sisters if not us? As Christians or just by being humans, we must offer what we can to others even if we're not being told. If I cannot give material things, I can at least provide hope by saying Kasiyana (P7). ... The value of mercy and compassion, solidarity and empathy or sympathy embedded in Kasiyana is related to the value of "Inayan" because one who does not know how to be one with the community if one is grieving is making one despicable – to avoid being such, one must understand the "Inayan" (P9).*

The participants frequently emphasized the communitarian ethos prevalent among the Kankanaeys, illustrating the inherent solidarity ingrained within their culture. While solidarity is often discussed within the context of their communities, it transcends such confines, extending to encompass all humanity. Moreover, their acknowledgment of the obligation to assist those in need reflects a preference for the marginalized in any form of deprivation. Poverty, in their perspective, extends beyond mere material lack to encompass any form of struggle or adversity, prompting a collective response facilitated through practices like *Kasiyana*. Furthermore, their readiness to offer aid to the afflicted underscores their reverence for human life and their recognition of the inherent dignity and rights of every individual within the community. In essence, their actions epitomize the core tenets of CST, as they embody principles of solidarity, preferential option for the poor, and the valuing of human life. Therefore, *Kasiyana* serves as a tangible manifestation of these CST principles, demonstrating the convergence of cultural traditions with moral imperatives espoused by Catholic teachings.

Indeed, *Kasiyana* is revered within the context of Kankanaey culture and holds a prominent place within the realm of Christian belief. Its dual significance resonates deeply with individuals who navigate the intersection of their cultural identity and religious faith, epitomizing a harmonious coalescence of tradition and spirituality.

5. Conclusion

Kasiyana, as discussed, embodies the property of reminding moral responsibilities, elicit reflections, reassure the presence of the divine, and provide viable grounds for inculturation, particularly the intertwining of Kankanaey values and traditions with Catholic teachings. Such embodiment proves *Kasiyana* to be a notable religious communication among the Kankanaeys. *Kasiyana* may not be a practice of established religion but rather a demonstrated indigenous knowledge and practice that amalgamates the Kankanaey values together, and that is what makes its communication and practice religious. Not only is the application of *Kasiyana* always in recognition of the divine, which makes it religious, but it also establishes relationships, a crucial aspect of recognizing religious communication.

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