LEX LOCALIS-JOURNAL OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT
ISSN:1581-5374 E-ISSN:1855-363X
VOL. 23, NO. 11(2025)

FROM STORY TO SOUL: THE ROLE OF PANIYAW IN IKALINGA LITERARY HERITAGE AND MORAL FORMATION IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

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Abstract
This study explores **paniyaw**, a system of cultural taboos and prohibitions in the Ikalinga indigenous community, through the lens of local legends and folktales. Paniyaw serves as a moral compass, regulating ethical behavior and maintaining harmony between people, nature, and the spirit world. Utilizing an ethnographic and literary hermeneutic approach, the research analyzes selected Ikalinga oral narratives for their symbolic and cultural representations of paniyaw, highlighting their relevance to contemporary moral formation and education. Findings reveal that paniyaw embeds indigenous environmental ethics and spirituality as core community values, which have waned among younger generations but are critical to revitalizing cultural identity and ethical responsibility. The study advocates for integrating paniyaw-centered texts into educational frameworks to preserve and promote indigenous knowledge systems.

Key words: Ikalinga, paniyaw, indigenous knowledge, oral literature, moral formation, cultural taboos

1 Introduction

Indigenous literary traditions serve as vital repositories of cultural memory, moral wisdom, and collective identity. For the Ikalinga people of Kalinga Province in the Philippines, the concept of *paniyaw* a set of prohibitions and moral injunctions rooted in ancestral belief systems—figures prominently in oral narratives and folktales. These stories function not only as a medium of entertainment but also as instructive texts that regulate behavior, transmit values, and shape both individual and communal conscience. However, in recent decades, the transmission and observance of *paniyaw* have noticeably weakened, particularly among the youth, raising concerns about cultural erosion, diminished moral grounding, and the weakening of community cohesion. This decline represents a scientific problem: the loss of indigenous moral frameworks embedded in literature and its consequences for identity, education, and ecological ethics.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on *paniyaw* as both a cultural symbol and a moral construct within Ikalinga folktales and legends. While scholarship has addressed the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in general, few studies have examined how specific belief systems such as *paniyaw* are embedded in literature and how they may be integrated into contemporary frameworks of moral formation. This research therefore contributes to intercultural education and indigenous literary studies by documenting, interpreting, and revitalizing a tradition that is at risk of being overlooked in modern discourse.

To address this problem, the study explores the literary and cultural representations of *paniyaw* in Ikalinga folktales and legends. Specifically, it aims to: (1) identify the literary manifestations of *paniyaw* in selected narratives; (2) analyze their symbolic meanings and cultural significance; (3) interpret the values and moral

principles conveyed through these stories; and (4) examine the role of *paniyaw* in shaping indigenous moral formation.

Guided by a qualitative research design, the study employed textual and cultural analysis to uncover the thematic and symbolic dimensions of *paniyaw* in indigenous narratives. An ethnographic orientation complemented this approach by situating literary representations within the lived cultural context of the Ikalinga community. Key informant interviews with cultural bearers further enriched the analysis by providing contextual insights into the historical and contemporary practice of *paniyaw*. This methodological triangulation enabled a holistic interpretation of *paniyaw* as both a literary motif and a moral compass within the Ikalinga worldview.

Through this inquiry, the study not only addresses a gap in the literature but also contributes to ongoing conversations on cultural sustainability, moral education, and the global relevance of indigenous knowledge. By reaffirming the role of *paniyaw* in Ikalinga literature, it underscores the importance of indigenous wisdom in shaping ethical consciousness, cultural resilience, and ecological responsibility in the 21st century.

2 Literature Review

Indigenous knowledge (IK) systems, shaped through generations of environmental interaction, are recognized as vital for holistic education and ecological sustainability (Battiste, 2002; Kimmerer, 2013; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). UNESCO (2018) emphasizes integrating indigenous worldviews into intercultural education. Yet, scholarship remains largely theoretical, with limited focus on how specific constructs like the Kalinga belief in *paniyaw* can be applied to contemporary moral formation.

Paniyaw, understood as prohibitions and spiritual warnings, extends beyond taboos to embody ancestral wisdom, ecological respect, and social order (Baguilat, 2011). Similar systems in Philippine communities regulate behavior and ecological balance (Macdonald, 2004; Balgos, 2015). While Baguilat highlights its social role, Macdonald emphasizes ecological stewardship, pointing to its multidimensional character that requires deeper study. Comparable systems of ecological jurisprudence, such as the kinship-based taboos of the Nyishi tribe in Arunachal Pradesh, likewise function as unwritten legal codes governing human–nonhuman relations (Banerjee, Pal, & Priyadarshini, 2025). This suggests that *paniyaw*, too, may be viewed as an indigenous form of environmental ethics that parallels other customary governance systems.

Folktales and legends preserve *paniyaw* by embedding it in symbolic and narrative forms. Evasco (2004) stresses their role in cultural memory, while Finnegan (2012) highlights their mnemonic and moral functions. This dual role—as symbolic depth and functional pedagogy—underscores their value but also reveals the need for closer literary analysis of how *paniyaw* is represented. Similar to other cultural communities, oral traditions have been increasingly recognized as a medium for sustaining cultural identity in pluralist societies (Yang, 2024).

In education, scholars argue that indigenous narratives foster moral imagination, empathy, and intercultural understanding (Delos Reyes, 2016; Gay, 2010; Iseke, 2013). While these works affirm the pedagogical value of indigenous traditions, they seldom examine specific moral codes such as *paniyaw* in depth. Meanwhile, broader studies on local autonomy and cultural education highlight the potential of embedding traditional values in policy and curriculum design (Warjiyati,

Salam, Sybelle, Fida, & Ridwan, 2023; Zhang & Zhou, 2025; Xi'an Jiaotong University, 2025). These perspectives support the idea that *paniyaw*, transmitted through literature, can contribute not only to cultural continuity but also to contemporary educational frameworks that strengthen community-based governance and ethical responsibility.

In sum, the literature affirms the relevance of indigenous knowledge in education, ecological stewardship, and cultural continuity but leaves a clear gap: how *paniyaw*, as reflected in Kalinga folktales, functions both as a cultural symbol and a moral compass. This study addresses that gap by analyzing *paniyaw*'s literary representations and exploring their role in indigenous moral formation, thereby contributing to broader global discourses on cultural identity, local governance, and sustainable education.

3 Research
PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE STUDY

This section of the study presents selected Kalinga literary works specifically folktales and legends that feature the presence of *paniyaw*. Each text was carefully examined and interpreted in alignment with the study's objectives, focusing on the manifestations, functions, and cultural significance of *paniyaw* within the narrative structures and thematic frameworks of the stories.

Ikalinga literary pieces particularly legends and folktales that contain representations of *paniyaw*.

A. Folktales- "Folktales are prose narratives that are regarded as fiction. They are not believed to be true by the people who tell them and are not attached to a specific time or place."– Bascom, W. R. (1965). These are traditional narratives passed down orally through generations, often involving imaginary characters such as animals, fairies, or talking objects, and typically conveying cultural values, morals, or lessons.

The Wrath of the River: A Tale from Pangol

By: Vicente Bentican

*Long, long ago, in the peaceful village of **Pangol**, two young boys set off one bright morning to fish in the **Donglayan River**. Back in those days, the river teemed with fish, especially the fat and glimmering **bangtat**, prized by the villagers for their abundance and flavor. The boys, full of excitement, cast their nets and soon pulled in a great catch. Laughter echoed across the water as they played by the riverbanks, their baskets growing heavy with fish.*

When the sun rose high and their stomachs began to grumble, they decided to take a break. They climbed onto a large, flat rock that jutted out near the river's edge. There, they planned to divide the fish before heading home.

*The older boy, tall and proud, stood up and said with authority, **"Let me do the dividing. I'm the bigger one."***

*With a mischievous glint in his eyes, the elder brother began sorting the fish, giving them names of his own. **"Kuwam nin lidliddoman" (You'll get the lid-lid-doman),** he said mockingly, tossing a duller-looking fish aside, **"Kuwak nin bukbukkakan" (and I'll take the buk-buk-kakan),** grabbing the shiniest checkered ones for himself.*

Little did they know, the names he gave were not just nonsense they were insults, made up to mock the appearance of the fish. What they didn't realize was

that in their laughter and greed, they had offended something greater than themselves.
Suddenly, the clear blue sky turned a ghostly gray. A fierce wind howled through the trees. The birds scattered in panic. Then, the earth groaned a deep, low rumble and began to tremble beneath them. The once-calm river churned with rage. Nature had awakened, angry at the boys who had mocked its sacred creations.
Terrified, the boys jumped to their feet and fled in opposite directions one running upstream, the other downstream. But as they ran, something strange happened. Each time they stepped on a rock, their feet sank as if the stone had turned to wet clay. The river was swallowing their path.

In desperation, they turned back toward each other, their breaths short and panicked. Just as they reached the center of the rock where they had once sat, the ground gave way. The rock cracked open like the mouth of the earth itself, and a powerful force pulled them into a dark, gaping cave. The river calmed. The wind died. The silence that followed was as chilling as the storm before it.

To this day, if you walk along the Donglayan River, you can still see the cave and the faint impressions of the boys' footprints on the rocks. The villagers say they remain as a warning a reminder that nature is alive, that every creature has a spirit, and that respect must always be shown to the world around us.

Paniyaw: The children's act of mocking the fish by laughing and naming them is considered deeply disrespectful, as fishes are seen not just as animals but as essential food sources.

Consequence: Nature revenged. There was darkness all over the world followed by a strong wind and strong earthquake until the two boys were consumed by the earth.

> *With a mischievous glint in his eyes, the elder brother began sorting the fish, giving them names of his own.* ***"Kuwam nin lidliddoman"(You'll get the lid-lid-doman),*** *he said mockingly, tossing a duller-looking fish aside,*
> ***"Kuwak nin bukbukkakan" (and I'll take the buk-buk-kakan),*** *grabbing the shiniest checkered ones for himself.*

In an interview with Informant 7, a cultural bearer and elder from the Kalinga community, he shared a vivid personal experience related to the traditional practice known as *liblibo*—a ritual act of playfully mocking or making fun of animals, to invoke rain during times of severe drought. This indigenous ritual, while seemingly humorous on the surface, reflects the deep interconnection between humans and the natural world in the Ikalinga worldview.

According to Informant 7, during a particularly harsh dry season in his youth, when their crops had withered and the community faced the possibility of food scarcity, the elders and children turned to *liblibo*. They caught a frog, mimicked its croaking, and jestingly urged it to "call the rain." To their astonishment, within a few minutes, a strong gust of wind swept through the area, followed by heavy rainfall. This event, witnessed by many, reinforced their belief in the efficacy of *liblibo*. For the young people at the time, the experience was transformative, deepening their faith in the ancestral practices and confirming that nature responds when respected, invoked, and even humorously entreated.

This story exemplifies how even playful indigenous practices are underpinned by a serious understanding of ecological balance and spiritual

reciprocity. While *liblibo* may appear superstitious from a modern perspective, it embodies a relational way of knowing rooted in the belief that animals, weather, and humans are bound by mutual communication and spiritual agreements. Within the context of *paniyaw*, it reflects an indirect moral lesson: that nature must not be taken for granted, and that invoking its forces requires a blend of humility, respect, and cultural wisdom. The success of *liblibo* in this case reinforced a collective moral imagination that remains part of the iKalinga's indigenous ecological ethics.

Symbolic and cultural representations of *paniyaw* found within this text

In this tale, the river's destructive outburst is not random; it symbolizes the violation of *paniyaw* a spiritual taboo based on the Ikalinga belief in nature's sacredness. The children's act of mocking the fish by laughing and naming them is considered deeply disrespectful, as fishes are seen not just as animals but as essential food sources. In Kalinga tradition, it is taboo to ridicule animals intended for human consumption, as such behavior signifies arrogance and a lack of gratitude for nature's provisions. The river, portrayed as a spiritual enforcer, punishes this act to restore moral and cosmic balance. This reflects the animistic and ecological spirituality in Kalinga culture, where rivers and other natural entities are believed to be capable of responding to moral failings (Pannogan, 2015; Yu & De Catalina, 2022).

Cultural values embedded in *paniyaw* as portrayed in the narrative

The story underscores core cultural values such as **respect for nature**, **humility**, and **communal accountability**. The act of mocking the fish breaches a cultural code that demands reverence for one's food sources and gratitude toward nature. The narrative's outcome communal suffering demonstrates that violations of *paniyaw* affect not only the individual but the entire community. This communicates the Ikalinga value of **shared moral responsibility**, where each member is accountable for upholding spiritual and cultural harmony. It also reinforces the idea that ancestral teachings are not just symbolic but deeply connected to social order and ecological balance (Ladip-Ladwingon, 2018; Pannogan, 2015).

The role of *paniyaw* in shaping the moral and ethical principles of the Ikalinga community

Within the Ikalinga moral system, *paniyaw* serves as a crucial ethical mechanism. It guides behavior by instilling a sense of reverence and caution when interacting with the natural world. In this tale, the punishment resulting from a seemingly harmless act laughing at fish teaches that even small breaches of respect can have large-scale consequences. This instills a cultural ethic of **mindfulness, restraint, and humility**, ensuring that people do not take nature's gifts for granted. *Paniyaw* functions not only as a set of prohibitions but also as a **spiritual framework** for promoting sustainable living and intergenerational continuity of moral values (Yu & De Catalina, 2022; Herald Express, 2022).

The tale of the river's destructive rage illustrates *paniyaw* as a spiritual and ecological boundary specifically the violation of respect toward food-bearing animals and the sacredness of rivers. In Kalinga belief, animals such as fish are not merely resources; they are imbued with spiritual meaning and ancestral blessings. To mock or ridicule them, especially those intended for sustenance, is to violate the unseen moral code of gratitude and humility. As Yu and De Catalina (2022) explain, indigenous Cordilleran cosmologies uphold that nature has memory and agency it

"hears" transgressions and acts as an enforcer of cosmic justice. The children's laughter, seemingly innocent, becomes a symbol of arrogance, prompting the river to retaliate as a moral and spiritual force.

This view finds echoes in the **Ifugao and Bontoc** traditions, where rivers (*waang*) are believed to house ancestral spirits or serve as paths of the soul. In these traditions, throwing garbage or mocking creatures found in rivers especially eels, frogs, or fish is considered taboo. Violations are believed to bring misfortune, sickness, or floods, as these waters are not just natural bodies but spiritual domains (Dulawan, 2001; Baguilat, 2004). Similarly, in **Tagalog and Kapampangan** folk beliefs, certain river spirits (*engkanto* or *diwata*) are thought to dwell in freshwater bodies. Provoking or disrespecting animals in or near these rivers, especially by laughing at them or catching them disrespectfully, is believed to incur the spirits' wrath causing drownings, hauntings, or unexplained illness (Demetrio, 1991).

Among the **Lumad** communities of Mindanao, particularly the **Manobo** and **Subanen**, rivers are seen as **sacred corridors** where nature communicates with humanity. Rituals are often held to ask permission before fishing, and children are taught not to mock or mishandle fish, as these actions are believed to offend the spirit guardians (*tagbanua* or *diwata*) who may respond with calamities like strong currents or lost catches (Lemana, 2016). These beliefs function as unwritten ecological laws ensuring respectful interaction with the environment.

Beyond local contexts, this notion of rivers as **moral and spiritual enforcers** exists in many indigenous cultures around the world. For instance, in **Hinduism**, the Ganges River is personified as a goddess (*Ganga*) whose waters are purifying but also capable of destruction if disrespected. In **Maori cosmology** of New Zealand, rivers are treated as *tupuna* (ancestors) and granted legal personhood recognizing their moral standing and spiritual authority (Charpleix, 2018).

These cultural perspectives align with **animistic ecological ethics**, where nature is not passive but inherently alive, responsive, and morally structured. This concept is central to Kalinga worldview: the river does not destroy arbitrarily it corrects an imbalance. As Pannogan (2015) notes, Kalinga tales often feature nature as a moral actor, punishing human arrogance and rewarding reverence. This reinforces *paniyaw* as both a spiritual taboo and an **ecological principle** one that regulates behavior through fear of supernatural consequence, ensuring sustainable and respectful coexistence with the environment.

DUMIGAY

By: Sylvia P. Boacon

Once there lived a family, father, Dumigay who was the father's daughter with his first wife, and two younger sisters from the second marriage of the father.

Dumigay was a very good child. She never disobeyed her parents. She was kind-hearted and hardworking, too. Her sisters were always commanding her to do errands for them. She did all without complaining.

One day, she went to the river to wash dishes and kettles. She removed all the food particles and placed them on the sand at her feet. While washing, she observed a big eel stilly eating the food particles. She kept quiet so as not to drive the eel away. The following day, she went back to the river to wash kettles with more food remnants to feed the big eel. She did this every day until her father had observed that Dumigay had made it a practice to stay longer and longer in the river.

One day, her father and sisters followed her to the river. They hid behind the bushes and saw Dumigay talking to a big eel. They made a plan. The following day,

Dumigay's father gave her work in the house to delay her going to the river. He and some men went to the river to catch the eel.

She went to the river after her work at home but did not see her friend eel. She called and called but no eel came up. She went home very sad. When she saw the food served, she was shocked because she knew that it was her friend eel.

She ran to the river and wept for her friend. As she was weeping on top of a rock, a fairy appeared and asked, "What's wrong Dumigay?" "I want to die, my father killed my friend, the eel and cooked it for food." As soon as she had uttered the words, the rock opened and swallowed Dumigay.

Her father who followed her saw what happened and pleaded to the stone to stop swallowing her daughter Dumigay. The stone stopped swallowing Dumigay whose head was still above the stone.

Until this time, the stone with a man's head formed on top is still seen in Mangali, Tanudan, Kalinga.

Paniyaw: Taming the eel and interacting with it as if it were a human such as speaking to it.
Consequence: Nature Revenge. The rock opened and swallowed Dumigay.

She went to the river after her work at home but did not see her friend eel. She called and called but no eel came up. She went home very sad.

She ran to the river and wept for her friend. As she was weeping on top of a rock, a fairy appeared and asked, "What's wrong Dumigay?" "I want to die, my father killed my friend, the eel and cooked it for food."

Elder informants 4 and 5 strongly affirmed that treating animals as though they were human is considered a serious form of *paniyaw* within iKalinga belief. They explained that, according to ancestral teachings, animals were created by Kabuniyan primarily as a source of food and sustenance for humans not to be elevated to the status of human companions or children. Violating this natural order, they believe, disrupts the spiritual balance intended by the Creator.

Informant 6 shared a striking personal account involving a married couple who had been childless for nearly ten years. The couple, he observed, treated their pet dog as their own child allowing it to sleep in their bed, speaking to it as they would a human, and giving it parental affection. Believing this behavior to be a direct violation of *paniyaw*, Informant 6 advised them to stop such treatment, warning that their excessive attachment to the dog might be blocking their blessings, particularly the gift of a child. Despite his advice, the couple continued with the practice, and as of the time of the interview, they remained childless.

This narrative reflects a culturally embedded warning that certain behaviors, especially those that invert the natural roles assigned by tradition, may carry spiritual consequences. It reinforces the belief that blessings such as fertility are not only biological but spiritual in nature and can be withheld when *paniyaw* is committed. In this context, *paniyaw* serves as both a moral guideline and a cosmological explanation for misfortune, illustrating how deeply indigenous ethics are intertwined with daily behavior and belief.

Symbolic and cultural representations of *paniyaw* found within this text.

In the story of *Dumigay*, the central *paniyaw* is the act of forming a human-like relationship with an animal that is culturally designated as food. For the Ikalinga, it is a spiritual taboo to treat animals especially those like eels, which are meant for sustenance as human companions. This belief is rooted in the cultural understanding that all creatures have a divinely assigned purpose, and to blur the boundaries between human and animal roles is to disrupt the sacred order of creation. Dumigay's sincere affection for the eel, though seemingly virtuous, becomes a transgression because it misplaces human emotion onto a being whose spiritual and ecological function lies elsewhere.

Her punishment being swallowed by a rock, a spiritually potent element in Ikalinga landscapes reflects nature's role as an enforcer of balance. Yet, the rock only partially consumes her, sparing her head. This image suggests that Dumigay's intentions were innocent, but her actions still required correction. As Yu and De Catalina (2022) explain, indigenous symbolic actions often serve to realign spiritual imbalance, even when caused by ignorance or excessive emotion. The story teaches that *paniyaw* can be violated not just through harm or disrespect, but through excessive familiarity or misplaced affection that distorts natural roles.

This complexity reveals that *paniyaw* is not merely a system of prohibitions but a worldview where each being must be respected **as they are**, not transformed into something they are not. It reinforces the idea that nature is sacred not because it should be romanticized, but because its design must be honored.

Cultural values embedded in *paniyaw* as portrayed in the narrative

The narrative conveys profound cultural values such as **respect for natural roles**, **emotional restraint**, and **conformity to ancestral wisdom**. Dumigay's story underscores the belief that even well-meaning actions can have unintended consequences when they go against the moral and ecological order embedded in traditional knowledge. Her relationship with the eel, while rooted in compassion, violates the value of **proper relational boundaries**, which are essential to maintaining harmony between humans, animals, and spirits. This reflects the Ikalinga worldview where emotional actions must always be guided by cultural teachings. As Pannogan (2015) emphasizes, Ikalinga values are not solely concerned with intention but with alignment to spiritual norms. The tale, therefore, functions as both a cautionary story and a moral reminder: one must not impose human values on animals whose place in the world has already been spiritually determined. Such misplaced familiarity is seen not as love, but as a form of cultural and spiritual imbalance.

Ultimately, *paniyaw* here teaches the necessity of **cultural boundaries and ecological wisdom**, promoting a respectful distance between the sacredness of nature and the intimacy of human emotion. The story honors Dumigay's character, but it also affirms that morality is rooted not just in goodness, but in cultural discernment.

The role of *paniyaw* in shaping the moral and ethical principles of the iKalinga community.

In the tale of *Dumigay*, *paniyaw* functions not just as a cultural rule, but as a moral compass rooted in ecological and spiritual balance. It shapes ethical behavior by teaching the Ikalinga community that goodness is not defined by intention alone but by adherence to ancestral knowledge and the rightful place of all beings in the cosmic order. Dumigay's emotional attachment to the eel, though kind-hearted,

violates a deeply held belief that animals especially those intended for food must not be treated as humans. Her punishment serves as a cautionary lesson that moral errors can arise from actions that disregard these inherited principles, even if no harm was meant.

This reflects a core function of *paniyaw*: to instill a disciplined morality that emphasizes cultural discernment over emotional impulse. In indigenous ethical systems like that of the Ikalinga, spiritual laws are not abstract but lived governing how people relate to nature, animals, and the unseen world. As emphasized by Pannogan (2015), moral development within the community is closely tied to observing these boundaries, which maintain harmony between humans and the spiritual environment.

Dumigay's transformation and partial absorption into the stone dramatize the process of moral correction, illustrating how spiritual laws respond not to punish maliciousness, but to restore equilibrium when it is disrupted.

Thus, *paniyaw* in this story educates the community by reinforcing the idea that ethical living requires humility before the wisdom of the ancestors, respect for the sacred roles of all beings, and obedience to inherited boundaries. It affirms that moral and spiritual growth involves more than just good intentions it demands cultural fidelity and ecological awareness.

In contrast to the Ikalinga concept of *paniyaw*, where treating animals meant for sustenance as human-like beings is a spiritual transgression, contemporary societies particularly in urban, Westernized contexts exhibit a growing tendency to anthropomorphize pets such as dogs and cats. Scholars refer to this phenomenon as *pet humanization*, a trend marked by attributing human emotions, social roles, and even legal rights to animals (Irvine, 2013; Serpell, 2003).

According to Charles and Davies (2008), this shift reflects a broader emotional turn in modern pet-keeping practices, where animals are no longer valued solely for their utility but for their perceived companionship and psychological support. Pets today are often seen as "fur babies," members of the family whose birthdays are celebrated, whose emotions are interpreted in human terms, and who are provided with products and services previously reserved for humans such as pet insurance, gourmet food, and therapy.

This inversion of the paniyaw observed in *Dumigay* reveals a significant cultural divergence: whereas the Ikalinga perceive the humanization of animals as a disruption of cosmic order, modern societies often regard such emotional transference as a moral good or therapeutic necessity. Yet, scholars like Haraway (2008) caution that such anthropomorphism may obscure the animal's own being and purpose, effectively projecting human desires onto non-human entities without regard for their species-specific needs or ecological roles.

Moreover, the moral reconfiguration of animals from food to friend is evident in studies that show a decline in meat consumption linked to emotional relationships with animals (Rothgerber, 2013). The eel in *Dumigay* is a stark counter-symbol to this modern sentimentality. In traditional Ikalinga cosmology, every creature has a divinely appointed role eels are meant for sustenance, not sentiment. Dumigay's affection, though tender, becomes a form of spiritual disorder because it confuses the categories that maintain cosmic harmony.

Thus, the modern trend of humanizing pets, while rooted in compassion, can be read through the lens of *paniyaw* as a cautionary reflection: when the sacred distinctions between human and animal roles are blurred, either through over-

attachment or misplaced reverence, deeper ontological and ecological tensions may arise.

BANNA BECOMES A PYTHON

*This is the story of **Banna**, a brave young man from Dulawon, and his adventure in courting **Laggunawa**, a maiden from the village of Magobya.*
*Despite the warnings of his father, **Dulliyaw**, Banna set out on his journey and passed by **Lamagan Gowa**, a known resting place near their village. Dulliyaw had warned him never to disturb anything in that sacred area. But drawn by the beauty of a striking bamboo stalk, Banna ignored the advice and cut it down.*
The moment he did, blood splattered onto his feet.

*Suddenly, Banna began to transform his body lengthening and twisting until he became a **python**. The cutting of the bamboo and the sudden transformation into a python reflects the concept of paniyaw, or taboo violation, which results in a supernatural punishment. In indigenous belief, sacred places like Lamagan Gowa are inhabited or protected by spirits, and desecrating them invites a curse. Word of Banna's fate reached Laggunawa in Magobya. She made the long journey to Dulawon to see him, hoping to find a way to lift the curse. But when she arrived, it was too late. The transformation was irreversible.*

*Three months passed. Banna, now a full python, left Dulawon and traveled far from home. He arrived at the home of a giant named **Gittam**. In a fierce battle, the python killed Gittam and swallowed all the gold he could find.*
The python's journey and conquest of Gittam may symbolize a spiritual trial or rite of passage. Slaying a giant is a common folkloric motif that establishes the hero's transformation from human to more-than-human.

*From there, Banna slithered toward the distant village of **Manila**, where he rested beside a **betel tree**. One day, **Dungdungan**, a local from Manila, climbed the tree to harvest betel leaves. As Dungdungan descended, Python-Banna waited below, preparing to devour him. Dungdungan pleaded for his life, offering his gold in exchange for mercy. But the python refused. He was no longer driven by material wants only hunger. In desperation, Dungdungan chewed betel nut and spat on the python.*

*To his astonishment, the **head of Banna emerged** from the serpent's form. In a weakened voice, Banna asked Dungdungan to **spit on him again**. Dungdungan did as he was told, and with each betel-laced spit, Banna slowly regained his human form. The betel nut (moma) is not only a social symbol in indigenous communities but also a ritual element. In this case, it acts as a spiritual cleanser or paniyaw-breaker an offering that restores balance and reverses the curse.*

*Now restored, the two men introduced themselves to one another. Dungdungan brought Banna to his home, where his father immediately recognized the young man from Dulawon. The elder then told Banna the sad news: **Laggunawa** had returned to Magobya in grief, believing him lost forever. Banna was overcome with sorrow. Seeing his pain, Dungdungan's mother urged her son to accompany Banna back to Dulawon. Upon their return, the people of Dulawon welcomed Banna with joy and celebration. Word was sent to Magobya, and soon **Laggunawa** returned as well. There, in Dulawon, the hero and heroine were finally reunited.*
They were married in a joyous ceremony, and thus ends the tale of Banna.

Paniyaw: Cutting the sacred bamboo, despite his father's warning, constitutes a

violation of ancestral guidance and spiritual prohibition.

Consequence: Banna was deeply wounded and became a python and suffered the experience of scrolling

Experience hardships and obstacles that hinder success in life

Suffer illness, which may lead to death

*Despite the warnings of his father, **Dulliyaw**, Banna set out on his journey and passed by **Lamagan Gowa**, a known resting place near their village. Dulliyaw had warned him never to disturb anything in that sacred area. But drawn by the beauty of a striking bamboo stalk, Banna ignored the advice and cut it down.*

The moment he did, blood splattered onto his feet.

obedience to their

parents was rooted in a deep sense of fear and respect. They emphasized that disobeying parental advice especially when something was declared as *paniyaw* was simply unthinkable. As one common sentiment expressed: *"When our parents said not to do something because it was paniyaw, we obeyed without question. We knew there would be consequences if we disobeyed."*

Beyond personal misfortune, they shared that disobedience would not go unnoticed within the community. A child who defied parental guidance would often become the subject of gossip or judgment among fellow tribe members. This social pressure, combined with spiritual fear, reinforced the importance of obedience not merely as a family expectation, but as a communal and moral responsibility deeply intertwined with cultural beliefs.

Symbolic and cultural representations of *paniyaw* found within this text

The moment Banna cuts the bamboo at **Lamagan Gowa** despite his father's warning marks a clear violation of *paniyaw*, a sacred prohibition against disturbing spiritually charged spaces or objects. In Kalinga belief, certain natural places such as bamboo groves, springs, and stones are taboo if they are connected with spirits or ancestral memory. The blood that stains Banna's feet symbolizes the **spiritual wound** inflicted on the sacred space, which then retaliates by transforming him into a python. The transformation itself is symbolic: the python, a creature both feared and revered, becomes an embodiment of punishment, liminality, and a reminder of spiritual transgression. As with many indigenous cosmologies, this punishment does not come from a deity in abstraction, but from nature as an active moral force (Ladip-Ladwingon, 2018; Pannogan, 2015).

In an interview with informant 1, a respected cultural bearer and researcher, he emphasized that even acts such as contaminating a water source by leaving human waste in a communal drinking area are considered *paniyaw*. Such a place is vital to the community's well-being and survival, and violating its sanctity invites misfortune upon the offender. He further shared that there was an instance where a peace pact (*bodong*) between two tribes was broken because one tribe deliberately defiled the other tribe's drinking water source with human waste, an act viewed as a grave offense under the principles of *paniyaw*.

Cultural values embedded in *paniyaw* as portrayed in the narrative

This tale embeds values such as **obedience to elders**, **reverence for sacred sites**, and **acceptance of spiritual consequence**. Banna's disobedience reflects

youthful impulsiveness, while his transformation teaches the need for **humility** before ancestral warnings. His journey from transgressor to savior (defeating Gitam and recovering gold) shows the possibility of redemption and the reintegration of someone who has learned from spiritual error. The *paniyaw* in this context is not only a punitive force but a **cultural checkpoint** that tests one's maturity, discipline, and readiness for leadership. This mirrors the moral trajectory found in many Cordilleran narratives where the hero must pass through **moral crisis** to fulfill their role in society (Yu & De Catalina, 2022; Herald Express, 2022).

The role of *paniyaw* in shaping the moral and ethical principles of the Ikalinga community

Paniyaw in this story serves as a **transformative spiritual law** that redirects moral failures into teachable moments. Banna's experience reinforces to the Ikalinga community that ethical life includes deference to wisdom, especially regarding the spiritual boundaries set by ancestors. The narrative communicates that **wrongdoing against sacred nature is not just an environmental offense, but a moral and social one** affecting identity, kinship ties, and community status. Redemption is only made possible through acknowledgment of the wrongdoing (as shown in Banna's emotional response and eventual reunion with Laggunawa), which reflects the community's emphasis on **reconciliation and moral growth**. This aligns with the indigenous pedagogical function of folktales, which serve as vital tools for cultivating ethical reasoning and spiritual maturity within the community (Pannogan, 2015; Yu & De Catalina, 2022). In the same vein, Demetrio (1991) explains that metamorphosis in folklore operates as a form of symbolic pedagogy imparting moral lessons through irreversible, often tragic transformations that highlight the severity of moral and spiritual transgressions. Banna's transformation, therefore, stands as a living embodiment of *paniyaw*, instilling cautionary ethics into the collective consciousness of the people.

The story of *Banna Becomes a Python* highlights a deeply held Ikalinga belief: that certain element of the natural world bamboo groves, springs, and stones are not merely physical features of the environment but sacred spaces infused with ancestral memory and spiritual presence. In this worldview, to violate these spaces, especially against cultural warnings, is to commit a spiritual transgression or *paniyaw*. The punishment Banna receives is not imposed by an external deity but arises from nature itself, which acts as a moral force guarding its sacred order. This belief resonates across various indigenous and traditional cultures where nature, and particularly plants, are treated as sentient, sacred, and morally consequential beings.

In **Balinese Hindu culture**, bamboo and sacred trees are considered dwelling places of spiritual entities known as *hyangs*. Communities perform daily offerings and prayers before entering or harvesting from these areas. Cutting bamboo or trees in sacred groves without ritual permission is believed to invite misfortune or spiritual illness (Lansing, 2006). Like the blood that stains Banna's feet, any harm done to spiritually charged plants in Bali is seen as a rupture in the moral fabric of the world—a wound that nature will inevitably answer.

Among the **Dai people of Yunnan, China**, bamboo is likewise treated as a sacred organism, protected by taboos passed down through generations. Groves tied to the memory of ancestors or inhabited by spirits are never disturbed. Those who violate these taboos are believed to suffer illness or social disorder, as nature retaliates to reassert balance (Xu & Grumbine, 2014). This view parallels the Kalinga belief that spiritual and ecological laws are intertwined, and that crossing

them leads not just to individual punishment, but to a disruption of communal harmony.

In the **Amazon**, indigenous groups such as the **Kichwa** and **Shipibo** regard plants as living beings with spirits, personalities, and moral agency. Before harvesting medicinal plants or sacred trees, individuals seek permission through songs, rituals, and offerings. Disrespecting a plant's spirit can result in dreams, sickness, or spiritual confusion nature's way of communicating offense (Narby, 1998). This mirrors the transformation of Banna into a python a creature feared and revered symbolizing both punishment and a liminal return to the sacred natural order.

Even within the **Ifugao** communities of the northern Philippines, whose cultural landscape and cosmology are closely related to the Kalinga, forest areas governed by the *muyong* system are protected by both ecological knowledge and spiritual law. Certain groves, especially those with bamboo and hardwood trees, are seen as the abodes of *tinmamaan* (spirits). Cutting these without proper rituals can result in spiritual affliction or misfortune (Acabado, 2015). Like Banna's fate, these consequences are not arbitrary they serve as reminders of the sacred contract between humans and nature.

In all these cases, plants especially bamboo are more than useful materials; they are symbols of a living cosmology that demands respect, caution, and moral discernment. The story of Banna is thus not just a local tale of transformation, but part of a larger indigenous worldview shared across cultures: one in which nature actively responds to human morality, and where violating the spiritual integrity of the land carries deep and lasting consequences.

Thematic and Symbolic Analysis: *Banna Becomes a Python*

The folktale *"Banna Becomes a Python"* illustrates core elements of Kalinga cosmology, particularly the indigenous concept of *paniyaw* a violation of sacred or taboo space and its moral and spiritual consequences. At the center of the narrative is the young hero Banna, whose disobedience toward ancestral warnings results in his transformation into a python, symbolizing the embodiment of punishment and spiritual imbalance.

Banna's act of cutting bamboo in *Lamagan Gowa*, a resting place marked by spiritual significance, reflects the crossing of a forbidden boundary. In many indigenous Philippine belief systems, natural landmarks are inhabited by spirits or ancestors. His father's warning against disturbing the site parallels traditional values of obedience to elders, reverence for nature, and recognition of invisible spiritual forces. Banna's transformation into a serpent represents not merely physical punishment but a deeper ontological shift he has moved from the world of humans into that of spirits and symbols.

The journey of Banna as a python, including his slaying of the giant Gittam and accumulation of gold, suggests a heroic quest distorted by his cursed form. However, it is not power or wealth that redeems him, but the humble, ritualistic use of **betel nut (moma)**. In Kalinga culture, betel chewing is a sacred act used in offerings, agreements, and social or spiritual reconciliation. Dungdungan's act of chewing and spitting betel nut on the python functions as a ritual of *healing and restoration*, breaking the curse and allowing Banna to reemerge as human.

This folktale teaches moral lessons at several levels:

- **Obedience to ancestral and spiritual warnings**
- **Respect for sacred spaces**

- **The redemptive power of humility and community aid**
- **The restorative role of indigenous ritual practices**

Ultimately, Banna's return to human form and his reunion with Laggunawa symbolize the community's restored harmony. The celebratory ending emphasizes cultural values of reconciliation, belonging, and the triumph of spiritual humility over prideful disobedience.

B. **Legends** – "Legends are prose narratives which, like folktales, are regarded as traditional, but they are believed to be true by the narrator and audience. They are usually set in the recent past and are rooted in specific places and times." Bascom, W. R. (1965). These are traditional stories sometimes popularly regarded as historical but unauthenticated. Unlike folktales, legends are often associated with specific historical figures, locations, or events and are considered to have a basis in real occurrences, even if they are exaggerated or fictionalized.

THE EVERLASTING SPRING

Many years after the terrible "Litap" (flood), Kabonyan in the guise of a tall, strong and charismatic young warrior, visited the earth. As a total stranger who refused to reveal who he was, he went on foot from place to place. He was admired for His apparent bravery, charisma and wisdom. He was respected and admired as a guest everywhere he went. At last the unknown guest from the sky world, reached Galdang where he was warmly received. But he did not like to drink the water served to him after meals because it smelled of sulphur.

On the third day the unknown guest was leaving the village. He felt so thirsty that he wanted to drink. He looked around and saw the bare rocky mountain near the village. A narrow trail was hewn across the base of the rocky mountain. As he was leaving the village some admiring maidens and young men were escorting him to manifest their respect and gesture of good will to their guest. Upon reaching the narrow trail at the base of the bare mountain, he struck the rock with the tip of his spear. To the consternation of the maidens and some young men around him, a man's thigh of clear water gushed out from the rock. Its rippling was so loud that the village folks rushed to the spot to find out what the sound was. With his hands, the guest scooped some of the clear and fresh water and drank to quench his thirst. Then he spoke to the village folks in this manner:

"Because you have no good water to drink and you been good so respectful and kind to me, I am now giving you an everlasting spring of pure water for you and your children."

After speaking, the unknown guest disappeared. The folks looked all around for their guest in vain. Some went on the hilltops to view the surrounding places but they saw their guest no more. Among the bystanders so amazed with the gushing clear water from the rock was Palayan, a wise old man who related many things that happened in the past. He told the younger folks not to look for the guest anymore. "Who else can strike this huge rock and let this gushing water come out from it?" It is only Kabuniyan who can do this. So, our unknown guest visitor is Kabuniyan. He went up to the sky". The wise old Palayan told the younger folks to call for the "Mandadawak", get a pig and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to kabuniyan, there was rejoicing overnight in the village.

This story is a legend about the origin of an everlasting spring in the village of Galdang, believed to have been a divine gift from Kabunyan, a powerful spirit from the sky world. Disguised as a brave and charismatic warrior, Kabunyan journeyed

through villages after the great flood, testing the kindness of people until he reached Galdang, where he was warmly welcomed. As a reward for their hospitality, he struck a barren rock with his spear, causing clear water to gush forth a spring that still flows today leaving behind a sacred reminder of the gods' presence and the value of goodness and respect among people.

Paniyaw: Obedience and kindness prevent paniyaw; divine reward follows.
Consequence: The people were granted an everlasting spring of pure water, providing sustenance for their community and for generations to come

> *"Because you have no good water to drink and you been good, so respectful and kind to me, I am now giving you an everlasting spring of pure water for you and your children."*

The researcher, being a native of Kalinga, continues to practice the deeply rooted value of hospitality a trait passed down through generations and still widely observed among the Ikalinga people today. This value, instilled by elders as part of the community's lived tradition, remains vibrant in daily interactions.

Visitors from outside the region often express their admiration, noting how heartwarming (*nakakatuwa*) it is to experience such genuine hospitality in Kalinga barrios. It is customary for residents to welcome guests with coffee or a shared meal, freely offered without expectation of payment. Even lodging is generously provided in simple homes, regardless of kinship ties, as a gesture of respect and honor to anyone who enters their community.

This enduring practice reflects the same spirit of hospitality portrayed in traditional Kalinga narratives where strangers are welcomed with kindness, generosity, and sincere regard. Such cultural consistency affirms that the values expressed in the folktales remain alive today, embodied not only in oral literature but in the lived experiences and social behavior of the Ikalinga people.

Symbolic and cultural representations of *paniyaw* found within this text.

In *The Everlasting Spring*, *paniyaw* is indirectly illustrated through its opposite *obedience* to sacred laws and the proper treatment of strangers, who may embody spiritual beings in disguise. While there is no explicit transgression in this tale, the *potential* for *paniyaw* is embedded in the narrative test: had the villagers of Galdang acted with hostility or indifference, they would have violated a sacred expectation of hospitality, resulting in divine disfavor.

Instead, by offering kindness to a stranger, they avoid the *paniyaw* of inhospitality a sin viewed seriously in many indigenous traditions, where strangers may represent deities or spirits (Salvador-Amores, 2018). Kabunyan's action revealing himself and rewarding the people represents the spiritual affirmation of their behavior. The spring becomes a **symbolic reversal of *paniyaw***: it is a sacred blessing that marks obedience, respect, and divine recognition.

Cultural values embedded in *paniyaw* as portrayed in the narrative.

The story reflects core Ikalinga values such as **hospitality, humility, and respect for others, especially the unknown**. By warmly receiving Kabunyan, the people of Galdang affirm a moral code based on generosity and kindness, which are

understood in indigenous cosmologies as reciprocal virtues treat others well, and the spirit world will treat you well in return (Dumia, 2012).
Embedded here is the value of **"panagkadua"** or communal interconnectedness a belief that the divine interacts with humans through everyday relationships and moral choices. The fact that the villagers did not recognize Kabunyan but welcomed him anyway shows an underlying ethic: that **respect is not conditional**, but a deeply held community standard. The spring becomes a physical representation of these values, enshrining the moral lesson in the landscape itself.

The role of *paniyaw* in shaping the moral and ethical principles of the iKalinga community

In this legend, *paniyaw* plays a **preventative and moral-shaping role**. While no direct taboo is broken, the community's ethical restraint expressed through reverent and respectful behavior shows how *paniyaw* conditions people to act cautiously, always aware that the spiritual world may be watching or testing them. As suggested by Pannogan (2015), indigenous belief systems in Kalinga often teach morality by modeling right action in sacred narratives. The villagers' treatment of Kabunyan becomes a **template for moral conduct**, where ethical behavior is not just about law, but about **honoring unseen relationships**. The story reminds listeners that to live rightly is to be ever-mindful of the spiritual dimension in human interactions.

By rewarding good behavior with a life-sustaining spring, the narrative reinforces *paniyaw* not only as a deterrent against moral failure but as an **affirmation of ethical excellence**. It suggests that moral choices shape not only social harmony but also the community's material and spiritual well-being.

In this story, the villagers' moral action reflects a **deep cultural consciousness of paniyaw**, not through violation but through reverent obedience. That makes it a powerful example of how *paniyaw* also functions **proactively** in shaping ethical behavior, not just reactively through punishment.

In *The Everlasting Spring*, the Ikalinga worldview presents an implicit spiritual test: how one treats the unfamiliar, the outsider, the one who arrives without explanation. Although the tale avoids explicit transgression, it is clear that a moral boundary *paniyaw* looms quietly in the background. Had the villagers of Galdang ignored, rejected, or harmed the stranger, their actions would have constituted a deep spiritual offense. Instead, their kindness brings a blessing, and the spring that emerges becomes a symbol not only of divine generosity but also of moral success. This theme that strangers may be sacred and hospitality a test of spiritual integrity appears in many cultures across the world, including the Philippines.

Among the **Akan of Ghana**, hospitality is more than social etiquette; it is a moral obligation rooted in the belief that any visitor may be an emissary of the divine. According to traditional proverbs and oral stories, failing to welcome a stranger is believed to bring curses or spiritual imbalance, while kindness to guests ensures communal blessings (Gyekye, 1996). The Akan see in every stranger the possibility of a hidden deity or ancestral spirit, mirroring the Kalinga fear of committing *paniyaw* by neglecting sacred duties toward unknown visitors.

In **Bedouin culture** of the Middle East, hospitality (*diyafa*) is an uncompromising moral code. A stranger is to be protected, fed, and respected for at least three days, even before questions are asked. This ethic is partly spiritual, rooted in Islamic and pre-Islamic traditions that recognize guests as gifts from God or even tests of one's righteousness (Abu-Lughod, 1986). Just as the villagers in *The*

Everlasting Spring are rewarded by Kabunyan for their unprovoked generosity, Bedouin tales speak of guests who turn out to be angels or prophets in disguise.

In the **Philippines**, particularly in **Cordilleran indigenous groups** such as the Ifugao and Bontoc, hospitality is viewed as a cultural duty with spiritual undertones. Strangers are received not with suspicion but with precautionary respect, as they may be either messengers or vessels of unseen spiritual forces. Among the **Ifugao**, for example, failing to offer food or drink to a guest especially in times of ritual or agricultural festivals is believed to offend the spirits (*anito*) who may be watching or accompanying the traveler (Dumia, 1979). In these communities, generosity to the unfamiliar maintains not only social harmony but spiritual equilibrium. This belief reinforces the Kalinga understanding that kindness is never a neutral act it either honors or violates the moral structure of the cosmos.

In **Maori** culture of Aotearoa New Zealand, the concept of *manaakitanga* (hospitality and care for others) is deeply spiritual. Offering food, shelter, and kindness to guests especially strangers is believed to uphold the host's *mana* (spiritual authority, honor). To mistreat a visitor is to risk diminishing one's mana and to violate *tapu*, a sacred law (Mead, 2003). In many ways, this reflects the moral structure embedded in the Kalinga tale: the villagers' behavior affirms their collective worth in the eyes of Kabunyan and preserves the balance of sacred relationship between humans and the divine.

European folklore, such as from **Ireland and Scotland**, also tells of strangers who are denied food or shelter and later reveal themselves to be *aos sí* (fairies) or divine figures, punishing the household or village for their pride or inhospitality (Ó hÓgáin, 2006). These cautionary tales echo the same moral underpinning: kindness to the stranger is not only right it is spiritually required.

Across these traditions, hospitality is not merely a matter of custom but a sacred responsibility. What is consistent and profoundly resonant with the Kalinga idea of *paniyaw* is that to mistreat a stranger is to risk divine disfavor. What makes *The Everlasting Spring* distinctive is its quiet moral clarity: there is no threat, no punishment, only the possibility of transgression. The villagers' choice to offer kindness becomes a sacred act of obedience, and the spring that flows eternal is a testament to the blessing that follows when humans honor the divine, even in the unfamiliar.

The Origin of the Monkey

Once there was a family, a mother, a father and their five children. The mother is so lazy even before she gave birth. All the villagers are busy in their kaingin where the source of their livelihood come from. The father has the widest kaingin to clean that's why they have to work fast so they will not be left behind with the others. But before they started cutting the trees, the father reminded every member of the family to be careful and not to meet any untoward incident because if something happens, it is a bad omen.

The mother was so lazy, she doesn't like to work that's why their children keep on criticizing her. Some people witnessing how the children criticize their mother reminded them to stop and just be patient since the mother grown that way since birth. She does not used to work at all, but the children did not listen instead they continued teasing their mother. When the clearing of the kaingin was finished, the father instructed the children to go home and prepare the paalay for planting. When everything was prepared the father announced to the neighbours to help in the planting as they usually do bayanihan.

When they started planting, one of the children shouted their mother sarcastically "You be the one to go and cook our food since you are the fastest to move". The mother was pregnant so she can't move that fast. And because she was fed up of how the children treat her, she said at the pick of her voice, "You children, look at me now! This would be my end. I will become a monkey! You better keep watch of all your plants because I will eat them all together with my descendants". The mother got the "bin-iyan" and forcibly stuck to her butt and jumped on the extreme part of the kaingin.

After the planting season, the family went back to the village while waiting for the harvest season. When harvesting season was about to begin, one of the children visited their plantations in the kaingin and he observed some fruits and grains are being eaten and destroyed. He was so angry and so he shouted, "who are you creature who eats and destroy the fruits of our plants? He was so furious. Unexpectedly, he heard the voice saying, "I am the one, your mother, I told you so that I will become a monkey and eat all your plants as an avenge to your cruelty in treating me." Upon hearing this, the child cried and cried, he went home and related the story to his family. The other villagers went to visit also their plants and they found the same thing happened.

The last child did not accept what had happened to their mother and so he went to the kaingin and followed her mother, he wanted to become also a monkey and it was granted. Since then, monkeys were scattered all over the forests looking for food.

Paniyaw: By disregarding his father's warning and acting carelessly on the first day of kaingin a day regarded as spiritually sensitive

Cosequence: Getting injured during the first day of work in the kaingin and an indication that there will be a poor crop.

Paniyaw: In scolding and ridiculing their pregnant mother who, being unaccustomed to hard work, struggled with the demands of kaingin, the children violated a deep cultural value that honors maternal vulnerability and respect for elders.

Consequence: The mother was transformed into a monkey, leaving her children abandoned.

But before they started cutting the trees, the father reminded every member of the family to be careful and not to meet any untoward incident because if something happens, it is a bad omen.

The mother was so lazy, she doesn't like to work that's why their children keep on criticizing her. Some people witnessing how the children criticize their mother reminded them to stop and just be patient since the mother grown that way since birth. She does not used to work at all, but the children did not listen instead they continued teasing their mother.

A similar form of *paniyaw* was consistently shared by Informants 1, 2, 3, and 8 during their interviews. Recalling their childhood experiences, they noted that their elders would always caution them before harvesting rice in the fields. They were strictly advised to be vigilant and ensure that no one whether a passerby or even a member of the household should cross the rice dike of the field being harvested until the first bundles of palay (rice stalks) had been properly gathered and grouped (*uppon*).

According to their elders, violating this customary rule would invite misfortune: the harvested rice would diminish quickly, becoming insufficient to

sustain the family. This belief highlights the role of *paniyaw* in agricultural practices, where spiritual discipline and respect for ritual order are seen as crucial to ensuring abundance and food security.

More than a superstition, this practice illustrates a deep cultural logic rooted in both spiritual reverence and practical wisdom. It teaches the value of mindfulness during harvest a sacred time of gratitude and careful stewardship. In this way, *paniyaw* operates as a cultural safeguard, preserving not only spiritual harmony but also the communal welfare and sustainability of the household.

Symbolic and cultural representations of *paniyaw* found within this text

In this legend, *paniyaw* is symbolically represented through multiple violations of cultural and spiritual norms. The most prominent is the children's **disrespect and ridicule of their mother**, a pregnant woman, who embodies both **maternal authority** and **vulnerability**. In many Cordilleran societies, to **mock or shame a parent**, especially in public and during communal labor like *kaingin*, is a grave offense that disrupts not only familial harmony but also the spiritual balance (Salvador-Amores, 2018).

In Kalinga culture, a pregnant woman is regarded as both fragile and highly valued, warranting special care and attention throughout her pregnancy. This deep respect is reflected not only in the community's social practices but also in dietary restrictions aimed at protecting both the mother and the unborn child. According to an interview with elder informants 1& 4, pregnant women are strictly prohibited from consuming exotic foods such as lizards, frogs, bats, and similar creatures. It is believed that doing so may cause the child to imitate the movements or characteristics of these animals, potentially leading to illness or developmental harm. This practice reflects the broader Kalinga worldview, in which the interconnectedness of nature, body, and spirit is honored and safeguarded through traditional knowledge and observance of *paniyaw*. Moreover, the father had issued a clear warning before starting the *kaingin* that no untoward event should occur, a cultural practice grounded in the belief that the first day of agricultural work is sacred and must be unmarred. The children's failure to heed this results in symbolic disorder. The mother's transformation into a monkey becomes both **a spiritual punishment** and **a mythic origin**, directly linked to the broken paniyaw. The transformation into a monkey is deeply symbolic: the monkey, often seen as a **mischievous and destructive figure** in local myths, is now tied to moral failure and disrespect, especially toward one's elders.

Informants 1& 8 recounted a significant belief related to the violation of *paniyaw*, particularly during the early stages of establishing a *kaingin* (swidden farm). He explained that individuals embarking on a journey to find a suitable location for their farm must remain highly observant of natural signs especially bird omens, such as the *idaw*. If an *idaw* crosses their path and emits a disagreeable chirp, it is interpreted as a spiritual warning. In such cases, continuing the journey is strongly discouraged, as it is believed that misfortune or harm could befall the individual or their family.

This belief was echoed and expanded upon by Informant 3, who emphasized the powerful role of the *idaw* not only in farming-related decisions but also in other major life events. He shared that when one is about to begin building a house, the presence of an *idaw* repeatedly crossing the path while making unsettling chirping sounds is a clear sign to delay or cancel the activity. Ignoring this omen, they believe, may result in the loss of a family member or other grave consequences.

These narratives highlight how *paniyaw* functions as a deeply embedded cultural mechanism for interpreting signs from nature, reinforcing the iKalinga people's belief in the interconnectedness of human actions, spiritual warnings, and the natural environment. The *idaw*, as a spiritual messenger, serves as both a guide and a protector, ensuring that significant undertakings are approached with caution, reverence, and alignment with ancestral wisdom.

Cultural values embedded in *paniyaw* as portrayed in the narrative

This story reflects deep-rooted **indigenous values** such as **respect for parents**, **compassion for the weak**, and **obedience to ancestral or paternal instructions**. The children's taunts towards their mother violate these principles and are met with divine or cosmic retribution her transformation and the subsequent loss of maternal care. The legend also reflects the value of **communal accountability**: other villagers who witnessed the ridicule advised the children to be patient, showing that **respect for elders** is not merely a private affair but a **shared moral obligation**. The narrative reinforces that **verbal abuse**, especially within the family and during sacred times such as the start of agricultural work, is culturally inappropriate and spiritually dangerous.
This aligns with Kalinga and broader Cordilleran ethics where elders are seen as **guardians of wisdom and continuity**, and disrespect disrupts both familial and communal stability (Dumia, 2012).

The role of *paniyaw* in shaping the moral and ethical principles of the Ikalinga community.

In this legend, *paniyaw* functions as a **moral regulator** by embodying the **consequences of irreverent behavior**. The children's moral failure results in their own punishment: the loss of their mother and the perpetual presence of monkey's symbols of mischief and destruction who disturb future harvests. This eternal interference with crops acts as **a lasting reminder of broken filial piety**.

The legend teaches that **words have power** especially curses spoken by elders, which can alter reality. This belief in the **potency of speech** reinforces the ethical code that one must guard not only actions but also language, especially toward parents and elders (Pannogan, 2015).
In this way, *paniyaw* is not only about prohibitions but about cultivating a sense of **inner discipline** and **empathy**, ensuring that younger generations grow up within a framework of **respect, caution, and responsibility**.

In *The Origin of the Monkey*, *paniyaw* is not simply a singular act of disobedience but a layered spiritual offense. The children's ridicule of their pregnant mother during communal labor and their disregard for their father's sacred warning reflect compounded violations: of familial respect, ritual order, and community values. These transgressions disrupt the moral equilibrium and invite spiritual retribution. The story echoes widely held beliefs in the Cordillera and across other indigenous Filipino groups, where shame, mockery, and disrespect especially toward elders, parents, and women in vulnerable states are viewed as spiritually dangerous and morally corrosive.

Among the **Ifugao**, the family is not just a unit of blood relations but a spiritual network bound by obligations to the living and the dead. The ancestral spirits (*numikha*) are believed to watch over daily conduct, and children are taught that disrespect toward parents brings misfortune or illness, as it offends not only the

living but the ancestral order (Dumia, 1979). Particularly during agricultural rituals such as *hagophop* or the start of *uma* (swidden farming), harmony is essential. Any quarrel, mockery, or emotional disturbance especially on the first day of planting or clearing may provoke the displeasure of nature spirits (*buni*) and lead to poor harvests or tragedy (Barton, 1946).

In the **Kankanaey** and **Ibaloy** traditions, similar beliefs are held. Children are raised with strong oral teachings on *panangnengneng* (reverence) toward elders and *pannakaammo ti inaramid* (awareness of consequence). In these societies, communal work like *kaingin* (slash-and-burn) is not only physical labor but a sacred social act. It begins with specific taboos: silence must be observed, no jokes or hurtful words are to be exchanged, and pregnant women must not be disturbed, as their condition is considered spiritually open or *lumlumang*. Violating these rules risks disturbing *anitos* or guardian spirits of the land, resulting in illnesses, misfortune, or unnatural transformations (Acosta, 2012).

Even outside the Cordillera, this sacred ethic of respect and emotional harmony during critical social tasks is mirrored. Among the **Tagalog**, for example, the cultural principle of *galang* (deference to elders) is encoded in the everyday use of honorifics, but it also extends to spiritual consequences. Traditional beliefs hold that offending one's parents through shame, loud disrespect, or ridicule can result in *sumpa* (curses) that follow generations unless ritually cleansed (Jocano, 1998).

In **Panay Bukidnon** oral epics like the *Hinilawod*, there are repeated episodes where disrespect or disruption during sacred labor such as planting, weaving, or cooking invites the wrath of spirits. For example, mocking a parent or elder during such acts is believed to draw *taglugar* (guardian spirits) who may inflict deformities or cause transformation into animals (Magos, 2010). This motif of metamorphosis as moral consequence is consistent with Banna’s mother turning into a monkey marking both punishment and origin myth.

This theme is not confined to indigenous groups. In Visayan folklore, stories abound where children who show *walang-hiya* (shamelessness) are transformed or cursed by divine forces, often becoming animals or outcasts. In one version of the tale “The Ungrateful Child,” a girl who mocked her mother was swallowed by the earth similar to the symbolic rupture in *The Origin of the Monkey*, where a mother’s dignity and spiritual role are publicly violated.

Across these traditions, the transformation into an animal especially one viewed with caution, like a monkey serves as a narrative device to embody the lasting spiritual consequence of *paniyaw*. The monkey becomes more than just a creature; it is a living reminder of the boundary between reverence and ridicule, harmony and disorder, obedience and shame.

The Tilin

Long time ago there were no ricebirds to damage the blooming palay of the people on the surface of the earth damages on the golden grains were seldom caused by rats, wild hogs and water buffaloes. So, no need to place scarecrows on the rice fields and kaingin areas planted with palay. Even in the kaingin there were no rice-eating birds.

In a lonely village there lived a very young couple who had twins, a male and a female. It has been customary until today that the women in the Kalinga families are tasked with getting palay from the rice bins in the rice fields for pounding. The young couple were orphaned early in their childhood and so, there were no grandparents to take care of the twins whenever their mother was away. In order

that the mother of the twins could go to get a basketful of palay for pounding, she would just cover the babies with a big basket and leave for the rice paddies. Uncovering the babies upon her return, she usually found them asleep. One time she found her babies crying and kicking the sides of their basket. The young mother noticed that the babies were bluish. It took them several minutes before they recovered their normal color. The poor woman was scared so much that she cried in a manner to avoid attracting the attention of her neighbors. In spite of this incident which was more than enough to teach her a lesson, she did the same thing each time nobody could take care of her twins.

One day she left the twins as usual after having them put to sleep. Instead of returning right away from the rice fields because of her babies, she joined some house wives picking shells and tadpoles from the rice fields. After perhaps a couple of hours, she thought of the babies. She hurriedly got home with a heavy heart. Arriving at home, she lifted up the basket covering the twins. Alas! The twins were no longer there. As she sallied forth from the house, she saw two children standing by staring at her. They were a boy and a girl of about four years old. She inquired from them who took her twins but the two just simply laughed at her. Upon looking at them more intently, she recognized them as her twins so grown up. She extended her arms to embrace them but the two children retreated telling their mother to embrace the basketful of palay she loved more than her children. She tried to catch them but they were no longer there. She heard their voices saying in unison: "Stay home with your basketful of palay, we will eat the palay you and your husband will be planting in the rice fields and kaingin." Instead of the two children chiding her, she saw two tiny birds on top of a big stone nearby. She screamed and extended her arms to take hold of the two tiny birds but they perched on the topmost roof of a house. The neighbors came around to find out what was happening with the young woman screaming at the top of her voice. She was found saying "Da utting ko, da utting ko", (my babies, my babies) pointing the two small birds on top of a house. "Dokma-anyo dida, dokma-anyo dida", (catch them, catch them) she cried. Some men climbed to the roof but the two small birds flew away chirping, "Tilin, tilin, tilin". Soon the listening and watching mini-crowd lost sight of the two small birds that were seen no more. The poor mother having been constantly blamed by her husband for her foolishness, died of grief.

After some few years flocks of tilin (ricebirds) appeared feeding on the blooming palay in the ricefields and in the kaingins. When driven away they chirped in unison, "Tilin, tilin, tilin". So in the Kalinga region these ricebirds are called "Tilin" because of the clear chirping "Tilin". They are said to be the descendants of the twins usually neglected by their mother who, covering her twin infants with a basket, oftentimes left them alone. They feed on golden grains to avenge the unfair and painful treatment their two parent-birds suffered under an uncomfortable and suffocating basket.

Paniyaw: Maternal neglect of twins invokes spiritual consequence; children turn to birds.
Consequence: The twins were transformed into *tilin* (maya birds), causing the mother to lose her children and leaving her alone with only her basket of *palay* (unhusked rice).

Furthermore, the couple would remain childless, and if they were to bear children, the offspring would not survive.

> *She would just cover the babies with a big basket and leave for the rice paddies. One day she left the twins as usual after having them put to sleep. Instead of returning right away from the rice fields because of her babies, she joined some house wives picking shells and tadpoles from the rice fields.* Arriving at home, *she lifted up the basket covering the twins. Alas! The twins were no longer there.*

Elder women Informants 2 and 7 shared how they managed household responsibilities during the time their children were still infants. One of the primary tasks of mothers then was pounding rice a physically demanding chore essential to daily sustenance. With older children in school and husbands away at work, there was no one left to care for the babies during the day.

As a practical solution, these mothers would carry their babies on their backs, secured with a piece of cloth, while they pounded rice. They acknowledged that the infants often endured the heat, the jostling motion, and even exposure to tiny debris from the palay, which could sometimes cause skin irritation or allergies. Despite these discomforts, this practice was considered normal among mothers at the time.

For them, carrying the baby while working was far safer than leaving the child alone and unattended. This reflects the mothers' strong sense of responsibility and their instinct to protect their children, even while balancing the demands of daily survival. It also illustrates the resilience, practicality, and nurturing values embedded in traditional Ikalinga motherhood, where the well-being of the child was always prioritized within the limitations of their circumstances.

Symbolic and cultural representations of *paniyaw* found within this text

In this legend, *paniyaw* is symbolically represented through the **neglect and maltreatment of children**, which violates deeply held cultural values around **motherhood**, **caregiving**, and **ancestral expectations**. The act of covering the babies with a basket an object associated with **harvest and productivity** becomes a powerful symbol of **misplaced priorities**. Instead of valuing her children's safety, the mother prioritizes material needs, thereby disrupting the spiritual and social order.

According to Kalinga belief, babies are sacred and must be treated with **great care**, as they are considered both a blessing and a continuation of ancestral lines (Salvador-Amores, 2018). Leaving twins symbolically potent figures in many indigenous cultures under a suffocating basket becomes a **transgression of maternal paniyaw**, invoking supernatural consequence. This legend also reflects the idea that violated paniyaw doesn't merely bring misfortune; it **reshapes the natural world**, in this case, transforming children into ricebirds (*tilin*), who become eternal reminders of that violation.

Cultural values embedded in *paniyaw* as portrayed in the narrative

The narrative underscores the cultural values of **maternal devotion**, **protection of life**, and **balance between sustenance and spiritual duty**. The failure of the mother to uphold her duty results in **irreversible loss**, not just personal but communal, as the *tilin* become pests that damage crops, a punishment that affects the entire village.

This reinforces the cultural idea that **the wellbeing of children is paramount** and cannot be compromised for convenience or productivity. It also reflects a key value in indigenous ethics: that **personal responsibilities must be harmonized with communal and spiritual duties** (Dumia, 2012).

The twins' transformation into birds that feed on palay serves as a moral allegory. The children, denied nourishment and care, return in another form to take what was withheld from them. This echoes a recurring motif in Kalinga folktales: **neglected obligations return with multiplied consequences** (Pannogan, 2015).

The role of *paniyaw* in shaping the moral and ethical principles of the iKalinga community

In this legend, *paniyaw* serves as a **moral compass**, especially in defining the boundaries of proper behavior within the family. The ethical lesson is stark: **neglect, especially of the vulnerable, is a spiritual and social sin**. The consequences are not only emotional (grief, blame, and loss) but ecological and cosmic resulting in a species that forever disturbs the human harvest.

This legend, like others in Kalinga oral tradition, uses *paniyaw* as a tool for **intergenerational education**. It warns future parents, especially mothers, of the sacredness of child-rearing, reinforcing the idea that one's actions, however private, are never isolated from the larger moral universe.

It also shows how paniyaw operates not only as a warning against taboos but as a **means to shape enduring community ethics**: compassion, attentiveness, and reverence for life's sacred responsibilities.

In the legend of *The Tilin (The Maya)*, *paniyaw* is violated through a deeply symbolic act: the neglect and endangerment of infants by their own mother. By covering her twins with a basket an object traditionally linked to harvest and economic productivity she prioritizes material labor over spiritual and maternal duty. This inversion of caregiving values disrupts not only the domestic order but the sacred one. In Kalinga cosmology, babies are more than dependents; they are spiritual bridges to the ancestors and custodians of lineage. Abandoning them, especially twins who in many indigenous beliefs hold mythic significance constitutes a spiritual offense that invokes divine retribution (Salvador-Amores, 2018).

This legend finds resonance in wider Cordilleran and Southeast Asian beliefs. Among the T'boli of Mindanao, twins are believed to have spiritual roles or connections to the *fu* (spirit beings), and improper care or disrespect toward them is believed to result in *kemok*, a kind of spiritual illness or imbalance (Lemana, 2014). Likewise, in Ifugao society, the early years of a child's life are ritually protected through rites such as *punnuk* or *tungo*, and neglect or violence during this period is taboo, as children are seen as particularly susceptible to spirit possession or harm (Barton, 1946).

However, this sacred view of children is often at odds with modern societal issues, where familial bonds are increasingly strained by poverty, labor migration, and digital disconnection. In many cases, parents under economic pressure may unintentionally neglect emotional and physical caregiving, echoing the mother in the legend who places her labor over her children. According to UNICEF Philippines (2021), emotional neglect and lack of parental presence have been rising concerns in Filipino families, especially due to overseas work and urban poverty. Children left behind often feel abandoned, which may develop into long-term resentment, behavioral issues, or cyclical neglect when they become parents themselves.

Moreover, the reversal of traditional family roles where children now increasingly challenge, disrespect, or emotionally abandon their parents is an emerging concern. Studies show that intergenerational disrespect, often amplified by media and weakening traditional values, is contributing to strained parent-child

relationships in the Philippines. As highlighted by Esteban and Canonizado (2007) in their sociological study of Filipino families, a growing number of youths are showing apathy toward elders, with discipline often interpreted as authoritarianism and parental roles devalued in favor of peer and digital influence.

This societal shift contrasts sharply with indigenous ethics, such as in Kalinga and other Austronesian societies, where familial roles are spiritual as much as social. The mother in *The Tilin* forgets this spiritual responsibility, treating her children not as sacred beings but as burdens inviting cosmic punishment in the form of metamorphosis. The children become ricebirds (*tilin*) an eternal, sorrowful presence in the landscape, calling out a moral reminder across generations. Their song becomes part of cultural memory, retelling the consequences of neglect not through anger but through spiritual witness.

This myth, therefore, serves a dual role: as a cultural explanation of natural phenomena and as a moral warning still relevant today. In both traditional and modern contexts, the failure to protect, honor, and nurture the most vulnerable family members whether children or parents shatters not just social harmony but spiritual balance. The idea that *paniyaw* reshapes the world aligns with the current understanding that intergenerational neglect and disrespect have long-term, societal consequences from mental health crises to broken family structures.

WHEN KABUNIYAN WITHELD HIS BLESSINGS

A long, long time ago, Kabuniyan ,the God of the Kalingas lived on top of a mountain called "Buliwan" somewhere in the hinterlands of Kalinga.

During that time, people enjoyed a happy life, because food was never a problem. They always had abountiful harvest, every harvest season. The people believed that Kabuniyan looked after their welfare and show their gratitude, they offered various kinds of rice cakes to Him on that mountain every year as a sacrifice of gratitude.

One bright morning, a man named Abbacan happened to passed by Mt. Buliwan. As he was passing by, he heard a voice calling his name. It said, "Abbacan, look at me." The man looks around but he heard again the same voice saying, "Abbacan, look at me." Abbacan looked around and he saw a glittering object near a big tree.

He went near it because he was curious to find out what it was and to his great amazement, he found a house made entirely of iron posts and glass. When he peeped in, he saw that there was nobody inside so Abbacan thought it was the house of an evil spirit.

Abbacan ran back to the village calling all of the men to go and see for themselves a glass house. He told about a voice that called his name when he was passing by. All of the men of the village rushed to Mt. Buliwan. When they reached the place, they indeed saw the strange house and they all exclaimed. "It is surely the house of an evil spirit." So, they dismantle the glass house. After they demolished the glass house, they left it to rot.

From that time on, things began to change for the people of Buliwan. The same year the people begun to suffer from all sorts of hardships. They no longer had bountiful harvests. Food became scarce. People got sick. They had famine and drought most of the time. It was that the people realized that they had dismantled the house of Kabuniyan who took care and watched over them.

Paniyaw: The people committed a grave sacrilege by dismantling the sacred house crafted by Kabunyan himself, an act of profound disrespect that shattered the spiritual order and provoked divine retribution.

(It's just like killing the owner of the house)

Consequence: Kabunyan withdrew all the blessings He had previously bestowed upon them, including

food, shelter, and other necessities. As a result, the people endured various forms of

suffering food became scarce, famine and drought were frequent, and many fell ill.

> *All of the men of the village rushed to Mt. Buliwan. When they reached the place, they indeed saw the strange house and they all exclaimed. "It is surely the house of an evil spirit." So, they dismantle the glass house. After they demolished the glass house, they left it to rot. From that time on, things began to change for the people of Buliwan. The same year the people begun to suffer from all sorts of hardships. They no longer had bountiful harvests. Food became scarce. People got sick. They had famine and drought most of the time.*

home and the cultural prohibition against acts of vandalism. They explained that damaging a house whether as an outburst of anger, an act of revenge, or any form of emotional retaliation is considered a serious violation of *paniyaw.* This applies not only to harming someone else's house but even to one's own dwelling.

In the Ikalinga worldview, a house is more than just a physical structure; it is regarded as an extension of life itself. To vandalize a house is symbolically equivalent to harming the person who owns it. Such an act not only disrespects property but also disrupts the social and spiritual balance within the community. As emphasized by the informants, this deep respect for the home reflects the broader cultural value placed on harmony, restraint, and the sanctity of personal and communal spaces.

Symbolic and cultural representations of *paniyaw* found within this text

In this tale, the symbolic violation of *paniyaw* occurs when the villagers dismantle the glasshouse of Kabuniyan, their supreme deity. The act signifies a grave spiritual transgression *paniyaw* not only against sacred space but against the divine presence itself. In Kalinga cosmology, structures like mountains and sacred places are often seen as dwelling places of spiritual beings (Macli-ing, 2017). Destroying a house associated with a god is more than a physical offense; it is tantamount to rejecting the divine order.

The glass house itself symbolizes purity, sacredness, and the transparency of Divine. Human relationships. Its destruction reflects a breakdown of spiritual understanding and reverence, indicating a loss of discernment between the sacred and the profane. This disruption is symbolically punished by the withdrawal of blessings famine, sickness, and drought emphasizing how *paniyaw* functions as both a spiritual code and a mechanism of cosmic justice

(Lacquian, 2022).

Cultural values embedded in *paniyaw* as portrayed in the narrative

The story reveals core Ikalinga values such as **spiritual sensitivity**, **gratitude**, and **Collective accountability**. Initially, the community enjoys abundance through a harmonious relationship with Kabuniyan, upheld by regular

offerings and expressions of thanks. Their prosperity reflects the cultural value placed on **reciprocity**, a key indigenous principle where divine favor is returned with respectful offerings (Salvador-Amores, 2018).

However, when curiosity turns to fear and disrespect, the community Collectively commits a taboo. The destruction of the sacred house, rather than being committed by a single wrongdoer, involves the entire village. This illustrates how *paniyaw* also governs **group morality**, holding entire communities responsible for the maintenance of sacred laws. The story implicitly teaches that **ignorance of the sacred does not excuse violation**, and that failing to discern holiness from danger results in moral and material loss.

The role of *paniyaw* in shaping the moral and ethical principles of the iKalinga community

Paniyaw in these narrative functions as a theological framework that reinforces obedience to spiritual authority and cultural protocols. The tale warns that disrupting sacred structures even unknowingly has moral consequences. This shapes the ethical worldview of the Ikalinga by instilling **a cautious reverence toward the unknown** and encouraging people to act within the boundaries of cultural teachings.

The sudden hardships following the transgression drought, famine, and illness serve as **didactic reminders** of what happens when spiritual order is ignored. According to Batangen (2020), such stories often serve as **social memory devices**, reinforcing ancestral wisdom through vivid narrative consequences. The tale encourages ethical living by aligning human prosperity with spiritual mindfulness and communal respect for the sacred.

In this tale, the destruction of Kabuniyan's glasshouse is a symbolic act of *Paniyaw* a serious violation against sacred space and divine authority. Within Kalinga cosmology, natural formations such as mountains, springs, trees, and unique geological structures are often considered the **dwellings of spirits** or *anito*. As Macli-ing (2017) explains, to disturb or destroy these places is not merely environmental harm it is spiritual desecration. The glasshouse, as a divine structure, represents not only the purity and sacredness of Kabuniyan's presence but also the **fragile relationship between the human and the divine**. Its destruction signals a spiritual blindness, a forgetting of ancestral wisdom, and results in cosmic retribution: drought, famine, and illness classic signs of divine withdrawal. Similar themes are present in many other **indigenous Filipino beliefs**, where sacred spaces are protected by oral laws and spiritual guardians. Among the **Tagbanwa** of Palawan, for instance, natural features like caves, forests, and coral reefs are considered sacred (*puno-an*) and guarded by spirits (*diwata* or *tumao*). Disrespect toward these sites such as unauthorized entry or extraction invites illness, crop failure, or even death, believed to be sent by offended spirits (Fox, 1982).

In **Ifugao** belief, the rice terraces are not only cultural landscapes but **spiritually charged spaces**. Certain areas, particularly those with ancestral *bale* (rice granaries) or ritual platforms (*hagabi*), are treated with reverence. Destroying or displacing them is seen as a **cosmic disruption** that leads to the loss of spiritual favor, often expressed through withering crops, sickness, or ecological imbalance (Dulawan, 2001).

In **Aeta** traditions, the forest is viewed as a living entity that must be approached with humility and ritual respect. Cutting trees in certain places without permission from elders or without making symbolic offerings is believed to provoke forest spirits (*pinang*) who may curse the violator or the entire community (Gaillard,

2006). Like the tale's famine and drought, these punishments reflect the idea that **spiritual laws are interwoven with ecological balance** a core indigenous worldview.

Contemporary environmental thinkers have even begun to reframe this belief system as an early form of **spiritual ecology** the idea that **sacredness protects sustainability**. As Alcantara (2020) writes, indigenous Filipino views on sacred space are not merely religious but ecological; they function to instill limits on human greed, enforce humility, and maintain harmony between people and place. The tale of the glasshouse's destruction echoes this principle: the punishment is not arbitrary but reflects a real-world disruption in ethical stewardship.

From a broader perspective, this story aligns with global indigenous patterns where divine spaces are to be approached with reverence. In the **Maori** tradition of Aotearoa (New Zealand), desecrating a *wāhi tapu* (sacred site) is believed to bring misfortune not just to the individual but to the entire group. Similarly, in **Native American** cosmologies, structures like mountains (e.g., Mount Shasta or Bear Butte) are revered as places of divine communication, and their disturbance is seen as a break in the sacred covenant with the Creator (Deloria, 2006).

Thus, in destroying Kabuniyan's glasshouse, the villagers are not only demolishing a divine dwelling they are symbolically **dismantling the moral contract between human beings and the spiritual world**. The resulting famine is not just a punishment it is the withdrawal of harmony itself, proving that *paniyaw* operates as both **a moral boundary and a cosmic balance**.

Across all informants, a common observation emerged regarding the practice and observance of *paniyaw* then and now. They recalled that during their childhood, adherence to *paniyaw* was taken very seriously. Children were raised with constant reminders from their parents about what should and should not be done, with *paniyaw* serving as a moral compass in their daily lives. This early guidance instilled in them values of respect, obedience, and reverence for Kabunyan. Many of them believe that such disciplined living may be one of the reasons they have reached old age without experiencing major illnesses.

In contrast, they expressed concern that in contemporary times, there appears to be a decline in the observance of *paniyaw.* They associate the increasing incidence of strange illnesses, sudden deaths, and negative behaviors among younger generations as possible consequences of disregarding these traditional moral and spiritual guidelines. For the elders, the erosion of *paniyaw* is not merely a loss of custom but a disconnection from the spiritual protection and communal order it once upheld.

Synthesis:

From the collective insights of the informants, a consistent pattern emerges regarding the implementation and observance of *paniyaw* across generations. During their childhood, informants recalled being strictly guided by their parents to never violate the rules of *paniyaw.* These rules were deeply woven into their daily lives and became moral foundations that nurtured values of respect, obedience, and reverence for Kabunyan. For many, this way of life is believed to be the reason they have enjoyed long life and good health. In contrast, they expressed concern that in today's generation, the weakening of *paniyaw* observance is contributing to increasing incidences of illness, untimely deaths, and a rise in undesirable behaviors suggesting that moral and spiritual disobedience has tangible consequences. They

fear that forgetting *paniyaw* is not just a cultural loss but a spiritual and ecological imbalance.

Paniyaw, Eco-spirituality, and Indigenous Environmental Ethics

The recurring theme across Kalinga folktales is the idea that moral and spiritual transgressions against nature — whether through ridicule, destruction, or disrespect are not merely human failings but violations of *paniyaw*, a deeply embedded indigenous ethical code. These stories affirm that the environment is not inert but spiritually alive and morally responsive. In tales such as *The Wrath of the River*, *Banna Becomes a Python*, and the destruction of Kabuniyan's glasshouse, natural elements like rivers, animals, and bamboo groves become agents of cosmic justice.

This reflects an eco-spiritual worldview where nature holds a sacred, sentient quality, and environmental harmony is maintained not by man-made laws but through cultural taboos rooted in respect, humility, and reverence. This indigenous ecological ethic resonates with global movements recognizing nature's moral status, such as the legal personhood of rivers in Māori traditions (Charpleix, 2018) and sacred forest protections among the Aeta and Tagbanwa (Fox, 1982; Gaillard, 2006). In the Cordillera, *paniyaw* functions as an ancestral environmental code one that disciplines human behavior to protect the balance of creation.

Scholarly work in other indigenous contexts offers penetrating parallels. For instance, among the Nyishi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, customary law, kinship structures and rituals/taboos serve not only to regulate social relationships but also to include non-human entities (forests, rivers, landscapes) in moral and legal consideration (Banerjee, Pal, & Priyadarshini, 2025). Their worldview similarly treats ecological transgressions as spiritual violations much like *paniyaw* in Kalinga. In another example, the Osing people's unwritten customary law model has been explored in Lex Localis, showing how indigenous prohibitions and spiritual injunctions gain recognition through formal legal frameworks, even while negotiating tension with state law (The Legalization and Application of Osing Indigenous People's Customary Law Model, 2023).

The folktales caution against spiritual blindness: when people forget the sacred roles of rivers, animals, and land, nature intervenes to restore balance often through droughts, floods, or transformations. Thus, Kalinga folktales serve not only as cultural narratives but as moral blueprints for sustainable living, grounded in the principle that to harm nature is to offend the spiritual order. The observed generational shift away from *paniyaw* highlights an urgent need to revitalize these indigenous teachings, not merely for cultural preservation but for restoring harmony between people, spirit, and environment.

Theoretical Discussion: Paniyaw as Indigenous Environmental Ethics and Eco-spirituality

In the indigenous Kalinga worldview, *paniyaw* is more than a taboo; it is an animoral spiritual system that governs human interaction with nature. Unlike modern legal frameworks that separate environmental protection from spiritual life, *paniyaw* fuses both into a holistic code where ecological ethics are grounded in cosmology, kinship, and reverence. This moral order is narrated, remembered, and reinforced through oral literature, especially in folktales that illustrate what happens when people violate the unseen boundaries that govern respectful living.

In tales such as *The Wrath of the River*, *Banna Becomes a Python*, and *The Glass*
House of Kabuniyan, natural elements such as rivers, bamboo groves, and sacred houses function as moral agents. Their reactions to human transgressions, floods, transformations, and famine — reveal a worldview in which nature is not passive but spiritually alive, capable of punishing injustice and restoring balance. As Pannogan (2015) notes, in the Kalinga imagination, nature has voice, memory, and power; it acts not out of vengeance but in fulfillment of a spiritual and ecological order. This aligns closely with the principles of ecospirituality, a concept gaining traction in both indigenous studies and environmental philosophy. Ecospirituality views all creation as sacred, arguing that spiritual disconnection leads to environmental degradation (Berry, 1999; Tucker & Grim, 2014). In Kalinga folktales, spiritual disconnection, mocking animals, destroying sacred places, and disrespecting elders result not only in moral decay but in environmental collapse. Here, *paniyaw* is not superstition; it is a cultural expression of ecological conscience, regulating behavior for long-term harmony between humans and the land.

Moreover, *paniyaw* intersects with indigenous environmental ethics, which do not rely on abstract principles but on embodied relationships with place, ancestry, and community. As scholars like Cajete (2000) and Battiste (2013) assert, indigenous environmental ethics are rooted in narrative and relationality. The Kalinga legends do not moralize in abstract terms; instead, they tell of rivers that flood when mocked, children who turn into birds when neglected, or mothers who become monkeys when disrespected. Each story is a symbolic mechanism that teaches ecological humility, responsibility, and spiritual alignment.

These insights parallel global indigenous practices. The Maori personification of the Whanganui River as *Te Awa Tupua*, and the Manobo rituals that treat rivers as sacred corridors, demonstrate that across cultures, nature is viewed not as property, but as kin, and spirit (Charpleix, 2018; Lemana, 2016). The Kalinga expression of *paniyaw* thus fits into a broader global framework: an animistic ecological paradigm where the environment is a moral subject and spiritual partner, not an object to dominate.

Ultimately, through the lens of *paniyaw*, we see that Kalinga folktales are not just Cultural artifacts; they are ethical systems encoded in a story, carrying vital lessons for both indigenous and modern readers in a time of ecological crisis. They remind us that the health of our environment is inseparable from the integrity of our relationships, not only with each other, but with the spirits and forces that dwell within the land.

4 Discussion

Findings:

Based on the examination of selected Ikalinga folktales and legends, the study revealed several key insights into the role and meaning of *paniyaw* within the community's cultural imagination.

Representation of Paniyaw Across Texts.

Across the narratives, *paniyaw* consistently emerges as a cultural-spiritual prohibition that regulates human interaction with nature, the divine, and social relations. It is commonly depicted through acts of disobedience, irreverence, or emotional excess, such as mocking fish, disrespecting elders, or forming excessive attachments to animals. Violations of *paniyaw* are never inconsequential; they are met with spiritual repercussions that often manifest in transformations—such as

turning into animals—or through collective punishment affecting entire communities.

Symbolic and Cultural Dimensions of Paniyaw.

The tales reveal that *paniyaw* is deeply intertwined with animistic beliefs, ancestral reverence, and ecological ethics. Natural elements—rivers, springs, stones, animals, and agricultural spaces—function as symbolic enforcers of this moral-spiritual code. Through rich metaphors of transformation, natural calamities, or divine withdrawal of blessings, the stories communicate the restoration of cosmic and moral order whenever humans transgress boundaries.

Embedded Cultural Values.

Underlying these narratives are cultural values central to the iKalinga worldview. Respect for nature and elders, emotional restraint, communal responsibility, and spiritual mindfulness are strongly emphasized. Importantly, even well-intentioned actions, as illustrated in the story of *Dumigay*, may lead to negative outcomes if they transgress culturally encoded roles and boundaries. This underscores the community's insistence on balance, humility, and attentiveness to tradition.

Moral and Ethical Formation.

Beyond their symbolic depth, the folktales highlight *paniyaw* as a practical ethical system that nurtures moral development among the iKalinga, particularly the youth. Storytelling becomes a pedagogical tool through which values of humility, hospitality, obedience, and responsibility are imparted. Thus, these narratives serve a dual purpose: they provide entertainment while simultaneously functioning as indigenous moral instruction, embedding ethical consciousness within everyday life.

5 Conclusions

The study concludes that *paniyaw* is not simply a collection of taboos but a holistic indigenous worldview that integrates morality, ecology, spirituality, and community life. It provides a moral–spiritual framework that shapes how the iKalinga understand their place within the natural and social order.

The legends and folktales examined in this study function as cultural texts that transmit these ethical codes, serving as narrative vessels for the preservation of ancestral wisdom. Through their symbolic and moral depth, they ensure that *paniyaw* remains embedded in the cultural memory of the community.

A consistent theme across the stories is that violations of *paniyaw* result in spiritual or ecological disruption, while observance leads to harmony, balance, and blessings. This pattern reinforces ethical behavior through consequences that are culturally resonant and spiritually grounded.

The role of *paniyaw* in moral formation emerges as both preventive and corrective. On the one hand, it establishes boundaries for right conduct; on the other, it provides interpretive frameworks for understanding misbehavior and its consequences. In this way, *paniyaw* shapes ethical consciousness by linking actions to outcomes within a sacred ecological order.

Ultimately, the narratives demonstrate that Kalinga folktales are powerful tools for indigenous education. By embedding moral lessons within familiar cultural and ecological contexts, they offer culturally grounded alternatives to moral instruction in both formal and informal settings. As such, *paniyaw* continues to serve as a vital moral compass that sustains cultural identity, fosters community values, and strengthens the interconnected relationship between people, spirit, and environment.

Acknowledgment:

This study is bounded by several limitations that must be acknowledged in interpreting its findings. First, the research focused primarily on selected Ikalinga folktales and legends in which *paniyaw* is explicitly present. Other narratives and oral traditions may reflect different interpretations that were not captured in this analysis. Second, the scope of key informant interviews was limited to eight cultural bearers from one locality, whose perspectives, while rich and authoritative, cannot represent the entire diversity of the Ikalinga or wider Cordillera communities. Third, the study relied on translated versions of indigenous terms and narratives, and while careful attention was given to cultural sensitivity, some nuances may have been reduced or altered in translation. Finally, the research employed a qualitative design centered on textual and cultural analysis, which emphasizes depth of interpretation over breadth of coverage.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the symbolic role of *paniyaw* in Ikalinga literature and its contribution to moral formation and cultural identity. The findings should therefore be understood as context-specific, while also serving as a foundation for further comparative and interdisciplinary research on indigenous belief systems and their educational significance.

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