

Indigenous Healing Practices: The Role of Rituals in the Indigenous Communities in the Cordillera

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Abstract

Indigenous healing rituals hold significant importance in many cultures specifically in the Cordillera Administrative Region in the Philippines. They preserve traditions and knowledge passed down through generations, fostering a sense of identity and continuity within the village or community. These rituals often address physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health, offering a more comprehensive approach to healing compared to some modern practices. In the face of external pressures and modernization, these ritual practices help maintain cultural resilience and resist acculturation, preserving unique cultural identities of the ethnolinguistic groups who practice them.

However, these traditional healing rituals currently face the risk of disappearing due to the influence of new religious beliefs, non-practice of rituals for those who migrated in the urban areas and passing away of the indigenous healers and knowledge holders. Hence, it is the conduct of the study to document the significance and role of rituals in the indigenous communities in the Cordillera for cultural preservation and transmission to the young generations. Data were gathered through key informant interviews and group discussions from the elders, traditional healers, Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives.

The finding shows that healing rituals centered on peace building and restorative justice, death rituals for healing, and rituals for health disasters/ epidemics/ pandemics are the rituals that continue to be practiced in indigenous communities today. The effectivity of these rituals is associated with the presence of the traditional healers, sacred ritual sites, prayers and chants, sacrificial animals, ritual foods and other symbolic materials for offering to the unseen and supreme beings. The performance of the rituals is guided by the value system of inayan/paniyew (taboos), ba-in (shame), respect, camaraderie and mutual help. These rituals played a significant role in balancing peace and harmony among the individuals, community members, environment and the unseen and supreme beings. Hence, amidst challenges that contributed to the nearly disappearance of rituals, modifications are being adopted by the community members to continue the performance of these rituals...

Keywords: Indigenous healing rituals, indigenous communities, Inayan/ paniyew (taboos).

Introduction

Traditional Indigenous healing systems encompass a diverse array of practices, deeply rooted in the cultural and spiritual traditions of various indigenous communities around the world. These systems offer holistic approaches to healing, addressing not only physical ailments but also spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being. Indigenous healing practices includes spiritual healing which plays a central role in many indigenous healing practices. Healers, or medicine men and women facilitate healing through spiritual rituals, ceremonies, and connection with ancestral spirits. These practices aim to restore balance and harmony within the individual and the community and their environment where they thrived for years.

One of the fundamental aspects of traditional indigenous healing is the use of herbal medicine. Indigenous communities have extensive knowledge of local flora and their medicinal properties, passed down through generations. Herbal remedies are often used to treat a wide range of ailments, from minor ailments to chronic conditions. Rituals and ceremonies are integral to traditional indigenous healing systems. These may involve drumming, chanting, dancing, and other sacred rituals designed to cleanse, heal, and restore the individual's connection to their community and the natural world (Traditional Healing Systems, n.d.)

In addition, the study of Dait (2000) highlights that healing rituals involve offerings to spirits, chants, and animal sacrifices, believed to appease ancestors and supernatural beings responsible for illnesses. The *Cañao* is one of the most significant ceremonies performed for healing purposes. Also, Fiar-od (2021) stated that in the Cordillera Philippines, the Igorots perform ceremonies and rituals as part of their everyday living. Rituals are performed as an effective means of communicating their requests for blessings and thanks to the Supreme Being, the spirits, and deities. Rituals are systems of cultural rites to preserve the environment as a gift from God to sustain life.

Among the Igorots, rituals affirm and re-affirm their connection to nature, and are a means to strengthen their cultural identity as an ethnic group rooted in the past. They perform rituals in everything they do, like the indigenous technologies of tattooing or mummification. They believe that deities, environmental or ancestral spirits help control any natural phenomenon that may happen.

To cite a few, the indigenous communities of Benguet have long upheld their traditional healing rituals and spiritual practices, deeply rooted in their way of life in the mountains. Their beliefs are strongly tied to nature, ancestral wisdom, and the guidance of shamans, who play a crucial role in addressing concerns related to health, wealth, food supply, and calamities. Many of these practices share similarities with other indigenous tribes, particularly in concepts such as bad omens and spiritual interventions. Despite modernization, these cultural traditions continue to shape their worldview, reflecting their enduring reliance on spiritual healing and indigenous knowledge (Baucas, 2003).

For the Ifugaos in Sanafe, the *bogwa* as exhumation ritual is an alternative healing ritual which people always turn to invoking their dead ancestors when an illness cannot be cured by medicine; at the same time. *Bogwa* is considered as the alternative healing ritual continued to prevail and be performed among the settlers in Sanafe as the people get contentment and relief from illness. However, because of the continued observance of the practice, it raises questions on the state of spirituality of the people in the community (Alindayo, 2020).

However, it should be noted that before the conduct of the rituals, traditional healers who have the ability to determine the causes of the illness are consulted. In Bontoc, they are called *Ensup-ok*, and *mamsup-ok* for the kankanaeys. Taguba (2019) presents the beginning of the *Ensup-oks* through dreams of an *ungot* given by an Anito and a monstrence seen. In addition, the process of *sup-ok* or healing starts when an anito talks to the soul, followed by the *Ensup-ok* identifying the culprit by yawning.

Over the years, it has been observed that the rituals in the Cordillera are slowly disappearing due to various factors such as the influence of new religious beliefs. Certain religious groups view indigenous healing rituals, such as the sacrifice of chickens, pigs, and dogs, as evil acts. In addition, traditional healers are passing away without being able to pass on their healing wisdom to future generations. Another is due to urban migration, modernization, urbanization and the non-practice of these rituals hence no avenue for the young generation to learn the culture.

However, it is interesting to note that despite these challenges there are still communities who continue their healing traditions since time immemorial and there are initiatives to preserve and transmit these healing to the young generations. Hence, the conduct of the study to document the significance and role of rituals in the Indigenous communities in the Cordillera to be used in transmission of indigenous knowledge in the academe before it will vanish like a natural death.

Conceptual Framework



Figure 1. Schematic diagram showing the concepts of the Study

Figure 1 shows the relationships of the concepts of the study. The performance of indigenous healing rituals in the Cordillera is associated with the presence of traditional healers who will conduct the rituals, say prayers and chants. These rituals are conducted in a sacred ritual site specifically in the *ato/dap-ay*, *patpatayan* and *apoyan*. *Sacrificial animals, ritual foods and other materials are needed as an offering to appease the unseen and supreme beings*. The rituals are guided by the value system of *inayan/paniyew* and *ba-in*. Hence, the observance of taboos, omens and beliefs are embedded in the performance of the rituals. Study is anchored on the perspectives of structural functionalism. Each element plays a significant role and has significance in the performance of the ritual to maintaining harmony and balance in the community.

II. Methodology

This study employed qualitative research design specifically narrative inquiry to gather information on the existing indigenous healing rituals in Mountain Province, Ifugao, and Benguet, Cordillera Administrative Region, Philippines. Specifically, the qualitative approach aimed to document the significance and role of the rituals in the indigenous communities for peace building, death rituals for healing of the bereaved families and communities, and rituals to bring harmony and balance between individuals, communities and their environment. This information was obtained through key informant interviews, small group discussions and onsite observations from the 25 key informants for this study who include the traditional healers who conduct the rituals, as well as community members who performed the rituals for healing, Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs) and community elders who are bearers of indigenous knowledge. The participants were selected based on their willingness to share their knowledge and experiences on indigenous healing. Hence, Informed consent was obtained from the key informants, who are the knowledge holders, before the research was conducted.

Also, in compliance with the ethics of research on Indigenous Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, consent seeking (Free Prior and Informed Consent) was conducted from the community members who are source of knowledge through the assistance of the research team of the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) before the data gathering.

Content analysis was also used to analyze secondary data on indigenous healing to substantiate collected data from the key informants. All data gathered were analyzed through thematic analysis. Data validation was conducted from the community members who are source of information through the assistance of the research team of the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to ensure the accuracy of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Healing Rituals for Peace Building and Restorative Justice

Indigenous justice and governance system is one of the customary practices of the people in the Cordillera even before the arrival of the colonizers in the region. In Mountain Province in particular, they have the *ato/ ator/ Dap-ay* system, an indigenous social and political institution that regulated community life. A village has multiple *ator*. Every family is represented by male members (Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with elders in Bontoc, Sagada, Sadanga, February 2026).

Specifically, the Bontoc *ator* (ward) system may have from three to over 20 wards in each ili (depending on the size of the population). Bontoc Ili has the greatest number of *ator/ato* in the Bontoc Culture area. Each family is affiliated with one of the several wards in the village. The physical structure in which wards are used for social and ritual functions is an elevated, semi-circular stone platform with an open court. The area is off-limits to women. Only male visitors may be entertained or housed in the *ator* (Prill-Brett, 2015). The *ato/ dap-ay* is a vital space for rituals in the community. It is a centralized space where the elders and community conduct and observe rituals before, during the peace processes and after the conflict resolution.

Sapon di Danum / Sapon di Palanga/ ka-eb si Palanga (water cleansing ritual). Before they go for settlement with their intertribal conflict communities, “*ga-eb/ ka-eb di palanga*” is done to ask guidance from *Kabunyan* (highest god) and to keep them strong and not to lose mind during negotiation. The ritual is accompanied with indigenous prayers asking the guidance of the unseen, ancestors and almighty God for safety and positive results. (FGD with Elders in Sagada and Bontoc, 2026).

During inter-tribal mediations, it is considered strictly taboo for the opposing tribes to eat or drink together while the conflict is unresolved. Once a resolution is reached, a vital water cleansing ritual called *Sapon di Palanga* or *Sapon di Danum* is performed to wash away the animosity and bad omens. Only after this ritual can the formerly warring parties safely share a communal meal to seal the peace (FGD with elders in Sagada, Bontoc, 2026).

Palanga/ amulo is also considered a cleansing ritual to remove bad omen, warring parties share meal after resolution to solidify the peace agreement. The conflict resolution is only considered truly consummated when the opposing parties share a meal together, signifying restored trust. In Bontoc, the ritual is called *allawid*, when

conflict is resolved, exchange of valuable items like *feneng* (bolo) or *vangkow/gayang* (spear) is conducted for both parties as a result that the conflict was resolved and that the valuable items serve as a symbol of abiding to what was agreed upon, and that this may also be considered as a healing ritual showing that the case had been settled and harmonious relationship are expected to be restored. Hence, they have a strong belief not to eat or share a meal with someone you are in conflict if the allawid ritual was not performed. The concept of *Allawid* has the same meaning with the paranga of Sadanga, it is the exchange of tools like bolo, *sangap* (sickle), knife or any metals as peace offering for conflict within the village. A sacred ritual where there is no need to butcher any animal. While warang is an exchange of metal tokens for intervillage conflicts.

Daw-es/ Chaw-es. After the resolution of conflicts, either intra or intervillage conflicts, rituals such as *daw-es* or *chaw-es* are customarily performed in the *Ato* or *Dap-ay* before the parties involved return to their homes. The *chaw-es* serves as a cleansing rite, intended to restore harmony and ensure the well-being of both the victims and the perpetrators. All those involved in the conflict will undergo cleansing rituals for healing of the mind and the spirits since restorative justice is the primary aim of the indigenous justice system.

padernat/paotong/papudot/papo-os. It is interesting also to highlight that Peace pacts between villages were also forged to maintain peace and harmony. Hence, to prevent possible outbreak of conflicts due to unforeseen reasons that may cause the severing of the peace pacts, the villages conduct *padernat/paotong/papudot/papo-os*. A ceremony during *ka-pechen* visits, conducted in the *Ator* of the pact holder. Happens every 2-3 years, or more frequently if there are ongoing issues between villages. Another purpose is warming-up of the pecten. A village may initiate a *padernat* by inviting their *ka-peden* to warm up the relationship and to revisit the *pagta/tulagan* (agreement). (Sadanga FGD, 2026). Rituals and ceremonies will be conducted where carabaos will be butchered to be shared by the intervillage who have peace pacts.

Death Rituals for Healing

Bogwa. Few years after the burial, the “bogwa” or bone cleaning is done by the family members. *Bogwa* is the practice of exhuming the bones of the dead, cleaning, rewrapping and returning them to the grave or “lubuk”. The bone of the dead is brought out from the tomb. The “*bogwa*” is like the second burial which is an expensive ritual being performed by the people whether rich or poor. The purpose of the ritual is respect for the dead, family reunion, and a source of healing because some Ifugaos believe the prolong illnesses could be caused by dead members of the families and to give permission for a widow or widower to remarry. *Bogwa* as a tradition is more of a personal responsibility towards a loved one rather than performing it as a necessity (Alindayo, 2020).

“Kalkal”/ Kail/ Sagpew. In Benguet, like the Ifugaos, they also practice the “*Kalkal*”/ *Kail/ Sagpew* ritual (the exhumation of the dead). The *Kail* “second burial” is a Ibaloy death-related practice of unearthing, cleaning, and reburying the remains of the dead depending on requests, demands, and complaints conveyed by the dead to the surviving kins (Ampaguey, 2018). Ibaloy traditional death rituals follow the pattern of the rites of passage. The different rites of separation, transition, and incorporation or reintegration aims to help both the living and the dead to manage the changes in their status resulting from the event of death (Camte-Bahni, 2018).

Dalos. In Mountain Province, *dalos* ritual is performed for the cleansing of people who went for a burial to prevent an illness to happen and *Legleg* is for the cleansing of a person upon arrival from a wake (Fiar-od, 1999). According to Dapig and Memeg (2025), all attendees of the burial participate in a ritual of washing their hands in a basin filled with water and guava leaves. This practice serves as a cleansing tradition, believed to ward off misfortune and remove lingering bad luck or prevent death to happen. After 3 days, the people also go and clean the water sources as this was used during wakes and it is considered dirty. During the duration of the wake water is one of the important elements for the cleansing rituals for healing.

Cañao/ Mangmang/ sida is deeply rooted in spiritual beliefs and practices, reflecting the community's connection to their ancestors and the natural world. By performing rituals to honor the spirits of deceased relatives, individuals maintain a sense of continuity and reverence for their heritage. These rituals serve as a reminder of the spiritual dimensions of life and the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with the spiritual realm.

Daw-es is practiced by the Igorots in all parts of the Cordillera, with some variations, depending on the place. The primary purpose of the ritual is to “cleanses” the mind of the survivors, especially the rescuers, in case of massive death like in landslides or deluge. It is also done to rid a place of evil spirits that cause tragedies for those living. *Daw-es* involves the butchering of a dog as offering to “*Kabunyan*,” primarily to remove the images of death in the minds of those still living and to dispel evil spirits. The animal used in doing the cleansing ritual is a dog (Agoot, 2018). Also, Carantes (1985) mentioned that *daw-es* is performed to avoid insanity, a dog or a small chick is offered during the ritual. The chick meat is buried with pebbles as a symbol that the curse is buried and has no power to affect the person. Michael “Pacsay” Tauli, a believer of the ritual, said the nature of the dog as a guardian is the primary reason for its use in the “cleansing” ritual. The dog’s bark shoos away the bad spirit. It bites, and it is a guardian. That is why it is used in the ritual. Tauli believes that dogs are both guardians and harbingers of death. They are portrayed as such in different cultures, places, and era, he said. In mythologies and in ethnic

cultures of some indigenous tribes, the dog is portrayed as a symbol of death and portrayed as a symbol of protection, he continued.

In addition, Barnabas Dapig (Personal Communication, May 15, 2025), a traditional healer shared that in Alab, Bontoc, Mountain Province, the elders performed *daw-es* if a village member encountered any accidents that cause trauma such as car accidents, murder/killings, conflict, and natural calamities that resulted to multiple deaths such as landslide, flush floods and others. He shared also that before they bring the body of the dead person to his/her home they bring first to the *Ato/dap-ay* to perform the *daw-es* ritual as a cleansing rite.

Rituals for Health Disasters/ Epidemics/ Pandemics

In the Cordillera, rituals during health-related disasters are performed as a curative and preventive healing rituals for many generations during community rest (Barnabas Dapig, Personal Communication, May 15, 2025). The community rest is locally called '*ngilin/ te-er/tengao/ obaya*' and it is observed during a community mourning or after a community tragedy for the community to cleanse, heal and recover, spiritually and emotionally (Scott, 1988). In other communities in the Cordillera, community rest specific for health-related disaster is called *sedey/ teer di far-en/ pakde*. During the Covid 19 Pandemic in 2020, the concept lockdown or quarantine was used to contain the virus from transmission. This preventive measure is new to the Indigenous Communities, according to Pooten (2020), the Igorots in the Cordillera have been practicing lockdown or community quarantine since the beginning of time. Some Igorot elders claim that Igorots also practiced *ngilin* during plagues to drive away bad spirits causing the disease while preventing transmission. During a community *ngilin*, people are strictly not allowed to roam around or make unnecessary movements or noises except for the cleansing rituals conducted. No one is allowed to enter or leave the community during the period.



Figure 2. Pudong, a cultural symbol

During the observance of the community rest day, the elders have to put up signs called *pudong* or knotted leaves of a plant, usually tiger grass, at the entrance and exit points of the community to signify that the village is in quarantine and that visitors are not welcome in the community as it is the rest day.

The Kankanaey people of Benguet, specifically Mankayan, also practice *pakde* or *kosde*. According to Sacla (1987) the elders require this ritual after an occurrence of successive death in the community with the belief that death-causing spirits are deterred from causing more deaths. *Pakde* was also performed during the covid 19 pandemic to drive away the virus that affected the whole community. In Sadanga, Mountain Province, *teer di far-en* (community rest) is practiced during health disasters like epidemics and pandemics. During the *teer* they prevented the entry and exit of people in the community to refrain sickness/ illness for entering the village.

Tebek ritual is performed to drive epidemics, cough and other ailments. 2 sticks, *Pudong*, fat meat, *tapey* (rice wine)/ *basi* (sugarcane wine), tobacco and *sabusab* (prayer) are the primary materials needed during the ritual. It is believed that these materials will scare the evil spirits who brought the sickness. If the unseen spirits will see or smell the ritual materials they will go back of where they came from. As mentioned by the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMR) or elders of Sadanga during the validation (May 27, 2025), this is the strictest ritual during health disasters. Hence, the elder who will perform the ritual must be clean, meaning he is not a widow, or no deaths from the family members to ensure the effectivity of the ritual. Value system such as the relationship of man to the God and the land and environment is also observed during the *teer*. "*bain*", *Paneyew/ inayan* (taboos) and respect are the values that are strengthened during the observance of the ritual.

Value Systems observed during Rituals

Since time immemorial, the Igorot in the Cordillera have been guided by their value system of *inayan / panyew, lawa (taboos) and ba-in (shame)*. *Inayan/ Panyew* means *do not do it* (taboo/ forbidden/ bad) that serves as warning. It is often relational and collectivist in nature. This serves as an ethical principle of what is right or wrong; of what is acceptable or unacceptable. It emphasizes the essence of harmonious relationship within the family, community and the other tribal groups (FGD with elders and IPMRs in Sadanga, Bontoc, Sagada, 2026). These values are strengthened during the observance of the rituals for peace building, death, and other community healing rituals. As mentioned by the elders during the interview on June 24, 2026, rituals have cultural meanings deep rooted in the community's traditions and played a vital role in resolving conflicts, and maintain peace and order in the community. These rituals are effectively performed because the people adhere to their indigenous values. *Ba-in* also is a form of discipline not to do something bad which will put your family and community into shame. It is also *kababain* (shameful) not to attend rituals and ceremonies since this is a social obligation. During community rituals, everyone observes the *ngilin* especially during the community rest where no one is allowed to go to the farm for 1 or 2 days.

Another value is *Ayyew*, this emphasizes the importance of frugality and not wasting resources and valuing life. This is interconnected with respect and appreciation of the hard work poured in coming up with resources. In context, during rituals, one should not waste or spill rice or foods because it is *ayyew*. Value every grain of rice, because it is believed that resources will vanish if wasted. Also, these are used for rituals and it is sacred.

In addition, during family or community rituals, the value of sharing and mutual help are inherent among community members. Every member of the family will attend the rituals bring food to share like cooked sweet potatoes, glutinous rice, rice wine or any alcoholic drinks, tobacco etc. others will go and lend a hand. Mutual help is either in kind or in cash. Most importantly, the presence is highly valued since attendance is a social obligation.

Important Elements of Healing Rituals

In the Cordillera, rituals and ceremonies are performed by the traditional healers. They have specializations in terms of healing. In Benguet, they are called *mansip-ok* (diagnostic), *Mambunong* (conduct ritual and prayers). In Mountain Province, diagnostic healers are also called "*mansip-ok*" and they have traditional healer partner who conduct rituals and prayers. In Ifugao, the traditional healers are called "*Mumbaki*" (they can diagnose cause of illness, perform rituals and prayers). Not everyone can perform the rituals, only those who have gifts from the ancestors and learned the tradition over the years.

Sacred ritual spaces are also important in conducting rituals. The *Ato/ dap-ay* is where most of the healing rituals are conducted. If someone died in an accident and brought home, they first bring the corpse to the Dap-ay and conduct cleansing ritual before it will be brought to his/her house. After the burial, the people who attended will go to the Dap-ay and wash their hands with a water soaked with guava leaves. The purpose of the ritual is to wash away bad luck before they will go home to their house (B. Dapig and B. Memeg, personal Communication, 2025).



Figure 3. Ato/Dap-ay. Community ritual sacred site



Figure 4. Papatayan and Apoyan

Another is the *Patpatayan*. It is a sacred site where they conduct community rituals such as *tengao* or community rest day during health disasters, planting and harvest season or agricultural calendars. Also, each clan has their own *Apoyan*, it is where they performed rituals to offer food/ sacrificial animals to the ancestors who inflict sickness to their living relatives. The purpose of the ritual is to appease their ancestors through sacrificing animals such as chicken or pigs depending on the diagnosis of the *Mansip-ok* or traditional healers who can communicate with the unseen. Ritual sites where rituals will be performed depends on the type and cause of the rituals to be conducted. These are usually determined by the traditional healers.

Moreover, ritual implements such as sacrificial animals for offering to the unseen/ ancestors are vital part of the ritual. The type of animals to be butchered depends on the type and cause of the ritual to be performed. In the Cordillera, the common animals used for rituals are pigs, chicken, carabaos, cow and dogs. For cleansing rituals especially *daw-es* ritual, dogs are butchered. According to one of the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory representatives during the interview (June 2026), all these animals mentioned above are used during rituals conducted in the *ato/ dap-ay* except vegetables. Also, the common foods use during rituals are *watwat* (big chunks of meat), "*pinikpikan*" or chicken, *etag* (salted meat), *Tapey* (rice wine), *basi/ bayas* (sugarcane wine), *sabeng* (fermented cassava or camote), camote or sweet potato, *diket* or glutinous rice. They also use flower which symbolizes prosperity, knife or bolo for protection against evil minds, tobacco for the ancestors, and water for cleansing and healing. (B.Dapig and B.Memeg, Personal Communication, April 26, 2025).



Figure 5. Ritual Implements

Another important element of the ritual is the prayer and chants to be performed during rituals. Prayers aims to communicate to the unseen, only the traditional healers have the gift to communicate to the underworld. However, with some exceptions, there are ritualists who can perform prayers and rituals but they learned these through years of apprenticeship from elder healers. And lastly, taboos and omens are strictly observed during rituals.

Change and Continuities of Rituals

Over the years, there are some changes in the performance of the rituals due to external and emerging factors like introduction of religious beliefs, cash economy people need to work for greener Pastures, urban migration, passing away of traditional healers, non-practice of rituals as avenue to learn the traditions and other reasons. However, despite the changes some modifications were adopted by the indigenous communities to suit the change of the time while maintaining the cultural meanings of the rituals. One explicit change in the conduct of rituals is the

number of days to observe the *ngilin* was shorten, for example, the observance of rituals is usually 3 days or more but today they can shorten into one day considering the nature of work of the family and community members to be affected. The number of animals to be butchered can also be negotiated for example, from 5 or more pigs it can be lessened into 2 just to feed the community. Sometimes the required pigs can be negotiated into chicken instead if the family cannot afford. It was also observed, that the traditional wines such as *tapey* (rice wine) and *fayas* (sugar cane wines) were changed into alcoholic drinks as an alternative. In the past, the family who plans to conduct ritual prepare traditional wines one year before the planned date for the rituals however, due to scarcity of resources for the raw materials and lack of knowledge to prepare such wines. The family now prefers to buy alcoholic drinks as an alternative.

Another sad reality is that there are few traditional healers who choose to practice rituals for healing. Hence, to arrest the disappearance of the indigenous healing practices, there are apprentice who are being trained by the elder healers. However, it should be noted that only rituals for healing than can be learned through apprenticeship but not a diagnostic healing since this is a gift from the ancestors to the chosen one who can take the responsibility to become a healer

In the past, family and clan rituals and ceremonies are considered community affairs hence, it is a social obligation to attend and participate in the ritual, however nowadays, it has been observed that only few children and youth are attending the ceremonies. As mentioned by the elders (FGD, February 2026) the youth are now busy with their cellphones and the influence of social media affected their interest to learn their cultural heritage

Conclusions and Recommendations

Cordillerans perform ceremonies and rituals as part of their everyday living. Rituals are performed as an effective means of communicating their requests for blessings and thanks to the Supreme Being, the spirits, deities and for their healing and well-being. There are community rituals during epidemics, pandemics, or health related disasters, as well as agricultural rituals to ensure food security and the well-being of the community. In addition, there are specific rituals for the indigenous peace processes and governance system which aims for restorative justice. The sustainability and effectivity of the rituals is associated with the availability of the traditional healers in the community. The power of prayers and chants to be delivered during the rituals, the foods, sacrificial animals and other materials, and the observance of taboos, omens and beliefs are vital part of the ritual. The absence of one component may affect the result of the ritual. Over the years, the change and continuities of the ritual depend on the adaptability of the indigenous communities to suit the change of the time. Hence, modifications are adopted as long as it serves its cultural purpose. However, the lack of interest of the youth to learn about the cultural significance of these rituals coupled with other external pressures contribute to the slowly disappearance of these rituals that sustain the Indigenous through generations.

It is therefore imperative to integrate indigenous knowledge into the academic curriculum, particularly healing rituals and their cultural significance, to ensure that younger generations understand, value, and preserve these traditions. The academe serves as a vital space for transmitting and appreciating such practices, safeguarding them from disappearing and allowing them to endure as living heritage rather than disappearing like a natural death..

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