



## **Beyond Sustenance: Exploring the Cultural and Narrative Significance of Rice in Five Ifugao Narratives**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Ifugao is recognized worldwide for its Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) and the Ifugao Rice Terraces (IRT) which is inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage List in 1995. For the Ifugaos, tinawon rice is the center of their life, tradition and festivities. Various narratives take tinawon rice as their inspiration, with each narrative presenting its unique depiction of rice. Through a qualitative approach, this paper argues that the selected narratives rationalize the establishment of tinawon rice as the foundation for the rites, practices, social organization, and value systems. Furthermore, rice is a symbol of mutual exchange and partnership between the Skyworld and the first people of Ifugao, ensuring well-being. Lastly, rice symbolizes the favorable response of the gods to human needs. Consequently, the absence of the tinawon rice would lead to the cultural and literary demise of the Ifugao people, marking the rise and fall of Ifugao literary and cultural heritage.

### **RESUMO**

Ifugao é reconhecido mundialmente por seus Sistemas de Patrimônio Agrícola de Importância Global (GIAHS) e pelos Terraços de Arroz de Ifugao (IRT), inscritos na Lista do Patrimônio Mundial da UNESCO em 1995. Para os Ifugaos, o arroz tinawon é o centro de sua vida, tradição e festividades. Várias narrativas tomam o arroz tinawon como inspiração, com cada narrativa apresentando sua representação única do arroz. Por meio de uma abordagem qualitativa, este artigo argumenta que as narrativas selecionadas racionalizam o estabelecimento do arroz tinawon como base para os ritos, práticas, organização social e sistemas de valores. Além disso, o arroz é um símbolo de troca mútua e parceria entre o Mundo Celeste e os primeiros povos de Ifugao, garantindo bem-estar. Por fim, o arroz simboliza a resposta favorável dos deuses às necessidades humanas. Consequentemente, a ausência do arroz tinawon levaria ao declínio cultural e literário do povo Ifugao, marcando a ascensão e queda da herança literária e cultural Ifugao.

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## Introduction

'Rice is life' applies to most Asians because it constitutes their meals (Gnanamanickam, 2009). Some Asians eat rice every meal while some eat it once daily. Along with the practice of eating rice also comes different ways of cooking rice. Some simply boil it while some drain the water once it starts to simmer. Not only do Asians view rice as a component of their daily meals. Some view rice more than their staple food. In fact, many Asian societies view rice as the center of their cultural tradition.

Countries like China, India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Philippines practice traditions that are identified with rice. Rice not only serves as their main crop but is also their food symbolic of the sustenance of a people and of a culture reflected by their cuisine linked to their beliefs and values.

In China, rice is used in Chinese traditional festivals. Moreover, it is viewed as a symbol of good luck and prosperity. In India, rice is believed to be a symbol of fertility and abundance, thus, it is used in traditional Indian dishes. In Indonesia, rice stands for national identity and is a major component in Indonesia's culture and cuisine. In Bangladesh, rice is symbolic for national pride. In Thailand, rice is used in their national dishes and is also considered as the symbol of their national pride. In Myanmar, rice symbolizes national identity. In Japan, rice is considered as a symbol of good luck and prosperity.

Rice in Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Vietnam and Taiwan is a symbol of national identity. In the Philippines, rice is a symbol of national pride. This implies that since Asia is a rice-eating continent, they perceive rice as a symbol of abundance and prosperity. Moreover, people in Asia tend to practice cultures that are more focused on community and cooperation. On the other hand, people who eat wheat perceive wheat as a symbol of strength and resilience, thus, they tend to focus on individualism and independence.

Different countries in Asia celebrate rice. In Korean, during the month of May, an event titled Asian Heritage Worship Month celebrates rice through their Rice is Heaven activity. Accordingly, the eating of rice is assuming the work of heaven, earth, and human beings together. To eat rice implies a sacred act as well as a symbol of joys and tears and of interconnectedness and community. In Thailand during the mid-year, the Thai ethnic people in Mai Chau located in Vietnam prepare for celebration of the New Rice Festival.

Rice in Japan is of great importance; hence, it is revered as the essence of their culture not only because rice was cultivated in Japan for 2000 years but because of its use in Japanese art, literature and music. Moreover, rice is used in many festivals and ceremonies. In fact, aspects of Japanese social, cultural and political behavior are linked with rice cultivation. The concept of *amae* (feelings of dependence and indulgence) is associated with wet rice cultivation which is laborious and one which cannot be accomplished easily. People living in a cluster had to pool together to provide the necessary labor to finish the task. Moreover, the post-harvest

products like sake (rice wine) and mochi (rice cakes) are from the rice grain and stalks which serve as beverages and snacks. Rice as an important commodity in the society determined wealth as expressed by the use of sho (a measure of rice). Rice, thus, can be used as a means of trade (Wojtan, 1993).

Rice for Thai Buddhism is more than just a means of satisfying hunger since it has deep cultural and religious meanings. In fact, Thais from both rural and urban areas greet with “have you eaten rice yet?” This greeting implies that one’s hunger for rice and that other foods like bread or noodles does not make one satisfied or full. Rice for the Thais is likened to an animal or human that possesses a soul (khwan). This belief necessitates the Thais to perform rituals that revolve around the rice. One ritual involves the bringing of rain to wash away bad luck. Regular offerings to the rice goddess (Mae Prosob) and the guardian spirits of the rice fields are a requisite to a bountiful harvest. Rice for the Thais is a gift from the gods and a necessity for their spiritual welfare (Esterik, 1984).

Rice is life! This statement strongly implies that rice is a symbol of life. It is not only a food stuff in the Philippines but that rice is deeply ingrained in the life, culture and traditions of the country. Rice Science for a Better World (2014), advanced that many farmers in the Philippines believe that spirits reside within the grains and the stalks of the rice. Thus, it is necessary to follow specific rice cultivation techniques, otherwise, the spirits would be angered. Rice is life advances the idea that rice symbolizes life, abundance, and fertility.

Moreover, rice is viewed as a prestige food which is given to chiefs and overlords as a tribute and a sign of respect. Rice also symbolizes prosperity and wealth becoming a social and economic symbol in the society. Rice is also a crop which is religiously worshipped and used in many spiritual rituals as a cleansing tool.

Stories about rice are either expressed through myths or legends. In Asia, the origin of rice is expressed through myths. The following countries in Asia have rice myths. Cambodia, China, Laos, Indonesia, India, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. The following features are common across the myths: the battle of the gods in heaven, mercy of the goddesses to the people, sacrifice, reincarnation of a goddess to be a rice plant and reincarnation from being human to being a rice plant and that the characters are either the sky and the earth, the sky and the jungle and the sky and the field.

Manuel Arguilla (1938) wrote about the conditions of rice farmers of his hometown, Nagrebcan, La Union in the short story titled, Rice. This short story mentioned that the significance of rice to people differs depending on their needs. The literary work’s context remains consistent with the ideology that rice is a staple food for everyone’s social status and power in the society. Moreover, this short story emphasizes the significance of food security in the country and a call for social justice especially among the farmers.

Rice and Bullets (Ocampo, 1969) is set during the Martial Law years in the Philippines. This story advances that one of the reasons for violence is the absence of food, i.e., rice as well

as the injustices experienced because of poverty. In addition, the novel, *Love in the Rice Fields*, narrated the story of two young people, Maria and Luis, who fell in love while working in the fields. The love of Maria and Luis is likened to rice, where rice planting has its own challenges as it is labor intensive and requires effort, dedication and time. Sacrifice is done before the fruit is enjoyed. Rice and love symbolize fertility and abundance but requires sacrifices of effort and time.

Rice in the Filipino culture signifies multiple things. First, it is the significant food of the elites synonymous to power and wealth. During the Spanish colonization, rice was synonymous with social power relations as rice were given to Spanish chiefs as '*tributes*'. During the COVID-19 pandemic, relief packages containing a few kilos of rice were distributed. Although, the rice may not be of high quality and was few kilos only, it served as a lifeline of the poor, a symbol of hope, cultural unity, well-being, and sustenance of the Filipinos across the country during the pandemic time. The distribution of rice is intertwined with the Filipino culture of *bayanihan*, a strong Filipino trait (Esmero, 2022).

'*Kumain ka na?*' is a common Filipino greeting. This is not only a form of greeting but is also an expression of hospitality among the Filipinos. As rice people, Filipinos eat rice in every meal. In fact, the dinner table was designed as the avenue to share stories after the day's work, catch-up with friends, and discuss future plans over a plate of rice and *ulam/viand*. There is that belief that a shared meal of rice strengthens relationship. On the other hand, a meal that would not include rice is generally not considered a proper lunch or dinner. Rice tastes plain and bland because this is eaten with flavorful viands, thus, rice is meant to complement great food. This expression is often given of rice: The food was so good, I ended up eating a lot of rice.

In the Cordillera Administrative Region, rice is a very important crop. Not only is rice the staple food of the *Cordillerans* but that rice is source of livelihood. The people continue to protect their rice fields and their terraces in order to provide food and livelihood for the next generation. Land is life and is sacred. This is fundamental to their worldview.

Among the wisdom practiced by people in Cordillera Administrative Region are the following: Rice is our life. It is what we eat every day. It is what we feed our children. It is what we sell to make a living (Ifugao farmer); Rice if more than just food. It is our culture. It is our identity. It is our way of life (Kalinga elder); and, Rice is our future. We need to protect our rice fields and our terraces. They are our heritage and our lifeline (Benguet student).

Where does the love for rice spring from among the Cordillerans? Among the Ibalays is the belief that rice is a gift. As a gift, it was meant to be celebrated through offering to the spirits or deities. In fact, the people of Benguet are noted because of traditional feasts and rituals, such as the *kosdey*. This rite is performed to maintain the fertility of the soil and is observed when the rice blooms in the field. This ritual is done when the moon rises in the month of May.

Ifugao as a province of the Cordillera Administrative Region is home to the epics, Alim and Hudhud, and the Ifugao Rice Terraces which is inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage List in 1995. Further, Ifugao is recognized in the world for its Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). This implies that the IRT is recognized as an agricultural landscape that possess remarkable land use systems and landscapes that are rich in globally significant biological biodiversity evolving from the adaptation of community with its environment and its needs and aspirations for sustainable development. Relative to this recognition, folk narratives linked to rice, rice cultivation, rice gods and harvest exist in the community.

All year-round international tourists frequent Ifugao for various reasons. Some come for the Ifugao Rice Terraces and Batad and Tapia Falls Experience. Some come for the yearly provincial wide fiesta called Gotad ad Ifugao where they get a taste of Ifugao through their festivities. Others come to immerse themselves to the culture of Ifugaos like the Japanese students who, through the *Satoyama* Meister Program, come to study the architecture and operations of the Ifugao Rice Terraces. Indeed, 'Bring home Ifugao' not only applies to the products they bring home but covers their experiences about the Ifugao's way of life, their culture, literature and arts. Mahgoub and Alsoud (2015) supported this by stating that consumers like tourists buy products because they want to be connected with indigenous traditions and cultures.

Historically, head-hunting as a practice during the olden days was considered as a means of advancing social status. As a result, members of the community are able to sustain their nobility (kinakadangyan) status through head-hunting practices. The food that sustained them was taro/gabi or locally known as *latud*, *pihing* or *aba*, as a result, this root crop was cultivated among the mountain slopes. However, as people abandoned their head-hunting practices, they engaged in upland farming of rice. Legend tells of a monitor lizard who showed the first people of Kiyangan the source of water eventually leading to the crafting of the *huyung* or a form of water irrigation from the mountains to the valley. Through the system of barter with Chinese traders, rice seeds reached *Kiyangan*. With the *huyung*, the technology of upland rice farming was first established in *Kiyangan*. The mountain slopes were carved, thus, the stairway to the sky metaphor was borne; water from the mountains were funneled by the canals placed at the middle of the terraces to reach all the rice paddies. As a result, the rise to nobility shifted from valor to industry.

An individual's prestige in the society shifted from the number of heads hunted to the numbers of slopes carved on the mountain and the number of granaries filled every harvest season. Since harvest is once every year, the rice which is harvested is locally called *tinawon* (yearly). Soon, rites and ceremonies were established to sustain, celebrate and restore the communion of the people with their gods and nature. Since the tinawon rice is considered a gift of the gods, the ways of life of the Ifugaos are anchored on rice, thus, they were able to thrive and be self-sufficient even in the remoteness of their communities.

Since majority of the literature gathered across Asia presented rice as a staple food, it is also significant to study the tinawon rice as a symbol encompassing literary and cultural meaning. It is along these lines that studies are wanting since rice is studied independently in the fields of environmental science and economics. If rice were studied in literature, it would be folktales of rice-eating provinces expressed in their local languages. Moreover, the study of rice would go hand-in-hand with culture encompassing rice rituals.

This current study aims to explore the literary and cultural meaning of tinawon rice among the indigenous people of the Province of Ifugao through five narratives composed of legend, folktales and an essay. The table below shows the titles, the genre and a brief description of the narrative.

**Table 1.**  
Description of the Narratives

<b>Title</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Description/Relevance</b>
<i>The Origin of Tinawon Rice</i>	<i>Legend</i>	This narrative recount how people on earth gained access to rice which was the staple of the gods in the Skyworld.
<i>The Story of Liddum</i>	<i>Folktale</i>	This narrative recount the role of the god Liddum to the lives of the people on earth. Through Liddum, the people were able to learn the technology of rice cultivation. As a consequence, rituals are performed in his honor.
<i>Why the Ifugaos Made Bulul</i>	<i>Folktale</i>	This narrative recount the presence of food shortage since food was acquired through hunting. Liddum gave the first bundle of rice which was first cultivated following the god's order about terracing.
<i>The Unexpected Exchange Rice, Meat, Humans and Gods</i>	<i>Essay</i>	This narrative recount that fire, which was in the possession of human beings, was taught to the people of the Skyworld especially Ledu. In exchange for the fire, rice was gifted.
<i>A Rice Ritual Abuwab Tale</i>	<i>Folktale</i>	This narrative recount the preparation of the couple for their rice harvest. For a yearly bountiful harvest, the husband was keen on procuring fattened livestock for the rice harvest.

## Related Literature

A number of researches reviewed focused on perceptions of other cultures about rice. Callaway (2014) stated that civilization in Asia was established on rice. Archeological evidence showed that rice was cultivated in India and China as early as 8,000 years ago. Rice was domesticated in many locations in Asia and that domestication began with *oryza rufipogon*. In fact, the nomadic hunter gatherers were able to find a reason to stay in one place as farmers, thus, giving rise to the first urban centers, empires and dynasties.

Rishikesh (2018) advanced that the life and livelihood of the diverse cultural communities in Kathmandu Valley have been closely connected to the ecosystem, spirituality and socio-cultural practices of Kathmandu Valley. In fact, the study revealed that a correlation

exists between the schedule of religious festivals and the onset of monsoon rains because their relationship with rice is spiritual rather than economic. Moreover, the Newar practice a number of rituals and beliefs associated with the coming of the monsoon rains. Collectively, the monsoon rains are gifts from the gods, thus, they are honored and respected.

Zhou (2018) argued that people coming from rice regions have a different perception of the nature of public goods as compared to the perception of people from non-rice regions. People from rice regions put premium on rice since this is attached to a cultural norm coming from a history of farming affecting the entire population living in that society. Thus, the process of rice cultivation ushers a cooperative social norm across societies and cultures.

On the other hand, some studies collected focused also on rice production, systems and challenges. DeSilva (2011) forwarded that the productivity and efficiency of farmers is affected by the relationship between the spatiality, spread and temporally of market institutions. In fact, remoteness and farm outcomes has a direct relationship. Population growth also influence the expansion of markets and connectivity of villages and market centers.

From India, Wischnath (2014) advanced that increased levels of political violence decreased harvest. Further, climate change will have a negative effect on local food production and economic activity, thus, becoming a potent reason for fighting in areas where there exist scenes of chronic conflict. This study provided information about the relationship between food production and conflict severity in India. Food production suffers because of economic inequality, religious and ethnic divisions, government corruption and legacy of colonialism. The study presented three complementary processes where loss of food production may increase during conflicts and these are: lowered opportunity costs of rebelling where people would most likely rebel if food production is low; increased opportunities for recruitment where the chances of the underemployed to be recruited by rebel groups is high if food production is low; and, accentuated and more widespread social grievances where people would feel aggrieved, increasing their chances to support rebel groups if food production is low. The recommendation of the study is to craft policies that are supportive of increasing food production and reducing food insecurity in order to reduce the risk of conflicts.

Based on the literatures cited, the following observations are advanced: the studies gathered were under the auspices of agriculture and rural development, political and social sciences; majority of the studies were conducted by international and national scholars; the researches were not funded by any funding agency as majority are requirements to a higher education; the studies were conducted recently, thus, they focused on the phenomenon concurrent to the challenges encountered by the people as identified in the locale; rice, rice varieties, rice farming, rice production and consumption surfaced as the common topic discussed; and, most of the findings are relevant to the experiences of the respondents as identified by the study.

Since Ifugao is home to the Ifugao Rice Terraces, this current study would like to study rice in the field of literature, focusing on five selected narratives that touch rice. The dearth of writers in the field of literature among State Universities and Colleges would certainly result to the neglect of literary outcomes, thus, the coverage would most likely include a listing of tourist destinations in the region, local products that were marketed in the industry and histories of landmarks in the region.

## Methodology

This study used the qualitative research design because it sought to understand the meaning of human experiences and interactions through the collection of non-numerical data. To do get these non-numerical data, five narratives were selected for this study through the following criterion: relevance to the core themes associated with *tinawon* rice; representativeness of the Ifugao culture; accessibility and availability of the folk narratives; analytical potential and ethical considerations. The narratives chosen address the origin of rice including rituals necessary for rice field preparation, for harvest, and requisites for an abundant harvest. Moreover, they represent different storytelling styles of different ethnic groups namely the Tuwali of Kiangnan and Hingyon, and Ayangan of Ducligan. They also possess analytical potential since embedded in them are linguistic and cultural elements that may be explored further. Lastly, the narratives engage the local cultural knowledge of the Ifugaos who produce and eat them.

The five narratives were interpreted through textual analysis in order to identify the literary and cultural assumptions embedded in the narratives. In doing so, the researcher would be able to understand the ways in which the indigenous people of Ifugao make sense of who they are and how they fit into the world in which they live in. Along with textual analysis is cultural semiotics that claims that the essence of culture lies in the symbols, the representation system of human beings encompassing the collection of human spiritual and material elements, including thought, behavior, literature, art, legal system, material products and so on (Long, 2021).

The analysis of the narratives followed the following stages: Stage 1/Textual Analysis; and, Stage 2/ Cultural Semiotics. Under Stage 1/Textual Analysis, the following guide questions were used: what are the signs/descriptions/elements related to rice; and, what important messages do the narratives convey/signify. On the other hand, for Stage 2/Cultural Semiotics, the following guide questions were also utilized: what descriptions were used for rice; what signifiers were used around rice; what denotative meaning is used for rice; what connotations are associated with rice; what beliefs and values about rice are reflected in the narratives; in what way are these narratives significant to the culture; and, how do the narratives sustain the culture of the people eating it? Results of the analysis was validated

through a validation instrument by two literature teachers who are familiar with the literature and culture of Ifugao. Their suggestions and feedback were incorporated in the study.

The study was conducted in Ifugao, Cordillera Administrative Region, in Northern Luzon, Philippines. The data used in this current study are considered to be primary data since these narratives were compiled, translated, digitized and published as instructional materials prepared by teachers in the Department of Education Ifugao. Copies of these were cataloged in the Learning Resource Center of DepEd Ifugao, thus, permission from the center was sought first. Upon approval of the request, the catalog searching, collection browsing, and borrowing of resource materials were conducted.

## Results and Discussion

The rice under investigation by this current study has a few names. The study of Glover and Stone (2018) termed it heirloom rice, which accordingly, is a social construct intended as a marketing strategy in order to advertise the commercialization of the Ifugao rice varieties. On the contrary, rice was commonly understood as the heirloom rice, a plant variety that existed for around 50-100 years (Negro, 2019). Moreover, this variety is open-pollinated, that is, it reproduces naturally. Locally, this heirloom rice is called “*tinawon*” which means “*once a year or yearly*.”

Accordingly, the traditional rice, is the center of the Ifugao way of life. In fact, the social structure was defined by rice through rituals that required the invocation of a thousand or so agricultural gods. Moreover, the cultivation of rice reflects a cooperative approach of the community manifested by their act of coming together to share in the year-long labor-intensive preparation for rice (Martin, 2017).

**Table 2.**

### The Origin of Tinawon Rice

*Long time ago in a faraway village, there lived two brothers named Ballitoc and Cabbigat. They went hunting every day in the forest and were not always lucky as there were days that they were not able to hunt any animal.*

*The family had a dog that was always tied at the post of their house. One day, it got loose and ran after their chickens and gobbled them up one after another. Cabbigat was enraged that he ran after it and beat it with the door bar to stop it.*

*“Stop,” his father shouted. “Be kind to it. It might be a hunting dog because it is a raw meat-eater.”*

*One day, Cabbigat and Ballitoc took the dog along with them to the forest. Upon unleashing it, the whole forest suddenly turned into a disarray when animals of all kinds and sizes suddenly began scampering, jumping and flying in all directions, squawking, chirping and the likes as it madly ran after them. More were coming out of their dens and the noisier the whole forest became as it continued running about. In a little while, it was barking wildly in a distance. The two brothers quickly followed it and they saw that it was running after a big wild pig. They followed them around the forest, up to the mountaintop and then beyond. Coming upon a village up in the sky, the wild pig suddenly stopped running so the two brothers killed it. When its blood was drained, they cut it into pieces and roasted some.*

*That same morning, the children of the gods and goddesses smelled a strange aroma coming from below. They all ran down to see what it was. They found Ballitoc and Cabbigat eating roasted meat.*

*The two brothers then roasted some more pieces of the meat and gave the children each a piece. How amazed they were when they tasted the meat. They immediately ran to see Liddum and gave him a piece of the roasted meat. "Hmmm! It tasted so good! It is different from the raw meat that we eat every day," Liddum said. "Where did you get this?"*

*The children led him to where Cabbigat and Ballitoc were roasting. "Aha! So it is your fire that made the meat tastes so delicious!" he said. "Give me your fire and I will pay for it."*

*"We can't give you fire but we can teach you how to build one," Ballitoc said.*

*The two brothers taught Liddum how to build fire by rubbing two dried bamboo stems together. Liddum was very happy when he started one by himself.*

*He went home and build fire on the floor of his house. When the fire started eating the floor on all sides, he was frightened so he called for help.*

*Cabbigat and Ballitoc put out the fire and made a hearth on one of the corners of his house. "It is here where you should build fire," Cabbigat said.*

*Liddum gave Cabbigat and Ballitoc rice bundles in gratitude for teaching him how to build fire. "Plant them and you will have plenty of food to eat," he said.*

*The two brothers took the rice bundles and went home. They were very proud to inform their father that they not only did hunt a wild pig but also palay.*

*Their father instructed them to go and clear their land in Imbiday and plant the rice grains. The two brothers obeyed. They went to Imbiday day after day and cleared the land and made rice terraces. Then they planted the rice grains. They were very happy to have rice which they called tinawon in Hingyon and tinoon in Kiangnan, the taste of which matched so well with roasted meat.*

*This is the origin of the Ifugao native rice which up to the present time, is being planted on the terraces that were build years ago.*

Based on the narrative, The Origin of Tinawon Rice, the following elements can be obtained about rice: that Liddum, a god, was the giver of the rice bundles; that Cabbigat and Ballitoc were the recipients of the rice bundles; that the rice bundles were the object that was given and is representative of potential food; that planting was the action Cabbigat and Ballitoc were instructed to take with the rice bundles; that the outcome of planting the rice bundles would be food; and that the emotion behind the giving of the rice bundles was gratitude.

A deeper analysis of the individual elements would also imply interesting details about relationship. Cabbigat and Ballitoc and Liddum implies a relationship that highlights the act of teaching and learning, with Liddum having knowledge and Cabbigat and Ballitoc acting as recipients of the knowledge. The rice bundle served as a token of appreciation for this knowledge transfer. In fact, the rice bundles as an alternative food aside from roasted meat emphasizes the practicality of the gift because the rice bundles represented not just food itself, but the potential for future sustenance and self-sufficiency.

Liddum instructed the two brothers to plant highlighting the connection of planting and food. This connection underscores the cyclical nature of life and the importance of work and foresight. Yes, man needs food to survive, however, he must also plan and plant. Although planting the rice requires effort now, it promises food in the future.

Liddum gave the two brothers a bundle of rice as a sign of gratitude for the fire. This highlights gratitude and giving rice bundles is an act of compensating gratitude. This connection ties the emotion to the action. The rice bundles were not just a gift, but a symbol of Liddum's appreciation for the knowledge he received from the two brothers. On the other hand, the exchange benefited both Liddum and Cabbigat and Ballitoc. Liddum and his children were able to have a savoring meal of meat through the fire. In like manner, the two brothers

were given an alternative form of food which was more sustaining than meat gathered from hunting.

This legend shows that the communal practice of exchanging is practiced by members of the society. There are at least three forms of exchange practiced by the members of the society. First, the exchange is often expressed in the management of shared resources like water, land and tools. As a result, communal facilities for storing facilities and rules for their use promoted cooperation and social cohesion. Second, labor can be exchanged for labor. During the preparation of rice fields, labor often becomes scarce, thus, labor is exchanged for labor. This is expressed through the community concept of *ubbu*, a form of negotiation understood as “I will come to work in your field today for free but you have to come to work in my field also for free.” In the exchange process, the exact monetary value is overlooked since the emphasis is the strengthening of relationships. Third, the increased food production created surpluses that facilitated trade and exchange with other communities leading to interaction and cultural exchange. The presence of precious stones in the community exemplifies this exchange. As shown by the legend, the technology of fire was exchanged with rice. Thereby, benefitting both parties.

This exchange between Liddum and the two brothers resulted to a more stable form of livelihood, rice farming. Consequently, rice farming is a more solid means of forming a community as against hunting. The technology of cultivating rice demands collective effort. Unlike hunting, rice cultivation demands tasks that are labor intensive which the members of a family cannot perform by themselves. Building irrigation systems and threshing require the strength of the male members while planting, transplanting, weeding, and harvesting require the patience and nurture of the women. Moreover, rice farming led to the development of social structures. Since rice cultivation requires a collective action, a figure is necessary to organize and coordinate communal efforts. This need led to the designation of roles and responsibilities establishing the foundation of a more organized community.

Unlike hunting which requires frequent movement, rice cultivation requires a settled lifestyle. This settled lifestyle allows the farmer to manage the rice crops throughout the growing season. From the water system to the birds that hovers the rice stalks, the farmer needs to be on guard, thus, he needs to stay and ground himself to be a member of a community.

The cultivation of rice symbolized the close association of humans and the gods. As the legend tells, the gods had primary ownership over the rice grains. This was cultivated and consumed in the Skyworld. When rice was shared to Cabbigat and Ballitoc, this implied that people began to cultivate and consume rice, too. The consumption of a similar staple food meant that the gods and humans share a common bond. This idea is supported by the poem of Kim Ji-ha titled, *Rice is Heaven*, that has implied that eating rice is a sacred act since there is joy, tears and interconnectedness. In fact, the act of eating rice meant assuming the work of

earth, heaven and human together. A bowl of rice represents the cooperation of earth, heaven and human labor and is meant to be shared with each other.

The Ifugaos have a strong cultural attachment to rice especially their tinawon (yearly), a local name for their rice. Before the planting season until the harvest season, different rice rituals are conducted to ask for a bountiful harvest. This is anchored on the belief that the gods and the descendants of Cabbigat and Ballitoc are in mutual partnership. A bountiful harvest implies that the grains are full, that weeds would not spread in the same amount as the stalks planted; that birds would not hover over the rice stalks; and that water would be sufficient for the year. The blessings of Maknongan are invoked through rituals beginning with lukya which literally means opening where the bundled and unthreshed rice may be taken out from the rice granary and ending with kahiw where the people are now allowed to consume aquatic foods and vegetables that classified as vines.

From the literary point of view, rice is a symbol of understanding and partnership of gods and the people. Consequently, the cultural aspect of rice reminds young people especially in Ifugao that sustaining a bountiful harvest meant sustaining the mutual understanding and partnership of the gods and the first rice planters. Felipe Landa Jocano (1967) advanced that as people seek for a living, they perform and observe rites and ceremonies in order to win the goodwill of the supernatural powers. Reasons for observing these rituals is not only limited to wanting to have a good harvest but to also deal with the spirits and coping with events including natural calamities. Relative to the current study, sustaining partnership with the gods or the supernatural beings through thanksgiving practices or rituals would reaffirm bonds between the people and the gods.

**Table 3.**  
The Story of Liddum

*One day, Liddum of the skyworld came to earth to teach Ballituk and Bagan how to grow rice and raise pigs and chickens.*

*The next time that Liddum came to earth, he saw that there were already children and many grandchildren of Ballituk and Bagan. He saw that there were plenty of rice, pigs and chickens, too.*

*Liddum asked: "What do you do with all the rice, pigs and chickens?"*

*"We eat all of it!" replied the people.*

*"But you must offer sacrifices to the gods and perform several rituals," said Liddum.*

*How are we going to offer sacrifices and perform the rituals?" asked the people.*

*So, Liddum taught them how to perform the Baki for good health and wealth. He also taught them the rituals to be performed in each stage of the rice cycle; rituals for the different stages in the life of man and other rituals like Uyaay, Kolot, and Hagabi.*

*At another time, Liddum visited the earth. He again asked: "People of the earth, what did you do with all your rice, pigs and chickens?"*

*"We did what you told us to do. We performed the Baki and offered sacrifices to the gods!" answered the people.*

*Liddum said: "You still have more than enough rice, pigs and chickens. You should also perform some rituals to protect your wealth and to protect yourselves from your enemies."*

*"How shall we do it?" asked the people.*

*So Liddum taught the people how to perform the Hagoho, a ritual to curse an enemy and also the ditak, a rite of sacrifice after a headhunting expedition.*

*To an Ifugao mumbaki, Liddum is known as the great teacher.*

'How to grow rice' as presented by the folktale was a technology taught by Liddum to Ballituk and Bugar. This implied that Liddum was the source of knowledge while Ballituk and Bugar were the receivers of knowledge. This knowledge empowered the couple to conquer food scarcity and create sustenance and self-sufficiency. Moreover, 'how to grow rice' represented the significance of the cyclical nature of work, that is, to sustain food stability, people needed to work together- to grow rice. To grow rice meant that there is food

The abundant rice and livestock produce of Ballituk and Bugar signified their obedient application of the knowledge given to them. As a result, Liddum went on further and taught them 'how to perform rituals' to sustain the surplus as well as protect the owners of the rice.

The semiotic theory unravels that a cyclical relationship between Ballituk and Bugar with Liddum was formed for as the couple received rice which established their wealth, this wealth would propel them to deepen their relationship with Liddum, who was their revered teacher, through rituals. For as long as this relationship was sustained, rice would be sustained, too.

The folktale implied that rice was a symbol of knowledge and an offering to gain kiphodan, a local term for well-being, not only of an individual but of the community. In addition, it was also Liddum who taught the people what to do with the rice and animals. Rice then symbolizes a cycle of planting/raising and sharing/offering leading to well-being.

One of the rich Ifugao cultures was their practice of thanksgiving. Often, this thanksgiving was held after every harvest. This was commonly referred to as kulpi. This is a community festivity meant to thank Maknongan for a bountiful harvest. Chicken and rice were sacrificed in the ritual performance. Hamul or general eating took place at the granary of the wealthiest family. Prayers were offered by the elders; dancing and singing were performed too.

Similar to the findings of the current study were the findings of Penny Van Esteric (1984) where she specifically stated that a good yield was the result of good acts. This implied that a good harvest was the result of good acts which may include generosity and compassion. Common to Ifugao and Thai was the concept of sharing and offering relative to rice and abundant harvest.

Rice as introduced by the folktale was the cause why people of a community come together. Metaphorically, the stickiness of cooked rice glued people together. Since, wet rice planting was too laborious, both the kadangyan (a title attached to prestige) and nawotwot (members who are not affluent) came together to cause the rice to be planted and eventually to be harvested. On the other hand, the short story titled, *Rice*, written by Manuel Arguilla depicted two views of rice: for the lowly people, rice is of value and of use in order to satisfy hunger; and, rice for the land owners symbolize high social status and power to dominate over the lower-class. This short story emphasized the significance of food security and the call for social justice among farmers. One culture may view rice as a unifying crop while another viewed it as a dividing crop.

**Table 4.**  
**Why the Ifugaos Made Bulul**

<p><i>The descendants of Bugan and Cabbigat were increasing in number alongside with evil practices. Wigan was so angry and remorseful watching young and old, male and female doing all sort of wickedness. He vowed to punish them and cleanse Kay-ang from its filthiness.</i></p> <p><i>One day, he caused the sky to pour forth heavy rains that lasted for many days. The whole Kay-ang land was flooded and everyone drowned except Bugan, one of his granddaughters and Ballitoc, grandson of another god named Maingit. Both were carried by the flood water to the top of Mt. Amuyao, the highest peak in the land. When the flood receded, the two survivors went down to the valley of Kay-ang and settled there as husband and wife. Many years later, the couple had many children. Their children intermarried and so did their grandchildren and the next generations that came after. The population rapidly increased that time came when food was insufficient to sustain them all.</i></p> <p><i>Tadona, the eldest among the descendants of Bugan and Cabbigat, was worried because in a short time, there would really be nothing to eat. One day, he set out to look for food where the sun sets. He followed the sun day after day and he wondered why it never sets. He was tired and hungry but was determined to save his people from the upcoming famine, he persistently continued going. Several days later, he was surprised because the sun was leading him up to the sky on a strange path. Up, up he went walking on clouds and rain and soon came upon a village up in the sky.</i></p> <p><i>He sat down to rest when Liddum, the teacher-god appeared before him. "Why are you here?" the god asked.</i></p> <p><i>"Looking for food," Tadona answered. He felt triumphant when he realized he was in Kabunyan, the home of the gods and goddesses. Liddum gave him a pair of chicken and a pair of pig. "Take good care of them so that you will have food to eat," he said.</i></p> <p><i>Tadona took the animals home and took good care of them. Not long after, the animals multiplied in abundance and the folks were happy to have meat for food.</i></p> <p><i>Time came when the folks got tired eating meat every day. Tadona set out for Kabunyan to see Liddum again. He followed the same path he strode before and after a long and weary journey, he came upon Kabunyan. He sat down and while he was resting, Liddum suddenly appeared before him. "Why are you here again?" Liddum asked.</i></p> <p><i>"Please give me another kind of food because my people are tired eating meat every day," Tadona answered.</i></p> <p><i>Liddum gave him bundles of palay. "Build terraces on mountainsides and plant them so you will have another kind of food," he instructed Tadona.</i></p> <p><i>Tadona took the bundles of palay and went home. They build terraces on mountainsides and planted the palay. In a few month-time, they harvested abundant rice grains and were happy to have another kind of food.</i></p> <p><i>Tadona wanted to thank Liddum for the bountiful harvests. He set for Kabunyan again but this time, he could not find the path anymore. He then went home and carved a wooden statue of Liddum. He placed the statue which he called bulul in the granary. Every harvest season, he took it out so it would witness the harvest festivals. They poured wine and animal blood on its head and offered it rice dough in thanksgiving for the many blessings that Liddum gave them.</i></p> <p><i>In the passing of time, everyone was making bulul. They placed them in their granaries to guard their stacked rice bundles from evil spirits.</i></p>
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In this folktale, Tadona, the eldest descendant of Bugan and Cabbigat, was searching for food because of his fear that the increasing number of people would cause food shortage. His journey in search for alternative food suggests an active response to foreseen challenges on food scarcity.

Interestingly, this folktale offered another perspective of rice. First, the growing population was creating the insufficiency of food resources. This touched on the core concept of food scarcity. The people feared that there would not be enough food to feed them, thus, Tadona took the initiative to search for an alternative solution. Second, the sojourn of Tadona to search for food highlights his active search for solutions to address food scarcity. Instead of

succumbing to death, Tadona capitalized on his strength to search for alternative food, thus, his sojourn. Third, Liddum providing Tadona with rice established the foundation of food security. The knowledge of rice technology empowered the people to cultivate rice, thus, rice became a reliable and sustainable food source. Compared with hunting, rice planting is more sustainable and reliable. Fourth, Tadona returning to the Kabunyan and discovering that the path could not be found was symbolic of the limitations of relying on different places to find food. Tadona realized that his people needed to devise a means to sustain food production practices. Lastly, Tadona carving an image of Liddum communicated that the technology of rice cultivation taught by Liddum was not a temporary solution but rather a system that could provide for future generations. Honoring Liddum during harvest rituals emphasized the enduring nature of this food security solution.

The symbol of rice as presented by the folktale was similar to how rice was perceived in the essay of Roy Hamilton (2004) titled, *Using Art to Teach Culture Rice in Asia*. Accordingly, the gods and goddesses allowed rice, which was their sacred food, to be cultivated in order to sustain humankind. This concept implied that rice coming from the gods/goddesses had a flourishing capacity and those human beings possessed the reproductive capacity. Rice would not yield if human attention was not delegated to the needs of the rice plants.

One of the enduring cultural practices of the Ifugaos is the baddangan. Baddangan is a cooperative labor group which is considered as an important synchronizing strategy especially along the Ifugao agro-cultural system. Moreover, the concept of baddangan has evolved and has extended to respond to other forms of need which has included the giving of rice, livestock like ducks, chicken or pigs, and money. In fact, during the surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, relief goods that were distributed contained a few kilos of rice, canned goods, instant noodles and sachets of instant coffee and a pack of sugar. This significantly displayed a national culture and identity called bayanihan, similar to baddangan.

Liddum's favorable response to Todana's search for other alternative food in the form of rice is culturally practiced through the concept of baddangan. From the literary point of view, rice was perceived as a favorable response of the gods to man's search for food, thus, the challenge to protect the rice fields and terraces in order to provide food for the next generation is apt as stated by Ano (2003): *And so, land is a grace that must be nurtured. To enrich it is the eternal exhortation of Afo (father) Kafunian to all Kafunian's children*. Culturally, rice may be viewed as a symbol of social status. However, as culturally practiced, those who have more rice and those who have less rice meet at one point, and that is through the baddangan or the synchronized labor for the agro-cultural system.

**Table 5.****The Unexpected Exchange Rice, Meat, Humans and Gods**

*As the vast men of the formidable mountains stand still, Balitoc and Kabigat, brethren to our race, explore the extensive range of the Mountain Province to appease their growing stomach. The siblings were forced by their needs to hunt with their bolos and pahol (spear) along with their guardian dog as they wonder Panggawan's terrain. In their sojourn, their dog bark ferociously for it saw an ulha (wild pig). The dog cornered the ulha until Balitok finally speared it. Balitok delivered the ulha to Kabigat for them to slice its meat and grill it. When the siblings grilled the meat, its smoke reached Kay-ang, the home of gods.*

*In Kabunyan in Kay-ang, the smoke from the grilled meat of ulha (deer) reached the nose of Ledu, the god who resides there. The oddity of the smell drove Ledu to search where it came from. Meanwhile, the siblings are climbing the mountain. They did not notice that they were reaching the orifice of Kay-ang which is also the hole of the mountains. As the siblings continued their sojourn, they have encountered Ledu who was still in search of the smell. Ledu was surprised that there are people in his place. He asked the two about their purpose of traversing his place. The two just answered that they were just exploring the mountain range. Ledu noticed that the smell he was searching was already near him. He asked the two if they can smell what he smelled. The two confessed that the smell comes from the meat that they have. It was the food that they will have while exploring the area. The two added that if Ledu wanted it they can give the grilled meat to him. Ledu accepted the offer and in return gave them rice. He explained to them how it should be prepared and how they can cultivate it through farming.*

*This exchange does not only bring the mating of rice and meat but it also refined the relation of gods and humans. For the longest time, we look at humans as reliant to god but we did not imagine that gods can sometimes be reliant to humans.*

This essay presented at least three metaphors of rice. First, rice was given by Ledu, a god, to the two brothers when they showed and gave him the reason of his search. This was symbolic of hospitality among strangers.

Ifugaos, though hospitable, do not have local term for this. However, hospitality was expressed through open doors. Guests were celebrated through the sharing of chicken, rice and rice wine. The best part of the chicken was always given to the guest.

Secondly, rice was symbolic of knowledge. Two realizations support knowledge: that roasted meat, or locally known as inlagim, was not the only source of sustenance; and, roasting was not the only means of processing food. Rice as food required knowledge of processing techniques that included fire and tools. The knowledge symbolized by rice may be influential in the transition of the society's life from head-hunting to a more stable and settled community life.

A common analogy in an Ifugao community was the use of rice to teach about knowledge and humility. Rice, which was a reality among the Ifugaos, was used to impart knowledge. It was said that a person who lacked knowledge was often proud likened to a rice that was not yet ripe while a person who is knowledgeable is humble likened to ripened rice. Ripe rice bow while unripe rice stands straight.

Thirdly, rice was symbolic of agriculture and life. In the narrative, the two brothers were introduced to agriculture which was a potential means of elevating human life. By utilizing the knowledge given by Ledu, the brothers could become self-sufficient. Moreover, it has taught the two brothers that rice cultivation required an in-depth understanding of the environment,

water management and harvesting techniques that were friendly to the environment and the rice.

The community life of the Ifugao people was aligned to their agricultural calendar. Since there were only 2 seasons, dry and rainy, the community life has to be aligned to these. Work in the field commenced at the onset of the rainy season, which usually was on June and harvest season which was usually on May. Rice rituals were performed on June while rice harvests and thanksgiving rituals were performed on May. In fact, the Ifugao diet was anchored also on the agricultural calendar. For months when rice is growing in the field, people support themselves with livestock like chicken, ducks, eggs, root-crops like camote and cassava and legumes. After the harvest season, aquatic resources, like fish (dolog), yuyu (Japanese eel) and shells (ginga) were cultivated in the rice-field for food. While these aquatic resources were consumed, livestock were replenished. It was their belief that life can be prolonged by observing this kind of diet. However, mixing them could cause the body to weaken. For instance, fish and eggs cannot be consumed simultaneously. Consuming both simultaneously or mixing them through a viand would cause the eventual weakening of the physical body. Discipline in food intake was observed. Otherwise, one would not be strong to sustain the work required by rice planting.

If rice cultivation was not given to the two brothers, the Ifugao people would have gone extinct due to food scarcity. The cultivation of rice, not only transformed the society to a more stable community but also challenged the society to pursue further knowledge about rice. The evidence for this is the Ifugao Rice Terraces. The carving of the mountain slopes to create terraces for rice cultivation was not only a product of agriculture but of the need to survive.

Table 6.

#### A Rice Ritual Abuwab Tale

*Bugan and Wigan live at Ducligan. They have healthy chickens, pigs and children. They farm their rice.*

*One day, the people of Ducligan harvest rice. The wife Bugan asks Wigan: "Where are you going, Wigan?" Wigan says: "I am going to drink with the people of Ducligan who are doing the harvest sacrifice." Bugan says: "Yes. Since we are making some rice wine, you should buy pigs and chickens. Then we shall harvest." Wigan says: "Yes, I shall go."*

*Bugan and Wigan live at Ducligan. They have healthy chickens, pigs and children. They farm their rice.*

*Wigan leaves. He takes the golden ornament of their Ancestors to sell it for chickens and pigs. He takes his spear and knife; and leaves. He goes to Halong, he goes to Ginihon; but he could not buy anything there. Wigan ascends the way of the people of Cambulo. He descends to Cambulo at the house of Buda of Cambulo and thinks that Buda of Cambulo must be rich.*

*Wigan asks: "Where are your pigs and chickens?" Buda of Cambulo says: "Nothing doing! My chickens and pigs are here, but I am not selling to you, Wigan of Ducligan." Wigan says: "I am living then to look for chickens and pigs."*

*He goes the way to Nabyun and descends to the house of Ataban of Huyuk who is rich. Ataban of Huyuk asks: "Why do you come here, Wigan of Ducligan?" Wigan says: "I come to buy your pigs and chickens so we can harvest our rice at Ducligan."*

*Ataban of Huyuk says: "Let me bring out my chickens. My pigs are there." He brings them out. Wigan looks at his pigs and chickens and says: "Like my pigs and chickens, your chickens and pigs are not fat. You are not rich, Ataban of Huyuk." Ataban says: "Go to Daya, to the house of Napadawan of Daya. He has many chickens and pigs."*

*Wigan leaves and arrives at Daya, at the house of Napadawan of Daya who asks: "Why do you come here, Wigan of Ducligan?" Wigan says: "I come to buy chickens and pigs for our rice at Ducligan is ripe and we shall harvest our fields at Ducligan." Napadawan of Daya says: "Let me bring out my chickens and pigs." Wigan looks at them and says: "Your chickens and pigs are not fat." Napadawan of Daya says: "Go to the house of Bulul of Lagud, Buyuhya of Lagud, Hakdol of Lagud, and Ampugawon of Lagud."*

*Wigan goes to Lagud and arrives at the house of Bulul of Lagud who asks: "Why do you come here, Wigan of Ducligan?" Wigan says: "I come to buy your chickens and pigs. We shall harvest at Ducligan for the rice in our fields at Ducligan is ripe."*

*"Bulul of Lagud shows his chickens and pigs. Wigan says: "I shall take these, I shall buy these. I shall buy your chickens and pigs with this golden ornament." They buy and sell. Wigan takes the chickens and pigs of Bulul of Lagud who has a lot of chickens and pigs and who is rich in Lagud."*

*Bulul of Lagud says: "It is auspicious for you to come here, Wigan, to get chickens and pigs for your harvest at Ducligan. I am the one who sells and I am the one who is rich." Wigan says: "Yes." Bulul of Lagud says: "Make some rice wine and harvest your rice. Pile up the bundles in your granary and your rice at Ducligan will not be exhausted."*

*Wigan leaves and ascends to their house at Ducligan. Bugar asks Wigan: "Where did you go, Wigan?" Wigan says: "I arrived at the house of Bulul of Lagud. Buyuhya of Lagud, Hakdol of Lagud, and Ampugawon of Lagud; and I bought pigs and chickens." Bugar says: "Let us make some rice wine and harvest our rice at Ducligan."*

*They pour the wine in their guling jar, they go to their granary, and they harvest. Bugar says: "Let us do the welfare prayer for our rice so it may not be exhausted." The rice, pigs, chickens, and children of Bugar and Wigan of Ducligan multiply."*

This folktale introduced rice as an event that required the offering of fattened livestock. Wigan and Bugar as owners of rice fields in Ducligan exuded wealth and influence. Thus, it is expected that their livestock offering were fattened pigs and chicken.

Rice in this narrative could be perceived as a communal element, one that has the ability to bring different groups together during the performance of rice rituals especially harvest, thus, Wigan wanted to buy fattened pigs and chicken. In fact, when these animals were offered, the humans commune with the divine to seek not only for a successful harvest but for the land to be renewed and restored in preparation for the next planting season. Moreover, when animals were offered, humans of different social class commune in order to establish social bonds not only as owner and laborer but as members of the community. Field work was not treated as paid work. Since members of the community were owners of rice fields, labor was not monetized. It was paid with labor also. This was locally referred to as ubbu/binadang. Rice then may represent the community's aspiration to seek the common good. The members of the community find rice as a common ground or a shared space to promote the common good of individual farmers and eventually the society's good. Thus, conflicts through shared meals must be resolved.

The last part of the story mentions that Bulul of Lagud instructed Wigan of what he needed to do with his rice harvest so that it would not be exhausted. This statement presented the cyclicity or renewing spirit of rice. Simply put, the abundance in rice harvest was the result of one's ability to give or to spread one's palm.

Thus, the desire of Wigan to buy fattened pigs and chicken spoke of his desire to gain divine favor. Offering thin pigs and chickens signify potential hardship, regaining divine favor and low harvest. In the community, offering thin animals signified loss of status or shame.

The analysis of the five identified narratives was advanced by Cultural Semiotics. Cultural semiotics aims to describe culture from a semiotic perspective and as a process of human symbolic action, the development of signs and a way to provide meaning to everything around it. Cultural semiotics highlights two ideas: semiotic and culture where semiotics studies signs in human life and culture pertains to the whole system of ideas, actions and human work in the context of community life which is made the property of humans by learning (Mankun, 2020).

Table below presents the summary of literary and cultural representations of rice as presented by the selected narratives.

**Table 7.**  
Summary of the Representations of Rice

Narrative	Signifier	Possible Signified	Cultural Context	Interpretation
Legend: The Origin of Tinawon Rice	Rice bundles from Liddum	Gift Potential food Planted/cultivated	Rice is knowledge from Liddum, an Ifugao god.	Rice symbolizes the practice of resource sharing among the Ifugaos.
Folktale: The Story of Liddum	How to <i>grow rice</i>	Technology Sustenance Communal	Rice cultivation was taught by Liddum, an Ifugao god.	Rice symbolizes sustenance through its cultivation in the terraces.
Folktale: Why the Ifugao Made Bulul	<i>Build terraces</i> on mountainsides and <i>plant</i> them so you will have <i>another kind of food</i>	Sustainable food Hard-work Respect for ancestors	Rice is celebrated because it is the sacred food of the gods which they gave to the people.	Rice, the solution for food scarcity, symbolizes the reliance of the people to their gods.
Essay: The Unexpected Exchange of Rice, Meat, Humans and Gods	Ledu accepted the offer and in return <i>gave them rice.</i>	Hospitality Knowledge	Rice, a gift from the god Ledu, requires technology for its propagation	Rice symbolizes a mutual exchange of resources between Ledu and the two brothers.
Folktale: A Rice Ritual An Abuwab Tale	Let us do the welfare <i>prayer</i> for our rice so it may <i>not be exhausted.</i>	Thanksgiving/ gratitude Abundance	Rice is a thanksgiving event that require fattened livestock.	Rice symbolizes an event that can cause community interdependence beginning with cultivation until the post- harvest activities

The sign analyzed in this study was rice. As a sign, it denoted across cultures a major crop, staple food or base for other rice-based products like rice wine, rice cake, and rice flour. On the other hand, rice connoted ideas that included but were not limited to gift, identity, foundation, ritual, and an event. From the narratives, these connotations were specific to

Ifugao. Rice as a gift implied that thanksgiving rites were indispensable activities of the community. As an identity, rice particularly the *tinawon* continued to be cultivated in the rice terraces.

As foundation, the Ifugao community continued to be organized based on rice, thus, (noble) *kadangyan* and poor (*nawotwot*) continued to be the classification of people in the community. As ritual, rice continued to be center and reason for the observance of the different rites that commenced from the preparation of the fields until the harvest season to seek for a bountiful harvest. Finally, rice as an event allowed the cohesion of communities. Cooked rice was inherently sticky possessing the ability to create a cohesive community. The intense labor exerted in the cultivation of rice made it an event to chase and to look forward to. According to Maknun (2020), the citizens' understanding of the sign system that applied in the society allowed them to behave in accordance with what was expected of them by fellow citizens because there was an appropriate interpretation of the signs used.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the finding revealed through the analysis of the five selected narratives, the following conclusions are advanced:

Rice is not only celebrated in culture but also in literature. The narratives were able to present not only the cultural significance of rice but also the literary significance. Through the theory of cultural semiotics, rice was not only the staple food of the Ifugaos, but a sophisticated literary symbol ushering a new sense of appreciation and ownership. Through the lens of the theory, rice shapes core values, human and nature relationship, social structures and ancestral beliefs and practices of the Ifugao people.

Rice which became a symbol of the mutual exchange and partnership between the Skyworld and the first people of Ifugao rationalizes ancestral beliefs and practices of the people. Moreover, rice was a symbol of sharing as well as a sufficient offering to warrant well-being. This epitomizes the core values of sharing and the importance of maintaining good human and nature relationship. Lastly, rice as a symbol of the favorable response of the gods to human needs accounts the social structure observed by the people.

Emerging from this symbolic relevance of rice is the apt response of the Ifugaos. Their cultural practices relative to rice were their means of extending, sharing and preserving the gods gift of rice. Among their enduring practices include invoking their blessings through thanksgiving, that is, as we receive, we share, and practicing *baddangan* or synchronized labor not only in terms of field work but also of rice as a form of help.

This current study, advances the following recommendations:

The folktales were part of the oral literature of Ifugao which were translated and were packaged for pupils in the basic education. Upon analysis, these folktales promoted values that were related to rice. This result suggested that learners of Ifugao from the basic to tertiary level,

need to do a re-reading of these folktales in order for them become culture bearers and stewards of their oral tradition;

Rice has literary significance. This implied that the consumption of the folktales was not limited to reading and identifying the plot structure. It is suggested that other approaches of studying folktales be adopted in order for the students to be re-rooted to their heritage, thereby, heightening their cultural sensitivity; and,

Rice has cultural significance which may be anchored to literature. The celebration of rice during thanksgiving festivals may be rationalized to its literary beginnings, the folktales. This would lead the young to develop a better and deeper understanding of who they are as a people including the need to save and cultivate their rice. The fear of the aging population about the 'dying spirit of the tribe' would not come to pass through an education platform.

Lastly, other aspects of rice like representations of rice in art, music and trade may be explored by future researches.

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