

# CULTURAL SCENARIOS IN THE ITNEG-ILOKO SUNG NARRATIVES OF TATA LUCIO

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This paper explores the cultural scenarios embodied in sung narratives depicting the social and cultural worlds lived by mythical characters recognized by residents of Lidlidda, Ilocos Sur in northern Philippines. Using excerpts from eight *salsalita* or sung narratives of an Itneg-Iloko, Tata Lucio Dalgo, the paper brings to bear cultural scenarios that organize social relations in mythical worlds. In part, these cultural scenarios mark the interplay of family relations, gender ideology, reciprocity, morality, and differential power relations. As such, the sung narratives can potentially serve as a cultural critique of current value-driven social relations.

**Keywords:** *folklore, salsalita, cultural scenarios, gender ideology, morality*

## Introduction

Folklore studies in the Philippines for the most part pivot around the notion that folk knowledge and practices embody creative human imaginations. They constitute one defining feature of anthropological production in the Philippines (Abaya et al. 1999). Invariably, practitioners are committed to safeguarding the importance of folklore from attenuation as a result of the onslaught of hegemonic mass media, not to mention the threatened cultural transmission of folklore due to the demise of knowledgeable aging performers in many communities in the country (see for example Meñez 1996, Revel 2005).

Here, our purpose is to tease out the cultural scenarios illuminated in the *salsalita* stories chanted by Tata Lucio Dalgo (hereafter, Tata Lucio), an awardee of the Ilocos Sur Living Treasures (ISLT) in 2011. By cultural scenarios we mean, following Ortner (1989) and Scheffelin (2005), the meaning-laden structures that organize the actions and interactions of the

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different characters in the salsalita or sung narratives. We deploy the concept of cultural scenarios as a heuristic devise to interpret the content of the salsalita.

**Methods.** This paper is based on the documentation and study of the indigenously-rooted salsalita of Tata Lucio Dalgo, which is also referred to as the “Lidlidda Folklore Research” project. The research took off in March 2011, eleven months after the Ilocos Sur Living Treasures (ISLT) Research Team was introduced to the chanter of the upland town of Lidlidda, this northwestern Luzon province. The exigency to document Tata Lucio Dalgo’s salsalita was driven by the realization that he was most likely the lone chanter in the whole province who could still deliver the indigenously-rooted narratives shared (with similarities as well as differences) among the Ilocos and Cordillera peoples. Moreover, Tata Lucio was already 84 years old in 2010, was losing his eyesight, and admitted of having started to forget some lines and the names of some characters in the narratives. Even his wife and friends therefore prodded researchers to hurry as soon as they learned of the plan to document the old man’s performance.

Using a two-camera set up, a video-recording of eight of Tata Lucio’s salsalita, as well as of interactions with and among some invited listeners, were done on March 28-31, 2011 in a private farm in Lidlidda, Ilocos Sur. Each of the chanted stories, including a few exchanges with his audience within every performance, ran from 30 to 70 minutes.

A grand-niece of the chanter and three Iloko speakers did the transcription of the digitally recorded narratives from April 2011 to August 2012, while an ethnomusicologist did the music transcription of three of the stories from July to November 2012. The initial translations were completed by the first author (M.L. Ingel) with the guidance of Tata Lucio starting in June 2011 until September 2013, eight months before the latter passed away on May 13, 2014 at the age of 88. The process of translation entailed close approximations of Tata Lucio’s interpretations of the salsalita in Ilokano. As such, no attempt was made to embellish the text in English so that the text itself stayed close to the translations of Tata Lucio. The translator’s first language is Ilokano.

**The setting.** Lidlidda is one of the 14 interior municipalities of the province of Ilocos Sur, which are also home to indigenous groups like the Itneg, Bago, Kankana’ey, and Ibaloy. Perched on a hilly terrain about 70 meters above sea level, it is situated between the coastal towns of San Esteban and Santiago and the lower-lying town of Banayoyo on the west and of the

upland town of San Emilio on the east. It is 37 kilometers south-southeast of the capital Vigan, which has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage City (Figure 1). According to the 2010 census, Lidlidda had a population of 4,398 people (NSO 2010).



**Figure 1.** Lidlidda in Ilocos Sur [source: Wikimedia commons]

### **Sung stories in the context of upland Ilocos Sur's chanting tradition**

The tradition of chanting persists in many upland communities of Ilocos Sur, especially in the southeastern towns of Nagbukel, Banayoyo, Lidlidda, San Emilio, Gregorio del Pilar, Quirino, Sigay, Cervantes, Alilem and Sugpon. Though sometimes generically referred to as *dayyéng* (*day-éng* for other communities in the Cordillera)<sup>1</sup> or *dalléng*, the chants are called by various names according to the occasion during which these are performed, as well as depending on factors such as the community or ethnic group with whom these belong and the content of the chants. As far as research in Ilocos Sur has gone, the chants could, however, be classified into two major types. Foremost is the *uggayam*, which could be described as sung “speeches” and/or narratives that are performed during happy events such as wedding rites, community-level or town-level feasts, and political and other social gatherings within or outside the communities and towns. The second is the *baya’o* (*dirge*), which is specifically performed at the *damaán* (wake for the

<sup>1</sup> In Ibaloy and Kankana-ey communities, *day-éng* is the name given to a style of chanting associated with a characteristic melodic structure practiced by chanters (see dela Peña 2000; Yeneno-Reyes 2002).

dead), and whose basic elements are its mournful tone and its objective to honor the deceased as well as to comfort the bereaved.

While the chanting tradition is alive with the relatively good number of chanters in the province, only Tata Lucio proficiently knew the lines and at the same time sang the indigenously-rooted salsalita, which the chanter himself ascribes at least linguistically as mainly Itneg and mixed with Iloko, as well as with a little Kankana'ey and even Ibaloy for the purpose of achieving *panagkakannati* (aesthetic rhyming of words). Remarkably, some of Tata Lucio's salsalita have characters, themes, and plots that conspicuously exhibit their cultural kinship (i.e., characters and content) with what Fay Cooper-Cole (1915) documented and labeled as "Tinguian tales of the Mythical Period".

Tata Lucio learned the lines of and how to sing the narratives mostly at the *dap-áy* (a space in many communities in the Cordillera and northwestern Luzon where events including feasts and discussion and resolution of disputes by respected elders take place) during early afternoon resting periods and in the evening, from the old men who sang such stories to entertain boys, who obliged to the old men's requests for body massages in return. Outside of the male-dominated sessions at the *dap-áy*, these varied salsalita were commonly sung until about four decades ago by old men and women chanters alike during other joyful events, planting and harvesting, and wakes, thus also benefitting more listeners, including women.

Endowed with great memory and a pleasant voice, and with a unique talent to put even new narratives into chanted form, Tata Lucio sang stories that ranged from those of indigenous mythical characters, to those of kings, princes and princesses, and to those of the Holy Bible. The tales about royal characters that he himself summarized and put into musical form were adapted from what he referred to as the "books from Calasiao"<sup>2</sup> that he read when he was young. He also culled out excerpts from the Holy Bible, from Genesis through the Apocalypse, and assembled these into rhythmic and rhyming lines to make one single story, to the greatest awe of his community and church mates.

Tata Lucio performed on both happy and sad occasions up to the last months of his life, a couple of times arguing against a fundamentalist sect's pastor's supposed denouncement of the practice as bad or of the devil. He sang with fervor as he believed that his chants were his contribution to his kin, who were as zealously intent in fetching him from his home to spend days and nights at the event's venue, bringing him back to his wife almost

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<sup>2</sup> [possibly Calasiao, Pangasinan –ed.]

only when the occasion was over. He took the style of the *uggayam* on joyful affairs, and conversely employed the style of the *baya'o* when he was in wakes.

### Mythical worlds

The *salsalita* is replete with cultural scenarios depicting the worlds lived by mythical characters who, according to some community members with whom we have talked, have truly existed in the past. The lives of the mythical characters are therefore perceived with a historical dimension and taken as reflective of the social and cultural contexts of the times in which they lived. As Cole wrote of the Tinguian tales that he recorded in the early 1900s, the stories “afford us a glimpse of the daily life” of a community as these are means for the “reconstruction of (the) culture” (1915:9,6). The retelling of the narratives signifies the contemporary folk’s appreciation of the worth of the narratives especially in terms of communicating the values that are still meaningful to the ethnic group to whom these belong.

Seven of the eight documented *salsalita* (Table 1) focus on male protagonists, all of them distinguished as *dulawen* and addressed as such. Tata Lucio described the *dulawen* as men who are *naakmán* (with a role or mission), with discernment and mostly goodwill, and bestowed by *Kabunian* (name of a supreme being) with supernatural abilities. The term, by which some antagonists are similarly addressed given their position as headmen or fathers, also connotes respectability, and indicates that the man is already an adult and mature, especially in terms of his ways. *Dulawen ay belláng* and *dulawen ay nablangán* (contracted from *nabellangán*) are also used in the stories, notably both for artistic purposes and to emphasize the mature thinking and honorable, dignified status of the mythical, power-wielding characters.

According to the chanter, popular epic hero Lam-ang is the only one referred to as “*sinaglalakin*”, given his reputation as a young *dulawen* with transcendent powers, wisdom, and respectability that set him apart from other *dulawen*. The protagonist *dulawen* Lam-ang, Allosan, Asbenan, Wadagan, Bagangan and his son Nagundalian are never totally invincible, however, and instead are still vulnerable to challenges posed by influential adversaries.

The only story with a woman as a main character, but still with a *dulawen* occupying a very important and large part of the story, is that of *Donya ay Dolimaman*. *Dolimaman* is referred to as *donya* to indicate her social status as a distinguished woman, similar to all the female characters

who appear in the dulawen stories. While reference to her supraphysical characteristics elicit mostly subdued laughter among male listeners and protests among embarrassed women audiences, Dolimaman is regarded with respect. Aside from her, some women in other stories, like the male lead's biological and/or adoptive mother, and/or beloved, possess mystical faculties.

**Table 1.** The eight sung stories of Tata Lucio

	<b>Titles</b>
1	<i>Sinaglalakin Lam-ang</i>
2	<i>Dulawen ay Allosan</i>
3	<i>Dulawen ay Asbenan, ken si insadona ay intubang ay si Donya ay Kuldiapan</i> [Dulawen Asbenan and his wife Donya Kuldiapan]
4	<i>Donya ay Dolimaman, ken si Dulawen ay Balangan</i> [Donya Dolimanan and Dulawen Balangan]
5	<i>Dulawen ay Wadagan, ken si insadona ay intubang ay si Donya ay Dolimaman, ken si anakda ay si Dagulayen ay Baknang</i> [Dulawen Wadagan and his wife Donya Dolimanan and their child Dagulayen Baknang]
6	<i>Dulawen ay Asbenan ken Dulawen ay Wadagan</i> [Dulawen Asbenan and Dulawen Wadagan]
7	<i>Dulawen ay Bagangan, ken si insadona ay intubang ay si Donya ay Bagiwanan, ken si anakda ay si Nagundalian</i> [Dulawen Bagangan and his wife Donya Bagiwanan and their child Nagundalian]
8	<i>Dulawen ay Gintangan ken si agina ay Donya ay Bangan</i> [Dulawen Gintangan and his sister Donya Bangan]

Excerpts from Story 4 (*Dolimaman*)

[Introduction ... Dolimaman's residence and her supraphysical characteristics]

*Ay, wad kano si Donya ay Dolimaman  
ay min-egaw ad leleggakan  
leleggakan di damilagan.*

*Ay, ay si Donya ay Dolimaman  
no agtugaw kano ket agkayang*

*ay, ay dagos ay dumarang  
di ubeyna ay kasla beggang ay mabalin  
da'y pagsilaw ay mangan.*

(Translation)

*Ay, it is said that there was Doña Dolimaman  
who lived in the east, where the sun rises.*

*Ay, ay it is said that when Doña Dolimaman  
sits down and spreads her legs, her vagina  
immediately glows like live coal that can  
illuminate them when they eat.*

For the protagonists' nemesis, the *Igorot ay Burikan*, headed by another *dulawen*, are collectively identified as raiding and/or head-taking village enemies in three stories; a male *alán* [suprahuman beings] by the name of *Mabillakan* figures as a wily multiheaded monster and cannibal; the *Don Balnegan ay Baknang* is depicted as a carabao-like-bodied rival who is anyway favored by the object of affection's wealth-smitten father; and an *alalladiwan* (python), who watches over a woman *alán*'s bamboo grove, becomes an adversary as it challenges the *dulawen* Asbenan to a duel.

It should be noted that the construction of the narratives across time manifests the incorporation of Spanish, American, and Anglican influences: the references to many characters as Don, Donya and Senyor in all of the stories; the mention of baptism in the Anglican Church in two stories; the employment of written wedding invitations prepared and distributed by the lieutenant, captain, and/or officials in a few stories; and the occasional use of other foreign words. All these indicate the appropriation of external, non-indigenous symbols, evidently to enhance the narratives' social message as well as their aesthetic renditions.

Excerpts from Story #6 (*Asbenan & Wadagan*)

[The "Anglican" church comes into the picture ...]

*Adi kad pay inmanak manen si Donya ay  
Langaan.  
Ket, idi kanon ay ma'iputputingan  
di anakna ay ginakayan,  
ay ket inmawag kano si dua ay babbalasang  
ay ayen si Donya ay Langaan,  
ta enna kano pabuniagan*

*si anakna ay ginakayan ...  
ad simbaan di Anglican.*

(Translation)

Doña Langaan therefore again gave birth.  
So, it is said that when the remnants of  
the child's umbilical cord had dried and  
had fallen, ay so, mother Langaan  
supposedly called on two maidens,  
because she would have her child  
baptized at the Anglican Church.

### **On life cycle, rites of passage, magical facilitators**

The stories of the mythical characters are replete with images of the life cycle of individuals, within their immediate families and kin group, and within their communities (villages, towns). Relations with other villages, including those with enemies (e.g., Igorot ay Burikan) and "other"/suprahuman beings (i.e., the alán) are also meaningfully portrayed. While the narratives vary from one another, common themes, plots, and sequences are seen in most - the early stages of a husband and wife's married situation, the conception, birth and growing up of a child, challenges that individuals go through, death and resurrection for some characters, and courtship and marriage of the protagonists. Where the stories begin without segments on conception and growing up, and right away focus on unmarried lead actors, the narratives are comprised almost solely of segments that lead to courtship issues and eventual marriage of the characters.

A large part of the sung narratives revolve around the quests of the lead characters and the obstacles and dangers that they encounter along the way. Apart from those that pertain to gratifying the yearning and conception-related cravings of their wives, the objectives of the initial and subsequent quests of the protagonists could be those linked to the search for missing parents, a suitable bride, desired male company, an important possession like a G-string or a box of heirloom beads, or those regarding battles to defend family and village.

The death of some characters, with a few protagonists included, is tackled in five of the sung narratives. Above portraying death as an inevitable part of the life cycle, this phenomenon is apparently employed as a means by which the supernaturally gifted actors could exhibit their life-restoring power. The resurrection of certain characters is therefore shown as



possible, although this potential is evidently limited to those whose lives were lost as a result of unjust death, or as penalty for some offense.

In all the salsalita collected, the quests and attendant risks depicted in the stories serve to build the protagonists' character, and their victories assure them their respectable place in society.

Excerpts from Story #1 (Lam-ang)

[Not a single spear from Dulawen ay Gatan's warriors hits Sinaglalakin Lam-ang, who challenges the enemies as he avenges the killing of his father...]

*"Ala, dikayo ay Igorot ay Burikan, luggianyong di agigayang.*

*Ket, nan igayangda 'y sulágda, agdisso datuna  
nagsumbangir ennak sikigan, ken  
sinasanguanak, awan di dumukpos ken sak'en."*

*Ay ket luggianda kanó met tit'iwan  
aya gayam ay agigayang  
isnan sulágdan.*

*Kasla kanón ay udan!*

*Agsasarunon nan di pika ay umey isdi ayanna,  
agsumbangir ay sikigan ken nasanguananna  
laeng met napagenggaanna nan sulágda.*

*Ay ageng-engganang nakanót da!*

*Ay, si kanó met Dulawen da ay Gatan  
adina metten kanó in-gayang  
aya gayam nan sulágna, ta mailana kanó 'ya  
'ya ket napepenpen met nan sulág datudi  
kaduana nan sangona 'ya isikigána.  
Aya awan met ti inmey ken siya.*

(Translation)

*"Ala, you Igorot Burikan, start throwing your spears.*

*And, when they throw their spears, these  
would land on both my sides and in front  
of me, none would reach me."*

*Ay so, it is said that they indeed started to throw their spears.*

*These supposedly came like rain!*

*The spears now continuously came his way, but their spears only landed on both his sides and in front of him.*

*Ay, until they ran out of spears!*

*Ay, it is said that Dulawen Gatan supposedly did not throw his spear, because he supposedly saw that the spears of his comrades were only piled up in front of him and on his sides. Aya, nothing landed on him.*

Magical as these stories about mythical worlds are, the supernatural power-wielding actors are aided out of their difficulties by equally potent human or suprahuman kin and friends, animals and plants, as well as inanimate objects. Don Kuan ay Batukan restores the life of his godson Lam-ang; the alán woman Atimbayan makes Asbenan human again after he became a python; in the story of a different Asbenan (shared with his brother Wadagan), another similarly named alán saves the newly born but abandoned would-be dulawen and raises him as her own son; Senyor Mabillakan helps revive Wadagan after punishing him with temporary death and then also adopts and bequeaths his wealth to Wadagan's son Dagulayen; and a young Don Kuan accompanies his friend Nagundalian to look for the latter's parents. Talking roosters—one of which is egg-laying—, a dog, life-restoring weeds and water, domesticated grasshoppers and honeybees, pythons, a raven, a firefly, a spider, and ripening betel nuts still attached to their nodes assume human and mystical characteristics as they play important roles in the narratives.

Other magical inanimate objects that appear in some of the stories include a reed pipe that can store human breath, a rattan whip and a spinning top that chase and hit the enemy, a flying wooden board that serves as ride for some protagonists, golden houses and fields that walk, and jars of sugarcane wine that listen to and grant a dulawen's plea for endless abundance.

Finally, metamorphosis from human to animal and vice versa, is depicted either as punishment (i.e., Asbenan becoming a python himself

after killing one), or as facilitative power (i.e., Donya ay Eban temporarily transforming into a large hawk to be able to seize Bangan's box of heirloom beads).

### **Social relations in mythical worlds**

Ideals about social relations, as well as about economic life within the family, kin group and community, including those that suggest the interplay of gender ideology, reciprocity and morality, are essentialized through the different segments that depict the mythical social institutions, life cycle, and rites of passage.

**Family.** Every man and woman has to found a family of his or her own when the right time comes. Certain people may live alone, but likewise need and deserve to be provided company especially when they grow old. The adoption of a child as one's own by an unmarried man or woman is therefore suitable (Stories 3 & 5).

A family where both parents exist is ideal. The absence of one or two parents causes pain and therefore elicits pity (Stories 1, 5, 7 & 8). Moreover, birth as a result of an illicit affair, rendered through the euphemism "from the edges of the fence or underneath the bushes," is unacceptable even to a child borne out of such circumstance, which is seen as source of shame and ridicule (Stories 1 & 5).

Excerpts from Story 5 (Wadagan ... & Dagulayen ay Baknang)

[Wadagan's son Dagulayen, asking his mother Dolimaman about his father...]

*"Ibagamman ken sak'en di pudno ina, no ..  
inal-aladak ket as igid di innaladan wenna  
silok di kapalpalungpungan?"*

*"Ay baken met ay kasta ay nangalaak ken  
sik'a. Nagalas met di panagipapanmon."*

*"Ket, wen a, ta kanan met datudi  
kadduak ay giginnakayan ay awan di amak.  
Kanam met a adda ngem 'ya ket ngamin  
intoy iyannan? Adi met dumatdateng."*

(Translation)

“Will you tell me the truth, mother, if you only got me from the edges of the fence or underneath the bushes?”

“Ay, that is not where I got you. Your perception is so disgusting.”

“So, yes indeed, because my fellow children said that I don’t have a father. You say that I have but where is he then? He does not return after all.”

Husband and wife are engaged in a cooperative, reciprocity-based partnership, as both are responsible for the well-being of their family. A husband is expected to be dutiful and devoted to his wife. He is attentive and obliging especially when his wife is conceiving their child, and delivers what she needs (Stories 1, 3 & 5). In return, the wife does her share of tasks, especially to do house chores and to prepare her children’s needs. Where it is called for, she also has to help her husband in producing food for their family.

As communicated through the *duayya* (Story 5), husband and wife have to wisely utilize the wealth that they have inherited from their own parents, as well as the gifts that were given to them by four groups of kinsfolk at their wedding feast. Desires for expense-requiring leisure and vanity must be resisted. Apart from ensuring their family’s livelihood, parents are likewise expected to provide for the education of their children. Both therefore have to work to build the family’s economy, unless where the husband is rich enough that his wife would only have to perform house chores.

***The individual.*** A child, on the other hand, must value his family. S/he must respect and obey his or her elders, who are supposed to be wise and capable of discerning what is right and wrong. Yet, respect and obedience must be founded on correctness and justice (Stories 1 & 2).

A son grows up with a sense of responsibility to protect the lives and interests of his parents, siblings, and village. While he is to be brave and fierce, he must nevertheless develop amiable conduct and negotiation to gain his way (Stories 1, 3, 4, 7 & 8). His passage through obstacles in life is anticipated, for these are expected and only serve to test, define, and build his character. As he emerges from the above risks, he proves his worth, and is gradually allowed into the affairs of adults and wise men (especially

Stories 1, 5 & 7). He could take on more challenges and in the process he himself becomes a strong, wise, and respectable man – a *dulawen ay belláng*.

Excerpts from Story 8 (Gintangan & Bangan)

[Gintangan's plea for the large hawk to let go of his sister Bangan's akusan (box of heirloom beads)]

*“A babuyan, a babuyan,  
maseg-a-seg-angka kay man  
ta itennagmon akusan,  
akusan Donya Bangan  
ta naay naadia-adiangusan  
bayawet ni Gintangan,”  
kanana manen.*

*Tinmayaw kano man san babuyanen.  
Umey kano pinmatong manen ad sidi ..kayo  
ay katatayagan batogna 'd Tiagan.*

(Translation)

“Ah large hawk, ah large hawk, please have mercy on me so that you will now let go of the akusan, akusan of Doña Bangan, because the body of Gintangan here is now tired,” he again said.

It is said that the large hawk now flew again. It now supposedly set down again on the tallest tree across Tiagan.

A daughter and sister, like the mother, deserve the care and protection of her parents, brother/s, and later on, of her husband. She is the one who has the right to inherit her mother's beads, although she is expected to share these with her sister-in-law (Story 8). Such material inheritance could likewise symbolize that the younger women will in time take on the mother's responsibility towards the family. Similarly, while at the surface a woman may be relegated to the service of husband or brother or of another man, it may also be that she is the only one who is capable of performing certain tasks. She may become a reason for conflict, but like Apo ni

Bolinayen ay Asang who is the object of rivalry between the yet-to-be introduced brothers Asbenan and Wadagan, she may also act as broker for reconciliation and unity. Moreover, she may stand as glowing light, a bright guide in times of darkness, as in the allegory of Dolimaman. In time, a daughter herself becomes a *donya ay inalimban* – a respect-commanding distinguished maiden who is sought out because of her virtues.

***Courtship and marriage.*** When he is ready, a dulawen embarks on a journey in search of a distinguished maiden who could become his wife (Stories 1, 2, 5, 6 & 7). He refuses to pick one from his own village, and likewise does not intend to choose among the many maidens who are “scattered” along the pathways (Story 1). Rather, he sets out on a journey to pay suit to a maiden who is known for her unique beauty and/or desirable character (especially Stories 1, 2 & 6).

Ideally, a *donya ay inalimbán* [virtuous woman] waits for an agreeable dulawen to come along. But when no one comes, she may employ a trick by which to summon one (Story 4). Nevertheless, her initiative must not be taken as letting down of her virtues.

Courtship is uncomplicated and easy, for it involves straightforward talk. Despite an initial show of disinterest, the maiden soon gets convinced and agrees to become the dulawen’s bride (Stories 1, 4, 6 & 8). Yet, the maiden stands her ground against the dulawen’s aggressive suggestion for the pair to engage in sexual relations. She resists such advances, expresses disapproval, and asks her beau to prove his sincerity by waiting until the wedding feast is done. Righteous as he is, the dulawen respects the maiden’s wish. (Story 8)

Excerpts from Story 8 (Gintangan & Bangan)

[Gintangan thinks of a good way to prove his love for Donya ay Eban]

*“Ala tapno mamatika,  
inka ngaruden a aplagan  
di kaman inka pagid-iddaan  
ta intan a agullaligan  
ay ipailak di kinapudnok ay agayat ken sik’a.”*

*“Ney, adi mabalin ‘sa, adiak kayat ‘sa’y  
panangipailam si ayatmo,” kanana kano met.*

*“Adiak kayat ‘sa ay panangipailam si ayat, adiak  
mapnek isá.”*

...

*Ay ket adi kad pay si Dulawen ay Gintangan nagpanunot kanon a si naligan.*

*“Ala kastoy ngarud nan mabalinko ay ibagan, no laketdin no pudno metten ay agayatkan, no sina a ket awan met di kadua ta isna, ta kanak koma ay sumayang ta,” kanana.*

*“Ngem no ketdi no mayatka ket, umey ta ad ilimi ta siya ay inta sumayangan, ta siya ay pangilaam ti kinapudnok ken sik’a.”*

*“Ala isu, kasta man di kayatko,” kanana metten.*

(Translation)

*“Ala, so that you will believe, now put a mat then, over the bed where you sleep so that we will now lie down, ay I will show you my sincerity in loving you.”*

*“Ney, that cannot be, I do not like the way you’d show your love,” she supposedly also said. “I do not like the way you’d show your love, I am not satisfied with that.”*

...

*Ay so, therefore, Dulawen Gintangan now supposedly thought of what would be good.*

*“Ala, this is what I can say then, if it is indeed true that you are in love, if it’s here we don’t have company here, because I would say let us have a wedding feast,” he said.*

*“But as long as you agree, then, let us go to our town so it will be there that we will have a wedding feast, so that is how you will see my sincerity to you.”*

*“Ala, that is it, that is what I want,” she now also said.*

Engagement may also result through the elders' matchmaking (Stories 2 & 5). Moreover, a bride may be a reward for victory in battle (Story 7). Yet, while elders persist in convincing a couple of what they think is a good match, nowhere is it justifiable to force a woman into an undesired marriage (Story 2). Even the women won from the enemy village through battle are portrayed as consenting (Story 7).

As tradition dictates, the groom's mother goes to her son's intended bride to adorn the maiden's arms with beads, which also signals that the woman is truly accepted into the family of the groom (Stories 1 & 6). The groom's mother takes his would-be bride home to his village. Where circumstances are different, the groom may himself bring his bride home from an incidental meeting or from battle (Stories 2, 7 & 8). Whatever the case may be, the elders are convened and a wedding feast is arranged for the couple; for in accordance with custom, a man and a woman cannot live as husband and wife without first holding one.

The wedding feast brings together the *sigido a kakabaggian* (beloved and true kinsfolk) and four groups of kin, members of whom are called on to perform their specialized roles – from the uncovering of the *basi* (sugar cane wine) jar and the serving of the wine, to the dancing and passing on of the large kerchief *alláp*, to the sharing of the remaining food, to the counsel by elders, and to performing the *duayya* “to instruct the money gifts” on how these would be used. The feast is a joyful and peaceful one, despite the overflowing wine. It is a picture of abundance, which is the same that is wished for the couple throughout their family life.

Excerpts from Story 5 (Wadagan ... Dagulayen ay Baknang)

[The elders' duayya to instruct the money gift from four groups of kinsfolk...]

*“Ay ket ala, idu-idu-idu-idu-idudduayya,  
ay ay maduayyaka man ay kuarta,  
ta inton no iserrekdaka isdi uneg di  
dinakligan da  
ket ikuada kanto san uneg di lakasa  
ket isdi, isdi kanto ay aginana.*

*“Ay ket, inton no, inton no adda’y  
sumagmamano ay aldawna  
ay malagip ton datuna agassawa,  
ay malagip ton ni Dagulayen ay Baknang,*



*ay mangala aya gayam si inna pakiburikburikna,  
kasta met ay malagip to met ni Donya ay  
Gawaniyan  
di mangala di innanto met iyala si lupot ay  
nadumaduma,  
ay ket, bilbilinka man ay serradora  
ta agputikém kanto ay agipiktoka  
tapnon no adida makaala.”*

(Translation)

“Ay so, *ala*, *idu-idu-idu-idu-idudduayya*, ay  
ay, may you now be subjected to the  
duayya, money, so that when they bring  
you inside their house, they will keep you  
inside the chest, and there, it will be there  
that you will rest.

“Ay so, when several days will have passed,  
and you will be remembered by the spouses,  
ay, when Dagulayen Baknang will think of  
taking money that he will use for cockfighting,  
and also when Doña Gawaniyan will think of  
taking what she will use to buy different  
clothes, ay so, may I now instruct you, lock, that you will  
take effect and be sealed so that they will  
not be able to take (money).”

### **On morality and justice**

Social relations in the world of mythical characters are defined by gender ideology and reciprocity, which are interconnected with, as well as circumscribed by, moral precepts, i.e., the sense of right and wrong, coupled with the need to achieve justice. The importance of recognizing the dignity of another being, largely by observing justice, permeates the social relations that are depicted in the narratives (Demetrio 1986), and are amply demonstrated in the themes carried by the stories.

Mutual respect and reciprocal relations, and recognition of the wisdom and authority of elders, are imperative, but all are still in accordance with the concept of justice. Aggression and defiance against authority figures become rightful when such authority is abused to the point of disregarding

the dignity of another being. After all, justice takes precedence over obedience to authority.

On the other hand, usurpation of one's authority, an unnecessary challenge, unprovoked aggression, acts of betrayal and injustice, and other wrongs committed do not go unchecked and unpunished. In such cases, anger and violence are justifiable and may even be necessary to deter further danger. Self-defense is sensible.

Contrition for a misdeed is appropriate, and pardon must be granted to the remorseful. However, forgiveness must still be tempered in accordance with what is just retribution in relation to the gravity of an offense.

On top of inheritance from forebears, wealth must be generated mainly through industry; nevertheless, the seizure of wealth from the unjust is also defensible. The abundance or paucity of wealth must never define the relations between and among people. It must never be flaunted, and extravagance is objectionable, for wealth must be appropriately managed to ensure the economic well-being of the family. Wealth must be justly shared and distributed in accordance with custom.

Compassion must be present, and favors must be extended without thinking of returns. Yet, one must not forget to return such favors.

### **Conclusion**

While the documentation of the Itneg-Iloko stories sung by Tata Lucio was propelled by the felt need to salvage folklore from being lost forever, the worth of the recorded material goes way beyond the initial objective. In addition, the cultural scenarios we generated from the salsalita point to the enduring cultural schemas that inform local constructions of social processes, which are imbued with aesthetic and moral values.

The weighing of what truly matters in relationships between and among individuals and groups of people, the importance of recognizing authority vis-a-vis the correct sense of what is right and wrong, are a few among the many subject matters that are borne by the sung narratives. Clearly, the salsalita communicates the rightful transcendence of power asymmetry by human agency in the interest of achieving social justice, which remains as a resonating challenge today.

Overall, Tata Lucio's performance of the salsalita materializes the scripts that animate the characteristic "form of life" lived in the mythical world, thereby accomplishing the educative virtue of folklore.

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### APPENDIX: Glossary of Local Terms

**Agí** – brother or sister.

**Akusan** – box of heirloom beads that is passed on from mother to daughter and/or daughter-in-law.

**Alalladiwan** – python.

**Alán** – Male *alán* are described as often monstrous, multiheaded, cannibalistic beings who eat their enemies or prey, and who have houses the roofs of which are made of the hair of humans that they have killed. Not all *alán*, however, are bad characters. For example, Mabillakan, who is mentioned as an *alán* but more identified as cousin of Wadagan (Story 5), turns out to be of good character after the earlier wrath that caused him to take away the life of Wadagan. *Alán* women are in contrast portrayed as forest-dwelling, fairy-like and generally good-natured and harmless human beings, although they are also regarded with awe.

**Alláp** – kerchief or blanket, which is passed on from couple to couple during the dance in the wedding feast.

**Baya'ó** – dirge; the sad tone of a story that is chanted during a wake.

**Belláng** – hardened; “hardened wood” (Rubino 2000).

**Damaán** – wake for the dead.

**Dap-áy** – a culturally designated place for community events, such as feasts and discussion and resolution of disputes among respected elders in Cordillera communities. Some lowland communities in the Ilocos also maintain such place.

**Dayyéng** (also *day-éng*, *dalléng*) – chant. While they appear to be similar, distinctions between *dayyéng*, *day-éng*, and *dalléng* seem to exist on the ground. For instance, Tata Lucio used the term *day-éng* for his chants and said that *dalléng* is another type of chant.

**Donya ay inalimbán** – a virtuous, respect-commanding, distinguished woman.

**Duayyá** – chant performed by a pair of (male and female) elders at the end of a wedding feast, specifically to “instruct” the money gift given to the couple by the four groups of kinsfolk. It is a literary and musical device that is meant to advise the newlymarried about the wise way of utilizing their resources.

**Dulawen** – man vested with a role, with discernment and mostly goodwill, and bestowed by *Kabunian* with supernatural abilities. *Dulawen* is also defined in the Ilocano Dictionary & Grammar (Rubino2000: 174) as a “variety of awned early-maturing rice with red kernel.” *Dulawen ay belláng* and *dulawen ay nablangán* (contracted from *nabellangán*) are sometimes used as artistic and literary device to emphasize the mature thinking and honorable, dignified status of a dulawen.

**Insado ay intubang**– spouse; husband or wife.

**Insadona ay intubang** – his/her spouse.

**Kabunián** – a supreme being; could also refer to a conglomeration of spirits or supernatural beings.

**Naakmán** – vested with a role; it could be associated with the words *akém* (role), *nakem* (discernment), and *nanakmán* (with discernment or goodwill).

**Panagakannati** – aesthetic rhyming of words.

**Salsalita** – tale, story, narrative.

**Sayang** – wedding feast.

**Sinaglalakín** – similar to *dulawen*, but is distinctly used only for epic hero Lam-ang in an apparent attempt to emphasize his transcendent powers, wisdom and, respectability that set him apart from other dulawen. It is translated as “brave” in the works of Yabes (1935) and Eugenio (2001), following the meaning of the old, now archaic word.

**Si sigido a kakabaggián** – the most beloved and true kinsfolk.

**Uggayam** – sung “speech” or story, which is performed on a joyful occasion.

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