Frailes, Caimanes, y Calingas: The Dominican Demonization of the Cagayan Valley Crocodile and Frontier (1600s to 1800s)

ALDOUS TRACY F. RUBIO
University of the Philippines Baguio

The Cordillera Review: Journal of Philippine Culture and Society 13 (1–2): 100–145
https://doi.org/10.64743/PTWL9785

ABSTRACT

Crocodiles figure conspicuously in many narratives of the past in the Cagayan Valley Region. However, a great discrepancy is observed: there are no more crocodiles known to exist in the major waterways of the Cagayan riverine valley. This paper explores such an irony by looking into the history of human-crocodile relations in the valley, focusing on how culture change throughout time could have contributed to the eventual disappearance of the crocodile. This is done by looking into archival evidence, linguistic evidence, ethnographic data, and material culture treated as evidence. The paper finds that Spanish colonial policies, particularly Dominican friar-initiated activities, created a physical and social environment that was hostile to the crocodile, effectively banishing the creature from the colonial space. With this, the crocodile became a symbol for evil, the unconquered wilderness, and even the people outside of the colonial order. This paper ultimately suggests that such colonial (re)conceptualizations might have contributed to the physical disappearance of the crocodile, more so to the manner on how people perceive and relate with their environment that still manifest today in the culture and identities of people in the valley.

Keywords: Crocodile, Dominican Friars, Cagayan Valley, Spanish Colonial Period, Animal History

Introduction

When I was still an altar boy serving our parish a couple of years ago, I accompanied our parish priest to a small barangay in our town of Piat, Cagayan to assist him in the *barrio* Mass.[1] While enroute to the place, we were passing by multiple streams which all led to the Chico River, a major tributary of the Rio Grande de Cagayan. It is in these circumstances that Father relayed to me this very amusing story:

In the later quarter of the 1900s or early 2000s, there was a small church-owned school in the town of Tuao, Cagayan which was run by the parish priest of the said town. During those times, the only way of getting into the town was by crossing the Chico River by riding what the people call *ferry*, which are two to three *barangays* (boats) joined together by large hardwood planks and has the capacity to carry more than a dozen people along with small motor vehicles or even a car or a jeepney. It was also during this time that the government agency tasked to oversee schools signified to the priest their intent to send representatives to the church-owned school to evaluate the school's facilities and the quality of education being given therein. The school that time was not well-off in terms of facilities, let alone the quality of education. The priest, being aware of the impoverished state of the school, immediately warned the government officials. He told them that in order to get to the town, they needed to cross the Chico River which is perilous because of the high probability of drowning, moreover, the priest said, the river is infested with man-eating crocodiles! Fazed by the threats of the cunning priest, the government agency just issued the necessary documents that would allow the operation of the school without even visiting the humble institution.

It is from this story that I take my point of reflection: as a person who was brought up in the province of Cagayan, I really did hear a lot of stories about crocodiles. Stories of crocodiles coming out of the river at night to lay eggs, of missing livestock and pets that wandered near the riverbanks and were snatched by crocodiles, even stories about crocodiles taking chunks off the buttocks of unsuspecting bathers. The discrepancy arises when I consider the fact that while growing up in the province, never have I seen the likeness of a crocodile in the various waterways nor have I heard of mere sightings of crocodiles anywhere in the province or even in the whole Cagayan Valley Region.[2] In actuality, Jan van der Ploeg and Merlijn van Weerd (2012), mentions that a substantial population of crocodiles in Northern Luzon exists only in the Sierra Madre mountains, particularly in what is now the province of Isabela. The same study also states that there were sightings of crocodiles in one island of the Babuyan Islands and in some parts of the Cordillera, however, the status of these populations (if there are indeed populations there) are unknown. At present, in the whole Cagayan Valley Region, crocodiles thrive in the Sierra Madre mountains in Isabela, particularly in the municipality of San Mariano and its neighboring municipalities due to conservation efforts. In the rest of the valley, however, few to no mention about the present existence of crocodiles exist.

This discrepancy gives rise to the question on how the crocodile occurs frequently in the narratives and culture of people in the valley, and yet they seem to be non-existent in the very setting that the narratives place them in at present. This warrants an investigation on

the history and culture of the people in the area, particularly on how cultural transformations in the Cagayan Valley Region throughout history could have contributed to this reduction of the seemingly widespread presence of crocodiles in the region.[3] Special attention is given on the rearranging of culture in the region during the Spanish colonial period since evidence suggest that it was during this long period that overlapping of perceptions and attitudes towards the crocodile occurred. In this endeavor, archival sources are consulted, especially Dominican documents throughout the Spanish colonial period that makes mention of crocodile and human interactions. In addition to these, ethnographic evidence gathered from fieldwork, as well as material culture treated as evidence, are also utilized to make sense of such cultural changes throughout history.[4]

Figure 1. Map of the "mainland" Cagayan Valley—comprising the provinces of Cagayan, Isabela, and Nueva Vizcaya—where the study is situated. The Cagayan River runs from the Caraballo del Sur Mountain Range in the south to its mouth at Aparri in the north, forming a valley between the Sierra Madre Mountain Range (east) and the Cordillera Mountain Range (west). Historically, the valley is inhabited by the Ibanag, Itawit, Malaueg, and Gaddang, while surrounding mountain areas were home to groups identified as Apayao, Calinga/Kalinga, Irraya, Ifugao, Igorot, Gaddang, Isinay, Ilongot, and various Agta communities (Keesing 1962, 168-300). Base map image from Google Earth (Imagery © 2025 CNES / Airbus, Maxar Technologies, Map data © Google).

I believe that through such an investigation, the study could present certain historical and cultural processes that could have contributed to certain conceptual transformations on crocodiles, or at least be reflective of such, which affected the relationship of humans with the creature in the valley. This study does not claim that such transformations singlehandedly lead to the physical disappearance of the crocodile in the Cagayan Valley, however, it suggests that through the conflation of perceptions and attitudes geared against the crocodile during the Spanish colonial period, crocodiles were actively repulsed and driven away from the human spatial order. This suggests that Spanish colonial perceptions could be one aspect that contributed to (or heightened) the non-belongingness of crocodiles in the structuring of space. Through this, the study hopes to contribute to the scholarship on animal history by showing how crocodiles influenced human action. This study would also like to contribute to the conversations on colonized populations by looking into how Spanish colonialism used crocodiles as symbols for the peripheries and un-subjugated territories and peoples of the region. Lastly, this study aims to contribute to enriching the local history of the Cagayan Valley Region. I believe that by this paper's attempt to resurface the crocodile from the depths of the history and culture of the people, the currents of discourse and debate would be stirred on such neglected aspects of human life in the valley of Cagayan, and this would add to the unending flow and ever-changing course of the river of knowledge.

The Crocodile: Endangered in Literature?

The term "endangered," when taken out of its technical conservationist and ecological context could be repurposed as a metaphor to describe the state of the crocodile in Philippine academic literature; it is "endangered" in the sense that there is a dearth of written materials on the subject. In truth, only Jan van der Ploeg and his group of scholars seem to have produced the bulk of studies on the biology, ecology, and conservation of the crocodile in the Philippines, with a focus on the crocodiles in the Sierra Madre mountains.

The book, *The Philippine crocodile: ecology, culture, and conservation* by Jan van der Ploeg and Jan van Weerd (2012) provides a comprehensive study on the crocodiles of the Philippines, from the physical characteristics of crocodiles, their lifecycle, their environment, until their conservation. In this book, van der Ploeg and van Weerd (2012) state that that there are two species of crocodiles in the archipelago, namely, the saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) and the Philippine crocodile (*Crocodylus mindorensis*). The former is adapted to both saltwater and freshwater environments and is found in India to Australia, and the latter mainly inhabiting freshwater environments (mostly further

inland) and is endemic to the Philippines. The smaller Philippine crocodile is also considered a critically endangered species with sparse populations throughout the archipelago. Because of this, the book focuses on describing the Philippine crocodile, particularly those in the Sierra Madre mountains, in order to arrive at a better comprehension of the species for their preservation. The book thus allots a substantial portion in discussing conservation methods applied to the populations of Philippine crocodiles in the Sierra Madre mountains. Van der Ploeg and van Weerd (2012) argued that government initiated and sustained education and livelihood programs that maintain a balanced relationship between humans and crocodiles should be implemented in conservation areas. There are a number of other studies on the biology and ecology of Philippine crocodiles with the aim of conserving the species, most of them led by the same scholars.[5]

Likewise, the studies on Philippine cultures vis-à-vis crocodiles are very few and the bulk of which are produced by the same team of experts mentioned above. The book of van der Ploeg and van Weerd (2012) cited above, also exhibits a detailed study on the place of crocodiles in different cultures in the archipelago and in the whole of Southeast Asia. The book also looks into the shift in perceptions of crocodiles, specifically Philippine crocodiles, throughout the history of the Philippines by looking into Spanish colonial accounts, American period cartoon drawings, and even Hollywood movies. The authors mainly argue that one major factor that contributed to the critical endangerment of Philippine crocodiles is the bad publicity of crocodiles throughout a large portion of Philippine history, which still persist until today. One notable point of the book is that many Philippine languages distinguish between the saltwater crocodile and the Philippine crocodile which reflects the awareness of people on the distinctions between the two species. This discussion is expanded on the work of van der Ploeg, van Weerd, and Persoon (2011) by listing the different terms used by peoples throughout the Philippines when referring to crocodiles. In most cultures, *buaya* (or variations of which) is used to refer to the saltwater crocodile. Some cultures such as the Bontok and Bugkalot, however, use the term *buaya* to refer to the Philippine crocodile. Other terms used to refer to the saltwater crocodile include *mangato* and *dapo*. On the other hand, many cultures use the term *bukarot, barangitaw*, or *lamag* (or variations of the three terms), to refer to the Philippine crocodile. Other terms used to refer to the smaller species also include *tigbin, ngusó, sapding, dagoroqan,* and *bungot*. The wealth of terms reflects the understanding of peoples towards these creatures. Other publications about crocodiles in Philippine cultures were also produced by van der Ploeg, Araño, and van Weerd (2011) and van der Ploeg (2013), all of which are aimed at shifting the perception and cultures of peoples towards the crocodile in aid of conservation efforts. In all the

publications of van der Ploeg and his team of researchers, there is an emphasis on the interrelated relationship between crocodiles, humans, and their environment hence, the studies mentioned above always look into this intricate relationship for the protection and conservation of the Philippine crocodile. It is also worth noting that most, if not all, of these studies on crocodiles vis-à-vis cultures highlight the role of Indigenous Peoples in protecting the Philippine crocodile; this is especially seen in an article and book of van der Ploeg and van Weerd (2005; 2012). This point of van der Ploeg and van Weerd on the close relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Philippine crocodiles deserves a closer look in the following sections of this paper.

These studies succeed in providing a comprehensive description of Philippine crocodile biology and ecology for the use in the conservation of the species. The studies produced on crocodiles and cultures, on the other hand, provide a general understanding on the relevance of crocodiles in the cultures of the Philippines as well as Southeast Asia. However, I find that these studies on crocodiles and cultures have the possibility of leading to romanticized interpretations of crocodile and human relationships especially when portraying an image of the pre-colonial period. Van der Ploeg and van Weerd (2012), for example, cite archival and ethnographic evidence that show people revered the crocodile as ancestors and spirits, and that children even swam in waters filled with crocodiles without care.[6] This might be true in some parts of the Philippines at certain points in time; however, situations might be different in other parts of the country at other points in time. This leads to my second point of criticism: the studies on crocodiles vis-à-vis cultures could be made richer by taking into consideration other local contexts. This comes from the observation that the main focus of many of the studies are the Philippine crocodile populations in the Sierra Madre mountains, however, many of the evidence cited come from other parts of the Philippines or Southeast Asia such as accounts of Spanish friars on crocodiles in Pampanga and the Visayas or folklore about crocodiles in Sulawesi or Borneo. Although some ethnographic and linguistic evidence are cited as coming from Northern Luzon, these are few when compared to the body of historical and cultural evidence coming from Central and Southern Luzon, the Visayas, Mindanao, and even other islands of Southeast Asia. These studies, which are focused on the crocodiles of the Sierra Madre mountains, could have a lot more to say if they consider the connection of the whole valley just adjacent to the said mountain range, that is, the Cagayan Valley.[7]

This study would thus like to address these shortcomings in the present literature, namely, the lack of mention of how the crocodile figures in Cagayan Valley societies and cultures. By providing archival, ethnographic, linguistic, and material evidence particular to the Cagayan Valley Region, this paper would also like to show

the historical and cultural experiences and perceptions of peoples therein. In doing so, this paper hopes to fill the wide gap between the jaws of possible generalization and romanticization on the topic. In tackling these issues, the paper aims to provide a nuanced account of the crocodile in the history and culture of the Cagayan Valley Region, contributing to the current body of literature on the topic and ultimately alleviating the "endangered" status of the Cagayan Valley crocodile in the consciousness of people.

A Hunt for the Pre-16th Century *Buaya* of Northern Luzon

The heavy mention of the crocodiles in the cultures of Northern Luzon at present seems to be indicative of the intertwined relationship of humans and crocodiles in the past, perhaps even during the time when Spanish colonialism had not yet reached the shores of the archipelago. In an attempt to look at this pre-16th century relationship of people with crocodiles, this section will present cases recorded during the initial phases of Spanish colonization that at least reflects the worldviews and customs of people that preceded the merger of local and 'hispanic' worldviews. Moreover, oral traditions and material culture are cited herein as they could reflect a cultural matrix that predates, but continues and develops within, the Spanish colonial period.

As stated above, numerous ethnic groups in the Philippines distinguish between the saltwater crocodile and Philippine crocodile. In Northern Luzon, buaya is the term used by much of the groups to refer to the saltwater crocodile while bukarot or lamag[8] (or variations of which) are used by some groups to refer to the Philippine crocodile. In my fieldwork, however, buaya is also understood in Northern Luzon to simply refer to crocodiles in general. The very presence of these terms, especially the term buaya, reflect that there were already human-crocodile interactions in Northern Luzon even before the Spanish arrive, since the term buaya can be traced to Austronesian language roots (cf. Blust, 2002; Blust and Trussel 2013).

Place names could also be interpreted to show the seemingly widespread reach of buayas in Northern Luzon. A geographic survey of Pampanga, Pangasinan, and Ilocos by Don Yldefonso Aragon that describes the geography, flora, and fauna of the said places in the 1700s and 1800s state that there are mentions of crocodiles existing in the mountain waterways of what is now Ilocos Norte. The survey also state:

> In Bangui, a species of crocodile is found that the natives call Buocarot, and it is a type of Cayman with colorful markings (Aragon 1821, 12-13; translation by the author).

Interestingly, maps from the 1800s show a place called Bucarug near Bangui in what is now Ilocos Norte, which seems to be pointing at the present location of Dumalneg, Ilocos Norte.[9] This place name is probably a variant of the term bukarot. In the province of Abra, there is a place called Buaya which is east of Bangued. In the province of Kalinga, there is also a place called Buaya which is said to be taken from a crocodile that once lived in a pond therein (De Raedt 1993, 2). Taking the assertion of Ian Christopher Alfonso (2024, 37) that "most of the existing Philippine place names of obvious indigenous coinages may have been in existence before the coming of the Spaniards," unless proven otherwise, it could be said that the place names related to crocodiles in Northern Luzon could possibly have existed even before the Spanish came to the area. But, even if these place names were coined during the Spanish colonial period, the fact that places were named after the buaya is a reflection of the buaya's widespread presence throughout Northern Luzon and also the awareness of the peoples about such animals. The very practice of naming places using the Austronesian term buaya, because of the abundance of such in the area, could possibly even pre-date the arrival of the Spanish.

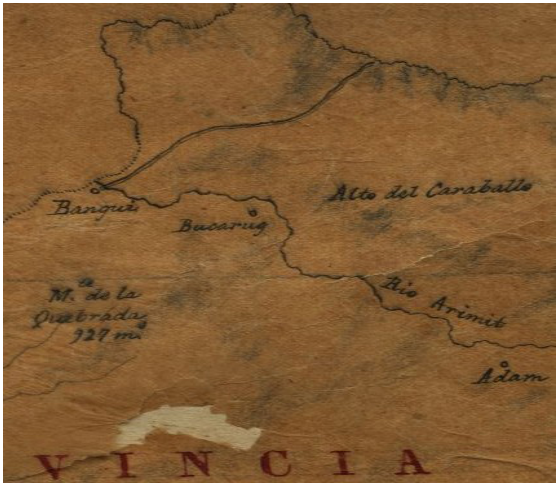

Figure 2. A 19th century map showing a place called Bucarug upstream of Bangui, Ilocos Norte (Biblioteca Virtual de Defensa ca. 19th century).[10]

The epics of Northern Luzon could also provide evidence to the distribution of buayas as well as the relationships that peoples had with them in the past. These epics could at least give snapshots of mindsets, perhaps coming from the pre-16th century, towards the subject because although many of these epics already contain 'hispanic' elements, they also contain motifs that parallel early Spanish colonial period descriptions about cultures of people that are not heavily influenced

by colonization. The epic of *Biag ni Lam-ang* (Life of Lam-ang) from the Ilocano-speaking people, tells of a time when a large buaya was living in the Amburayan River, which now serves as the natural boundary between the provinces of La Union and Ilocos Sur. The epic states that Lam-ang went to "play" with the buaya in the depths of the Amburayan River, chasing the buaya upstream and downstream. After the buaya was defeated, some of the characters in the epic took its teeth to shape as amulets. On the other side of Northern Luzon, the Cagayan Valley epic about *Biuag* and *Malana*, two persons endowed with super-human abilities due to magical stones given by a woman when they were children, also talk about crocodiles. One instance in the epic speaks about Biuag, who was from the Southern Cagayan–Northern Isabela area,[11] who swam in a river (probably the Cagayan River) filled with buayas when he was just a mere boy and not one buaya approached him. The epic also speaks of Malana, who was from Malaueg (now Rizal), Cagayan.[12] It is said that Malana's community was experiencing a famine and to alleviate the people's hunger, he needed to go to another community and get rice. Malana allegedly had to cross a river filled with buayas while transporting the rice by himself. The very climax of the epic makes mention of a buaya: when Biuag and Malana were dueling for the hand of a maiden from Tuao, Cagayan,[13] Biuag sought the assistance of a crocodile in the Matalag River, a tributary of the Chico River. The epic of Biuag and Malana could be interpreted to show the interactions of possibly different ethnic groups in the valley of Cagayan, as well as their intertwined existence with buayas since the animal occupies key sections of the epic.[14]

Figure 3. The hills where Biuag and Malana stood, in between them is the Matalag River where Biuag caught a buaya. Biuag and his people stood at the southern (left) hill while Malana and his people stood at the northern (right) hill (Photo taken by the author, 2023).

Material culture could also show the prevalence of buayas not only in terms of physical space, but also with regard to human-buaya interactions throughout Northern Luzon. The epic of Biag ni Lam-ang stated above clearly shows the use of Ilocano-speaking people of the teeth of the buaya as protection against dangers when traveling. As shown by van der Ploeg and van Weerd (2012), certain cultures in Northern Luzon also have necklaces fashioned out of animal teeth (but ideally from the teeth of the buaya) or shells that were shaped to resemble animal (buaya) teeth. The Bontok call such necklaces *boaya, buwaya*, or *fuyay-ya* while the Gaddang who generally inhabit the watersheds west of the Cagayan River, also call such necklaces *boaya* (Maramba 1998, 56, 57, 58, 78, and 92). Rather than confining these material cultures to a fixed period, i.e., the pre-16th century, they might be treated as expressions of continuing local conceptions whose origins could predate Spanish contact. The recurring buaya motifs in epics and material culture does not indicate a strict historical boundary but a development of worldviews, of living memory.

A source that could give a glimpse into the pre-16th century dispositions of people in the Cagayan Valley Region on buaya, which could have a little bit more certainty over the sources mentioned above in terms of dating, is the *Bocabulario en lengua Ybannág* (Vocabulary in the Ibanag language). The book was finished by Fr. Antonio Lobato de Santo Tomas, O.P., in 1766 however, the book was a continuation of an earlier work by Fr. José Bugarin, O.P., who was one of the earlier generations of missionaries destined to the valley in the 1600s.[15] This means that parts of the Bucabulario documents the worldview of the people in the area during the earliest contacts that the Spanish had with them. The proximity of the book to the period prior to the 16th century gives way for the possibility that its contents reflect pre-16th century perceptions and dispositions of people concerning buaya. The following lists the terms related to buaya contained in the Bocabulario:

Word	Translation (by the author)	Remarks (by the author)
Words used to refer to crocodiles		
Buáya	Cayman, or Crocodile. pl. bubuáya. Binuáya: the [one] injured by it. It is not used very often. Marabuáya: dog's tongue herb (p. 159).	
Bucarú.c	Black Cayman, with a *doblado* [folded/bent]	The Bucaru.c (probably referring to the

	Body. It is more of a butcher (p. 160).	Philippine crocodile) is described as having a body that is *doblado* which could be translated to *bent, turned, folded,* etc. This could be referring to the animal's body shape (like a rolled tobacco/cigar) or the bumps on its back that seem to create "folds". "More of a butcher" could be interpreted as the animal being more carnivorous and/or vicious in attacking its prey.
Cutú	Louse of the head, and debris that sticks to cotton. … pl. cutucutú.˘ maccutú: [one] who has lice. Cutucutu nad danum: the [one] given to fish. l. The cayman. … (p. 217).	The phrase "*cutucutu nad danum* (like-louse of water)" is used to refer to crocodiles.
Names given to flora, fauna, and objects derived from the crocodile		
Buáya nallángau	The spider, which catches flies, not with a web, but [by attacking] from behind, suddenly (p. 159).	This probably refers to Jumping Spiders (Family *Salticidae*). Such spiders have the characteristic of attacking their prey by surprise.
Marabuáya	Biniebla or the herb called tongue of the dog. root word: Buáya (p. 392).	A plant that is named after the buaya. Probably referring to plants under the genus *Cynoglossum*.
Tallán P. 558	root word. To swallow, rather than to eat or gobble. Tallannán sillán: which manallán: who. … Tatallannán: gulley, or way sillân naggangngáb yttolay: hence: sillán	This entry makes mention of "gold of a few carats" which is called "*sillán nabbuaya* (swallowed by the buaya?)".

	nabbuaya: gold of a few carats (p. 558).	
Words that denote the deterrence of buayas		
Áliau	fear Máliau: fearful. Macáliau: which causes fear. Ycáliau: what is feared, and what there is danger of. … Tagáliau. Herb [used] to get rid of the Cayman (crocodile). Humbug (p. 44).	This reflects a knowledge of herbs that deter certain animals. The author seems to dismiss this practice as mere nonsense or superstition.
Tagáliau	Herb [used] to escape from the cayman, so that it does not catch you. r. aliau. Superstition (p. 533).	
Pasabíng	Sleeve fence [made] of reed for catching fish, Cayman etc. … (p. 448).	This shows the use of traps to catch/deter buayas.
Words that classify buayas in terms of physical characteristics		
Gatólayán	Cayman the size of a man (p. 290).	These terms could be translated as "*until-man*", referring to the measurement of something compared to man.
Magatoláy	Tree for Building l. cayman the size of a man. root word: toláy (p. 388).	
Talabá	oyster shellfish. Mattalabá: who takes them. Sinalatalabá ybbuaya: old cayman full of oysters … (p. 545).	The example related to buayas could be interpreted in two ways. First, the buaya is filled with oysters sticking to its body (which is allegedly indicative of age), and second, the "oysters" could be referring to the natural bumps or scutes on the buaya's back.
Tarissi.t	little oysters, which are on the back of the cayman. Hence: sinarissi.t cayman, who	Here, a term is particularly given to a buaya that has little oysters on its back,

	has them on its back (p. 577).	as well as the kind of oysters that stick to a buaya. This might be related to the Ibanag terms *sissi-t* and *sissi-c* which both translate to *fish scales*.
Tong	tusk of [the] pig, wild boar, cayman, person etc. … (p. 585).	
Words that describe/relate to the actions of buayas		
Attuáng	root word. To lift with the snouts, like [how] the pig [does to the] trough, the cayman [to the] boat etc. … (p. 225-26).	The action of buayas capsizing a boat is described.
Duál	root word. To lift, or suspend, like the cayman [to] the boat [and] the pig [to] the trough. Etc. … (p. 249).	
Gabbuá.t	root word. to rush, or to jump suddenly: such as sudden death, Cayman etc. … guibbuá.t cami nab Buaya: the Cayman attacked us carelessly (p. 277).	The buaya's characteristic of attacking suddenly and by surprise is described. The contemporary Ibanag expression of surprise, *gavvá*, originates from this term.
Gangngangá	root word. to open the mouth. Maggangngangá: (More commonly [used]) Gungngangá. … Gamaccu ytattat tagguingngangá nabbuaya. I would like to put it in the Cayman's mouth, when he opens it. … (p. 286).	The gape of a buaya's mouth is used as an example to convey regret. The Ibanag phrase "*Gamaccu ytattat tagguingngangá nabbuaya*" could be roughly translated as "*I regret/fear ytattat* (probably referring to

		the action of shaking) *the gaping [mouth] of the buaya*." which is not captured in the Spanish translation.
Pattú	root word. To remove [from] the mouths, and arms of the Crabs, and shrimp, and from the mouth of the dog the prey. Pattuán. Pittú which … Pittú.c sicua, nga Yna.ˇ nabbuaya. I took out so-and-so from the grasp/jaws/claws of the Cayman (p. 456).	
Péqui.t	root word. To bring the boat to the shore. Pequitán Pinequi.t the Boat, which maméqui.t who approaches etc. … Napequitalajj ybbuaya tabbico.t nabbarangay. The Cayman just approached the side of the barangay (boat). … (p. 459).	
Quiláu	root word. Of eating raw meat, or fish. … Maqquiló y accanna buaya: only the Cayman eats raw (p. 475).	The example could be best translated as "*Raw is the eating of the buaya*".
Sarcasms related to buayas		
Nguilab	Toothless. Mannguilab: Who is running out of teeth. Nangnguilabban ybbuaya: They tell [this phrase to] the boys that, without fear of the Cayman, they throw themselves into the water as if it had no teeth. … (p. 414).	The expression "*Nangnguilabban ybbuaya* (the buaya is toothless)" seems to be used in a situation wherein children are being careless in bathing (probably in a river).

Taffúl	nick/dent/notch. Taffulán: siffulán what is nicked/dented/nothced. … Nataffulassigari.t They tell [this to] the boy that walks in the water without fear of the Cayman. … (p. 531).	A phrase that seems to imply carelessness vis-à-vis buayas is given. "*Nataffulasigari.t*" could be roughly translated as "*Striped* (black and white stripes; used to refer to the carelessly brave child) *is nicked/dented/notched*".
Maledictions/curses related to buayas		
Bunniag	root word. To eat. Used only to curse: or to speak angrily. And also to mock. … bunniagacca nabbuaya. if the son asks his mother for something importunately, she tells him [this]. … (p. 166).	A curse of a mother to a stubborn child uses the buaya. "*bunniagacca nabbuaya*" translates to "*may the buaya eat you*".
Curiáb	root word. Scratching, or clawing [like the cat], or Cayman … curicuriában ca nabbuaya. (malediction) [May] the Cayman claw/grasp you. … (p. 214).	The malediction "*curicuriában ca nabbuaya*" may be translated as "*may the buaya claw-you-many-times*".
Muttayág	root word. Of dying. mammuttayacca: Malediction. Die immediately, and suddenly. … Cuammu laguttu pamuttayaggammu, nu accacca magamma nga majjigu.t ta angnguan nabbuaya tattolay: There you will be dead suddenly, because you will not be able to swim, where the Cayman makes its prey (p. 399).	The Spanish translation of "*Cuammu laguttu pamuttayaggammu, nu accacca magamma nga majjigu.t ta angnguan nabbuaya tattolay*" does not give the phrase justice. It could be best translated as, "*Do, then, that-which-causes-your-death, if you are not preventable in bathing [at the place] where the buaya does-action to its prey,*" which is like a motherly threat towards a child.

Pángngul	root word. Of chopping/cutting. … Pangngupangngúlacca nabbuaya: [May] the Cayman break the neck (p. 442).	The malediction "*Pangngupangngúlacca nabbuaya*" may be more appropriately translated as, "*May the buaya chop-you-many-times*."
Pitáy	root word. To tear apart, and rip, make into pieces, split etc. … pitapitayaccá nabbuaya: [may] the Cayman tear [you] to pieces. … (p. 466-67).	The malediction "*Pitapitayaccá nabbuaya*" could be translated as, "*May the buaya tear-you-apart-many-times*."

Table 1. Terms related to buayas in the 1766 Bocabulario de la lengua Ybbanág by Fr. José Bugarin, O.P. and Fr. Antonio Lobato de Sto. Tomas, O.P.

The numerous terms related to the buaya in the Ibanag language reflect the complex understanding of the Ibanag-speaking people on the buaya. Since the Bocabulario captures worldviews of Ibanag-speaking people in the 17th and 18th centuries, perhaps some of the contents therein that are related to buayas are continuations of pre-16th century perceptions and attitudes toward the creature. This linguistic evidence, together with epics and material evidence, could be vestiges of pre-16th century dispositions towards buayas in the Cagayan Valley Region, that, when pieced together, could give a rough picture of human-buaya relationships prior to the 16th century.

As claimed by the present body of literature on crocodiles in the Philippines, people in the archipelago in the pre-colonial period generally venerate and revere the buaya who is thought to be both benevolent and malevolent in character.[16] The evidence presented above, however, paints a picture of people in pre-16th century Cagayan valley fearing buayas. This is shown through the numerous terms within the Bocabulario that associate buayas with danger, carelessness, and physical injury. As shown above, there are even plenty of curses that wish people bad fortune with the buaya in certainly gruesome ways. The buaya is even associated with death, as seen in one example in the Bocabulario which implies: go and seek your death by bathing where the buaya is (cf. Table 1: Muttayág)! Because of this fear, it is seen in the Bocabulario that there are examples that imply the active avoidance and deterrence of buayas by using traps or even herbs. This feeling of fear is also manifested by the buaya in the Cagayan valley epic of Biuag and Malana as the buayas are portrayed as threats to human life. Going beyond this, the buaya became a metaphor for treachery in the epic as Biuag tricked Malana to jump in the water just to lure him towards the

jaws of a buaya. The maiden, which was the object of the heroes' duel, saved Malana and scolded Biuag for employing the help of a buaya. It could then be inferred that perhaps in the pre-16th century Cagayan valley, the buaya was feared and actively avoided because of its being a threat to human life – in this sense, it could have been respected, however, no evidence supports that the buaya was venerated to the point of active ritualized worship.

From Buaya to *Caiman*: The Dominican Demonization of the Crocodile

The late 16th century saw the gradual rise of Spanish colonization in the valley of Cagayan as *conquistadores*, soldiers, *encomienderos*, and other representatives of the Spanish Crown were deployed in the area.[17] Perhaps the most influential forces of colonialism were the priests of the Order of Preachers, otherwise known as the Dominicans, since they were the ones tasked in proselytizing the valley.[18] It was the Dominican friars who set out to different areas of the valley starting in the later parts of the 16th century, with wide-spread and heightened missionary activity happening in the 17th century.[19] Through the establishment of *reducciones* and the introduction of Christianity, the Dominican missionaries gave rise to a cultural shift throughout the valley. It is also in this context of colonial contact that a shift in the perception and attitude towards the buaya began to unfold as the Dominicans began to encounter them. Perhaps the earliest written account that mentions the existence of crocodiles in the valley of Cagayan is the *Historia de la Provincia del Sancto Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Philippinas, Iapon y China* (History of the Province of the Holy Rosary of the Order of Preachers in the Philippines, Japan, and China) written by Bishop Diego Aduarte, who was an early missionary to Cagayan.[20] The account goes on to narrate an interesting case encountered by a Dominican friar in Tuao in the early 1600s:

> When Father Fray Pedro Muriel[21] … was vicar of this town, an Indio fell ill there and asked Our Lord for a remedy, and as far as His Majesty knows,[22] he was not granted it [the remedy]. The sick man was getting worse as the illness progressed. He, with his excessive desire for help, remembering his bad habits as an *infiel* [infidel; non-Christian], he called on the *demonio* [demon] to help him, placing his trust in him. Barely had he called on him [the demon] when the Lord, punishing him, began to experience the effects of his guilt. Worsening rapidly, walking on the post to death. Adding to his troubles was the fact that from then on, he was spitting up a great quantity of blood from his mouth. **On the third or fourth day of his**

> **crazed words [delusion], it seemed to him that he saw the demonios in the form of horrendous Caimanes [crocodiles], negros feroces [ferocious negros], and espantolas fantasmas [frightening phantasms/ghosts] who wanted to lash him, and putting their claws to his throat, wanted to suffocate him**. … the miserable Indio came to his senses … he begged favor from the Lord … and calling the Virgin as his intercessor, repenting of his past error, he proposed amends with all his heart; and the Lord, who seeks this, and not the death of the one who sins, was not slow to favor him, because immediately (as the Indio said) he saw nearby a man with a very cheerful and handsome face dressed in white (from whose presence the demonios fled) who consoled him. … The same thing happened to him twice on separate nights within the span of six days … he called the said religious in great haste to seek his counsel. He came and found him bleeding so much that what he had bled was as if a cow had been slaughtered there, and so his pulse was so weak that it seemed he would last only a few hours. He confessed with many signs of repentance and told him all that had happened. … He began to get better, and the terrifying visions ceased, but not that of the one who had consoled him, dressed in white, whom he saw twice more in the span of two weeks, whom he looked without fear, but with shame, understanding that he was Angel de su guarda (his guardian Angel).[23] He gave the priest permission to preach [about] it in the church … so that they might learn a lesson and not dare to do or say such disconcerting things [as he did], and to truly place their hopes in God. The priest preached [about] it and said that he was an eyewitness to the great blood that was shed before the confession took place, and that upon confessing he stabilized and was improving … and thus he swore and testified, so that the Lord might be feared and praised, as [one who is] marvelous in his works (Aduarte 1640, 306; translation and emphasis by the author).

Here, it is seen that the word used for the crocodile was *caiman*. This term probably originated from the Carib *acáyouman*, which the Spaniards appropriated to refer to crocodilians (Taylor 1980). In Central and Southern America, where the Spanish stayed for many years prior to their arrival in the Philippines, they definitely encountered creatures that resemble the crocodiles of the Philippines already (van der Ploeg and van Weerd 2011, 236). In fact, spectacled caimans (which are actually alligators) still abound in these parts. The use of the term "caiman", then, reflects the transfer of colonial consciousness to the Philippines.

It is very interesting to note that the first mention of crocodiles in the Cagayan Valley Region, as presented above, is through an account of an exorcism. It is in this account that one can see the initial perspectives of the Dominican friars on the crocodile: that of antagonism. These early missionaries basically demonized the crocodile. This demonization persisted throughout the 17th century as the Dominicans used the crocodile as a metaphor for evil. This is seen in the *Antorcha de Caminantes ó sea Catecismo Explicado y Abundante* (Torch of Walkers or Explained and Expanded Catechism) written by Fr. Martin Real de la Cruz in the first half of the 1600s wherein the buaya is used as the embodiment of evil and suffering in Hell, and is especially associated with sins committed by women.[24] The Antorcha de Caminantes was influential since it was a basic tool of indoctrination, moreover, the Ibanag language was used in its writing. The following are the contents of the book that are related to crocodiles:

Translation of the Ibanag Passages (Translation by the author)	Remarks (by the author)
1st EXAMPLE WHERE ONE CAN SEE THE SUFFERING in Hell – that is the return (exchange/reward) of the sinner – for all sins against the sixth commandment of God. And it happened like this: their [the demons'] ruler then requested for an enclosure, that is extraordinarily tight/narrow, to be brought. **[The young man was] imprisoned therein, [in the enclosure] that was filled with fire, and filled with buayas, and snakes, and different-beasts that are ferocious. They crowded and clawed [him] many times, and the beasts and buayas gnawed [at him] then, and the snakes struck him many times. This is the return/reward of [his] taking-pleasure of women in the past.** The diablos just left [him] in that enclosure, as the food-source of the beasts therein, so that their gnawing at him would continue always and would not cease (de la Cruz 1868, 349; 351-52; emphasis by the author).	This passage speaks of one punishment given to a young man for committing sins related to women (whether with or against women, it is not emphasized). A priest allegedly died and was taken by an angel to witness such punishments and was eventually brought back to life in order to preach conversion from sins related to women.
2nd EXAMPLE WHERE ONE CAN SEE THE EXCESSIVE suffering of a woman in	Here, the gruesome punishments of a lady

Hell, because of hiding her sin during her confession. This dragon on whose lap I sat on, is the very diablo who pushed me to hide my sinning with [a] man. … These two frogs, that peck the life of my eyes, because of my extraordinary pleasure of seeing the beauty of the body. **These two buayas that are entwined on this my throat, that keep scratching my nipple, are the return/reward of [the] man's caressing [of] me, and my embracing of our sin** (de la Cruz 1868, 379; 382-83; emphasis by the author).	who committed sins with a man is laid out
2nd EXAMPLE WHERE ONE CAN SEE THE misery of [one who] does not have good preparation in going to communion. In the past, there were allegedly two Priests who entered a Church; one of them apparently looked at a person who was approaching for communion, [he saw that] there were two snakes that were entwined on the person's body. After partaking in the communion, **[the person] was allegedly caught and stopped by three buayas and was swallowed whole**: the priest told the person, when they were together, of the vision he had about the person's body. … the person knelt in front of him, and told him about his sin related to a woman, of which he was ashamed of confessing before going to communion … this is a great foolishness when going to communion … when one has great sin [and goes to communion] (de la Cruz 1868, 389-90; emphasis by the author).	In this passage, the punishment for partaking in communion while in a state of sin is shown.

Table 2. Passages using buayas to illustrate eternal punishment in the early 17th century Antorcha de Caminantes ó sea Catecismo Explicado y Abundante by Fr. Martin Real de la Cruz, O.P.

This attribution of the buaya to sin, demons, and evil itself persisted until the 18th century as can be seen in the 1731 *Libro de Sermones* (Book of Sermons) composed by Fr. Juan de Sto. Tomas, O.P. in the Ibanag language for use in his parish of Iguig, Cagayan. In one of the sermons, the friar preaches on how to ask God's mercy properly during the Lenten Season:

> "Lord Jesus Christ, true support of the afflicted and the poor. I am here, who is truly burdened, because of my sins, the weight of which is impossible to describe, that can be likened to a fierce **buaya**, because of my tolerance towards the will of the Diabalo, I turned you away, my true Lord, because of this my sinning, have mercy, Lord, and hear my pleas to you (Sto. Tomas 1731, 128)."

This framing of the Cagayan valley buaya during the Spanish colonial period could have originated from the fact that the buaya presented a threat to human life. Moreover, the buaya could have been associated with evil since it fits the description of the Leviathan in the Bible – that is, a sea beast with impenetrable armor, a mouth full of teeth, and is the enemy of God and his people (van der Ploeg, van Weerd, and Persoon, 2011).The term caiman itself seems to have originated from a word that referred to a serpent-like water spirit (Taylor, 1980). Perhaps this colonial concept of the buaya was met with little resistance by the pre-16th century Cagayan valley attitude of fear towards the creature. From fearing and actively avoiding the buaya, the Dominican friars added the dimension of treating the buaya as the embodiment of evil. It is in this sense that the notion of the 'buaya' shifted into the colonial concept of the 'caiman'.

Santos y Caimanes: A War of Friars and Saints Against the Crocodile

The characterization of the caiman as embodiments of evil, and thus the enemies of the faith, in the Cagayan Valley Region during the Spanish colonial period seems to reflect a real physical conflict between people, particularly the Dominican friars, and caimanes. The books *Historia de Cagayan* (History of Cagayan) by Fr. Julián Malumbres, O.P. (1918a) and *Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de las Islas Filipinas* (Geographical-statistical-historical Dictionary of the Philippine Islands) by Fr. Manuel Felipe Buzeta, O.S.A. and Fr. Felipe Bravo, O.S.A. (1850) contain accounts that record the location of buayas throughout the valley, such as a lake called Namongan/Nanóngan between the towns of Tabáng and Santo Niño, Cagayan; a creek between the towns of Iguig and Amulung, Cagayan; a creek called Balasig between Tumauini and

Cabagan, Isabela; and even the Cagayan River beside Tuguegarao, Cagayan (Malumbres 1918a, 282, 341, 335, 417; Buzeta 1850, 462–63).

Because of this abundance of caimanes posing as threats to life in the rivers of the valley, some Dominican friars considered this as a factor in planning the layout of a town. Through this, one can see that the *reduccion* was not a mere reorganization of settlement for the convenient governance of people, it is also a major modification of the whole physical environment wherein the people were settled. The following accounts imply that caimanes did not have a place in the Dominican-designed *pueblos* of the Cagayan valley:

> To the east of Nassiping [Cagayan], on a small hill about half an hour away, there is a lake, which … give off an odor like sulfur … Colonel Pineda visited it and said that this lake was harmful to the town – they say that Fr. Arredondo ordered an excavation to be made and that earth resembling burnt bricks came out; and also, the grass around the lagoon … has leaves that look burnt and black. (They also say that there are black caimanes in this lake) (Malumbres 1918a, 344; this account was written around March 5, 1805, translation by the author).

> Claveria [Cagayan] … The layout of the town dates back to the time of Father Ramón Pujadas [parish priest from 1878-1881], who also built a very long bridge between Pata and Cabicungan [old name of Calveria] to prevent the constant disasters caused by caimanes (Malumbres 1918a, 415; translation by the author).

It is apparent that the caiman was not only viewed as a physical threat to life, rather it is a threat to the whole wellbeing of a person–physical and spiritual. It seems that the association of evil to the caimanes was not only confined to the metaphorical realm, rather, the caiman is the physical manifestation of evil. As can be seen in one of the accounts cited above, the caiman was associated with a lake that has burnt surroundings, that has soil that is baked into bricks, and has a sulfurous smell. This can be interpreted as an image of hell-on-earth in which the caiman is placed by the Dominicans. This merger of both threat to life-physical and life-spiritual into the caiman is greatly exemplified in this account:

> Fr. Luis Gutierrez, a Spaniard, was caught by a caiman in the river while going to say the third mass in a neighborhood three leagues from Cabagan [now San Pablo, Isabela] on February 2, 1653 (Malumbres 1918a, 435; translation by the author).

Because of such a view on the caiman, the Dominicans set out to actively eradicate the creature in the valley through both physical

and spiritual means. One such activity in eradicating caimanes was recorded by Fr. Julián Malumbres:

> Let the reader hear the curious theory that the Dominican Father, Fr. Pedro Giménez, proposed around 1680, to save the monetary crisis that was felt at that time: 'Those who can command it should be in charge … that money should be made from the teeth of 'Caiman,' giving them their value with the seal, so that things and foodstuffs could be found in these towns at current and affordable prices. This will remedy two major problems and inconveniences, which among many others are experienced throughout Cagayan. The first is the great lack of silver to trade among the natives … and the other problem is the unfortunate damage that caimanes do to the population of Cagayan every year. If it were in my power, I would do these two jobs with great ease. I would designate a prize for each Caiman head, and by making small cuts of their hideous teeth, marking them with a special stamp, I would make them circulate as money in this province. … these inconveniences and imminent enemies would be reduced, since the natives would be encouraged to hunt them; and we would have current currency to clean up deals and commerce; Of course, the matter that it has no intrinsic value can be solved by the Prince (the King could give value), and just as in 'Siam' the 'Sigayes' and 'caracolillos' are passed as currency and in America the 'cocoa' beans could well be given here by the Prince. The government gives value to the fang of the 'caiman.' … (Malumbres 1918a, 232-33; translation by the author).

There is no current evidence to support that this Dominican-sanctioned act of incentivizing the killing of caimanes throughout the valley was carried out during the 17th and 18th centuries. Fr. Malumbres himself questioned whether the plan was implemented, however, he also witnessed an instance when people were rewarded after catching a caiman:

> In the year 1891, finding ourselves in Buguéy [Cagayan] recovering from some fevers; they took to the basement of the convent, not only the head, as our famous statesman [Fr. Pedro Giménez] proposed, but a whole and live caiman with it; but with its snout or jaws tied. The Father Vicar of said town, Fr. Juan Gómez, drew up a record of the event, and with this certificate, the hunter was assured of five pesos, which was the lowest prize, for each animal of this kind. (Malumbres 1918a, 233; translation by the author).

Figure 4. The ruins of the Spanish period Buguey convent where Fr. Malumbres witnessed a caiman being turned over to Fr. Gómez in 1891 (Photo taken by the author, 2023).

Alongside this physical avoidance and persecution, the Dominican friars also waged war against the caiman through spiritual means. Patron saints were invoked against these friar-eating and Mass-stopping creatures, and records show that a particular devotion to Santo Domingo en Soriano was created for this very reason of banishing the caiman from the rivers of the valley. The following accounts recorded by Fr. Malumbres shows this celestial invocation and battle against the caiman:

> On Holy Week in the year 1739, an Indio from Piat was passing by the river that is near the Ermita [chapel]. He was caught by a caiman and in such a situation he called our Lady of Piat to help him; Invoking her and at the same time being released by the caiman, and he went to give thanks to the Virgin in her Ermita; Father Diego de la Torre [he lived from 1689-1738 and was a missionary to the valley in the early 1700s, cf. José 2018c, 546] told me about this event … (Malumbres 1918c, 68; translation by the author).

Figure 5. The Basilica of Our Lady of Piat atop a hill where the Ermita of Piat once stood (left), below which is the Chico River where a miracle against a caiman is recorded to have happened in 1739 (right). The area is notoriously perilous as many people drown therein (Photo by the author, 2024).

> FR. JERONIMO ULLOA … he established in Abulug the fluvial procession of Sto. Domingo en Soriano on September 15 against the caimanes, who in two months had caused the disappearance of 22 people between Pamplona and Abulug [Cagayan] (Malumbres 1918a, 433).[25]

> Father Diego de la Torre, then Vicar of Cabagan [now San Pablo, Isabela], placed Sto. Dominingo in Casibaran [as patron] ... A contemporary chronicle says that Sto. Dominingo saved Casibaran from many disasters [caused] by caimanes (Malumbres 1918a, 58).

These accounts of miracles could be interpreted to show that the heavenly powers sided with the Dominican friars against the caimanes. This, then, is a solid manifestation of the constant spiritual struggle against the forces of darkness and evil which is staged on the surface of the earth. This is also the reason why the caimanes were likened to temptation and suffering in the accounts in the preceding section. These miraculous events, however, when viewed closely, actually reflect a pro-active and Dominican-sanctioned environmental disturbance that threatens and ultimately drives away caimanes.

One example would be in the old town of Nassiping, Cagayan wherein during the fiesta of their patron saint, San Miguel Archangel, people would dress up as *Janggo* (*Djanggo, Janggu, Janggok*), a monkey-like and man-eating creature said to have terrorized the town in olden times until San Miguel saved the community. Some people would cover their bodies with soot, they would don clothes made of sacks and dried banana leaves, and they would wear horned masks imitating the devil. They would parade around town with their whips, spears, nets, and shields wreaking havoc and asking for spare change. In the past, the Janggo would perform a play-like duel on the streets when the centuries-old image of the patron was brought out in procession; they were ultimately defeated by the opposing "archangel" that protected the image. What is interesting in this celebration is that the people believe that when they do not perform the ritual, bad things will happen to the town the following year, specifically, crocodiles would emerge from the Cagayan River just beside the old town and would cause chaos. In fact, some masks worn by the Janggo are fashioned to look like horned crocodiles.

It is possible, then, that such fiestas were aimed at causing increased human activity in the rivers, and thus causing disturbance to the natural environment of the caiman. Some oral accounts, as well as photographs, show Janggo in Nassiping originating from or near the river.

Figure 6. The masked Janggo of Nassiping in their full regalia in the late 1900s near the Cagayan River (upper photos; photographs from the Cagayan Museum and Historical Research Center). Present-day Janggo mask maker sporting his Janggo horned-crocodile mask (Photo taken by the author, 2022).[26]

Perhaps this is a remnant of a time when people made a ruckus on the side of the river to drive away the caiman. This could also be the case on why the 17th century fiesta of Santo Domingo en Soriano in the Abulug River is celebrated through a fluvial procession. There is actually evidence that support such a claim. An account written in Ibanag by Vicente Dumaual entitled, "*Historia na Camalaniugan*" (History of Camalaniugan), which is a collection of stories from elderly people in the late 19th and early 20th century, as well as the author's experiences, gives the following account of caimanes in the town of Camalaniugan, Cagayan wherein he describes the fluvial procession of Santo Domingo en Soriano:[27]

> BUAYAS THRIVED IN THE RIVER OF CAGAYAN
>
> In the year 1596, when the Castillans started to rule the Philippines, Buayas thrived in the River of Cagayan–especially at the part of the River at Camalaniugan which is near the sea.

According to the elderly people, in the dock beside the town of Camalaniugan, they would make corrals that are fenced with Tarao palms which are either circular or elongated. Women would stay there to wash clothes because of the fierceness of Buayas – that manage to eat people every year.

If they [buayas] see dogs or pigs on the banks of the River, they go out of the water and emerge onto land.

In the year 1870, there is a priest who was stationed in the town of Camalaniugan, he thought of making a petition of the people to Santo Domingo Soriano and to make a fluvial procession wherein the Image of Santo Domingo Soriano would be placed in a *Barangay* [boat] in order for the waters and banks to be blessed.

Because of these petitions and because of the mercy of God through Santo Domingo, their [buaya's] fierceness ceased.

In 1890, this was the last time when a Buaya ate an Ilocano who habitually fishes using nets, his name was Biluru. This happened in the *divisoria* [division] of Lal-lo and Camalaniugan.

When the Procession takes place at the river bank or the River, the men prepare firm oars.

The men *bogador* [boatmen/oarsmen] that are in the boat where Santo Domingo's Image [as well as the *Musicos*/musicians] is boarded, wear uniform red clothes.

Those who have the means, they sponsor the creation of the large Barangay where the Image and Musicos are boarded.

If those who sponsored the Barangay are from far places, it often serves two fiestas which are the Fiesta in Piat and that of Santo Domingo Soriano.

In 1886, a *Fugu* [island] came out of the river across the mouth of the Babayuan stream.

This Fugu was named "*Fugu ni Cuaresma*" [Island of Cuaresma], because this Fugu is where he set-up his dock.

According to what they say, this Fugu is where the Buaya lay their eggs.

> This Jacinto Cuaresma is the husband of Jacinta Dumaual, and is the father of Rufino Dumaual, Teodora Dumaual, Juan Dumaual and Gregoria Dumaual.
>
> According to what Rufino Dumaual has said, they get many Buaya eggs here which, according to him, are very delicious.
>
> During the Procession of Santo Domingo Soriano, there were many small Barangay that went along with the Procession. They go around the boat where Santo Domingo is boarded.
>
> After the Procession, the small barangay participate in a wager-game wherein the loser would give money or his barangay (Dumaual ca. 1959, 101-02; translation by the author).

Such an account paints a picture of the fiesta as a concerted effort by the community to disrupt the natural environment of the caimanes and to perturb them. These efforts might have actually scared the caimanes and drove them away from the *pueblos*. A closer reading of the account given above would show that there is no indication of the caiman being killed, however, it merely states that their "fierceness" or "ferociousness" towards humans "ceased." Conversations with people throughout areas historically populated by caimanes show a similar disposition. Older people believe that there are still buayas in the rivers of the valley, however, they are already elusive and they evade human contact because they are afraid, particularly, the buayas are scared of the *putuk-putuk* (explosions) of guns or fireworks, or even from the sound of motorboats.

Figure 7. The ruined façade of the old Camalaniugan church that fronts the Cagayan River. It has eroded since the 1800s. This is where the processions described by Vicente Dumaual took place (Photo taken by the author, 2022).

It seems that in the 19th century, the Cagayan River and its tributaries became notorious throughout the Spanish empire because of multiple accounts indicating that the valley was infested with caimanes. José Montero y Vidal (1886) in his *El Archipiélago Filipino y las Islas Marianas, Carolinas y Palaos* (The Philippine Archipelago and the Islands [of] Marianas, Carolinas and Palaos) provides a description of the caimanes in the Philippines, as well as ways on how people in the islands kill caimanes:

> The principal species of the order, and one of the most abundant *Saurios* [reptiles], is the caiman (*Crocodilus biporcatus, Cuv.*), which causes considerable misfortune among the natives when wading through them. The caiman has a special predilection for dogs, and the means the latter employ to outwit them is curious. They bark for a time at a certain point on the riverbank, and when they realize that they have come toward that point, they take to their heels and wade across the river as far as possible from where they were barking.
>
> Many Indios risk hunting caimans, and for this purpose they enter the waters carrying a sharp *bolog* (knife) in one hand and a molave stick or other strong wood, sharpened at both ends, in the other. When they find the caiman and it opens its mouth to hurt, they quickly insert the stick, leaving one end resting on the palate and the other on the lower jaw, which prevents them from doing any damage, since the more they struggle, the deeper the stick goes into them, and they die from drowning because they cannot close their mouths (Montero 1886, 101-02; translation by the author).

José Honorato Lozano (1847), in describing reptiles of the Philippine archipelago in his *Álbum: Vistas de las Yslas Filipinas y Trages de sus Abitantes* (Album: Views of the Philippine Islands and Garbs of their Inhabitants), also described the caiman which abounds in the Cagayan River. However, the accompanying depiction of the caiman seems to be imaginative and a little bit strange (cf. Figure 7).

> "Buaya. (Cayman.) A species of crocodile that abounds in the rivers and lakes, particularly in the Rio Grande de Cagayan and in the Laguna de Bay, where some of the largest caught measure 8 to 10 *varas* [22 ft. to 27.5 ft.], and whose teeth are sometimes six to eight inches long. They tend to attack people who go alone, and every year, misfortunes happen to those who venture to cross the rivers alone in a light *balsa* [bamboo raft], or through other means, as happens in the Rio Grande de Cagayan (Lozano 1847, 73; translation by the author)."

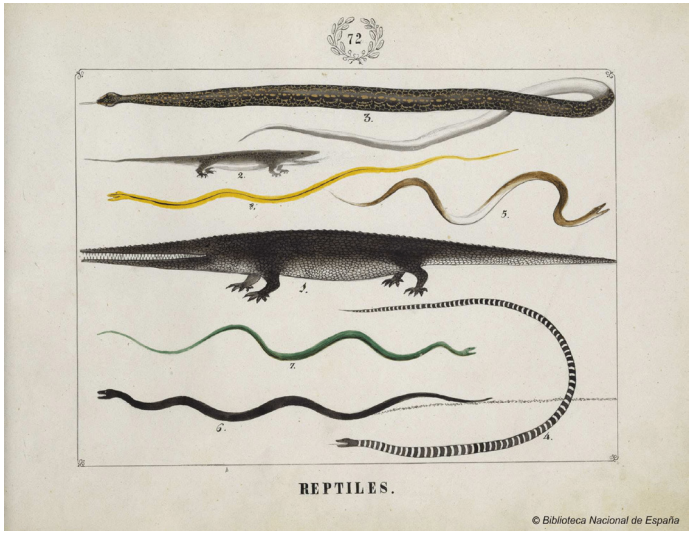

Figure 8. A depiction of a caiman said to be prevalent in the Cagayan River (Lozano, José Honorato. 1847. *Album Filipinas*. Retrieved from: http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000105391)

Other sources also provide strange descriptions about the Cagayan caiman such as the description found in the *Diccionario ilocano castellano* (Ilocano-Castilian Dictionary) by Gabriel Buderias Vivó (1873) which states:

> Buaya (m.) Caiman or crocodile, these are abundant in the rivers of the province of Cagayan, their bodies are large and thick. Their heads are wide and flat. They have four eyes. The length of their bodies are five to seven vara. The circumference of their bodies are three to five vara. They are reckless when they come out of the river: when the females find a boat or raft, they capsize it and eat whatever human they catch. They often come out of the river at night, they then catch and eat all of the chicken, pigs, or small cows (which the careless owners let loose all night long) that cross their way inside the town. The teeth inside their mouths are large. When one opens its mouth, a ten-year-old child could stand inside it. Their skin is thick sans scales, they look like black lizards. Their fat can be extracted and used as fuel for lamps. They bury their eggs beside the water, their eggs are the size of a duck's but are more elongated. (Vivó 1873, 47-48; translation by the author).

In such accounts and depictions, it is seen that the mystical view towards the Cagayan caiman as a threat to life was carried on to the 19th century. It is in this context that a more organized and solid plan of

eradicating the caimanes was instituted in the valley of Cagayan. José Montero y Vidal (1887) wrote:

> Because of the misfortunes that caimanes were causing in the Cagayan River, on March 17, 1858, [Governor-General Fernando] Norzagaray published a decree granting metal [monetary] prizes to Indios who managed to kill caimanes, setting the amount of two to five pesos if those saurios [reptiles] were a vara long or more. Whoever killed three caimanes of these proportions had the right to be named cabeza de barangay of his town (Montero 1887, 258-59; translation by the author).[28]

Through the numerous accounts given above, it is seen that the Cagayan valley caiman was persecuted both physically and spiritually, and that such persecution heightened in the 19th century wherein both Church and state incentivized the killing of caimanes as seen in the decree of Governor-General Norzagaray and Fr. Malumbres' account of a certain Fr. Gómez giving five pesos to those who caught a caiman in Cagayan. The killing of caimanes seem to have continued in the first half of the 20th century, as elderly people state that they remember a time when American soldiers would shoot crocodiles upon seeing them in the rivers. My own forebears who lived through the first half of the 20th century recalled a time when they would sleep in huts near the river in order to guard their loose livestock from crocodiles that went out of the water at night; upon hearing the slightest ruckus, they would take out their kerosene lamps, bolos, and guns, ready to kill a crocodile.[29] Such accounts of active deterrence and persecution through centuries give a general idea on how the caiman disappeared from the major waterways of the Cagayan Valley Region. It seems, then, that through hundreds of years of cultivating an antagonistic attitude towards the caiman, an environment and culture that was actively hostile to caimanes was created, making this a major contributor to the eventual extermination of the creature in the Cagayan Valley Region.

Caimanes y Calingas: From Crocodiles to People

[T]ay Yafum̃a Jx.o ngayacuruga quengallan na adde.t nacca Cap.n nganamatulu.t taqquitapporay ura Buaya, nga Diablo, nga calingatam…

To our Lord Jesus Christ, through his valiance, and all his Captains, who humbled the brutality of the Buaya, the Diablo, who is our enemy…
– Fr. Juan de Sto. Tomas, O.P. 1731, 194.

It is now made apparent that such physical and spiritual persecution of the caiman contributed to the downfall of the creature in the Cagayan Valley Region. However, there is yet another dimension to this conflict.

A deeper investigation on the spiritual framing of the caiman as an embodiment of evil would yield that the creature was representative of the wilderness, and ultimately, the people who dissented from Spanish colonial rule, especially those who did not accept being placed under the Dominican reducciones and pueblos. This urges one to take a deeper look into the records of "miracles" instead of just dismissing them as plain nonsense, since these accounts of what seems to be "supernatural" events are already manifestations of the colonial perspective – of the celestial good on the side of the colonists winning the battle against the worldly evil on the side of the non-colonized. Miracles in this context, simply put, are manifestations of real-world native-colonial conflicts, through which a grand narrative of the colonist's victory, as achieved through divine providence, is presented.

Going back to the earliest account of a caiman in the Cagayan Valley Region by Bishop Aduarte, it is seen that the creature was already associated with "old" pagan practices which the Dominicans sought to eradicate. During this time, it is probable that the Dominicans associated the caiman to people that were still practicing "pre-hispanic" rituals contradictory to the new Spanish faith. The term *calinga* in the Ibanagic languages (cf. Reid 2006, 4) can be translated as "enemy", however, in the Bocabulario of Fr. Bugarin and Fr. Lobato, calinga already had the additional definition of "infiel" or unfaithful, referring to those who are not baptized. It was in such circumstances that the caiman was associated with calingas who were not subjected under Spanish rule, particularly those who were the objects of Dominican missionary conversion efforts. The following are investigations of some of the accounts of miracles given above concerning Dominicans and caimanes which actually reflect a conflict between Dominicans and calingas.

In the old town of Nassiping, Cagayan, the story of the banishing of the Janggo by San Miguel is in its core a story on how the Spanish effectively established a reduccion of Nassiping and banished those who "raided" the settlement in the 17th century. It is probable that these Janggo are derogatory images of the groups that originally inhabited the area, but chose not to be part of the Spanish reduccion of Nassiping. An 18th century map of the area shows that there are "*ranchos de bandidos* (rancho/area of bandits)", "*Negros Caribes Barbaros* (Caribbean Negro Barbarians)", and "*Rancho de infieles mansos* (rancho of tame infidels)" near Nassiping. In fact, a *visita* or mission under Nassiping was established in 1738, the object of which were those who were labeled as *Aripas* scattered throughout the mountains opposite Nassiping, just across the Cagayan River. In establishing a reduccion in the area, calingas from the old mission of Orag was settled with the Aripas. Felix Keesing (1962, 216) suspects that these Aripas were perhaps Negritos. When one looks into how the Janggo is portrayed in stories, it seems

that the Janggo is a blatant demonization of the Negrito. Until the late 19th century, there were records of Aripas by Ferdinand Blumentritt and "Calingas de rancho de Aripa (calingas from the rancho of Aripa)". The fact that there are horned caiman masks that represent the Janggo is already reflective of the colonial mindset of equating the caiman to those people living in the mountain-wilderness near Nassiping. It is also interesting how the people attribute the non-performance of the Janggo ritual to caimans coming from the river and "raiding" the town. These are already amalgamations of colonial thoughts and experiences concerning Christian and non-Christian conflicts which are shaped throughout generations.

Figure 9. An 18th century map showing the old town of Nassiping (enclosed in an oblong) and the territories inhabited by "Infieles", "Bandidos", and "Barbaros" (enclosed in rectangles; emphasis by the author; Biblioteca Virtual de Defensa, ca. 18th century).[30]

Figure 10. An image of Santa Marta stepping on a crocodile in the Archdiocesan Archives of Tuguegarao. This is probably from the town of Gattaran, Cagayan, near Nassiping wherein the banishing of the crocodiles near the town is attributed to the saint (Photographs by Rubio, 2023).

In the case of the town of Claveria in downstream Cagayan, wherein the Dominican parish priest created a bridge over the Cabicungan River to avoid the "constant disasters caused by caimanes" during his term from 1878 to 1881, it is again seen in the records that "*Calingas de Apayao* (Calingas of Apayao)" and/or the "*Calanatas*" followed the Cabicungan River in going down to Claveria and allegedly killed people. Fr. Malumbres (1918a, 253, 266-67) even records an instance in July 16, 1897 when calingas killed a cabeza de barangay and his nephew in Claveria. This pushed the parish priest at that time to ask for military presence to be established in a *rancheria* of Claveria called Tabugan (now Tabbugan) in which there are killings every year. All these happened beside the Cabicungan River mentioned to be infested with caimanes, with Tabbugan being the last rancheria of Claveria before going up the Apayao mountains following the Cabicungan River. The same phenomenon is seen in the Abulug River which is the main entry point towards the Apayao missions (Malumbres, 253-56). Around ten kilometers from the Abulug River, Fr. Malumbres (1918a, 252) also records that the same calingas de Apayao or Mandayas went down the Annabatán River in Pamplona, Cagayan and killed seven Negrito children near the winery of Don Dionisio Bangalán in February of 1892. It could be remembered that the first fluvial procession dedicated to Sto. Domingo en Soriano for the repulsion of caimanes was instituted in the Abulug River in the 18th century. Even the town of Buguéy where Fr. Malumbres witnessed a caiman being brought to the convent in exchange for monetary reward in 1891, has a record concerning calingas: in February 6, 1897, Fr. Brugués wrote a letter about calingas killing two men and one woman, in addition to injuring one man, one woman, and two boys.

It seems that the given examples above are mere coincidences on the presence of both caimanes and calingas in an area. However, there is evidence that support the claim that caimanes were directly associated with calingas. This is seen in the Cagayan Valley insurrection of 1718 where people, especially in what is now Southern Cagayan and Northern Isabela, began to evacuate the *pueblos* and form scattered settlements. In the case of the old Cabagan (now San Pablo, Isabela), some people fled farther south and established a community near the Cagayan River. In the 1720s, when the revolt was quelled, the Dominican friars wanted to reintegrate these scattered populations, they did this by establishing Ermitas (chapels) within the scattered settlements. In 1724, Fr. Diego de la Torre established an Ermita within one of the settlements that fled Cabagan, which is named Casibaran (now Casibarag). As stated above, Fr. de la Torre dedicated the Ermita in Casibarag to Sto. Domingo en Soriano, which is said to have saved the community from caimanes since then. Interestingly, when the image of Sto. Domingo en Soriano, the banisher of caimans in Casibarag, is processed during its

fiesta at present, it is accompanied by dancers which reenact a battle between calingas and Christians. This is most probably a manifestation of the collective memory of people about calinga conflicts, possibly even the recollection of the 1718 revolt. Fr. Ulloa, the one who instituted the first fluvial procession of Santo Domingo en Soriano in the Abulug River against caimanes, was himself stationed in these areas of Cabagan in 1673 (Keesing 1962, 254).

It is also interesting to note that just opposite Casibarag is the barangay of Tallag which is strongly associated with the folk hero Biuag who swam in the river filled with buayas when he was a child, and who sought the help of a buaya in the hopes of defeating Malana. These areas opposite Casibarag and across the Cagayan River, are already on the foothills of the Cordilleras where numerous accounts about calingas are mentioned throughout the colonial period (cf. Malumbres 1918a, 12, 223, 331-333, 370, 414). It is also in these places that there is still a prevalence of folk beliefs and rituals merged with Catholic elements. Here, it could be said that because the calingas went into the fastnesses of the mountains unreached by Spanish control, they were eventually associated with the fierce caimanes who also abound in areas that are yet to be touched by civilization. This is why, until today, there is a view that buayas are only to be found in the backwaters or hinterlands of Northern Luzon, which are also associated with historically discriminated and minoritized groups of people. It is not a coincidence, then, that van der Ploeg and van Weerd (2012) cites in their work that Philippine crocodiles still abound in areas in the Sierra Madre that are inhabited by the Agta and Kalinga peoples. To the colonial mind, these people who practiced 'pagan' beliefs instead of following Dominican teaching, as well as the caimanes that occupy the same conceptual 'wilderness', are all the same – they are calingas, enemies of the envisioned colonial ordering of heaven and earth, whose ultimate end is to be subjugated.

Figure 11. The Cagayan River in Casibarag Norte, Cabagan, Isabela. Near this river is the Ermita of Santo Domingo en Soriano who is attributed to have saved Casibarag from

caimanes. At the other side of the river is barangay Tallag, where Biuag is said to have originated. This is probably the same river wherein Biuag swam with crocodiles when he was a child (Photograph by Rubio, 2024).

Conclusion

This discussion about the history of the crocodile in the Cagayan Valley Region has at least given one certain fact: fear toward the Cagayan Valley crocodile throughout history endured, but in the process, underwent multiple reformulations and manifestations. This paper argued that the pre-16th century buaya was feared and avoided by people in the valley due to its character of being a threat to human life. This fear was later elevated when it was merged with the Spanish colonial conception of the caiman which is not only a threat to life-physical but more so, to life-spiritual. As seen in the overwhelming amount of evidence presented above, this conception of the caiman gave rise not only to physical means in actively eradicating the creature but also to spiritual acts that persecuted the caiman conceptually and culturally. It is seen that in such a holistic activity of persecuting the caiman – from environmental disturbance and reorganization to incentivizing the killings of caimanes, until the instigation of cultural norms that alter human-crocodile relationships – the Dominican friars who administered the valley for generations were fundamental.

It is also noted in this study that the colonial conception of the caiman was inclusive of colonial views and attitudes toward the wilderness that was not reached by Spanish rule. This paper thus cites many instances in the valley wherein caimanes were associated with people who evaded colonial rule and Dominican conversion efforts. This effectively lumped the caimanes with calingas, or enemies, together. Although evidence is presented that shows the colonial grouping of the wilderness, cimanes, and calingas, the study barely scraped the surface of native-colonial conflicts with regard to conception, portrayal, and representation of identities that possibly contributed to ethnic differentiation between lowland and upland groups in the valley. The presence of Santo Domingo en Soriano in areas that were associated with caimanes and calingas alone could be reflective of the colonial cosmology of differentiation and discrimination of creatures (animals-people). This could be a subject for another study.

Going back to my initial reflection, there is now a greater understanding on why there are no mere mentions of crocodiles being sighted in the major waterways of the Cagayan Valley Region. Hundreds of years of persecution has created a society and people that antagonizes the crocodile. This perhaps adds, or even sets the stage, to the many factors that contributed to the creature's downfall in the valley even after the Spanish have left. Taking the reflection a little

further, one realizes the true tragedy of the Cagayan Valley crocodile: it vanished physically but it still remains in the consciousness of people as a mystical being that represents evil. Moreover, one realizes the colonial tragedy of people and caimanes being relegated to the status of worldly and heavenly adversary, the dividing effects of which are still seen in the Cagayan Valley Region today.

Figure 12. The miraculous image of Santo Domingo en Soriano in Casibarag Norte, Cabagan, Isabela, which is said to have saved Casibarag from caimanes.[31] It is one of the only two known bas relief santos in the whole Cagayan Valley Region[32]; it is attached atop a *carreta* (cart) so that it could be pulled during processions. During the flooding of Cagayan Valley in November and December 2024, the image was processed through the streets of the barangay. Allegedly after the procession, it did not rain for a week, effectively staving off the floodwaters from reaching Casibarag.

To end this rather long excursion into the history of Cagayan Valley crocodiles, I quote Bishop Diego Aduarte in his recollection of a passage told by a Dominican when asked by the natives on when they are going to leave the valley in 1594:

> Father Fray Antonio de Soria and a [Dominican] brother went to this town [Camalaniugan, Cagayan] to found and build a church, and although they [Indios] received them without resistance, they showed so little pleasure that they were in their town, that no one approached them, nor spoke to them,

> except to ask them when they were going to leave, until they [the Dominicans] answered: when the river dried up, which is so large that the Spanish called it Tajo because of its similarity [with the Tagus River], with which this question ceases (Aduarte 1640, 165; translation by the author).

The sarcasm of this passage spoken more than four centuries ago has become somewhat of a truth since although much of Cagayan Valley is now under the administration of Diocesan priests, the Dominican friars are still present in the Babuyan Group of Islands. This passage, however, can be used as a metaphor to describe the state of the Cagayan valley crocodile: the shadow of Dominican demonization of the creature still looms over the valley, Spanish-Dominican colonial policies still divide the crocodile-infested wilderness and the crocodile-liberated pueblos, and this view towards the crocodile and the wilderness still manifest today in the separation and discrimination of peoples' identities. For the Dominicans, it seems that their presence, both physically and figuratively, will continue as the river also continues to flow. Unfortunately for the crocodile, it seems that the Cagayan River has long dried up. The tragedy of the Cagayan Valley crocodile: its memory confined to priestly jokes – a jest of celestial humor.

The Author

Aldous Tracy F. Rubio is a graduate of Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences, Major in Anthropology and Minor in Philosophy, from the University of the Philippines Baguio. Aldous is taking his Master of Arts in History (with a focus on Ethnohistory and Local History) in the same university. He is also a Teaching Associate of the Department of History and Philosophy of the University of the Philippines Baguio, and he has taught courses on the history of Philippine ethnic minorities and the history of Northern Luzon. His research interests include Material Culture and History, Church History, and Northern Luzon History.

Notes

1. The priest being referred to is Rev. Fr. Fredel G. Agatep to whom I am grateful for being one of my mentors in my formative years, especially on the topic of local and church history. Acknowledgement is also due to Dr. Francis Gealogo who read the initial version of this paper passed in his Philippine Historiography class. This paper was also improved through the 2025 History Writing Workshop organized by the MA History Program and the Department of History and Philosophy of UP Baguio and headed

by Dr. Michael Pante, Dr. Ariel Lopez, and Dr. Leah Abayao — to whom the author is greatly indebted to

2. The Cagayan Valley Region includes Batanes, the Babuyan group of islands, Cagayan, Isabela, and Nueva Vizcaya.
3. This study treats the Cagayan Valley as a region based on the geographical, social, cultural, and political connections formed in the area during the Spanish colonial period. This study goes beyond political boundaries and touches on the lowland and upland areas of the region. The study mainly presents evidence from what is now the provinces of Cagayan and Isabela, as well as the foothills of the Cordillera and Sierra Madre, which were all parts of the Spanish colonial Cagayan sphere of influence.
4. The ethnographic evidence being referred to is a collation of "marginal" data gathered from different fieldworks I had in the valley and its surrounding mountain regions. However, I also had the chance to enrich this data by going to different parts of Cagayan, Isabela, and their borderlands throughout 2024 with this study in mind.
5. Namely: van der Ploeg and van Weerd (2003; 2004; 2006; 2008); van Weerd, van der Ploeg, Rodriguez, Guerrero, Tarun, Telan, and de Jonge (2006); van der Ploeg, Rodriguez, Tarun, Guerrero, Balbas, Telan, Masipiqueña, Cauilan-Cureg, and van Weerd (2008); van de Ven, Guerrero, Rodriguez, Telan, Balbas, Tarun, van Weerd, et al (2009); van der Ploeg, Cauillan-Cureg, van Weerd, and Persoon (2011); van der Ploeg, Cauilan-Cureg, van Weerd, and De Groot (2011); Daltry, Langelet, Solmu, van der Ploeg, van Weerd, and Whitaker (2016); Somaweera, Nifong, Rosenblatt, Brien, Combrink, Elsey, Grigg, Magnusson, Mazzotti, Pearcy, and Platt (2020).
6. See van Weerd and van der Ploeg 2012, 42-27. Here they cite the various spiritual characters taken by crocodiles in "Malay" cultures such as the Tagalog associating the crocodile with "Nono" or grandfather/ancestor.
7. Many of the rivers in the Caraballo Mountains, the Cordillera, and the Sierra Madre (in which the rivers populated by Philippine crocodiles are found) are tributaries of the Rio Grande de Cagayan or the Cagayan River. One can then infer that through such interconnected waterways, crocodiles might have roamed the whole territory at some point in time. To leave the Cagayan Valley out of the narrative of crocodiles in the Sierra Madre is tantamount to removing a large portion of the story.
8. Itawit informants state that they use the term "*lamag*" for the crocodile because it also refers to the action of sinking or going under water. This term is possibly related to the Ibanag word "*lammad*" or the Ilocano word "*lumned*" which means the same.

9. An 1821 map by Juan de Sevilla places "Bocarot" beside another river north of the Bolo River. This seems to be misplaced since Sevilla places what is now Adams on the same river when it should be on the banks of the Bolo River.
10. The map is probably created on or after April 25, 1845 as the map depicts a town named "Alcala" in Cagayan. The town was founded on April 25, 1845 and was named after Governor-General Francisco de Paula Alcalá de la Torre (Malumbres 1918a, 412-13). The town was formerly a sitio called Fulay which was founded in 1787 (Malumbres 1918a, 409-10).
11. Some versions state that Biuag is from Enrile, Cagayan while others state that he was from Tallag, Cabagan, Isabela (wherein a hill is dedicated to Biuag). Both places, however, are just adjacent with each other and are found beside the Cagayan River. Today, this area is populated by Ibanag-speaking people. However, Spanish accounts state that the area was historically populated by a people called Iraya (cf. Malumbres, 1918a). There are still some Irraya speakers in Cabagan, Isabela albeit few in number.
12. The people of Malaueg speak their own language which is related to Ibanag and Itawit (Reid, 2006). Malaueg then refers to the place, people, and language.
13. The people of Tuao today speak Itawit.
14. It could be interpreted that Biuag was representative of the Irraya in what is now the Southern Cagayan–Northern Isabela area, Malana could be a representative of the Malaueg, while the maiden could be seen as representing the Itawit. It is good to note that these ethnic labels at present are derived from the particular geographic area inhabited by the people: Malaueg allegedly come from the root word *ueg* which could be translated to *river* or *stream*; Itawit is a combination of the prefix *i-*, which could be understood as *person from*, and *tawit*, thus, *person from tawi*t; and Irraya is probably a combination of *i-* and *raya*, which could be a cognate of the Austronesian *daya*, meaning *upstream*, hence, *person from [the] upstream*. The epic might not have the original intention of pitting rigid and boxed ethnicities against each other, it could just have simply been a story of people from different localities of the valley interacting with each other without much weight on their ethnic differences.
15. Fr. José Bugarin, O.P., lived from 1606 to 1676 according to Fr. Eladio Neira, O.P. (2000, as cited in José 2020b, 327).
16. Jan van der Ploeg, M. van Weerd, and G. A. Persoon, "A Cultural History of Crocodiles in the Philippines: Towards a New Peace Pact?," Environment and History 17, no. 2 (2011): 229–64; Johan A. N. van der Ploeg, Swallowed by a Cayman: Integrating Cultural Values in Philippine Crocodile Conservation (PhD diss., Leiden

University, 2013); Takashi Tsuji, "Crocodiles in Philippine Folklore," Southeastern Philippines Journal of Research and Development 26, no. 1 (2021): 19–34; M. van Weerd and J. A. N. van der Ploeg, The Philippine Crocodile: Ecology, Culture, and Conservation (Leiden: Mabuwaya Foundation, 2012).

17. Cf. Keesing, Felix M. "The Cagayan Valley Region: General Perspectives." In *The Ethnohistory of Northern Luzon*, 168-81. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962.
18. Angelito Malicse, "The Role of the Catholic Church in Governance During Spanish Colonization of the Philippines" (PhilArchive, 2020); Vicente L. Rafael, Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988); Hilario Ocio, Misioneros dominicos en el extremo oriente, 1587–1835 (Manila: Eladio Neira, 2000).
19. In general, much of the missionary efforts were heightened in the 17th century in the lowland regions of Cagayan valley (cf. Malumbres 1918a, 1918b, and 1919; Keesing, 1962). By this time, much of what is now Cagayan Valley was already known to the Spanish, as well as the mountains surrounding the valley. This does not mean, however, that missions ceased after the 17th century. Records show that throughout the Spanish colonial period, Dominican missions were constantly being established in the Cagayan Valley Region, especially in the mountains surrounding it.
20. Bishop Diego Aduarte, O.P., died in 1636. His work was compiled and published by his confreres in 1640.
21. Fr. Pedro Muriel, O.P., was recorded by Fr. Neira (2000a, as cited in José 2019a, 84; 2019c, 540, 550) as having been assigned to the old mission of Pata, Cagayan in 1629, to the old town of Nassiping, Cagayan from 1631 to 1633, and he died in 1641. In this account, it is not mentioned what year Fr. Muriel became vicar of Tuao, however, it is probably during the early 17th century. Fr. Muriel is a contemporary of Bishop Aduarte.
22. This phrase could be interpreted as, "for only reasons that God knows".
23. The parish of Tuao was established on May 13, 1612 and was placed under the patronage of the Santos Angeles Custodios (Holy Guardian Angels). This is one of the miracles concerning Guardian Angels in Tuao recorded by Bishop Aduarte.
24. According to the bibliographic information provided by the Antorcha de Caminantes, Fr. Martin Real de la Cruz, O.P., arrived in the Philippines in 1628 and became a missionary to what is now the province of Cagayan and the Babuyan Islands from then on. He became the Rector of the University of Santo Tomas (probably from 1648 to 1649; cf. José 2018a, p. 110). He died in the Babuyanes in

1651. He is a contemporary of Bishop Aduarte and Saint Francisco Fernández de Capillas. The version of the Antorcha de Caminantes used herein was published in 1868, which is based on a sole existing copy of the work written by the friar found in Cagayan. There were earlier editions printed in Sampaloc and in the Universidad de Sto. Tomas, however, all of which, including the one in Cagayan, have disappeared (de la Cruz 1868, 3).

25. Fr. Ulloa was imprisoned in the Babuyanes by English "pirates" in 1685 according to José 2018a, p. 112. Hence, Fr. Ulloa was already a missionary to Cagayan in the 1600s.
26. The mask-makers interviewed and photographed by the author are members of the Pallagao family of Nassiping, Gattaran, Cagayan of whom the author is greatly indebted to.
27. Vicente Dumaual was born on the 10th of January, 1887. Much of the accounts in the book he wrote are from the late 19th century and early 20th century; it seems that he wrote based on his own experiences and interactions with the elderly during his time. The work, however, is dated to be from 1959, as stated in a National Library card at the back of the book. It is now deposited in the Cagayan Museum and Historical Research Center.
28. This account was raised to the author's attention by Dir. Kevin D. Baclig, Mr. Jake C. Coballes, Ar. Michael Tabao, and Mr. Joshua Jewel L. Palolan of the Cagayan Museum and Historical Research Center and Cagayan Heritage Conservation Society, to whom great appreciation is owed.
29. This story was relayed by Mariano "Anung" C. Agustin, Felicisimo "Filing" C. Agustin, and Anacleto "Litong" Bironia in different parts of my youth, all of whom are remembered fondly.
30. The map is estimated to be from the 18th century as scribbled on its bottom right. This seems to be correct since some of the places depicted therein were founded in the 18th century.
31. Whether this is an 18th century image coming from the time of Fr. de la Torre remains to be proven. There is a smaller image of Santo Domingo en Soriano on the central niche of the altar of the Ermita, it seems to be made of wood but was cemented to the niche. This larger image in the photo is a processional image entirely made of hardwood.
32. The other one being the *Animas Tap Purgatorio* (Souls in Purgatory) in Camalaniugan, Cagayan.

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