

Representation of Ethical Values in the Manalatai Lewun Sansana Text of the Dayak Ngaju

Ngalimun^a, Rusma Noortyani^b, Dwi Wahyu Candra Dewi^c

^{a,b,c} Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin, Indonesia

 ngalimun@umbjm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of ethical values in *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* within the oral literary tradition of the Dayak Ngaju community. The study uses a qualitative field approach supported by observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Informants were selected purposively and consisted of Dayak Ngaju cultural figures, academics, university students, and customary leaders. The textual data were drawn from *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* and related Dayak Ngaju cultural documents. The findings show that the ethical values represented in the text are centered on two main relationships. First, the text reflects spiritual ethics, namely the human obligation to approach God or Ranying Hatalla through prayer, obedience, gratitude, and moral conduct. Second, the text represents ecological ethics, in which nature is understood not merely as an economic resource but as a sacred entity connected to ancestors, cosmic balance, and collective survival. Through the narrative of *sansana*, these values are transmitted as cultural guidance for maintaining harmony among humans, God, nature, and society. This study contributes to the understanding of Dayak Ngaju oral literature as a medium of ethical education, cultural memory, and ecological awareness in both traditional and contemporary contexts.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 3 March 2026

Accepted 5 June 2026

Published 13 June 2026

KEYWORDS

ethical values; Dayak Ngaju; Manalatai Lewun Sansana; oral tradition; ecological ethics; indigenous ethics

Introduction

The Dayak Ngaju community has a system of values, beliefs, and oral traditions that shape its collective worldview regarding the relationship between humans, God, other people, ancestors, and nature. In Dayak Ngaju cosmology, life is not understood as a separation between the social and spiritual worlds, but as an interconnected order. Belief in Ranying Hatalla, ancestral spirits, natural symbols, and customary rules forms the basis for ethical conduct in the community. Therefore, Dayak Ngaju oral tradition functions not only as a legacy of stories, but also as a medium for transmitting values, norms, and moral orientations. Recent studies show that Dayak Ngaju oral literature plays a role in shaping cultural identity, preserving collective memory, and connecting the community with a value system inherited across generations (Misnawati et al., 2021; Ngalimun et al., 2025).

One important form of oral tradition in the Dayak Ngaju community is *sansana*. *Sansana* is an oral narrative that contains stories of origins, human relations with the unseen world, views of nature, and moral guidance for social life. In this context, *sansana* should not be understood merely as folklore or traditional entertainment, but as a cultural medium that preserves collective memory, spiritual teachings, and the ethical values of the community. Recent studies indicate that Dayak Ngaju oral tradition continues to represent the cultural identity of the community, although its existence faces challenges due to social change, modernization, and the weakening of intergenerational transmission (Misnawati et al., 2021; Ngalimun et al., 2025). This is consistent with ethnopedagogical studies of oral literature, which emphasize that local oral traditions can serve as sources of value education, character formation, and the preservation of community cultural identity (Fitriana et al., 2025).

In *Manalatai Lewun Sansana*, Dayak Ngaju ethical values are expressed through the spiritual relationship between humans and Ranying Hatalla and through the ecological relationship between humans and nature. Nature is not viewed merely as an economic resource, but as part of a cosmic order that possesses sacred value and must be respected. This view is consistent with the framework of Indigenous knowledge, which positions the relationship between humans and nature as ethical, spiritual, and communal rather than merely instrumental. Recent studies on Indigenous knowledge emphasize that Indigenous peoples and local communities play an important role in effective and equitable conservation because they possess knowledge systems, ecological practices, and governance structures rooted in long-term experience with their living landscapes (Dawson et al., 2021; Jessen et al., 2022). In addition, the transmission of Indigenous knowledge faces challenges caused by changes in social landscapes, modernization, and intergenerational value shifts, making cultural documentation and revitalization increasingly important (Malapane et al., 2024).

Although studies on Dayak Ngaju culture, Kaharingan, and oral literature have been conducted, there remains a research gap that needs to be clarified. Previous studies have mostly discussed *sansana* as an oral tradition, cultural identity, or local literary heritage. Studies that specifically connect the text of *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* with the representation of ethical values, particularly spiritual ethics and ecological ethics, remain limited. In fact, this text contains the way the Dayak Ngaju community evaluates human actions, understands the relationship with God, and positions nature as a sacred entity that must be protected. Therefore, the research gap of this article lies in the limited reading of *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* as a medium for transmitting ethical values that connect cosmology, spirituality, and the ecological responsibility of the Dayak Ngaju community. This gap becomes increasingly relevant because recent studies on Dayak Ngaju *Sansana* have focused more on religious values and cultural identity, while the reading of ecological ethics in the text of *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* still needs to be developed more explicitly (Misnawati et al., 2021; Ngalimun et al., 2025; Jessen et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the challenges of modernization make this study increasingly important. Modernization, urbanization, formal education, institutional religion, and the development of

digital technology have changed the ways local communities transmit cultural values. On the one hand, social change may weaken traditional oral practices. On the other hand, digital technology also opens new spaces for the documentation, dissemination, and revitalization of local culture. Recent studies show that digital media can become a space where religion and culture meet in multicultural societies, while studies on oral tradition emphasize the importance of documentation and revitalization so that cultural heritage is not disconnected from younger generations (Latifah & Ngalimun, 2025; Fitriana et al., 2025). At the same time, research on the transmission of Indigenous knowledge emphasizes that social change can shift the ways younger generations understand local knowledge, making educational strategies, documentation, and community involvement necessary to maintain the sustainability of cultural values (Malapane et al., 2024). Therefore, reading *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* is important not only for understanding the past, but also for assessing the relevance of Dayak Ngaju ethical values in contemporary life.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the representation of ethical values in the text of *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* of the Dayak Ngaju community. The main focus of the study is directed toward two value dimensions: spiritual ethics, which regulate the relationship between humans and Ranying Hatalla, and ecological ethics, which regulate the relationship between humans and nature. This study also seeks to explain how sansana functions as a medium for transmitting values, preserving cultural memory, and providing moral guidance for the Dayak Ngaju community. Through an ethnographic approach and textual analysis, this study is expected to contribute to the study of oral tradition, Indigenous ethics, and ecological ethics in the context of local culture in Central Kalimantan. More broadly, this study is also expected to strengthen the discussion of the role of Indigenous knowledge in ethical education, cultural preservation, and ecological awareness amid the challenges of modernization and contemporary environmental crises (Dawson et al., 2021; Jessen et al., 2022; Taufik et al., 2024).

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a field research design combined with textual analysis of oral tradition. A qualitative approach was selected because the focus of the study concerns meanings, values, symbols, worldviews, and cultural experiences of the Dayak Ngaju community, which cannot be adequately explained through statistical figures. Qualitative research is appropriate for understanding sociocultural phenomena in depth, especially when researchers seek to interpret the reasons, meanings, and ways in which a cultural practice is understood by its participants (Busetto et al., 2020; Surawy Stepney et al., 2023). In this study, the qualitative approach enabled the researcher to understand *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* not only as a narrative text, but also as a medium for transmitting the ethical values of the Dayak Ngaju community.

The research design was ethnographic-textual. The ethnographic approach was used to understand sansana as a living cultural practice within the community, while textual analysis was used to examine the representation of ethical values in the text of *Manalatai Lewun Sansana*. Thus, the research data were obtained not only from interviews and field observations, but also from an in-depth reading of the sansana text. This combination is important because ethical values in sansana appear not only in informants' statements, but also in phrases, narratives, symbols, and story episodes that are transmitted orally or documented in textual form. Such a combined approach is consistent with the principles of document analysis and qualitative research, which emphasize transparent, contextual, and responsible reading of sources (Taylor et al., 2024).

The object of this study was the representation of ethical values in *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* of the Dayak Ngaju community. The ethical values examined include spiritual, ecological, social, and cosmological values that regulate the relationships between humans and Ranying Hatalla, nature, ancestors, and fellow human beings. The research subjects were selected purposively based on their competence, experience, and involvement in Dayak Ngaju culture. Purposive informant selection was used because this study required data sources who truly

understood the text, tradition, and cultural practices being examined. The informants consisted of Dayak Ngaju cultural figures, academics familiar with Dayak Ngaju culture, university students as representatives of the younger generation, and customary leaders who hold cultural authority in local customary practices and traditions. The selection of informants based on competence and cultural involvement is consistent with the principles of purposive sampling in qualitative research, especially when researchers require informants who have direct experience and in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon being studied (Campbell et al., 2020; Busetto et al., 2020).

The main data in this study consisted of two types: field data and textual data. Field data were obtained through observation and in-depth interviews with informants. These data were used to understand how the Dayak Ngaju community interprets ethical values in *sansana*, how these values are transmitted, and how they remain relevant in contemporary social life. Textual data were obtained from the text of *Manalatai Lewun Sansana*, Hans Schärer's work translated by Lambut, customary manuscripts, cultural archives, and other supporting documents related to Dayak Ngaju *sansana*. The textual data were used to identify representations of ethical values that appear in the narrative structure of *sansana*. The use of cultural documents and oral tradition texts as data sources was conducted by considering the context of production, cultural meaning, and the relationship between the text and the community that owns the tradition (Taylor et al., 2024; Ngalmun et al., 2025).

The units of analysis in the textual study included phrases, sentences, narratives, symbols, characters, events, and episodes in the *sansana* text. These units were selected because they represent the ethical values that are the focus of this study. For example, phrases or narratives that refer to the relationship between humans and Ranying Hatalla were analyzed as representations of spiritual ethics. Narratives about Sangumang, kayu ulin, and the prohibition against cutting trees without following customary rules were analyzed as representations of ecological ethics. Symbols of nature, the upper world, the human world, ancestors, and sacred powers were analyzed as representations of Dayak Ngaju cosmology. By defining these units of analysis, the relationship between the *sansana* text and the interpretation of ethical values became more operational and traceable. Explicitly determining the units of analysis is also important in qualitative content analysis so that the relationships among data, codes, categories, and themes can be academically justified (Kyngäs, 2020; Taylor et al., 2024).

Data were collected through three techniques. First, observation was conducted to understand the sociocultural context of the Dayak Ngaju community, particularly cultural practices related to *sansana*, customary law, human relationships with nature, and respect for ancestral values. The observation was limited-participatory because the researcher did not fully become a cultural actor, but observed relevant cultural practices and contexts. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with key and supporting informants. The interviews were used to explore informants' understanding of the meaning of *Manalatai Lewun Sansana*, the ethical function of *sansana*, spiritual values, ecological values, and their relevance in the contemporary life of the Dayak Ngaju community. Third, document study was conducted to read and interpret the text of *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* and supporting cultural documents. The use of observation, interviews, and document study is consistent with the principles of qualitative research, which position multiple data sources as a way to understand phenomena more comprehensively (Surawy Stepney et al., 2023; Busetto et al., 2020).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and qualitative content analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of meaning in interview data, observation notes, and the *sansana* text. Meanwhile, qualitative content analysis was used to classify the content of the text and field data into categories of ethical values. Thematic analysis enables researchers to identify main themes systematically, while content analysis helps organize textual data into more structured categories of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Kyngäs, 2020). With this approach, narrative and symbolic data could be classified into the themes of spiritual ethics, ecological

ethics, social ethics, and cosmological ethics. In the context of oral tradition research, such analysis is important because cultural values often appear through symbols, metaphors, story episodes, and character relationships rather than through explicit statements alone (Taylor et al., 2024; Ngalimun et al., 2025).

The analysis was conducted through several stages. First, the researcher repeatedly read all interview data, observation notes, and the sansana text to gain a general understanding. Second, the researcher marked units of meaning related to ethical values, such as prayer, obedience to Ranying Hatalla, respect for nature, prohibitions against exploitation, relations with ancestors, and social etiquette. Third, these units of meaning were assigned initial codes according to their content and context. Fourth, codes with similar meanings were grouped into value categories, such as spiritual values, ecological values, social values, and cosmological values. Fifth, these categories were interpreted thematically to explain how *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* represents the ethical values of the Dayak Ngaju community. Sixth, the textual analysis was compared with interview and observation findings to identify alignment, differences, and expansions of meaning.

Operationally, textual analysis was conducted by examining four main elements. The first element was narrative structure, namely how an episode in sansana describes events, characters, and actions. The second element was cultural symbols, namely objects, figures, places, or beings that have spiritual or cosmological meanings, such as Ranying Hatalla, ancestors, kayu ulin, the upper world, and the human world. The third element was ethical meaning, namely moral messages contained in the text, such as the obligation to be grateful, obey God, respect nature, and maintain cosmic balance. The fourth element was social relevance, namely how these values are interpreted by informants in the context of contemporary Dayak Ngaju life. Through this approach, the analysis did not stop at cultural description, but was directly connected to the representation of ethical values that became the focus of the study. This framework also strengthens the reading of sansana as a source of Indigenous ethics that connects local knowledge, social practice, and ecological responsibility (Jessen et al., 2022; Taufik et al., 2024).

To ensure data validity, this study used source triangulation, method triangulation, and textual-field triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from cultural figures, academics, university students, and customary leaders. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of observation, interviews, and document study. Textual-field triangulation was conducted by comparing meanings found in the text of *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* with informants' interpretations. This strategy was used so that the findings would not depend on a single type of data, but would be supported by multiple sources. In document-based and qualitative research, source transparency, the reading process, and data comparison are important for strengthening analytical credibility (Taylor et al., 2024; Surawy Stepney et al., 2023).

The validity of the analysis was also maintained through repeated reading of the text, documentation of the coding process, and interpretive discussions with informants or Dayak Ngaju cultural experts. Each emerging theme was traced back to its source data, including excerpts from the sansana text, interview findings, and observation notes. Thus, the interpretation of ethical values was not detached from the cultural context and the text being analyzed. This process is important because research on oral tradition and Indigenous values requires caution so that researchers do not impose external meanings, but instead interpret values based on the cultural context of the community that owns the tradition. Studies on Indigenous knowledge also emphasize the importance of respecting the knowledge-holding community, local context, and the sustainability of intergenerational transmission (Dawson et al., 2021; Malapane et al., 2024).

Through these procedures, this study sought to demonstrate the connection between field data and textual data. Field data helped explain how the Dayak Ngaju community understands and lives the values of sansana, while textual data showed how these values are represented

through narratives, symbols, and episodes in *Manalatai Lewun Sansana*. Therefore, this research method did not merely document oral tradition, but also analyzed how sansana functions as a medium for transmitting ethical values, preserving cultural memory, and fostering ecological awareness in the Dayak Ngaju community. This approach is relevant to the needs of contemporary cultural research, which should not only describe local heritage, but also interpret its contribution to value education, cultural revitalization, and ecological sustainability (Latifah & Ngalimun, 2025; Fitriana et al., 2025; Taufik et al., 2024).

Results

Representation of Spiritual Ethics: The Relationship between Humans and Ranying Hatalla

The first finding shows that *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* represents the spiritual ethics of the Dayak Ngaju community through the relationship between humans and Ranying Hatalla. In Dayak Ngaju cosmology, human beings are not viewed as independent entities, but as beings connected to the Creator, ancestors, nature, and the cosmic order. Therefore, human actions are considered good when they are aligned with the guidance of Ranying Hatalla, customary law, and the principle of life balance.

This value is represented in the following excerpt from the *sansana* text:

“Una asin Jata Sangiang ih! Ije biti mahin jaton ije minsik.”

“Praise be to the Deity who has granted approval, not a single person woke up.”

The excerpt shows that human actions in *sansana* are not separated from the blessing and will of divine power. The expression of gratitude to the Deity indicates that life is understood as a space under spiritual supervision. Thus, spiritual ethics in *sansana* is not only a belief in God, but also a way of life that requires humility, gratitude, obedience, and the preservation of inner and outer purity.

Interviews with cultural figures and customary leaders show that this value is understood as the moral foundation of the Dayak Ngaju community in distinguishing good from bad actions. A good person is not only someone who lives in social order, but also someone who respects Ranying Hatalla, observes customary rules, and does not violate cosmic balance. Therefore, *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* represents spiritual ethics as the main foundation of moral conduct in the Dayak Ngaju community.

Representation of Social Ethics: Harmony, Mutual Assistance, and Respect for Custom

The second finding shows that *sansana* also represents the social ethics of the Dayak Ngaju community, particularly through the values of harmony, respect for elders, customary deliberation, and mutual assistance. In the Dayak Ngaju community, social etiquette is not merely a rule of politeness, but also a moral mechanism for maintaining order in communal life. Principles such as *Hatamuei Lingu Nalata* illustrate the importance of mutual recognition, good social relations, and harmony in social life.

The value of mutual assistance is reflected in the story of Nyai Jaya and Mangku Amat, who helped treat Apang Dohong. This story shows that helping others is part of human dignity. Although the characters who help others face risks and even injustice, the ethical value emphasized is the moral obligation to assist fellow human beings.

Social ethics is also reflected in the principle of *Hatindih Kambang Nyahun Tarung, Mantang Lawang Langit*, which implies the ideal of becoming a person who is useful to others and pleasing before Ranying Hatalla. In this context, social values do not stand apart from spiritual values. To become a good human being means being able to maintain relationships with others, respect customary law, listen to the advice of elders, and place collective interests above personal ego. Therefore, the description of social etiquette in *sansana* should be read as a representation of ethical values that emphasize order, responsibility, and harmony in communal life.

Representation of Ecological Ethics: Nature as a Sacred Entity and Ancestral Heritage

The third finding shows that *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* represents the ecological ethics of the Dayak Ngaju community. Nature is not viewed as an object of economic exploitation, but as a sacred entity that has a spiritual relationship with humans, ancestors, and the upper world. This perspective is clearly reflected in the narrative of Sangumang and *kayu ulin*.

Table 1. The Sansana Text on Sangumang and the Ethical Meaning of Manalatai Lewun

No.	Sansana Text in Dayak Ngaju	Indonesian Translation	Ethical Meaning and Cultural Value
1	Intu sansan ije rahian toh inyarita kilen ampie Sangumang tato hiang oloh Pantai Danum Kalunen mandino tabalien.	Pada sansana berikut ini diceritakan bagaimana Sangumang, nenek moyang orang Pantai Danum Kalunen, memperoleh kayu ulin.	<i>Kayu ulin</i> is understood as a resource with sacred origins. It is not merely a material object, but an ancestral heritage containing spiritual and cosmological values.
2	Sansan toh harajur inyarita oloh helo bara oloh nampara maneweng tabalien, uka ela buah taloh papa.	Sansana ini selalu diceritakan sebelum orang mulai menebang ulin, agar terhindar dari segala malapetaka.	This reflects ecological ethics and the principle of caution. The use of nature must be conducted through customary procedures so that cosmic balance is maintained.

The table shows that cutting *ulin* trees cannot be done carelessly. Before humans use nature, they must remember its sacred origin, follow customary rules, and recognize the spiritual consequences of actions that violate balance. Thus, *sansana* functions as a moral mechanism that limits human greed toward nature.

This ecological ethics is also reflected in the view that land clearing must be carried out only as needed and accompanied by the responsibility to replant useful vegetation. Nature is understood as a gift from Ranying Hatalla and as a living space that has spiritual guardians. Therefore, damaging nature is not only an ecological violation, but also an ethical and cosmological violation.

Sansana as a Medium for the Transmission of Ethical Values and Cultural Memory

The fourth finding shows that *sansana* functions as a medium for transmitting ethical values and preserving the cultural memory of the Dayak Ngaju community. Through *sansana*, spiritual, social, and ecological values are passed down from older generations to younger generations. Narratives about ancestors, the upper world, *kayu ulin*, Ranying Hatalla, and customary rules do not merely preserve stories of the past, but also shape guidelines for present action.

In this context, *sansana* has a pedagogical function. It teaches that humans must be grateful to God, respect others, obey customary rules, and protect nature as part of spiritual life. Therefore, *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* is not only a cultural text, but also an instrument of ethical education that shapes the way the Dayak Ngaju community understands the self, nature, and the cosmic order.

Discussion

Spiritual Ethics in Sansana as the Moral Foundation of the Dayak Ngaju Community

The findings show that the ethical values in *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* are rooted in the spiritual relationship between humans and Ranying Hatalla. This value demonstrates that morality in the Dayak Ngaju community is not based solely on social considerations, but also on cosmological awareness that human life exists within an order guarded by divine power. This

interpretation is consistent with Ngalimun et al. (2025), who explain that the oral tradition of Dayak Ngaju *Sansana* contains religious values and functions as a medium for renewing cultural interest in Dayak heritage. It also aligns with Misnawati et al. (2021), who show that Dayak Ngaju oral literature represents cultural identity through narrative structures, symbols, and inherited cultural meanings. Therefore, *sansana* can be understood as an ethical text that connects belief, morality, and cultural identity.

This reading expands previous studies that generally position *sansana* as oral literary heritage. In this study, *sansana* is read as a medium for representing spiritual ethics. Values such as gratitude, prayer, humility, and obedience to Ranying Hatalla do not appear as abstract teachings, but are embodied in narrative events, symbols, and the actions of characters. This perspective is also supported by Schärer's classical account of Ngaju religion, which shows that Dayak Ngaju cosmology places divine power, ancestral relations, and the order of life within an integrated spiritual framework (Schärer, 1963). Thus, the contribution of this article lies in affirming that *sansana* does not merely preserve cultural memory, but also regulates how Dayak Ngaju people evaluate moral action.

However, this spiritual value cannot be understood statically. In the context of modernization, formal education, institutional religion, and changes in the lifestyle of younger generations, the transmission of spiritual values in *sansana* faces serious challenges. Traditions that were once transmitted orally within the community now encounter the weakening of oral performance, changes in everyday language use, and the reduction of social spaces for storytelling. Malapane et al. (2024) show that the transmission of Indigenous knowledge can be threatened by changes in social landscapes, the dominance of modern knowledge systems, and intergenerational shifts in values. Therefore, the relevance of *sansana* today depends greatly on the ability of communities, cultural institutions, and educational actors to document, teach, and recontextualize its values.

Social Ethics and Custom as Mechanisms of Moral Regulation

The findings on Dayak Ngaju social etiquette show that social values in *sansana* function as mechanisms of moral regulation. Principles such as respect for elders, customary deliberation, avoidance of *pali*, and the obligation to help others indicate that Dayak Ngaju social ethics is built upon harmony and communal responsibility. Social etiquette is not merely a behavioral rule, but a value system that connects individuals with community, custom, and the spiritual order. This is consistent with studies of Dayak Ngaju cultural identity, which show that oral traditions continue to transmit social norms, collective memory, and cultural values in community life (Misnawati et al., 2021; Ngalimun et al., 2025).

This discussion is important because several cultural descriptions in the earlier manuscript tended to expand into general descriptions of custom. In this revised version, social etiquette is positioned directly as a representation of ethical values. For example, respect for *bue* and *mina mama* reflects appreciation for the wisdom of older generations. Customary deliberation in *Balai Basara* reflects deliberative values in problem solving. The obligation of guests to respect local custom reflects reciprocity and respect for the cultural space of others. These values also demonstrate that Dayak Ngaju ethics is relational, meaning that moral action is judged through the quality of one's relationship with elders, community members, customary rules, and the wider cosmological order.

In contemporary contexts, these social values remain relevant, but they are also undergoing negotiation. Modernization may shift customary authority, especially when younger generations are more familiar with formal education, digital media, and state law than customary law. However, this shift should not always be interpreted as the disappearance of customary values. Latifah and Ngalimun (2025) show that digital technology can become a meeting space for religion and culture in multicultural societies. This means that social values in *sansana* can be

revitalized through educational media, digital documentation, and intergenerational dialogue. In line with this, Fitriana et al. (2025) argue that local oral traditions can function as sources of ethnopedagogy, namely culturally based learning resources that transmit values to younger generations. Therefore, *sansana* can still function as a source of social ethics if its values are translated into language, educational forms, and media that are relevant to contemporary generations.

Ecological Ethics in Sansana and Its Relevance to Contemporary Environmental Crises

The strongest finding of this study is the representation of ecological ethics. The narrative of Sangumang and *kayu ulin* shows that nature is understood as a sacred entity, not as an object of exploitation. *Kayu ulin* is not viewed merely as a commodity, but as part of ancestral heritage and the cosmic order. Therefore, the use of nature must be preceded by narrative, ritual, and moral awareness. In this context, *sansana* functions as a reminder that humans do not have absolute authority over nature.

This reading is consistent with studies of Indigenous knowledge, which emphasize that local knowledge contributes significantly to ecological understanding and sustainability. Jessen et al. (2022) state that Indigenous knowledge can enrich ecological and evolutionary understanding because it is rooted in long-term relationships among humans, other species, and living landscapes. Dawson et al. (2021) also emphasize that Indigenous peoples and local communities have an important role in effective and equitable conservation because their practices are shaped by place-based knowledge, cultural responsibility, and local governance. From this perspective, ecological ethics in *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* can be read as a form of local ecological knowledge that regulates human relationships with nature through sacred narratives, customary prohibitions, and principles of balance.

Ecological ethics in *sansana* is also relevant to contemporary environmental crises. Deforestation, resource exploitation, land fires, and forest degradation in Kalimantan show that human relationships with nature are under serious pressure. In this situation, values such as cutting only as needed, asking permission, replanting useful vegetation, and avoiding greed can be read as culturally based sustainability principles. Taufik et al. (2024) emphasize that traditional ecological knowledge can support ecological awareness and sustainability among Indigenous communities. Therefore, *sansana* is important not only as cultural heritage, but also as a source of environmental ethics that can engage in dialogue with modern sustainability discourse.

Nevertheless, this discussion must remain critical. Ecological ethics in *sansana* cannot be assumed to be sufficient to solve all modern environmental problems. Contemporary environmental challenges involve broader actors, such as corporations, state policies, global markets, and changes in land use. Therefore, the ecological values of *sansana* should be positioned as a moral and cultural foundation, not as the only technical solution. The contribution of *sansana* lies in its ability to provide an ethical framework that limits exploitation and restores human relationships with nature to the principles of respect, responsibility, and balance. In this sense, the ecological message of *sansana* complements, rather than replaces, modern environmental governance and scientific conservation approaches.

Sansana, Modernization, and the Negotiation of Dayak Ngaju Ethical Values

Reviewer feedback emphasized the need to discuss how ethical values in *sansana* negotiate with modernization and social change. The findings show that spiritual, social, and ecological values in *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* remain relevant, but their forms of transmission have changed. In the past, *sansana* lived primarily through oral tradition and ritual practice. Today, these values must negotiate with schools, universities, digital media, formal religion, and modern public spaces.

This change presents two possibilities. First, *sansana* may weaken when younger generations no longer master the language, symbols, and cultural context surrounding it. Second, *sansana* may be revitalized if it is rewritten, documented, taught, and connected to contemporary issues such as cultural identity, character education, and environmental conservation. Ngalimun et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of renewing interest in Dayak Ngaju *Sansana* so that this oral tradition does not become disconnected from its community. Similarly, Fitriana et al. (2025) show that local oral traditions can be read as ethnopedagogical sources, namely sources of culturally based value learning.

Thus, modernization does not necessarily mean the disappearance of *sansana* values. Modernization can become a threat if it breaks the chain of value transmission, but it can also become an opportunity when *sansana* is reintroduced through education, research, cultural documentation, and digital media. Latifah and Ngalimun (2025) demonstrate that digital technology can expand the space for cultural and religious encounters in multicultural communities. This suggests that digital platforms may support the revitalization of oral traditions if they are used responsibly and remain connected to the cultural authority of the community. The critical position of this article is that ethical values in *sansana* should be understood as a living tradition, not as an artifact of the past. They can continue to function in modern society as long as their spiritual, social, and ecological meanings are translated contextually without detaching them from their cosmological roots.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions of the Study

Theoretically, this study contributes to the study of oral tradition, Indigenous ethics, and ecological ethics by showing that *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* represents ethical values through narratives, symbols, and cultural episodes. This article does not merely map values, but also shows that ethical values in *sansana* operate through three relational axes: the relationship between humans and Ranying Hatalla, the relationship among human beings, and the relationship between humans and nature. These three axes form the cosmological ethics of the Dayak Ngaju community. This contribution strengthens the position of oral literature as a source of ethical knowledge, cultural memory, and ecological awareness.

Practically, the findings of this study can be used as a basis for developing local cultural education, documenting oral traditions, and strengthening ecological awareness based on Indigenous values. *Sansana* can be used as a source of character education, environmental education, and the preservation of Dayak Ngaju cultural identity. However, its use must be carried out carefully by involving tradition holders, customary leaders, local academics, and younger generations to avoid simplification or cultural commodification. This is important because Indigenous knowledge should not be extracted merely as information, but should be understood within its cultural context and community ownership. Dawson et al. (2021) and Malapane et al. (2024) remind us that Indigenous communities must be positioned not only as sources of data, but also as active knowledge holders whose authority and participation are essential in cultural and ecological work.

Conclusion

This study shows that *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* represents the ethical values of the Dayak Ngaju community through three main relationships: the relationship between humans and Ranying Hatalla, the relationship among human beings, and the relationship between humans and nature. The relationship with Ranying Hatalla forms spiritual ethics that emphasize prayer, gratitude, obedience, and the awareness that human life exists within a cosmic order. The relationship among human beings forms social ethics that emphasize harmony, customary deliberation, respect for elders, and communal responsibility. The relationship with nature forms ecological

ethics that positions nature as a sacred entity, ancestral heritage, and part of the balance of life that must be protected.

The main contribution of this study lies in reading *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* as a medium for transmitting ethical values, not merely as an oral literary text or origin story. Through narratives about Ranying Hatalla, ancestors, Sangumang, *kayu ulin*, and customary rules, *sansana* shapes moral guidance that regulates how Dayak Ngaju people relate to God, society, and the environment. Thus, *sansana* can be understood as a medium of ethical education, cultural memory, and ecological awareness.

This study also affirms that ethical values in *sansana* remain relevant in contemporary life, especially amid the challenges of modernization, the weakening of oral transmission, and environmental crises. However, this relevance does not emerge automatically. The values of *sansana* need to be documented, taught, and recontextualized through education, research, and digital media so that they can be understood by younger generations without losing their cultural roots.

The limitation of this study lies in the scope of data, which focuses on the text of *Manalatai Lewun Sansana* and a number of selected informants. Therefore, future research may expand the analysis to other variations of *sansana*, compare Dayak Ngaju oral traditions with those of other Dayak subethnic groups, and examine how younger generations understand and preserve the ethical values of *sansana* in modern life. Through this direction, the study of *sansana* can continue to develop as part of cultural preservation, identity strengthening, and the development of ecological ethics based on local wisdom.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin, Indonesia, for the academic support provided during the preparation of this study. The authors also extend their appreciation to the Dayak Ngaju cultural figures, customary leaders, academics, and community members who contributed insights, contextual explanations, and cultural guidance during the research process. Their non-financial support through interviews, cultural discussion, interpretation of oral tradition, and scholarly feedback contributed substantially to the completion and refinement of this article.

Research Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of scientific research, including academic honesty, respect for cultural knowledge, transparency, voluntary participation, and research integrity. Since this study employed a qualitative field approach combined with textual analysis of oral tradition, the researchers ensured that informants were informed about the purpose of the study before interviews and observations were conducted. Participation was voluntary, and informants were treated with respect as cultural knowledge holders. The study did not involve clinical intervention, biological specimens, or the collection of sensitive biomedical data. All cultural information, textual sources, and scholarly references were used responsibly, with proper acknowledgment of the Dayak Ngaju cultural context and the sources consulted.

Author Contributions

Ngalimun: conceptualization, development of the research focus, coordination of field data collection, analysis of Dayak Ngaju oral tradition, interpretation of ethical values, and writing of the original draft.

Rusma Noortyani: methodology, textual analysis, validation of thematic categories, interpretation of cultural and linguistic data, and manuscript review and editing.

Dwi Wahyu Candra Dewi: documentation of field and textual data, organization of interview and observation findings, literature review, substantive revision, and preparation of the final manuscript.

All authors have read, reviewed, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Artificial Intelligence Use Statement

The authors declare that artificial intelligence was used only as a limited technical support tool for language editing, sentence refinement, grammar checking, translation assistance, and improving manuscript readability. All processes involving field interpretation, interview analysis, textual reading of *Manalatai Lewun Sansana*, thematic coding, cultural interpretation, academic argumentation, and conclusion development remain the full responsibility of the authors.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study consist of selected excerpts from *Manalatai Lewun Sansana*, field notes, interview summaries, observation records, thematic coding notes, cultural interpretation records, and relevant scholarly references on Dayak Ngaju oral tradition, Indigenous ethics, and ecological ethics. Due to cultural sensitivity and respect for informant confidentiality, the complete raw interview data are not publicly available. Additional information regarding the textual materials and analytical procedures may be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

References

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.
- Busetto, L., Wick, W., & Gumbinger, C. (2020). How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and Practice*, 2, Article 14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z>
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652–661. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>
- Dawson, N. M., Coolsaet, B., Sterling, E. J., Loveridge, R., Gross-Camp, N. D., Wongbusarakum, S., Sangha, K. K., Scherl, L. M., Phan, H. P., Zafra-Calvo, N., Lavey, W. G., Byakagaba, P., Idrobo, C. J., Chenet, A., Bennett, N. J., Mansourian, S., & Rosado-May, F. J. (2021). The role of Indigenous peoples and local communities in effective and equitable conservation. *Ecology and Society*, 26(3), Article 19. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-12625-260319>
- Fitriana, A., Mu'in, F., Noortyani, R., & Ngalimun, N. (2025). Lamut sebagai puisi rakyat: Kajian etnopedagogi. *Anterior Jurnal*, 24(1), 65–70. <https://doi.org/10.33084/anteriorv24i1.8933>
- Jessen, T. D., Ban, N. C., Claxton, N. XEMFOLTW, & Darimont, C. T. (2022). Contributions of Indigenous knowledge to ecological and evolutionary understanding. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 20(2), 93–101. <https://doi.org/10.1002/fee.2435>

- Kyngäs, H. (2020). Qualitative research and content analysis. In H. Kyngäs, K. Mikkonen, & M. Kääriäinen (Eds.), *The application of content analysis in nursing science research* (pp. 3–11). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30199-6_1
- Lambut, M. P. (1978). *Manalatai Lewun Sansana/Bertamasya ke Negeri Sansana: Terjemahan dari Mythen zum Totenkult oleh Hans Schärer.*
- Latifah, L., & Ngalimun, N. (2025). Teknologi digital sebagai ruang pertemuan agama dan budaya masyarakat multikultural. *SINTESA: Jurnal Sains & Teknologi*, 1(2), 51–64. <https://doi.org/10.65369/2qdcyw49>
- Liadi, F. (2020). *Refleksi kosmologi masyarakat Dayak Ngaju dalam sastra lisan Manalatai Lewun Sansana.* Kanaka.
- Malapane, O. L., Chanza, N., & Musakwa, W. (2024). Transmission of Indigenous knowledge systems under changing landscapes within the Vhavenda community, South Africa. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 161, Article 103861. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2024.103861>
- Misnawati, M., Poerwadi, P., Anwarsani, A., Nurachmana, A., & Diplan, D. (2021). Representation of cultural identity of the Dayak Ngaju community: Structural dynamic study. *JPPi (Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Indonesia)*, 7(4), 690–698. <https://doi.org/10.29210/020211392>
- Ngalimun, N., Noortyani, R., & Hermawan, S. (2025). Nilai religi dalam tradisi lisan Sansana Dayak Ngaju. *Al Qalam: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan dan Kemasyarakatan*, 19(1), 426–440. <https://doi.org/10.35931/aq.v19i1.4300>
- Schärer, H. (1963). *Ngaju religion: The conception of God among a South Borneo people* (R. Needham, Trans.). Martinus Nijhoff. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-011-9346-7>
- Surawy Stepney, N., Provost, F., Bhangu, S., & Caduff, C. (2023). Introduction to qualitative research methods: Part 2. *Perspectives in Clinical Research*, 14(2), 95–99. https://doi.org/10.4103/picr.picr_37_23
- Taufik, I., Mustika, A., Hidayat, A., Kogoya, W., & Sutiapermana, A. (2024). Building ecological awareness: Implementing environmental ethics and sustainability in Indigenous communities through a traditional ecological knowledge approach. *International Journal of Community Service (IJCS)*, 3(2), 192–203. <https://doi.org/10.55299/ijcs.v3i2.971>
- Taylor, M., Garner, P., Oliver, S., & Desmond, N. (2024). Use of qualitative research in World Health Organisation guidelines: A document analysis. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, 22, Article 44. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-024-01120-y>