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## **BODONG IN LOWER KALINGA: A STRATEGY OF PEACE AND JUSTICE SYSTEM**

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**Abstract:** *The study documented the awareness of the natives of Kalinga on the processes of Bodong in settling conflicts and disputes, their perception on its effectiveness and the alternative measures they adopt when it becomes ineffective using descriptive research design requesting the tribal leaders and members to answer unstructured questionnaires and informal interviews as well as conducting observations and documentation of activities related to Bodong practices. Findings show that most members of the Bodong are 51-66 years old, majority are male, married, literate and Roman Catholics. Findings further show that there are three procedures in the conduct of Bodong in Lower Kalinga: the Lumnok, Pagta and Sipat; that the respondents are very much aware of the procedures in the conduct of Bodong; that they perceive Bodong as effective justice system; and that they elevate their disputes to the courts as alternative to Bodong. Generally, respondents consider Bodong as a 'fair' justice system where no innocent soul is unjustly punished even at the cost of bloodshed.*

**Keywords:** *Awareness, Bodong, effectiveness, justice system*

### **INTRODUCTION**

*Bodong* refers to the 'peace pact' or peace council used in the Province of Kalinga in the northern part of the Philippines. It is a socio-cultural and economic institution conceived and painstakingly developed through the centuries out of a need for collective security which is the basis for binding viable communities which sprung from their ardent desire to live in peace and social security and with the belief of advancing towards economic prosperity and social stability if peace is achieved. *Bodong* also promotes the development and preservation of a cultural heritage that bespeaks of a distinctive ethnic identity.

The *Bodong* administration is an institution recognized by the Philippine government by virtue of Executive Order 220, now guided by the PAGTA of 1986 and based on the indigenous laws of the Cordillera. Leadership is handed down from an incapacitated *pangat*



or leader to his successor. The *Bodong* is represented in the provincial and regional governments, the representation elected every four years through a Bodong Congress Tribes in lower Kalinga practicing *Bodong* are the Gamonang or Tubog, Magnao, Pinukpuk, Limos, Matukad, Buaya, Dao-Angngan, Mabaka and Salegsig. These stereotyping tribes will settle unless the tribes of the person who committed the misdemeanor will surrender or will be killed.

Information and record show that their forefathers have fought and participated in the tribal wars with other ethnic tribes where their *Bodong* was used for the attainment of peace and further solving cases and forging friendships. And through time, it has greatly contributed to the preservation of a rare cultural heritage and a distinct ethnicity of the *Kalinga* in establishing a 'peace pact' and demonstrating 'love for peace' despite its notoriety and violence.

*Bodong* is a unique judicial system with a peace pact holder appointed by the *pangat* (tribal leaders) of tribes holding a peace agreement and who agree to ally with each other. It usually works out in large gatherings between two villages that belong to the same geographic area and shares kinship ties.

Justice in *Bodong* is considered to be all the more effective in possibly achieving justice compared when resorting to government laws. Accordingly, most provisions of the latter were made to favor the '*baknangs*' or the wealthy. In peace pact using *Bodong*, no innocent soul is unjustly punished even at the cost of bloodshed. Yao Gay (2011), a blogger, comments that he realized his luck to have been born into a family of tribal leaders for his exposure to *Bodong* practices that made him witness the resolution of many cases and the forging of many friendships. He explained in his blog that there is nothing as great as the *Bodong* system for it allowed him to hear the wisdom of the old, the power of serenity, gentleness and reason.

The *Bodong* system is being utilized to reunite tribes who had been divided by arbitrary administrative and social boundaries and most especially to protect or safeguard the rich natural resources within their territory which had long been exploited and damaged by the unscrupulous outsiders (Torrevilla, 2009).

Father Balweg and his group agreed to negotiate under the umbrella of Cordillera Bodong Association (CBA) during the administration of former President Corazon Aquino and so



peace accord or '*Sipat*' was held at Mt. Data, Bauko, Mt. Province back in 1986. The peace accord resulted to the creation and implementation of Executive Order No. 22 creating the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)" (Agpalo Jr., 2007).

Domingo (2007) in his article, *Kasapulan pay Laeng ti Kalinga ti Bodong* (Kalinga Needs Bodong) mentioned that Bodong is a process of developing confidence and self-reliance for economic growth and development.

However, *Bodong* has been given a bad image and has been feared especially by the non-natives of Mt. Province due to misinformation or the lack of information about its real nature. What mostly reach people in lowlands and urban areas are stories that the tribes in Kalinga are known for such as their tribal wars where a life is payable only with another life. It is in this light that the researchers have decided to conduct this study in order to gather more data on the acceptability of the *Bodong* and in the end help in the information sharing about it for the researchers believe that *Bodong* had been and will be an important part of Philippine legal and social culture. They share the same conviction with Malinnag et. al. (2007) that *Bodong*, as an indigenous justice system that plays a minor role nowadays, is still effective. Further, Malinnag et. al. believe that the rich culture of Abra can only be restored by educating the youth and engaging them in more cultural activities. The researchers hope that this study will help educate the people, especially the youth of Kalinga and other places in the country, with what *Bodong* really is and how significant it is as a strategy of achieving peace and justice in a community.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of
  - 1.1 Age
  - 1.2 Sex
  - 1.3 civil status
  - 1.4 highest educational attainment
  - 1.5 religious affiliation
2. How aware are the respondents on the process of settling disputes through the bodong?



3. What is the perception of the respondents on the effectiveness of b in settling disputes among tribes in Lower Kalinga
4. What alternative measures adopted in cases conflict is not resolved through bodong and problems encountered through the process?

## METHODOLOGY

The researchers used the descriptive research design specifically using the 'triangulation approach,' combining the use of questionnaire to gather data on the profile of the respondents, the awareness of the tribal leaders in the process of settling conflicts and disputes, the effectiveness of *Bodong* in settling conflicts and disputes among tribes, the alternative measures adopted if conflicts are not settled through the *Bodong* and the problems encountered in the use of *Bodong* in settling disputes and conflicts, and validation of the data gathered through the questionnaires using documentation and observations through immersion and conduct of unstructured interviews.

Data were analyzed using frequency count, percentage and weighted means. In determining the level of awareness, the following scale was used:

Very much aware	4.21 - 5.00
Much Aware	3.41 – 4.20
Aware	2.61 – 3.40
Less Aware	1.81 – 2.60
Unaware	1.00 – 1.80

On the level of effectiveness, the following scale was used.

Very much effective	4.21 - 5.00
Much effective	3.41 – 4.20
Effective	2.61 – 3.40
Less effective	1.81 – 2.60
Ineffective	1.00 – 1.80

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Profile of Respondents

Table 1 reflects that most of the respondents are 51-60 years old and married and that majority are male, elementary graduates and Roman Catholics. Findings reveal that the



composition of the tribes in attendance to the *Bodong* is male dominated, mature, literate and religious.

**Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents according to their Profile**

Profile	Frequency (n= 100)	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
41-50	25	25.00
51-60	48	48.00
61-65	18	18.00
66 and above	9	9.00
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	79	79.00
Female	21	21.00
<b>Civil Status</b>		
Single	4	4.00
Married	86	86.00
Widow/er	10	10.00
<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>		
Elementary graduate	68	68.00
Secondary graduate	25	25.00
College level	4	4.00
College graduate	3	3.00
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>		
Roman Catholic	92	92.00
Pentecostal	3	3.00
Protestant	5	5.00

## 2. Awareness of Respondents on the Process of Settling Disputes Through the *Bodong*

Table 2 reveals that the respondents are *'very much aware'* of the processes in the conduct of the *Bodong* in settling disputes. Their highest awareness is on the *Pagta* specifically on the following processes rated with a weighted mean of 5: *The tribal leaders of the aggrieved party narrate the facts of the case to the 'kasuapang'* and *The offender will give the 'multa' (penalty) commensurate to the crime committed and pay the customary damages to the victim.* There are times when there are conflicting opinions on the penalty and on the procedures of administering penalty according to the respondents. But because the tribal leaders have strong control over their members, the *Bodong* proceeds with smooth procedures and ends with favorable results.



On the other hand, their lowest awareness is on the *Lumnok* specifically on the first process where *the accused tribe enters where the Bodong will be held* which is rated with a weighted mean of 4.20.

Findings imply that the *Bodong* as a justice system has taught the respondents to give importance in looking into factual evidences and giving due punishment to the guilty. Findings further imply that the tribal leaders must give their tribal members better information campaign on where the accused should enter when called for a *Bodong* procedure.

**Table 2. Awareness of Respondents on the Procedures in the Conduct of Bodong**

Items	Weighted Mean	Descriptive value
<b>Lumnok</b>		
The accused tribe enters where the bodong will be held	4.20	VMA
The offender (Bummug-uy) gives papod (token e.g. carabao, pig) to the aggrieved tribe to be butchered during the bodong	4.67	VMA
Once papod accepted, it signals settlement of the case	4.35	VMA
<b>Pagta</b>		
The tribal leader (pangat) invites his kasuapang (tribal leader of the other tribe) to formalize the bodong	4.25	VMA
The tribal leaders of the aggrieved party narrates the facts of the case to the kasuapang	5.0	VMA
Each tribe leader investigate, interrogate witnesses, evaluate evidences, and work for the settlement of the case	4.78	VMA
The tribal leaders decide and resolve the case immediately	4.36	VMA
The offender will give the multa (penalty) commensurate to the crime committed and pay the customary damages to the victim	5.0	VMA
<b>Sipat</b>		
giving the beads to the wounded victim	4.24	VMA
Perform the rituals (kakab) which symbolizes that the conflict ends	4.58	VMA
Both tribes will have the meals (pakan) and to be followed by drinking of native wine (inum)	4.38	VMA
Overall mean	4.52	VMA

**Legend: VMA = VERY MUCH AWARE**

### 3. Perception of Respondents on the Effectiveness of Bodong in Settling Disputes

Table 3 shows that generally, *Bodong* is an 'effective' means of settling disputes and conflicts specifically with settling disputes on *rape* and *grave or serious physical injuries*. The



dispute considered lowest in effectiveness is *homicide*. These findings imply that the people in Kalinga give greatest importance to the dignity of their women but least importance to killings. Respondents revealed in their interviews that many tribesmen would still resort to personal vindications where a life will be paid with another life.

**Table 3. The Perceived Effectiveness of Bodong in Settling Disputes among Tribes in Lower Kalinga**

Cases	Weighted Mean	Adjectival Value
Murder	2.46	Effective
Homicide	2.38	Effective
Rape	2.92	Effective
Theft	2.83	Effective
Robbery	2.73	Effective
Physical Injuries(grave and slight)	2.92	Effective
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>Effective</b>

#### **4. Alternative Measures Adopted In Cases Conflict is not Resolved through Bodong and Problems Encountered through the Process**

In an interview with the different tribal leaders, *Bodong* as a system is very difficult on the part of the offender because there are cases where the offender cannot afford the penalty demanded by the aggrieved party. In this case, the offense can not be settled amicably through the *Bodong* thus the case is brought to the court for a decision. since both parties do not agree on the penalty. Further, the aggrieved party may find difficulty in communicating with the accused and fail to agree with the terms or finds difficulty in accepting *Bodong* as a means of settling their conflict. In this case, the conflict continues even when the case is brought to the court for settlement.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the study reveal that *Bodong* is an effective way of settling disputes and delivering justice among the people in Kalinga and that when problems arise, *Bodong* still becomes effective because of the peoples' respect for their tribal leaders and elders and because of their respect for cultural traditions.

It is therefore recommended that *Bodong* be sustained among tribes but be made flexible in its penalty system in consideration of the financial capacity of the offenders and that tribal leaders make the necessary adjustments in cases when conflicts occur between members of



the tribe and people outside Kalinga. It is further recommended that when offenders are from outside Kalinga or when cases between *Kalingas* cannot be resolved, the case be brought to the appropriate court for decision.

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