

ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY

**BOBBOBAI NI KALINGA PARA AD KAPYA:  
DOCUMENTATION OF THE ROLES OF  
WOMEN IN BODONG**

THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
MASTER IN TRANSDISCIPLINARY SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

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QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES

DECEMBER 2021

## **Bobbobai ni Kalinga para ad Kapya: Documentation of the Roles of Women in Bodong**

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**ABSTRACT:** Bodong, an indigenous dispute settlement and peacebuilding mechanism in the province of Kalinga, has been dominated by men for centuries. However, recent practices have demonstrated that women are now performing important roles in this mechanism, either as participants in negotiations or as peace pact holders. Notwithstanding, the public's general understanding is still dominated by the misconception that women's participation in Bodong is confined to the preparation of food or entertaining visitors. It is thus important to dispel this misconception in order to inform the public of how significant women can be in achieving the goals of any Bodong process, which is the resolution of conflicts and the achievement of peace and amity. This is the aim of this capstone project. In pursuit thereof, a participatory co-documentation process with Kalinga partners was carried out through data-gathering leading to the creation of a jointly developed and owned website.<sup>1</sup>

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Bodong is a territorially-based bilateral pact of non-aggression between Kalinga tribes, the objective of which is to maintain peace and stability within their territories and create bonds of amity, with the end view that members of each tribe may live and flourish in prosperity (Senate Bill No. 24, 2004).

This peacebuilding and dispute settlement mechanism is hailed by many as a vital aspect of Kalinga society considering the functions it plays in bringing about peace and stability. However, some look upon it as backward and anachronistic because they consider Bodong as an active agent of tribal killing (Saboy 1988, as cited in Refugee Review Tribunal 2009). It is also criticized for the retributive penalties attached to the transgressions of the *pagta*, or the rules of Bodong. Recent developments have nonetheless been integrated into most *pagta*, which have made the penalties more humane or acceptable.

Because of its distinctive functionality and normativity, Bodong has been the subject of numerous studies. However, there is a dearth of scholarly work discussing the roles Kalinga women play in the system. This is thus the gap that we, the academic researchers, aim to fill. We are of the view that the reason behind this is that Bodong has been dominated by men for centuries, so that most of the previous studies focused on their roles. Moreover, we are also of the view that less interest is shown not only in the roles of women in Bodong but in Bodong in general. That is because younger Kalinga generations are becoming less and less aware of its processes due to their exposure to mainstream justice systems—a phenomenon resulting from globalization, migration and greater contact with the national society.

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<sup>1</sup> The website can be accessed through this link: <https://kalingawomenforpeace.com/index.php>

Recent practices nonetheless show that women have been gradually brought into the Bodong process, specifically in aspects that require dialogue and negotiation. Kalinga women now perform important and critical functions in Bodong. In view of these developments, the academic researchers deemed it important to examine and document through this capstone project the roles of women in Kalinga dispute settlement and peacebuilding in partnership with a locally-based co-researcher group of Kalinga women lawyers and members of the community.

This capstone project thus seeks to address this central question: What are the roles of women in Bodong? It will also address the following sub-questions: What are the perceptions of Kalinga society, particularly the male elders, the youth, and the women themselves, of the roles of women in Bodong? Are women given enough platforms as men for them to exercise their rights as much as men do? What are the efforts to preserve the cultural practice of Bodong? What recommendations can be made based on the results of the documentation so as to further the struggle of Kalinga women toward playing more public roles in conflict resolution?

To answer these questions, discussions on the following shall be generated: a general overview of Kalinga women's engagement in peace; overview of the Bodong, the Bodong peace pact holder, and the *pagta*; roles of women in Bodong including case studies of three women peace pact holders; and the Kalinga youth and male elders' perceptions of the roles of women in Bodong and of Bodong in general. The discussions will be followed by an analysis of the data gathered. Finally, the researchers will present their conclusions and recommendations.

## **Objectives**

The main objective for the capstone project is to document, through a website, the workings of the Bodong process, which constitutes a highly regarded part of Kalinga society, with particular attention to gender issues. This documentation hopes to increase the level of awareness of the public, especially the younger generations of Kalinga on Bodong and the roles that women perform in this indigenous dispute settlement and peacebuilding mechanism. The results are also expected to encourage community initiatives toward enhancing women's active participation in the Bodong process.

Moreover, the phenomenon of a changing indigenous culture affected by external factors is occurring in all indigenous communities. As time goes on, important aspects of the values and knowledge that exist in indigenous societies may be lost and devalued if this knowledge is not transmitted to the next generation. Many young people are attracted to elements in Western or for the Kalinga, Manila-centric culture, believing that tradition is obsolete. This leads to a lack of interest among indigenous youth in practicing their traditional cultures (Lekhi 2019). Given the loss of cultural knowledge among many indigenous peoples, the idea of indigenous cultural preservation and revitalization becomes extremely relevant to discussions of cultural identity. Some degree of cultural preservation among indigenous peoples is important because

negative effects will likely occur if efforts to preserve traditional culture or knowledge, given external influences, are not addressed. Thus, this documentation aims to contribute to the preservation of the practice of Bodong even as it is changing and adapting to new and revitalizing forms of Kalinga culture. It thereby retains its status as an intangible cultural heritage of the people of Kalinga.

### **Previous studies on Bodong**

The studies that have been conducted related to Bodong have almost entirely focused on investigating its structure and effectiveness. Nonetheless, some of these researches reviewed below have guided the academic researchers in the execution of our capstone project.

#### *On the structure of Kalinga conflict resolution*

Naganag (2021) investigated the structure of conflict resolution management or alternative dispute settlement in Kalinga. He identified institutions and mechanisms that deal with this aspect of Kalinga society: *first*, the *peace pact* or the *Bodong*, which he described as a bilateral covenant between and among tribal groups or villages. The author discusses how bodong is constructed and enforced. The *second* is the *council of elders*, which he characterizes as a non-formal assembly whose members would, during a conflict, listen to the both parties before making a decision. The *third* is *swearing* or *sapata*. This is used if there are no witnesses to testify who committed the violation. In this case, all malefactors are asked to say the “swear” when the sun is about to rise. The *fourth* is *mambubuyun*, or probing through a spirit medium. If an animal is stolen, the owner will consult the *mambuyuyun* in order to find the animal. The *last* is probing, or *mandungol*, done by old men listening to the sound of a portent bird, or *idaw*.

#### *On the effectiveness of Bodong*

Vecaldo, et. al. (2015) described the effectiveness of Bodong as an alternative dispute resolution within the larger provincial legal context. The research utilized internal assessors, which included tribe/sub-tribe leaders of the province of Kalinga and external assessors. The latter comprising court employees of the regional trial court and the municipal trial courts/municipal circuit trial courts along with the local chief executives, rated Bodong as very effective or effective in dispute resolution. The research concluded that most Kalinga prefer the Bodong over legal proceedings when it comes to settling their differences.

Guadamor and Victor (2017) probed into how aware Kalinga leaders and members are of the Bodong process and how effective it is as an alternative dispute settlement measure in the broader provincial government context. This descriptive research adopted the triangulation approach, using questionnaires, immersion, and unstructured interviews. It showed that: (1) the majority of the participants were 51 to 60-year-old married men who are elementary graduates and Roman Catholics, (2) their highest awareness was of the *pagta*, which is the trial phase in Bodong; the lowest was the

*lumnok*, which is the first part of the Bodong process, (3) the Bodong is regarded as the most effective mechanism for settling rape and grave or serious physical injuries, but the least effective for homicide, and (4) Bodong is very strict on offenders and in case conflicting groups cannot reach a peaceful agreement, the case is taken to court. The authors concluded that Bodong continues to be an effective way of dispute settlement due to the people's respect for their cultural traditions, and their recognition that it can be more flexible to sustain the system.

The effectiveness of Bodong in conflict resolution and promotion of peace was also investigated in the context of conducting religious missions in Kalinga. "The Kalinga Peace-Pact Institution, Bodong: Forging Relationships, Resolving Conflicts, and Fostering Peaceful Co-existence," is a study that attempted to illuminate Kalinga society's practice of Bodong and its relevance to resolving conflicts and promoting peace (Layugan 2016). The paper took a cultural heritage approach in the hope of engendering discussion on missionary approaches among indigenous peoples. The research revealed that several aspects of Kalinga ways of life have changed, and one of its features being gradually superseded by mainstream institutions is the Bodong. The research, however, noted that some Kalinga still resort to Bodong for resolving their differences with other tribal groups.

Further, the research found that although Bodong has relatively slowed down hostilities between *sin-ilian* (tribes, subtribes), it has not completely eradicated vendettas, which have taken their toll on innocent victims. The researcher argued that Bodong may be an instrument to settle certain cases, but it may not be the perfect solution to the phenomenon of tribal war and the drive for vengeance. Thus, the research recommended that certain changes could be made in order to make Bodong a viable instrument to promote peace. This included making changes in the provisions of the *pagta*, or the rules that govern the pact between two tribal groups. It considered the rationale and consequence of forging a peace pact. The study further highlighted that the concept of the *sunud* (the "other" becoming a brother or sister) needs to be the central principle of the pact so that conflicting groups which accept it now become a new family, guaranteeing peaceful co-existence.

### **Significance of the capstone project (in the field of research)**

The findings of this capstone study address the inadequacies of previous investigations that have been carried out relating to the roles of Kalinga women in Bodong and dispute settlement. As can be gleaned from the foregoing chapter, previous scholars have explored only what the Bodong system looks like and how effective it is. Researches focusing on women peace pact holders or the roles of women in Bodong are a rarity, if not nonexistent. This study fills this gap by exploring the various ways in which women participate in Bodong. Moreover, it considers not only the perceptions of women peace pact holders, but also of other culture bearers, such as male peace pact holders, elders as well as Kalinga students and Kalinga women. This research thus offers a more comprehensive overview and understanding of the roles of women in Bodong.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research activities were conducted as a capstone project for the Asian Peacebuilders Scholarship program, which is a dual master's degree program co-initiated by the Nippon Foundation in Japan, the United Nations Mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica, and the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines. The project was carried out by the academic researchers along with their local women lawyer partners, who were all members of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines – Kalinga Chapter, in the province of Kalinga. Also included in the partnership were selected members of the community. It took place from July to November 2021 through an online-offline hybrid research mode in consideration of government regulations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature reviewed in this undertaking included academic books, journal articles, and reports. This documentation also utilized articles taken from online libraries as well as relevant texts from internet websites and newspapers. Data were primarily gathered through face to face interviews with the culture bearers, online for two of the academic researchers and frequently in person by the other academic researcher and the local partners.<sup>2</sup> All strictly observed health protocols promulgated by the national and local government units.

It must be emphasized that establishing and maintaining a Bodong is a long process, which is best observed and documented over a long period of time. Considering the time frame allotted for the capstone project, neither the academic nor women lawyer researchers had the luxury of an extended involvement with the community. Further, owing to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the time constraints and the nature of the capstone project, an ethnographic research involving consistent actual person-to-person interaction with the community could not be conducted. The research that was actually undertaken is therefore a qualitative venture which adopted a phenomenological approach. Data on the roles of women in Bodong were collected in online and in-person interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Our non-probability sampling prioritized people from Kalinga tribes as its sampling criteria.

Being a phenomenological kind of research, one of the main research activities involved interviews with women peace pact holders utilizing deviant case sampling in the limited population. The researchers employed semi-structured interviews with three women peace pact holders between August and October to explore their experiences and opinions. Another main research activity was a focus group discussion with convenience sampling involving Kalinga youths. Two men and five women students, introduced by one of the local partners, were interviewed, generating gender disaggregated data. Moreover, to document multiple perspectives of the roles of women in Bodong, semi-structured interviews with a male peace pact holder and elders together

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<sup>2</sup> Two of the academic researchers were not able to come to the Philippines due to border restrictions during the Covid 19 pandemic; hence, they participated in data gathering through online interaction. The other academic researcher, who is from the Philippines, was able to join the local partners in interviewing key informants in person.

with unstructured interviews drawing on local partners and other people in Kalinga were conducted in a snowball sampling strategy. Interviews were coded and thematically-analyzed.

Based on the collected data and reviewed literature, a website was developed featuring the Bodong and its processes. The website highlighted the roles of women through case studies of three past and present women peace pact holders. It should be clarified, however, that since women play other roles that contribute to the success of the peace process, these roles are also highlighted. Social media contents were created and shared through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. All data were validated by key informants before they were published online.

In the monitoring and evaluation of the project, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was utilized. Viewers of the website can access the link to the evaluation form and find answers to their questions there. The link was shared during the launching event of the website on October 31, 2021, in time for the culmination of the Indigenous Peoples' Month in the Philippines.

All research activities and each phase of the project complied with NCIP (National Commission on Indigenous People) Administrative Order No.1 Series of 2012, or The Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) and Customary Laws (CLs) Research and Documentation Guidelines of 2012 and other instructions from NCIP. Adherence to the principle of free, prior, and informed consent was ensured in all interviews and the FGD.

### **Co-production, co-creation and co-benefit**

This capstone project was guided by the core principles of co-creation, co-production and co-benefit. These principles were reflected in the local partners and the community's participation throughout the project cycle. The local partners were lady lawyers, who are all members of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) – Kalinga Chapter and come from various Kalinga sub-tribes: Dallac, Lubo and Tulgao. One local partner heads the Provincial Office of the NCIP, one is a private law practitioner, and the third a city councilor who was one of the drafters of the yTabuk Pagta. In various capacities, all are engaged in promoting indigenous and women's rights as well as cultural preservation.

At the outset of the project cycle, face to face in-person and online meetings were conducted with the local partners during which inputs for the capstone project design were gathered. During the implementation, the local partners also participated in the collection of data, most often through in-person interviews. Their wide social networks enabled the researchers to reach and interface in person and online with peace pact holders, elders and other stakeholders, including Kalinga youth. Their ability to speak the local language facilitated the interviews. Moreover, through their initiative, other IBP Kalinga lawyers were tapped to arrange and schedule in-person interviews, among

others. The local partners also took part in producing the contents of the website, either through drafting and revising of write ups or validating their contents.

It is the plan of the local partners to establish a women's organization that they will call, "Kalinga Women for Peace." For this reason, the researchers, with the consent of the local partners, named the website "Kalinga Women for Peace." Eventually, the output will be endorsed and turned over by the researchers to the local partners; thus, naming the website as such will establish the sense of ownership of the local partners over the capstone project. This will ensure the sustainability of the project as intended by the academic researchers. As of this writing, the academic and local partner researchers are firming up the schedule of a workshop to address the sustainability of the project.

In addition, insights and opinions of the other culture bearers, which include the Kalinga elders, peace pact holders, Kalinga youth, and local and national government representatives, were thoroughly considered in each phase of the project cycle. More importantly, unanimous consent of the various sub-tribes of Kalinga as regards the design, objectives and deliverables of the capstone project were obtained through their respective elders during a consultation facilitated by NCIP Kalinga.

At the initial stage of the conceptualization of the project design, the idea of the capstone project was introduced to the elders of Kalinga, most of them were women from Dallac, Balenciagao and Lubo subtribes. Through the sharing of their rich personal experiences with Bodong in their respective sub-tribes, the researchers and the local partners were able to gather a deeper understanding of the Bodong process. Along with their worthwhile suggestions, the elders' sharing aided the researchers in coming up with the project's logical framework, objectives, scope, and other components of the project design.

The researchers also conferred with representatives of the MBCC (Matagoan Bodong Consultative Council), an office created by the City Government of Tabuk, whose main function is to oversee the practice of Bodong in the City. The researchers met with some members of the council in order to discuss the idea, as well as solicit their suggestions, as regards the use of an online platform to achieve the objective of increasing awareness of women's participation in Bodong.

A FGD with the Kalinga youth also provided the researchers with a more informed understanding of their perceptions towards Bodong. This was a significant component of the project implementation considering that it gave the researchers an insight of what should be included in the website that could encourage the youth to know more and participate in Bodong processes.

Moreover, during the scheduled interviews with the women peace pact holders, one of the researchers who was present on site, along with the local partners, took the opportunity to engage with the other members of the community through informal conversations, all of which certainly enriched the conceptualization of the final output



and the data gathering for the capstone project. Lawyers, whose relatives were either tribal elders or peace pact holders, were among those who were interviewed informally.

### **III. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF KALINGA WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN PEACE<sup>3</sup>**

Imbued with a rich cultural heritage, Kalinga women mirror an aura of gold, incomparable and matchless. One of their defining features is seen beyond their upper body nakedness of earlier days, in their tradition of bedecking their skin with lace-like tribal pattern tattoos and adorning themselves with intricately decorated textiles. Yet, Kalinga women offer still more.

In Kalinga society, women are valued and even regarded as sacred due to their nature as 'life-givers.' In case of a tribal war, it is considered taboo to kill a woman. Hence, women are specifically not to be harmed, otherwise Kabunyan (Supreme Being of the Cordilleras) will curse and bring ruin to the tribe for generations to come if they perpetrated the heinous act.

The native tribes of the Cordilleras have been affected by multiple forms of violent conflicts worsened by the proliferation of weapons in the region. This has sometimes led to the abandonment of health, education, and economic activities, making women vulnerable and more susceptible to insecurity and gender-based violence (ISIS International 2011) as they struggle for liberation, democracy, and self-determination (Palaganas 2010:8).

Societal issues and the tyrannical practices of the Marcos regime in 1970 motivated the indigenous peoples of Cordillera to step up against their oppressors. The resistance against the Chico River Hydroelectric Dam project supported by the Marcos Administration would have displaced hundreds among the ethnic groups of the Cordilleras and would have caused flooding and mass destruction of their ancestral lands. To combat this incursion, one of the tactics initiated by women was to bare their breasts in defiance and distract the lowland construction workers. While the disoriented workers tried to comprehend what was happening, Kalinga men carried away the workers' construction machinery down the mountain to dump them at the constabulary barracks.

Thanks to these risqué tricks conceptualized by Kalinga community organizers with their external CO partners, and other tactics pressuring the World Bank in Washington, D.C. to withdraw its financial support, the Marcos government was forced to stop the Chico Dam project. When the news was announced, the Kalinga exuberantly celebrated their victory (Bagadion 1986). The lead Kalinga community organizer later reflected that the tribe's long experience in managing conflict through the Bodong was largely responsible for the successful outcome (Ngolaban 2021).

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<sup>3</sup> This part of the literature review was partly based on the idea of a thesis "The constructed self-awareness of Bodong" by Miki Sakiyama to be submitted to the University for Peace.

Kalinga women have also played important roles in peace building in various ways. Several elders even vouched that without women, the community would have been unsuccessful in mediating disputes. As a testament to this, several decades ago, large-scale operations of the New People's Army (NPA) in the province were feared as about to happen. At this crucial moment, women took a stand and acted as the mediators in the conflict. They served food and organized peace talks between the government soldiers and members of the NPA to prevent their village from being harmed. Aside from this, Kalinga women also play a special role in forging the Bodong where they offer food and drink to ease the tension and calm the parties in conflict (Lawagan and Bautista 2017:54-55).

Nowadays, the number of indigenous women active in Bodong practice remains limited but the idea is slowly being embraced. Nanang Irene Baawa, 64, is one of the notable *de facto* peace pact holders in Buanao Village in Abra. She assumed the post of being the *Nangdon si Bodong* because the original holder, her husband, had a hearing impairment which prevented him from fulfilling his duties. According to Nanang Irene, Bodong is not only inherited by men who traditionally become peace pact holders, but by the whole family, especially by the wives in order to preserve and develop their Bodong (Allad-iw 2005).

Despite these efforts and clear manifestations of how Kalinga women can make a difference, women are still deprived of leadership positions and their opinions are rarely acknowledged in mediating disputes (Lawagan and Bautista 2017:55). Until now, regardless of their traditional perceptions about themselves, Kalinga women have made commendable individual and collective efforts in gender work and peace building. Nonetheless, the formal recognition of these commitments and the encouragement of their participation are still lacking (ISIS International 2011).

#### **IV. OVERVIEW OF THE BODONG, THE BODONG HOLDER AND THE PAGTA**

##### *A. The Bodong*

Bodong emerged as an intervention in line with a *lex talionis* (law of retaliation) provision years ago (Sugguiao 1998). Vengeance then was justified as long as blood was drawn. The Kalinga believe that if they do not retaliate, they will end up being taken lightly. This remedy determines the relationships of a tribe and its domain with another tribe. It affirms the law that enables the relationship of these tribes to grow in mutually binding ways with one another. Further, crimes with no clear danger, such as stealing and the like, can be resolved through a series of peace-talks and intensive arbitration to make sure that the matter will not be taken lightly (Sugguiao 1998). Whenever conflict arises, this distinctive justice system intervenes through the *Nangdon si Bodong* (the peace-pact holder), who initiates the negotiations through an intermediary known as *mansakusak* to resolve the transgression (Sugguiao, 1998).

The practice of Bodong is guided by the *pagta*, or the rules of Bodong, which are either constituted orally or in writing, although the latter is the prevailing practice at present. This is the centerpiece of Bodong providing for the processing of its breach and the regulation of inter-tribal relations.

Bodong represents not only the outcome of the creation of a binding legal relationship; it is also an important social activity for the people of Kalinga. The latter believe the confluence of these two aspects of Bodong equates to the essence of life itself, not only because peace underwrites the perpetuation of their lives, but also because the very activity itself makes them feel alive (Senate Bill No. 24, 2004).

#### *B. Who can be Bodong or peace pact holders?*

When a Bodong is forged, the *binodngan*, or the members of the two tribes between which the peace pact was constituted, are expected for the sake of peace and harmony, to follow the laws or the *pagta*. In case they violate these laws, they shall be held responsible for their transgressions. However, in all *binodngan*, certain individuals are charged with the special, albeit heavier, responsibility of enforcing or executing the *pagta*. They are called the peace pact holders, or “*nangdon si Bodong*”.

Peace pact holders are the eyes, ears and mouth of the Bodong. They have the duty to prosecute with dispatch the cases brought before them and they are expected to confer with the *umili* and the elders in making decisions. They shall not allow the severance of the Bodong without complying with the provisions of the *pagta*.

Because they carry huge responsibilities, including economic duties, peace pact holders have to meet certain requirements before they are chosen as such by their tribes.

In most cases, males are chosen as peace pact holders because in the past, it was the males who actually went to the battlefield to fight on behalf of their people. For most members of the various Kalinga tribal groups, the males are seen as representing the stronger gender as they have the capacity to protect their village members against physical harm.

Although physical strength is desirable for a peace pact holder, in this present age as in earlier times, peace pact holders must be individuals who are respected in their communities and come from well-to-do families. The respect given to peace pact holders translates into an authority that enables the community to abide by their decisions. Thus, for peace pact holders to retain the respect and confidence of their fellow tribe members, they have to be upright in their dealings, show strength of mind in their decisions, and display compassion and empathy towards others.

Peace pact holders must also be financially capable considering they are always expected to protect the lives of their counterparts (Layugan 2016:15). This extends to being the host during a Bodong celebration or during the warming up of the Bodong or what is called the *dolnat* (Sugguiao 1998). They are also expected to be the host of

traveling *binodngan*, with the responsibility to feed, offer them shelter, and ensure their safety and well-being.

However, the possession of the above traits is not a guarantee that one can become a peace pact holder. As a matter of tradition, peace pact holders become such by virtue of inheritance. The designation is usually passed-on to the eldest son and it is a rarity that it is passed-on to a daughter.

Nevertheless, despite the strong preference given to male children until today, some females have risen above the tradition and played the role of peace pact holder.

In the above case, when the eldest son or the other sons beg off because they feel the requisite traits are wanting, the daughter who possesses the desired characteristics and capacities may inherit the position. In some tribes, however, it is a condition that the husband of the daughter must come from their own tribe.

Another way by which a woman can become a peace pact holder is when the designation is passed-on to her after the death of her husband, who was the previous peace pact holder. She will hold it until she dies or until she is unable to perform the responsibilities expected of her. Outside the process of inheritance, a woman can also become a peace pact holder when the council of elders of her tribe selects her.

Yet another way is when two tribes desire to reestablish a Bodong which was previously severed due to *patoy*, or killing. In this instance, the elders of each tribe may select, as a matter of preference, the new peace pact holder—who may be a woman—from the relatives of the victim or the culprit (as the case may be).

### *C. Women as subjects and agents of protection; how pagta protect and empower women*

A fundamental tenet in the Kalinga worldview is the deep respect and courtesy accorded to women, who are regarded as life-givers and peacemakers. This provides a mantle of protection to women who may be caught in a crossfire during tribal wars. It is considered a *paniyaw*, or a taboo, to hurt a woman at any time. In fact, it is believed that harming a woman will bring ruin and curse to the tribe of the wrongdoer.

It is, therefore, not a surprise that in most *pagta*, a chapter is specifically devoted for provisions that make certain acts against women criminal. The commission of these acts renders the perpetrator liable for penalties based on the gravity of the offense.

Among the acts considered as criminal is *pugod/gabao* (rape). The person who commits this act may be held to answer by paying the victim twelve carabaos. One author noted that since this act is a taboo and the penalty is rather high, this crime is seldom committed in Kalinga villages even to this day (Naganag 2021).

Another act that is considered a crime under a *pagta* is the *sowao/daldag*. This act pertains to an illicit affair that a married man incurs with the wife of another man. Usually, a fine of one carabao is demanded of the guilty man; it is to be butchered during a settlement. The guilty man may also be required to pay an additional fine of three carabaos to be delivered to the husband of the woman. The guilty woman may also be held answerable for two carabaos to be delivered to the wife of the offending husband (Naganag 2021).

Acts of lasciviousness, permanent abandonment of a spouse, physical injuries, *lukluk/lobak* (desecrating a widow), and *toddak di babae* (abduction), are some of the other acts punishable by the *pagta*. It must be noted that a woman may also be held liable under the *pagta* if she commits some of the acts referred above (Naganag 2021).

However, more than protecting women by making the above acts committed against them criminal, most *pagta* now accord to Kalinga women a status that was once non-existent, particularly in the practice of *Bodong*. Today, Kalinga women's roles are recognized by the *pagta* as indispensable to the achievement of peace and development in Kalinga society; hence, Kalinga women are now encouraged to be peace pact holders and to actively participate in all *Bodong* undertakings (Naganag 2021). This does not only protect Kalinga women, but also empowers them to protect themselves and others, assert their rights, and use their innate capacities to contribute to establishing a more peaceful and harmonious Kalinga society for everyone.

## **V. DISCUSSION ON THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN BODONG**

### *A. As Peace Pact Holders*

In discussing this role of women in Bodong, three case studies comprised one part of the data: the cases of Carina Alñag Chulsi, Elena Baglinit and Irene Addamo. Two (Auntie Elena and Nanang Irene) of these women are current peace pact holders, while one was a former peace pact holder dating back to the early 1980s. The three of them became peace pact holders by virtue of three different methods—Nanang Carina volunteered when none of the eligible males from her tribe wanted to hold the peace pact; Auntie Elena was elected by her tribe's elders while Nanang Irene inherited the peace pact from her husband.

#### *(1) Nanang Carina Alñag Chulsi*

Deep in the highlands of Kalinga lies the village of Sumadel. Almost forty years ago, this village witnessed a killing that ignited what was then believed to be a seemingly unending tribal war between the Sumadel Tribe and the Butbut Tribe. Adolescent boys from the latter were identified as the perpetrators of the assassination of then incumbent Mayor Alexander Alñag. This tragic incident elicited an immediate reaction from the Mayor's son, Alexander Alñag, Jr., who then killed Peter Gaddawan of Butbut in Tuguegarao, Cagayan in mid-1980.

In Bodong, it is a cardinal norm that the peace pact is automatically severed once a killing, or *patoy*, is committed against a member of a KaBodong (tribe with which the other tribe forged a peace pact). What normally ensues after the severance is a killing spree, where one tribe aims to score evenly against the other.

This is exactly what happened between Sumadel and Butbut. The members of each tribe lived in constant danger as they were all rendered vulnerable to the vengeful acts of some of the members of the opposite tribe. Indeed, during the period following the severance of the Bodong, retribution and bloodshed proliferated. This took place despite the presence of military units in the municipality of Tinglayan, where Butbut and Sumadel tribes are situated.

Moreover, during this precarious period, tribal members who were working as government employees were forced to take a leave for two years for fear of losing their lives in the course of the tribal war. Others sought refuge in distant places. Children and youth were not allowed to go to school as they were likewise susceptible to the violence of the tribal war.

Because of the worsening situation, the Office of the Provincial Governor of Kalinga had to intervene. Augustus Saboy, who was then the Provincial Administrator, and other provincial officers were sent to Tinglayan to persuade the two tribes to negotiate and restore the peace pact. Although the two tribes gave negotiation a chance, the atmosphere remained menacing.

While the negotiation was transpiring, the rest of the members of the Sumadel Tribe were anxious and in full anticipation of some kind of resolution. Many were earnestly hoping that the peace pact would be restored. Among them was the late mayor's older sister, Nanang Carina Alñgag Chulsi. For Nanang Carina, her tribe had already seen enough bloodshed and it was time for killings and other forms of violence to end. Many lives had been stunted, including that of the younger generations of her tribe. Although she was still grieving over the loss of her younger brother, she knew that the time had come for her tribe to restore the Bodong with the Butbut Tribe. That would enable the lives of everyone to return to normal and for their children to be given the chance to go back to school again.

The negotiations, however, proved to be difficult. Aside from irreconcilable terms and conditions being proffered by both tribes, the elders or the *papangat* of Sumadel were having a hard time identifying who would hold the Bodong. Apparently, none from the elders and other Sumadel males from Mayor Alñgag's clan wanted to become the Bodong holder as they were afraid that they would not be able to carry the responsibility or control the members of the clan who were still bent on choosing retribution over reconciliation. Many were too frightened to take on the task, since being a Bodong holder is not simply a social distinction; it also implies a precarious social status and may mean life itself.

On the third day of negotiation, Nanang Carina went to the rice fields with another woman to attend to their crops. When rains came pouring down, Nanang Carina and her companion decided to go back home. Suddenly, the sky cleared up and an odd and scorching heat descended upon the wide rice fields. Then Nanang Carina saw a group of men making their way out of Sumadel. She noticed that these were the elders of the Butbut Tribe. She hastily approached the group to ask why they were already leaving when the negotiation was still ongoing, to which the group retorted that no one among the males of her tribe wanted to hold the Bodong so it was futile for them to continue negotiating.

Frustrated at what she had just heard, and determined to restore peace between the two tribes, Nanang Carina right there and then decided to hold the Bodong. She prodded the Butbut elders to come along with her and head back to her village. Upon reaching it, she bravely announced that she would be the one to hold the peace pact.

While this surprised her family and her tribe members, Nanang Carina's decision was however embraced by them considering that this would mean a great deal to both the Sumadel and Butbut Tribes. Their members had been longing to see a day where they could live their lives free from fear and worry.

Negotiations then lasted for a few more days to settle the *pagta* and as in other Bodong celebrations, a feast followed the successful negotiation. However, since trust had not yet been fully restored, members of the Butbut Tribe had to demand that they be given unbreakable objects before they could partake in the meals prepared by the Sumadel Tribe. It is a common belief that this would dispel any curse that they might get from eating the food. To show that they are sincere, members of the Sumadel Tribe allowed the Butbut Tribe to take with them cauldrons, cast iron pots and other metal objects.

Because of Nanang Carina's strong will to finally bring peace, she has become the source of inspiration for many people in her tribe, including her own much loved children. For her daughter Juanita, Nanang Carina has proven that in Bodong and elsewhere in life, women are not consigned to the kitchen. Women play enormous roles in conflict resolution and achieving peace. They possess assets and skills that are valuable in negotiating and restoring amity. They are cool-headed and can adjust in almost all situations since they can control their minds and emotions. In addition, when women speak amidst a pool of men, the latter would almost always lend their ears to the former as Kalinga men accord women great respect.

Today, Nanang Carina's son, Ferdinand, is the holder of the Bodong that she has so gallantly fought for in the name of peace. When asked how he feels about her mother's feat, Ferdinand responded with a brimming pride in his eyes. For him, what his mother did was a great act of sacrifice and an immense display of courage. As his tribe's current peace pact holder, it is his joy to emulate and continue his mother's gallantry. Being a Bodong holder is a huge responsibility, but Ferdinand sees his position as an opportunity to be of true service to his people and his tribe, and for him, there is no greater honor.

## (2) Elena “Auntie Kimay” Baglinit

Confident in their abilities and certain of their power, women take on numerous roles in society. Filling in needs and achieving great feats have been their primary ways of proving that they are worthy of esteem and are empowered to handle responsibilities, especially in leadership. This holds true of Auntie Kimay, a peace pact holder in Kalinga, who radiates her light to lead her community toward a peaceful life.

Designated a peace pact holder by elders of the Biga tribe in a unanimous decision, Auntie Kimay holds a peace pact between her indigenous community and the Tanglag tribe in Lubuagan, Kalinga. Succeeding as the manager of the peace pact of her father, she learned her functions as a peace pact holder during four community meetings.

The 55-year old Bodong holder has her community’s trust as they believe that she is completely able to make good decisions for them. Accorded high regard even before she accepted the responsibility, Auntie Kimay allocated more of her time and capabilities to helping people resolve their problems when she became their village’s peace representative. With her tribe’s confidence in her, it did not matter to them that she was a woman.

*Fulfilling her duties and responsibilities* – Auntie Kimay’s experience in problem-solving boosted her confidence that she could perform the task of dealing with conflicts, since she felt it was her utmost mission to resolve community conflicts. As a leader with a functional moral compass, she always sides with the one she believes who is right. Wealth or smartness does not influence her decision-making because she sets aside biases to support fairly the people she is convinced are on the right side of the situation.

Auntie Kimay’s title heightened her sense of responsibility. That is why she strived hard to be a good role model for her community. That called for being righteous in all her actions and gestures. Having been urged to project an image of good leadership for the people to emulate, she upholds the *Bodong* in her charge in a way that elevates her alertness and sensitivity to the needs of her tribe members.

*Being a woman peace pact holder* – Being the lone woman *Bodong* holder in her tribe, Auntie Kimay believes that she was chosen because she is a lesbian. As a female leader dealing with similar responsibilities and issues that male peace pact holders manage, she has not encountered any problems based on her being a woman. Her sexual orientation essentially makes people believe that she can make as firm a decision as any man.

Despite the belief that men make firmer decisions than women, Auntie Kimay highlighted women’s superior skills in negotiation, especially concerning youth delinquents. In her view, women can better handle the younger generation who are in conflict with what is deemed right because women are generally more patient. She had



observed and noted that children tend to be frightened of men, but that fear vanishes when a woman talks to them with compassion. Their supreme ability to sympathize and expand their patience proves that negotiation is one of the women's strong points.

*Becoming a woman peace pact holder* – A peace pact holder since 2018, Auntie Kimay has already spent 3 years dealing with both the successes and challenges of her role. She always tries to do her best to serve her people well. One instance last year where she exemplified good dispute settlement capability was when somebody from another tribe was stoned by someone from her tribe. The victim suffered injuries, but the worsening of the dispute was avoided because Auntie Kimay dealt effectively with the trouble. The one side had to perform certain rituals on behalf of the victim so that it would appease the latter; the tension then might not heat up into something worse.

One difficulty of holding a Bodong is that Auntie Kimay is required to make herself available whenever and wherever she is needed no matter what the circumstances are. No matter the time and place, she has to be there when duty calls.

Despite the struggles she encounters and the huge responsibility she carries, Auntie Kimay remains steadfast in doing her job because she does not want to perpetuate violence. In the 1980s, the Bodong she held was severed and came to a halt because the conflict between the two tribes had led to bloodshed. Auntie Kimay does not want to have that kind of war and violence, especially among the present generation. Fortunately through her, the peace pact was restored in 2018. Chosen to be a protector of peace within and across tribes, she continues to do her work and justify her responsibility as a peace pact holder. For her, peace is tantamount to a good life and peace of mind.

*Calling future women peace pact holders* – Auntie Kimay emphasizes that if Kalinga women want to become peace pact holders, they should be able to exemplify strength and wisdom in decision-making, be ready with all assets especially financial, be fearless and courageous, and serve the people.

### *(3) Nanang Irene "Capas" Addamo*

It is no secret that women have historically faced greater barriers than men when it comes to participating fully in their respective communities. In Kalinga, being the leader of a tribe was once a male role but has dramatically become a gender-equal task through the test of time. The story of Irene has proved her worthy of not only being a peace pact holder but also a chieftain in her tribe.

Nanang Capas, of the Sumadel tribe in Tinglayan, Kalinga, holds a peace pact between her community and the Lubo tribe of Tanudan. She whole-heartedly inherited the title of Nangdon si Bodong following the death of her husband in 2002. She believes that the peace pact should not only focus on men but should also be open to the entire family, especially the spouses. She pointed out that women need to take on much bigger roles to maintain and strengthen their Bodong.

*As a woman in peacebuilding* – Since her succession, the 70-year-old Bodong holder is enthusiastic and nonchalant when it comes to decision-making. With the help and guidance of the council of elders in her indigenous tribe, her leadership has been smooth-sailing for the past 19 years. It has been peaceful. In fact, she has never encountered any problems, challenges, and hard negotiations in her path that she could not solve. She believes that diverse experiences and perspectives contribute importantly to bringing innovation, as different perspectives lead to better decision-making.

Whenever there are some concerns and matters needing further discussion, she would always consult and consider what the elders think before making a decision. Nanang Capas has a strong sense of trust toward the elders, so she follows the elders' decisions even if they differ from her perspective. However, she emphasized that women should also be present whenever they discuss conflicts to share their opinions on certain issues, to listen, and to actually have their voices be heard.

Despite being a woman peace pact holder for nineteen years now, she still believes that men are more capable of being the *Nangdon si Bodong* because they have greater strength to defend their village on the battlefield when necessary. In her perspective, this makes men better able to be the protector, defenders, and leaders of their tribe.

*Maintaining peace for the future generation* – More than the recognition and the indigenous tradition, Nanang Capas felt it was her responsibility to be the Sumadel tribe's peace pact holder. In almost two decades of being an amity builder, it never crossed her mind to renounce her duty. According to her, the only time that she would pass her title to her eldest son is when she dies. Further, she wants the younger generations of her tribe to exercise and abide by the provisions of *pagta*, even if she is already gone, as it is geared towards the holistic and maximal development of their members.

This 19-year mission as a peace pact holder fulfills her and makes her happy because she has been contributing and maintaining peace between the Sumadel tribe and the Lubo tribe. As she feels proud of rendering service for her tribe, the people in her community also delight that they have her as a guardian of peace.

#### *B. As participants in negotiations and tribal meetings*

It is a common observation among elders that Kalinga women have been participating largely from background positions in tribal meetings and negotiations within their tribes addressing various issues affecting the tribe, including critical ones. One example is when a *Bodong* is contemplated to be forged or re-established with another tribe; before the elders make decisions, they would usually solicit the opinions of the whole tribe. At this stage, women are given the chance to speak their minds whether forging or re-establishing the Bodong is ripe at this time. Another instance is when they give their opinions whether the penalties imposed are commensurate with the transgression of the *pagta*.

*C. As responsible for the preparation of food during Bodong celebrations*

In any Kalinga occasion, food plays a vital role in making the moment as worthwhile and meaningful as possible. Food has always been an integral part of Kalinga culture as the latter exhibits itself in the variety of dishes served during important occasions. One occasion where the Kalinga showcase their rich culinary tradition is during the culmination of a successful establishment of *Bodong* following a long and tedious negotiation. During the celebration, food is prepared mostly by women, who have to make sure that only the best is served to the visiting tribe. To many, this role that women perform, especially during *Bodong*, highlights how food plays a vital factor in creating a stronger bond between tribes or clans.

*D. As entertainers of the visiting tribes*

The celebration of a successful *Bodong* is characterized by festivities where members of the host tribe entertain the visiting tribe. Usually, this aspect of the celebration is carried out by women and children of the tribe, where they perform choruses and traditional dances.

*E. As assistant to husband who is the peace pact holder*

Wives of peace pact holders also play major roles in *Bodong*. Most often, they are the ones in-charge of managing the preparation of the food or entertaining the tribes during the *Bodong* celebration. They assist their husbands so that the *Bodong* process will go as smoothly as possible. Moreover, whenever a *Bodong* is planned to be re-established, it is mandatory that not only the previous peace pact holder should be compensated, but also his wife.

**VI. KALINGA YOUTH AND MALE ELDERS' PERCEPTION OF THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN BODONG AND OF BODONG IN GENERAL**

*A. Kalinga Youth's Perception of Bodong*

The exponential growth of numerous innovations and developments influenced from outside has convinced many that the seeds of values and culture indigenous peoples have nourished for generations are slowly dying. The influx of external modes and the mobilization of Kalinga youth to pursue education or work is believed to be causing this phenomenon. At the same time, many of the Kalinga youth interviewed for this study affirm the importance of *Bodong*.

Accordingly, young members of the indigenous peoples are called to preserve the values and culture of their ethnic group because these are on the verge of being forgotten. Young people are urged to maintain and practice the cultural legacy they have inherited from their ancestors.

Some of the young Kalinga generation, however, believe that Bodong is a system of rules that brings about harmony and peace between two tribes by enabling them to reach an effective bilateral agreement. According to a young male Kalinga, neighboring provinces like Abra also practice it. In his view this substantiates the significant role of Bodong in Kalinga and environs.

Interestingly, two out of seven youths, from various tribes who were interviewed, have already participated in the Bodong Process. One male participant admitted that he has seen a Bodong Process twice, in 2016 and 2018. "It is a common practice. We witness it because it is usually practiced," he added. A female Kalinga community member also had the experience of attending a Bodong process when she was younger. According to her, peace pact holders must be qualified to lead the tribe in a peaceful and harmonious way. These leaders are usually men, but the majority of young Kalinga women interviewed believe that they can also be Bodong holders nowadays.

Similar to the indigenous customs and traditions that are handed down by word of mouth, Bodong is passed from generation to generation. That is how the youth of Kalinga come to understand the Bodong process they inherited from the past. A male interviewee stated that he holds adequate knowledge of the Bodong process. His grandfather, a *Pangat* in their community, informally educated him on the procedure. He later learned that the Bodong system of Kalinga has similar counterparts in every Cordillera tribe.

Perceived by youth still to have relevance in this day and age, Bodong remains widely practiced and greatly valued in Kalinga communities. Upheld as a sacred covenant, it fosters cooperation between tribes and promotes the peaceful settlement of disputes. Another young female Kalinga who is an undergraduate in the faculty of law expressed, "I am a supporter of Bodong, even though I am studying law, from my perception at the moment, I still believe in the Bodong process and its effectiveness."

The Bodong is an instrument to serve justice and achieve a more culturally-oriented legal process as it is a simple, quick, and effective settlement mechanism for tribal conflicts. Hence, by all accounts, the process will continue to be observed and respected. "It is relevant and it is part of our history," a Kalinga woman remarked. For Bodong to remain alive in the future, seeds of the cultural knowledge it represents must be planted and cultivated in the minds of the young generation.

The Kalinga youth who were asked if they want to get involved in the process signified their interest. However, not all of them wanted to be Bodong holders because of the huge responsibility attached to it, specifically the male interviewees. Yet, they are not totally closing the door if the community chooses them. Confident of their abilities, some female Kalinga youth conveyed their willingness to be peace pact holders and take an active role in other capacities.

#### *B. Perception of Male Elders on the Roles of Women and Youth in Bodong*

Kalinga male elders have varying perceptions of the capabilities of women vis-à-vis *Bodong*. One elder,<sup>4</sup> who himself was a former peace pact holder, believes that men are more capable of becoming Bodong holders because men are more physically-equipped to maintain the balance of terror and to protect the village from incursions in case of tribal conflicts. His belief stems from the ancient and conservative perception of their elders that being the *Nangdon si Bodong* should only be held by men. According to him, Bodong has always been only for men, while women, on the other hand, carry the responsibility in food, pots, and merrymaking. Women only join in celebrations as food servers and entertain the guests with songs and dances during the rituals.

However, the male elder expressed that he does not oppose women becoming peace pact holders; only that there are no women ‘takers’ in his tribe. He thus hopes to see women taking a place in a once male-dominated environment in the future, although he is not sure whether women are interested in being *Bodong* holders.

Another male elder<sup>5</sup> interviewed welcomes the idea of women taking the role of peace pact holders. He emphasized that women should step up to assume this role. Despite the rarity of women acting as peace pact holders, the elder emphasized that women are already playing important roles in Bodong because they participate in tribal meetings where they get the chance to voice out their thoughts. A former board member<sup>6</sup> of the province of Kalinga also expressed a similar opinion, adding that women can oppose a decision if they think that the decision of the elders will negatively impact the tribe.

Although their present peace pact holder is a woman, an elder<sup>7</sup> from one tribe conveyed his opinion that men should be preferred as peace pact holders because men are more capable in protecting the tribe. He also mentioned that among the children, it is the eldest son who is traditionally sought to be the heir of the peace pact.

As regards the youth’s role in Bodong, one elder<sup>8</sup> made an interesting point in that he sees a bright future for the Kalinga community, which is of course contrary to the general public understanding that the younger generation of indigenous peoples tends to ignore their cultural values. The elder believes that the interest among the youth about participating in the Bodong process is increasing owing to the fact that the subject, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices, is taught in high schools and colleges as a mandate. He further emphasized that the placement of representatives of the Mandate of Indigenous Peoples in all regional legislative bodies also has an impact on the resurgence of attention in culture and the arts. He feels that it has aroused considerable interest among the younger generation considering the Bodong celebration is a major cultural carrier.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with an elder of Lubo Subtribe

<sup>5</sup> Interview with an elder of Basao Subtribe

<sup>6</sup> Interview with a former Board Member of Kalinga

<sup>7</sup> Interview with an elder of the Sumadel Tribe

<sup>8</sup> Interview with an elder of Lubo tribe about Kalinga youth’s participation in Bodong

## VII. ANALYSIS

### A. *Gender division of labor and preservation of Kalinga tradition*

Kalinga people have maintained their gender division of labor based on the traditional lifestyle that they have inherited from their ancestors. Men have become leaders of their tribes and have mediated conflicts to prevent their households and members of their tribes from any type of violation, while women have been in charge of life-giving, food, pots, and merrymaking to keep up their daily lives. They have created and played gender roles that are deeply rooted in their communities.

However, their traditional lifestyles had been threatened due to massive resource extraction and development projects that took place in their territories, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. Both Kalinga women and men have, nevertheless, worked together and successfully protected their inherited lands and long-held traditions.

Following the challenging period, the Philippine government, pressured by civil society working with organized indigenous people made efforts to protect their ancestral domains and cultural traditions. IP rights were legally recognized—the first country in the region and one of the few in the world to do so—through the enactment of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997. This law even became a model for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ten years later (Republic of the Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

IPRA would then prove to be a legislation relevant to Kalinga women, as Section 26 ensures equal rights and opportunities for all indigenous women and fosters their participation in decision-making at all levels.

While progress on indigenous rights was unfolding, Kalinga women were simultaneously taking on more and more activities that formerly only men used to carry out. The emergence of women peace pact holders and women's wider participation in the decision-making processes in Bodong offers ample evidence to support the observation.

Nevertheless, one male student interviewed did not agree with the idea of women becoming peace pact holders, saying that men should have a more prominent voice in certain dispute settlements. Another male Bodong holder also believed that men are better able physically to protect their territories from attacks in the event of tribal conflict. The same perspective was acknowledged by some female peace pact holders. The dominant theme is that the Bodong process being still primarily subject to inheritance, entitles the eldest male to claim the right.

Altogether, the research activities disclosed many episodes of Kalinga women who respect their traditions and take new roles for peacebuilding. The story of Nanang Carina highlighted her bravery in becoming the holder of a peace pact between her tribe and the Butbut tribe. That came about when none of the qualified males from her tribe

was willing to take on the role owing to the enormous responsibility it entails. She took on the responsibility in order to restore peace, using the traditional methods of conflict resolution. This implies that even though she had to go against the traditional gender roles favoring men, she wanted to maintain the traditions and peace in her tribe. The stories of the three women peace pact holders show deep respect for Kalinga traditions and the elders who represent them, even if they deviated from traditional gender roles. That means that it is less the gender division of labor than the inherited cultural legacies that the Kalinga want to preserve.

### *B. On the Roles of Youth*

Many people think that the values and cultures of indigenous peoples are increasingly fading due to outside influences penetrating indigenous people's areas. They also notice the movement by indigenous peoples out of their communities to pursue education or work.

Interestingly, the foregoing common notion does not appear to apply to the youth interviewed. Based on the findings, all of the young Kalinga agree that Bodong is still a relevant and respected institution today. For them, Bodong is inseparable from the effectiveness of the cultural values practiced by the Kalinga indigenous people. This happens because the oral tradition, which is still strong in the Kalinga community, facilitates the transmission of cultural practices from generation to generation. Moreover, the existence of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices curriculum taught in high schools and colleges has a huge impact on the preservation of Kalinga culture through emphasizing their worth.

All young Kalinga women believe and acknowledge that in this day and age women can be involved in Bodong as peace pact holders or negotiators. This is clearly more than just being servers of food or entertainers of visitors during Bodong celebrations.

It is interesting to note however that none of the young Kalinga women interviewed knew whether there are female peace pact holders at present. A similar observation was noted when a male peace pact holder was asked the same question.

### *C. Bodong's evolution as an institution*

While Bodong has long been practiced as an oral tradition whose survival depended on the ability of the Kalinga to pass it on from generation to generation, recent trends show that most, if not all, Kalinga sub-tribes have already placed in writing their respective *pagta*, the law that governs Bodong. Thus, like any other written law, the written *pagta* can now provide clearer statements of how each sub-tribe should conduct the process with no uncertainty. It can now also provide clearer protection of rights, duties, and responsibilities of individuals, peace pact holders, and tribes.

However, the most relevant part of Bodong's evolution vis-à-vis indigenous women's rights is the recognition that the *pagta* recognizes the indispensable roles of women in

achieving, maintaining and promoting peace. It was only of late that the value of women has been appreciated. This appreciation first emerged during the Kalinga Bodong conventions facilitated by the Kalinga Bodong Congress (KBC). This is the body that oversees the practice of Bodong not only in Kalinga, but also in the neighboring provinces of Abra and Mountain Province. It was also in these conventions that the codified *pagta* originated (Naganag 2021). By virtue of this recognition, *pagta* encourage women to participate in all undertakings related to Bodong, and to become peace pact holders themselves. This legitimization clearly gave Kalinga women a wider platform to assert themselves as community leaders.

Other noteworthy changes that have been adopted over time include the formulation of penalties in such a way that they are commensurate with the transgressions committed. Likewise pertinent are the rules regarding the non-automatic severance of bodong in cases where crimes are committed by any *binodngan*, thus making revenge an exception rather than the rule.

It is therefore evident that these notable evolutions in the Bodong process refute the notion that it is anachronistic. These changes in the significant aspects of Bodong cater to the demands of a dynamic society, but which is still robust and strong in adhering to its distinctive cultural ways of life.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The main objective of this capstone project is to document the roles of women in Bodong, and in doing so, launch an investigation of whether women are given enough platforms as men for them to exercise their rights alongside men. Based on the interviews and the scrutiny of available resources, it can be said that while gender parity in this aspect of Kalinga society is still wanting, it is important to emphasize that Kalinga women have indeed broken through a tradition that has been dominated by men for centuries. Women now play important roles in the practice of Bodong, notwithstanding the fact that some elders and young males in a few tribes are still strongly bound by tradition and still prefer males as peace pact holders.

Many women and even men, who are highly regarded in their respective tribes, have expressed that more women should be given the chance to become peace pact holders because they can be as effective as men. In fact, women peace pact holders are considered more effective to a certain extent because they tend to be more patient and compassionate, which are traits that are helpful in achieving more long-lasting and humane agreements.

As a dispute settlement and peacebuilding mechanism, the Bodong has evolved and developed into a more progressive institution on account of inclusion nowadays in most *pagta* of provisions creating an enabling environment for women. Many of today's *pagta* between tribes have recognized the indispensable role of women in the attainment of peace, security and development, and thus encourage women to be *Bodong* holders and to actively participate in all *Bodong* undertakings. This declaration of principle,



which now guides the practice of *Bodong*, is a most welcome development that will enable more Kalinga women to assert their leadership roles in grassroots conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms.

On the aspect of preservation of an important intangible cultural tradition, it is notable to point out Kalinga society, especially the youth, shows an interest in preserving their traditional practices and identity including the Bodong as it brings hope to their indigenous communities. It ensures that their Kalinga values and culture are in safe hands because young and passionate people like them are willing to nourish and perpetuate it.

Finally, it is clear that despite the belief in some circles that indigenous people are losing part of their cultural heritage with their exposure to the outside world, in the Kalinga case the community as a whole continues to uphold the Bodong process. At the same time, it is open to new developments like women taking stronger roles in the process. Kalinga youth continue to respect and value the Bodong process even as they also are making their way in the outside world.

## **IX. RECOMMENDATIONS**

This capstone project has been limited in some ways, but most prominently, by the pandemic. The researchers note that there are other aspects of the Bodong process that were not documented, such as the other women peace pact holders who live in the deep mountains of Kalinga and the formulation of their *pagta*. Thus, it is highly recommended that the documentation process be continued by the local partners or other researchers who now have a framework through this capstone project, to carry out more extensive and thorough research.

While the co-researchers are using other social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, to disseminate their findings, it is also recommended that the local partners and other interested researchers use additional available platforms in order to extend the reach of information dissemination. However, adherence to government regulations and respect for the rights of the culture bearers must always guide this kind of endeavor.

On a more substantive aspect, the researchers note that there are some aspects of the Bodong, particularly the penalties involved and the cases that can be amicably settled, that are in conflict with the mainstream national justice system. It is therefore imperative to exert efforts to reconcile these conflicting points so that whatever results achieved through Bodong will not be rendered inconsequential because they go against national laws. This is important considering that one Supreme Court decision stipulated that whenever there is a conflict between the national law and indigenous justice system, the former prevails. Efforts toward reconciliation may be done through consultative meetings involving tribal elders and peace pact holders, in coordination with institutions like the MBCC and KBC.

On the psychosocial aspect of Bodong, tribal elders would do well to initiate the formation of a committee that will address the psychosocial needs of the victims and transgressors of the *pagta*. This will allow for restorative justice to prevail. This may also be effective in avoiding the relapse of conflict between tribes or the recidivism of the transgressors.

Lastly, it is hoped that this capstone project does not just serve as an effort to showcase the participation of Kalinga women in Bodong; it is also a gesture and an indication of serious appreciation and recognition of their significant roles in peacebuilding and dispute settlement. As mentioned above, Kalinga women evoke an aura of gold; their radiance should thus be allowed to disperse by giving them wider platforms to shine as they demonstrate their full potential in achieving a more peaceful and progressive Kalinga society.

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### **Interviews:**

Addamo, Irene, interview by researchers. Tabuk City, Kalinga. October 14, 2021.

Aggalao, Kairan, and Marcel Wangiwang, Fe Marie Sibayan, Christine Rose Likigan, Reyze Marie Grayle Balinte, Kimberlee Linggayo, Carlo Magsilao, focus group discussion with researchers. Via Zoom platform. August 26, 2021.

Ao-as, Luis L., and Benedicto Sugguiyao, Imelda Payao, Segundia Magtanao, Beatrice Canao, Naty Sugguiyao, Jane-ai Lomas-e, Remedios Baltao, William Puday Sr., and Felix Puday, interview by researchers. Via Zoom platform. October 8, 2021.

Bacacao, Emmanuel, interview by researchers. Tabuk City, Kalinga. October 30, 2021.

Baglinit, Elena, interview by researchers. Tabuk City, Kalinga. October 5, 2021.

Chulsi, Carina A., interview by researchers. Tinglayan, Kalinga. August 15, 2021.

Ngao-I, Andres, interview by researchers. Tabuk City, Kalinga. August 6, 2021.

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