

## THE DYNAMICS OF LEADERSHIP IN KALINGA

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One of the reasons why the Kalingas of Northern Luzon have preserved their indigenous identity as a strong political community is the assumption that the Kalinga leadership institution has always served to promote the will of the Kalinga people. In understanding the dynamics of leadership in the area, there are four interdependent elements influencing the process that will be considered for discussion. These are the established social goals recognized by the Kalingas from which leadership derives its inspiration, the social structure upon which leadership derives to achieve such goals, the wise leader whose attributes and qualities determine how the leader plays and performs his role in society, and their implications to national development.

It is recurrently recounted by these people that the leadership factor proved invulnerable against Western colonization by Spaniards and Americans and against potential exogenous factors that threatened the general social order of their community. As conceived by the Kalingas, the social order which governs man's existential structure constitutes the harmonious co-existence of man and his spiritual world, meaning, man does not live only in space and time, in the community with his fellowmen, but with *Kabunyan*,<sup>1</sup> the deities and dead ancestors. In fact, the spatial and the temporal divisions make the cosmic order. This cosmic order not only puts everything in its proper place. It also facilitates harmonious interaction between man and the deities.<sup>2</sup>

This cosmic view of the Kalinga world is believed to have been communicated by *Kabunyan* and therefore, a commandment that man is obliged to live by. To every Kalinga, this concept of social order is the central philosophy and rationale of his existence. In real life, it is a world which is meaningful and relevant, a home of happiness and justice where man is bound, as a religious duty and political responsibility, to village community life. As a member of the community by virtue of an initiation rite performed, man is introduced and instated into an adult community and into the world of spiritual and socio-cultural and political values. Since time immemorial, the Kalingas believed that initiating the individual into this world is a living tradition that is so closely interwoven with the

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structure of Kalinga society that it becomes virtually the dynamic and unifying principles of fulfilling vital political and social functions.<sup>3</sup>

Aside from being identified with social goals or with promotion of social order, leadership among the Kalingas is tied with the social structure. By virtue of his initiation, man becomes a citizen of a kinship group, of the village, of the Kalinga community as a whole, and of his immediate neighboring communities. And as a citizen of these social aggrupations, he is called to conform with the functional pattern of the social structure.

The function of the social structure requires the mutual responsibilities and commitments of both individual kinship member and the community as a whole towards the goal of preserving the social order. As a functional structure, it embraces all the political, socio-cultural and religious factors that characterize the life of the Kalinga community and its individual members. Ultimately, the achievement of such goal is what makes one's existence meaningful and relevant. Within the structure, every member according to his ability and capacity based on his social standing must contribute to the attainment of a perfect cosmic community that is generally characterized by social equity and justice. Although the Kalinga social organization indicates social stratification, there is no such thing as more or lesser functions among the *baknang class* and the *lawa class*, in the same way that there is no rich or poor attributes in Kalinga.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, it may be argued that wealth or economic prestige or being a *baknang* is not always the case a criterion for assuming leadership. A *lawa* can also become a leader by virtue of his wisdom or recognition by the community.

In fact, wisdom is the source of power of a Kalinga leader. A leader is believed to be wise when he has proven to have lived the true and authentic Kalinga way. This calls for the leader's sustained charismatic striving for knowledge on the Kalinga culture and tradition which has to be lived faithfully and by example.

Knowledge and example, in turn, require one's loyalty to the powers of the teaching of *Kabunyan* who taught and made man understand how to live the life of a good man. Kalinga tradition has it that the leader must not only display physical masculinity that makes him a brave warrior but must also possess, in the highest and most excellent degree, the moral qualities of self-discipline and self respect, the virtues of generosity, honesty, trustworthiness and kindness, the values of benevolence and compassion in battle, and above all, truth and justice. In other words, *Kabunyan* taught man the commandments of authentic human existence. In actual life, the Kalinga leader uses his wisdom not to cause human injustices and unhappiness. According to the Kalinga, this constitutes the justification and rationale of a true leadership, provided however, that it totally commits to the maintenance and promotion of the social order.

What might be of more interest at this point is to have a look on the roles and functions of the Kalinga leader. It is further recognized among Kalinga that the leader must have the ability to alter the behavior of people in order to promote what is good for the community. This requires the competence of a teacher, adviser, counselor of tradition, and the power of the leader to settle social or tribal conflicts. Just like in formal education where skills are hard-earned from elementary to college, these leadership skills are acquired thru arduosity and endurance that begins from the family to his kinship group, then to his village, then to the larger Kalinga community or beyond Kalinga to the national society. This is the reason why leadership among the Kalinga is a sacred task, where a leader is privileged to carry all the burdens and consequences of his actions. The sacredness of leadership implies the following: the people has the power to mandate strong authority to the leader in the performance of his roles that will be taken as binding; all the pronouncements of the leader are rather more binding when they are orally said than put in writing; leadership is legitimized not through electoral processes but by the consensus mandating power of the people to ensure accountability; leadership is based on strong authority.

The Kalinga argue that written traditions do no ensure long-term internalizing effects rather they contain empty words that can easily be manipulated. This is demonstrated in the oral tradition of the *pudon* institution (peace pact), the unit of political government in Kalinga.

On his observation among the various cultural communities of the Philippines, Roy Franklin Barton noted that Kalinga had one of the most developed political organizations which is demonstrated in the *pudon*.<sup>5</sup> Like Francisco Billiet, Barton also takes the position that the *pudon* is specifically a Kalinga development.<sup>6</sup> The *pudon* has as its principle of organization originally real blood tie (and the future kinship relations) entered into by two lineages or tribal villages (In its definition, the Kalinga *pudon* includes, as a substantial requirement, the territory referred to as the *ili*.) In the treaty of agreement, the two contracting (*ili*) parties define in a set of provisions their territorial boundaries, the extent of trade and commerce between them, respective political and social obligations towards each other and inventory of punishable crimes and their corresponding penalties. To the Kalinga the *pudon* is a sacred pact, in which case any violation of it or any infringement of its provisions must be severely punished. As such, any infringement or violation will severe the existing sacred bond of brotherhood. A Kalinga would put it that any infringement or violation is like "eating one's flesh." The holders of the peace pact, or the *Mangdon attey pudon* may be the principal brothers in the fictive kinship bond established between the two *ili*. The *pudon* holders are either

*papangat* (leaders) in their respective *ili* or at least they prove their capabilities and worth to become leaders in accordance with the consensus sanction of the village community. This criterion is further enhanced by economic means. In other cases, economic means is not necessarily a prescription depending on the weight of your leadership credibility in the community. Entrusted by their respective villages with the authority to enforce the provisions of the *pudon* in the two *ili* and to ensure the continuance of friendly relations, the holders of the *pudon* possess the powers to decide, arbitrate, judge and punish. While the *ili* is administered by the *papangat* (*pangat* in the singular) the inter-*ili* administration is assumed by the *pudon* holders. Both *papangat* and *mangdon attey pudon* are highly respected by the Kalinga community because they speak with eloquence and wisdom. The community population seeks their advice in times of trouble because their counsel conform with fundamental customs.<sup>7</sup> In its functions to preserve and maintain the political structure, the *pudon* has the following characteristics: first, the *pudon* functions perfectly within the perfect Kalinga traditional social structure; second, it functions perfectly well within the environmental (territorial) sentimentality where it is originally instituted. As such, any *pudon* that is transacted outside Kalinga may not be as effective. Third, the *pagta* (provisions) of the *pudon* provides exclusive measures in all matters involving conflict settlements between the two *ili* concerned. This means the *pudon* makes sense and gives meaning only if it is made to operate within a historical context, within the Kalinga traditional concepts, and within the cosmic world of the Kalingas.

In both the administration of the village and the inter-*ili* communities, the concept of leadership does not encourage the exercise of power that implies the use of force or coercion. By tradition, the concept of strong authority has governed the Kalinga leadership in the decision making processes following the legal-rational model. By this model, leadership is legitimated by fixed laws set by the people. To a certain extent, this is how people participate in the decision-making process. However, political authority and leadership are enforced by some form of council of elders constituted by the various heads of the kinship groups, the so-called *papangat* in Kalinga. This council of elders or the *papangat* makes decisions concerning the internal affairs of the village.

From the outset, it has been shown that the Kalinga leadership is so perfectly structured to respond to the world of the Kalingas. Obviously, leadership is confined within the internal governance of the Kalinga society. This implies the extreme difficulty of an outside force for accommodation and integration. However, once the structure is penetrated, it easily loses its strength. The interplay of these two extremes may be observed today in the

case of the Kalinga struggle against the Chico River Dam Project. Subtly, the Philippine government has recognized the difficulty of pacifying the opposition of the people against the project due perhaps, for one reason, to the strong influence of the leaders. In the process, however, Kalinga leadership has evidenced its initial setback, at least not substantially, with the rise of leadership groupings with differing orientations and points of views that show signs of deviations from the traditional leadership structure. However, these groupings provide a difficult frame of reference towards arriving at a definite or sound decision for development planning.

There are at least three categorical groupings: The first category consists of the Kalinga elders and sages. They are usually the traditional *papangat* who possess the traditional consciousness in relation to the survival of the Kalinga community. To them, modernization is a sort of a disease, a social cancer which is deeply abnormal and destructive deviation from the way men are intended to live by nature (by which and by what *Kabuniyan* and the dead ancestors want them to be). Their arguments are essentially *cultural*. Continuing the family and kinship lines, steeped in tradition, is the main concern of the old ones. The continuity depends not only on having generation follow generation, but also upon the uninterrupted transmission of the common property of the family and the kin. The land especially, with its productive resources is the most dependable insurance for the next generation because the land is both an economic and social factor that holds the group together. To the Kalinga, nothing is more threatening than the loss of a land. So long as he has a piece of land to work with, he has all the security and social prestige connected with his family or his kinship name in the community. Moreover, aside from the economic and social functions, land is the religious basis of the community. The group and the community would not be complete without the living relating also with the dead ancestors. If the land and property of the living generations are inherited from the previous ones, then the present members are merely the stewards who keep them intact for the next generation.

The argument of this first group is also *political* in nature. To what extent will those community elders and old folks politically allow any counter-values to stand in the way of development programmes? Obviously, the construction of the Chico Dam Project would mean the enundation of the Kalinga territory. This would entail not only the dislocation of the socio-cultural structure, but also the dismantling of the indigenous political organization that is brought about by the relocation of the dam-affected villages. Since the *papangat* and the village elders (who may also be *pudon* holders themselves in their respective villages) are delegated by the Kalinga

community the trust and commitment to maintain and preserve the social order, approval or allowing any external force that desecrates the sacred harmony of the social order would absolutely bring them into trouble. Thus, since the construction of the Chico dam project it has brought somehow a disruption of the social orders.

Another argument considered by the same group is essentially *economic*. Generally, the disintegration of their economic organization would be one of the unavoidable effects of the dam project. Economic organization is itself one of the institutions that maintains the dynamics of the Kalinga community. Economic organization does not only refer exclusively to the manipulation of economic resources or to the conventional flow of economic goods and services, it also gives importance to the interrelationships between the social structure and economic activities. The relations of people to one another in the processes of production, consumption, distribution and exchange are generally the expressions of kinship ties and community solidarity. Among the Kalinga, the cooperative spirit permeating the economic processes is an expression of village community life.<sup>10</sup>

The second category embraces the vested interest group. This includes some few educated ones (the modern politicians and those with formal educational attainment) and some of the members of the indigenous population. The two subcategories have one attribute in common: they are the seemingly frustrated elements or the seemingly outcast members of the community whose social standing in their respective communities is either unacceptable or they have lost their leadership credibility. Since they are generally opportunists, their judgment is usually based on their inadequate education and their irrational thinking.

The third categorical group includes those whose aspirations are in close agreement with the first group, but the former displays an open-minded perspective. They recognize also the deep discontent arising from the functional rationality of modernization. However, it takes efforts and desire to look at modernization or development intelligently. Their approach is based on critical but rational interpretation of contemporary realities. Rather than rejecting outrightly what are modern, they believe that it is valid and useful to understand development programmes as processes on the levels of meaning

Although the Kalinga viewpoints are somewhat ambivalent, it is very probable that tradition and modernization will relate to each other through a variety of compromises and mutual adjustments, with greatly varying outcomes. Traditional customs and norms can actually become vehicles of modernization. Unless public policy makes use of the indigenous and traditional definitions of modernization processes, it is bound to fail.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Kabunyan* is the Kalinga Supreme Deity, the "Creator" of all things. Sometimes, He is called the "cultural hero," the model and prototype of man.

<sup>2</sup> Esteban Magannon, *Religion in a Kalinga Village: Its Implications to Planned Change* (Quezon City, Philippines: Community Development Research Center, University of the Philippines, 1972), p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Maximo Garming, "Three Living Traditions in Kalinga," *Philippine Social Science Information*, April-June, 1977, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Kalinga Culture: Its Implications to National Planning," a supplementary paper presented at the University of Life on a lecture on "Tribal Societies," sponsored by the Development Academy of the Philippines, September 16, 1980, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Roy F. Barton, *The Kalingas: Their Institutions and Custom Laws* (Chicago: The University Press), 167.

<sup>6</sup> Francisco Billiet and Franci Lambrecht, *The Kalinga Ullalim* (Baguio City, Philippines: Catholic School Press, 1970), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Esteban Magannon, "Tagu, Ipugaw Matago," *Sari*, Institute of Language, University of Malaysia, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> In his definition of the legal-rational concept of power in decision-making processes, Max Weber qualified the definition of power in terms of "strong authority." Authority would be a limiting factor in the power position of the leader. This means the exercise or execution of leadership functions is justified and legitimized by established rules and regulations recognized by the people. The legal-rational model applies to the structure of the Kalinga leadership . . . Cf. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, translated by A. K. Henderson and Talcott Copyright 1947 by Oxford University Press, Inc., 152; See also Dwight Waldo, *Ideas and Issues in Public Administration*. copyright 1953 by McGraw-Hill Book Co., 47.

<sup>9</sup> Maximo Garming, "The Economic Development of Kalinga: A Footnote to an Evaluation," *Dialogue*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, December 1978, 54.

<sup>10</sup> More discussion on the Northern Kalinga cooperative and reciprocity customs are made by Jules de Raedt, "Some Notes on the Buwaya Society," *St. Louis Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1.