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Peace pacts and contentious politics: The Chico River Dam struggle in the Philippines, 1974–82

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In the 1970s, communities of the Kalinga sub-ethnic group in the Cordillera Mountains in northern Philippines successfully halted the construction of a series of hydroelectric dams along their main waterway, the Chico River, which would have caused their displacement. Based on interviews and archival research, the article examines the role played by a Kalinga political institution known as the bodong or peace pact in the Kalingas' mobilisation against the dam project, using an analytical framework drawn from Charles Tilly's and Sidney Tarrow's work on contentious politics.

The 1970s saw widespread social and political turmoil in the Philippines, where left-ist, Catholic, regional and other groups mobilised against what they perceived as state overreach, economic predation, political discrimination and other ills. When President Ferdinand Marcos, who had been in power since 1965, declared martial law in 1972, he gave his government and its security forces greater leeway to crack down on dissenters. However, far from ushering in the social stability and economic prosperity that Marcos had promised, the martial law period led to increased turbulence.

One of the most striking episodes of political struggle during the martial law years took place far from the halls of power in Manila. In the rugged Cordillera Mountains in the northern reaches of the island of Luzon, the state-owned National Power Corporation (NPC) had begun to explore the possibility of damming the Chico River, a powerful river that flows from the centre of the Cordilleras to the Cagayan River in the plains to the east. In 1973, the West German engineering company Lahmeyer International had conducted an assessment on behalf of the NPC and concluded that it was technically feasible and economically viable to dam the Chico River.¹ The assessment envisaged the construction of an interlinked series of four hydroelectric dams along the river, which in combination would have produced

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1 Patricio Guyguyon, 'History of Chico River project', *Philippine Political Science Journal* 6, 9 (1979): 109–14.

around one megawatt of energy or the equivalent of two nuclear reactors.² It was hoped that this would provide abundant electricity for the towns and cities of the coastal lowlands near the Cordilleras, stimulating a growth of industry in one of the most impoverished parts of the Philippines. Marcos, who had vowed to implement a programme of industrial expansion as part of his electoral platform,³ gave his approval to the plan. Under the 'Chico River Basin Development Project' four dams were to be constructed along the Chico River, one of which would have become the biggest dam in Asia.⁴

Whatever its economic potential, the Chico Dam project would also have exacted a large human toll. Philippine anthropologist Mariflor Parpan had worked extensively with indigenous communities near the river in the Cordillera Mountains. She estimated that one hundred thousand Bontocs and Kalingas lived on the banks of the Chico.⁵ If the dams were constructed, she said, the rising waters would inundate many of their villages and agricultural lands. Jesuit bishop Francisco F. Claver, another critic of the dam project, used even stronger words to explain what was at stake. To him building the dams would be tantamount to 'genocide'.⁶

Threatened by the Chico Dam project, highlander communities along the river organised to defend their homes, their livelihoods and their lands. They petitioned the government, held manifestations in the Cordillera and in Manila, sent delegations to the presidential palace to plead with Marcos to stop the project, engaged in acts of sabotage and violence against construction sites along the river and pressured individual members of their communities not to work for the NPC.⁷ Despite the large economic, political and security resources at the Philippine government's disposal, the highlander communities maintained their resistance for over a decade. Eventually, they were able to declare victory when the flagship government project was shelved in the early 1980s,⁸ with the project officially being called off when Marcos fell from power in 1986.

The reasons for the highlanders' victory against the dam project were many. One was the gradual weakening of Marcos' authority after a string of political failures in the 1970s.⁹ Another was the fact that the World Bank, which had promised to bankroll the Chico River dam project, prohibited the forceful displacement of people, which limited the Marcos' government's room for manoeuvre.¹⁰ A third were the

2 A.B. Pittock, 'Valley of sorrow', *Asiaweek*, 5 Sept. 1980, p. 3.

3 William H. Overholt, 'The rise and fall of Ferdinand Marcos', *Asian Survey* 26, 11 (1986): 1137–63. See also Jean Grossholtz, 'Philippines 1973: Whither Marcos?', *Asian Survey* 14, 1 (1976): 101–12; Robert B. Stauffer, 'Philippine corporatism: A note on the "New Society"', *Asian Survey* 17, 4 (1977): 393–407.

4 Pittock, 'Valley of sorrow', p. 3.

5 Mariflor Parpan, 'The Kalingas', *The Communicator*, 25 Jan. 1975. Cited in Friends of the Philippines, *Makibaka! Join us in struggle* (Amersfoort: De Horstink, 1978), pp. 108–11.

6 Francisco F. Claver, 'Letter on the Chico River Dam project', 15 Feb. 1975, cited in Francisco F. Claver, *The stones will cry out* (New York: Orbis, 1978), p. 126.

7 For accounts of the resistance to the dam project, see: Gerard A. Finin, *The making of the Igorot: Contours of Cordillera consciousness* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), chap. 9; Dorothea Hilhorst, 'Discourse formation in social movements: Issues of collective action', in *Images and realities of rural life*, ed. Henk de Haan and Norman Long (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1997), pp. 121–49.

8 Roberto Z. Coloma, 'Color the Chico red', *Who*, 4, 3 (1982): 6–7.

9 Overholt, 'The rise and fall of Ferdinand Marcos', pp. 1137–63.

10 Sanjeev Khagram, *Dams and development: Transnational struggles for water and power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 192.

growing troubles in other parts of the Philippines, not least on the island of Mindanao, where a three-sided civil war tied down government resources. Beset by these problems, the Marcos government became both less willing and less able to carry through the Chico River Dam project.

Yet all of these factors were external to the highlander communities themselves. The highlanders' also demonstrated a strong capacity for collective action. They coordinated and sustained their resistance in the face of government pressure and attempts to foment division. This was particularly true for Kalinga communities,¹¹ which agreed on a common stance on the dam project, planned and coordinated actions among communities, agreed on common rules for the resistance and successfully collaborated with external actors, including civil society activists and the Maoist guerrillas, the New People's Army (NPA).¹² They did so with few defections over a decade despite government pressure and a history of inter-community rivalry.¹³

The cohesion and tenacity of the resistance cannot be explained only in terms of the Kalingas' interest in stopping the dam project. To be sure, the Kalingas had a clear incentive in resisting the project, as failure to do so would have led to their being displaced from their lands and livelihoods. But as has been pointed out by social movement scholars,¹⁴ collective incentives do not necessarily translate into collective action. Prisoner dilemmas and other organisational obstacles can make it difficult to achieve joint action. Charles Tilly has argued that collective mobilisation requires the activation of 'mobilising mechanisms', defined as short-term events that enable people to organise themselves and build up collective strength.¹⁵ In other words, people do not automatically combine when they share a common interest but do so through socially and historically situated mechanisms and processes. Elsewhere, including in other parts of the Cordilleras, people were similarly threatened by displacement by dams,¹⁶ but did not demonstrate such strong capacity for collective action as the Kalingas.

11 The Bontocs' side of the struggle will be addressed only in passing. These southern neighbours of the Kalingas also played an important part in the efforts to halt the dam project. Moreover, similarly to the Kalingas, they utilised in their efforts a kindred peace-making institution to the bodong, known as the *pechen*. However, their side of the struggle bore fruit already in 1975, when a presidential decree ordered the cancellation of the two dams envisaged for their province, Mountain province, whereas the government persisted in its plan to construct dams in Kalinga province. The Bontocs' resistance also did not reach the same violent intensity as the struggle did on the other side of the provincial border.

12 Hilhorst, 'Discourse formation'; Finin, *The making of the Igorot*.

13 Edward P. Dozier, *The Kalinga of northern Luzon* (New York: Holt, Rinehard & Winston, 1967); Christoph von Fürer-Heimendorf, 'Culture, change and conflict among Filipino tribesmen', *Modern Asian Studies* 4, 3 (1970): 193–209.

14 John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, 'Resource mobilization and social movements', *American Journal of Sociology* 82, 6 (1977): 1212–41; Craig J. Jenkins and Charles Perrow, 'Insurgency of the powerless: Farm worker movements (1946–1972)', *American Sociological Review* 42, 2 (1977): 249–68; Mancur Olson, *The logic of collective action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

15 Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious politics* (London: Paradigm, 2007); Charles Tilly, *The politics of collective violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Charles Tilly, 'Mechanisms in political processes', *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001): 21–41.

16 Doracie B. Zoleta-Nantes, 'Development-induced displacement, resettlement experiences and impoverishment and marginalization in Pagbilao, Quezon and San Manuel, Pangasinan', *Public Policy* 8, 3 (2004): 53–143.

The present article examines the Kalingas' collective action within a framework based on Tilly's and Tarrow's writings on contentious politics. Drawing on archival research and interviews with former participants in the resistance, it considers the mechanisms through which the Kalingas mobilised against the dam. It argues that a Kalinga political institution provided a key mobilising resource by supporting numerous mobilising mechanisms. The *bodong*, or peace pact, had been used to cement good relations between Kalinga communities but also possessed features that rendered it an asset in the resisters' struggle against the dam. It involved a set of socially, culturally and historically situated structures, symbols and practices, which in pre-dam times had helped to resolve conflicts between communities, and which later facilitated communication and coordination between the communities opposing the dam project. The article examines the way in which these structures, symbols and practices supported the resistance at key junctures in the mobilisation of the struggle.

The article opens with an overview of the bodong system as it emerged and was practised in Kalinga communities on the eve of the Chico River Dam struggle, drawing on published ethnographic research from this period. It then sets out the theoretical framework and the methodology used in the research, before giving a chronological account of the struggle and the role of the bodong system in it. A final section sums up the findings.

Research on the Chico Dam struggle

The Chico River Dam struggle was a watershed event in the post-Second World War history of the Cordillera region. It dealt a blow to the Marcos government, expanded political activism in the Cordillera, and catalysed the entry of NPA forces into Kalinga province where they had long been labouring to gain a foothold.¹⁷ In spite of this, the struggle has attracted relatively little attention from scholars. Mostly, researchers of social movements and Philippine history have passed over it or treated it briefly in broader accounts about the history of the region.

Two exceptions are Gerard A. Finin and Dorothea Hilhorst. Finin's *The making of the Igorot: Contours of Cordillera regional consciousness* traces the emergence of a regional identity in the Cordillera in the twentieth century and devotes one chapter to the period of martial law, which discusses the Chico River Dam struggle at some length.¹⁸ Drawing on a broad array of sources, including newspaper reports and interviews, Finin sets out a detailed chronology of the struggle, focusing on how the struggle played into broader processes of regional identity formation in the Cordilleras.

Hilhorst's chapter 'Discourse formation in social movements: Issues of collective action' considers discourses that arose around the anti-dam resistance. How did participants in the resistance make sense of their struggle to themselves and to others? Mapping the trajectory of the struggle, Hilhorst argues that there was a significant and reciprocal interplay between indigenous and national Philippine left-wing discourses. While Kalingas recycled rhetorical tropes and ideas from NPA cadres to

17 Hilhorst, 'Discourse formation', pp. 135–7; interview with Ernesto 'Ka-Sungar' Garado, 8 Apr. 2009; interview with Jose Maria Sison, 4 June 2009.

18 Gerard A. Finin, *The making of the Igorot* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015).

explain their struggle—thereby couching it partly in Marxist terms—the NPA fighters modified their understanding of the national democratic revolution with a greater sensitivity to minority and specifically Cordilleran culture. As Hilhorst points out, although the entente between the highlanders and the NPA did not outlast the dam struggle in all communities, it shaped the discourse of the anti-dam movement in important ways.¹⁹

Both Finin and Hilhorst address the bodong, yet neither of them explores, more than incidentally, the role that it played in the mobilisation of the Kalinga resistance. To the extent that they consider factors in the mobilisation against the dam project, Finin and Hilhorst focus on other elements, such as rural–urban ties and the support provided by the NPA. The importance of the bodong in the dam struggle remains understudied. This article will examine it by first considering some of the features and functions of the bodong as it was practised in the years before the dam struggle.

The bodong

In 1967 there were approximately forty thousand Kalingas living in some one hundred and fifty settlements and divided into 36 tribal communities in what was then Kalinga-Apayao province.²⁰ The Kalinga word for these communities, *ili*, lacks a standard English translation, but will be referred to in this article interchangeably as communities and tribes, which are words which Kalingas themselves use when speaking to outsiders in English.²¹

Unlike most of the Philippine population, the Kalingas never fell under Spanish dominion and embraced Christianity only relatively recently. During the Spanish period (1521–1898), the rugged mountains helped to limit Spanish control and influence and shaped the interaction between highlander and lowlander Filipinos. During the American era (1898–1943), road-building projects and public relations campaigns began to draw the Cordillerans slowly into mainstream Philippine society.²² But even so indigenous practices remained strong. The official Philippine institutions that gained a foothold in Cordilleran society during the post-Spanish period usually came to play a secondary role in local life. This was probably nowhere truer than in Kalinga, where the bodong remained the main instrument of justice and inter-community politics.

In the late 2000s, according to Andres Ngao-i, president of the Cordillera Bodong Administration and secretary general of the Kalinga Bodong Congress, two organisations of bodong-holders in Kalinga, 90 per cent of murder cases in Kalinga were settled through the bodong.²³ In the 1970s, the decade of the Chico River Dam struggle, the bodong seems to have been equally influential. A survey conducted in Tabuk, Kalinga, in 1971 indicated that 89 per cent of the respondents placed greater faith in

19 Hilhorst, 'Discourse formation', pp. 121–49.

20 Dozier, *The Kalinga*, p. 10.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

22 Albert S. Bacdayan, 'Ambivalence toward the Igorots: An interpretive discussion of a colonial legacy', in *Towards understanding peoples of the Cordillera: A review of research on history, governance, resources, institutions and living traditions*, ed. Victoria Rico-Costina and Marion-Loida S. Difuntorum (Baguio City: Cordillera Studies Center University of the Philippines, 2001), pp. 9–11.

23 Interview with Andres Ngao-i, Tabuk City, 26 Apr. 2009.

the bodong than in official institutions to settle murder cases.²⁴ Sometimes state officials deliberately took a backseat to the traditional means of conflict resolution. In 1975, the commander of the Philippine Constabulary in Kalinga candidly admitted that he could do little to halt an ongoing conflict between the Butbut and Sadanga except to ‘press for the re-establishment of the peace pact’.²⁵

In the absence of recognised state power, the bodong offered a means for mediating between communities. The 36 Kalinga communities have been described as autonomous and self-contained political units, submitting to no superior authority in their internal and external dealings. Indeed, in the years before the dam struggle some observers likened them to mini states—or ‘proto-states’²⁶—regarding them as sovereign political actors in possession of well-defined territorial boundaries and allegiance populations.²⁷ While conflicts occasionally erupted within the Kalinga communities,²⁸ in their dealings with other communities, they typically stood as one, and were treated accordingly by their counterparts. As a consequence, conflicts between communities typically embroiled the Kalinga communities as a whole. It was in this context that the bodong responded to the need to pre-empt disputes that might otherwise escalate into extensive and destructive inter-community conflicts.

The American anthropologist Roy F. Barton noted that inter-community conflicts in Kalinga typically proceeded in the manner of feuds, that is, they were highly rule-bound with the score of killings closely kept and tribes being held collectively responsible for the torts of their members.²⁹ If a person killed a member of another tribe, the avengers could rightfully target any of the perpetrator’s adult tribemates. The result was a tit-for-tat manner of fighting that often extended over many years.³⁰ Another American anthropologist, Edward Dozier, wrote that if feuds lasted a long time, they were sometimes ended by way of pitched warfare, which offered a more decisive measure for settling scores. Battles were announced in advance and fielded at an agreed location, where the full manpower of the two tribes assembled at a designated time. The battle was then pursued until one side considered its losses as unbearable and sued for peace, which opened the path for the initiation of peace negotiations.³¹

Violent feuds between Kalinga communities continued well into the twentieth century,³² but with time external developments appear to have changed the situation.

24 Simplicio B. Dang-awan, *The Kalinga peace pact institution: Its bearing on problems of peace and order facing the state and the church* (Dasmariñas: Union Theological Seminary, 1971), p. 134. See also Christoph von Fürer-Heimendorf, ‘Culture, change and conflict among Filipino tribesmen’, *Modern Asian Studies* 4, 3 (1970): 193–209.

25 Diego Lucob, ‘Death Trap: Two slain in KA-Mt. province tribal war’, *Baguio Midland Courier*, 12 Oct. 1975, pp. 1, 4.

26 Roy F. Barton, *Kalingas: Their institutions and custom law* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

27 Dozier, *The Kalinga*, pp. 12–14; Barton, *Kalingas*, pp. 137–9.

28 Von Fürer-Heimendorf, ‘Culture, change and conflict’, p. 202.

29 Barton, *Kalingas*, pp. 234–5.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 235.

31 Dozier, *The Kalinga*, p. 69. Dozier believes that the feasting and drinking that followed the conclusion of the peace may have been an important precursor of the later peace-pact celebrations.

32 Barton, *Kalingas*, p. 235; Dozier, *The Kalinga*, pp. 68–9; Von Fürer-Heimendorf, ‘Culture, change and conflict’, p. 193.

According to Dozier, the gradual opening up of the Cordillera Mountains to Western influences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries inadvertently contributed to the emergence of the peace pact institution.³³ Taking over from the Spanish in 1898, the new American administration embarked on a campaign to draw the Cordilleras into the wider political and economic grid of the Philippines. The building of roads and the expansion of trade connections increased the likelihood of encounters between Kalingas from different communities and thereby the potential for both cooperation and conflict. Meanwhile, the influx of high-power rifles into Kalinga dramatically raised the stakes of conflict. In Dozier's words: 'The spear and the head axe kept casualties low, but warfare with repeating rifles threatened wholesale slaughter.'³⁴ Dozier argues that Kalinga communities developed the bodong system on the basis of existing ceremonies and institutions as a means to manage the heightened threat of violence and to take fuller advantage of new trade opportunities.³⁵ Eventually the peace pacts became a pivot of Kalinga life and the main instrument for maintaining good relations between communities.

In its simplest terms, the bodong was an agreement between two communities based on a number of provisions that defined the terms of peace between the contracting parties. As such, it has been labelled a treaty by scholars.³⁶ Barton wrote: 'Kalinga pacts seem to me deserving of being called treaties, for they contain a number of general and particular provisions, and sanctions for enforcing them are taken for granted according to the custom.'³⁷ Pacts enshrined the mutual obligations of two communities along with the appropriate penalties for violations of these obligations. As long as the terms of the peace were met, friendship reigned between the tribes. Should a violation occur and the dutyholder fail to make the necessary amends, however, the pact was normally ruptured and conflict ensued.

The forging of a bodong between two communities involved a lengthy procedure that could last for years.³⁸ It was necessary to allow sufficient time for the completion of this process in order that all outstanding grievances between the communities be settled and the new agreement be firmly anchored among the members of the communities. The procedure typically involved three steps. The first was the *sipat*, which was a bid for peace by one community to another. A community wanting to establish relations with another tribe sent out a feeler in the form of a spear or another symbolic object.³⁹ If the receiving tribe kept the object the negotiations continued; if the object was returned the peace overture had failed. The second step was the *simsim* or *singlip*, when the leaders of the two tribes met to discuss past grievances and the prospects for achieving a settlement.⁴⁰ Should peace be deemed possible by the leaders, the negotiations moved into the final stage, the *lonok* or *inom*, which was a large celebration that gathered all the members of both tribes as well as guests from other

33 Dozier, *The Kalinga*, p. 82.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

36 Leonard Davis, *The Philippines: People, poverty and politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987).

37 Barton, *Kalingas*, p. 185.

38 Dozier, *The Kalinga*, p. 193.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 85; Arsenio L. Sumeg-ang, *Ethnography of the major ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordillera* (Quezon City: New Day, 2003), p. 127.

40 Barton, *Kalingas*, p. 179; Dozier, *The Kalinga*, p. 85; Sumeg-ang, *Ethnography*, pp. 127–8.

communities. During this event, grievances between the tribes were again reviewed and, unless strong objections were raised, agreement was made as to the terms of the peace.⁴¹ The agreement was formulated in the form of a *pagta*, or by-laws, of the bodong. Its content normally contained provisions defining the territorial boundaries of the contracting tribes, prohibitions against killing and stealing, and guarantees that visitors from one of the tribes to the other would be treated with hospitality.⁴² It could also stipulate that certain individuals were to be excluded from the full coverage of the bodong, including Kalingas working as government law enforcers, if they otherwise might jeopardise the pact during the execution of their professional duties. Peace pacts were renewed and fêted regularly, sometimes annually, which provided occasions for reaffirming and updating the pagta.

The breadth and flexibility of the pagta indicates that peace pacts were more than simply peace agreements but in fact political instruments for adjudicating a range of inter-community issues. As one Kalinga elder explained to the author, the bodong is ‘comprehensive because it covers bilateral relations ... it covers property, territorial boundary, respect for interrelations’.⁴³ Indeed, the pagta may be understood as a template for articulating the terms of the common agreement—the content of the agreement could and did vary.

Another important aspect of the peace pact related to its enforcement. The bodong was enforced by bodong-holders, who were village strongmen and in some cases strongwomen, who were appointed to handle relations with partner communities. They committed their personal prestige and resources to upholding the pact⁴⁴ and took personal responsibility for punishing fellow community members who had violated the inter-community agreement. As wealth was a necessary asset to be able to sponsor bodong meetings, and high status allowed individuals to command the respect of fellow community members, the pact holders were often drawn from the upper stratum of the community.⁴⁵ Most importantly, as Dozier points out, the pact-holders needed to have a reputation of firmness and bravery, as the crucial challenge would be to punish one of their own community members who had violated the pact, including with death if necessary.⁴⁶ Failure to punish such a community member would normally rupture the pact, bringing consequences for the community as a whole. Moreover, a pact-holder with a reputation for firmness and dauntlessness might deter people from breaking the stipulations of the pagta, preventing a critical situation from arising in the first place. Thus, the pacts stipulated common rules and were enforced through mechanisms of deterrence and possible punishment that were anchored in community hierarchies.

Contentious politics

Tilly and Tarrow argue that contentious politics consists of discrete events that can be observed and analysed directly.⁴⁷ They present an analytical framework for

41 Barton, *Kalingas*, p. 179; Dozier, *The Kalinga*, p. 85.

42 Dozier, *The Kalinga*, p. 93.

43 Interview with Kalinga elder, Baguio City, 2 Apr. 2009.

44 Barton, *Kalingas*, pp. 179, 194.

45 Dozier, *The Kalinga*, p. 88.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

47 Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious politics*; Tilly, *Politics*; Tilly, ‘Mechanisms’, pp. 21–41.

disaggregating broader processes of contentious politics into observable events, which they term mechanisms. Mobilisation, for instance, according to Tilly and Tarrow, can be disassembled into mechanisms that function to increase an actor's capacity for collective claim-making. By disassembling processes into observable events, Tilly and Tarrow's framework can be used to analyse broader processes of political contention as a series of mechanisms with particular effects.

In this article, Tilly and Tarrow's framework has been used to identify mechanisms in the mobilisation of the resistance against the Chico River Dam project, that is, events that brought an expansion of the Kalingas' claim-making capacities. Mobilising mechanisms have been identified using three measures: the number of actors involved, the resources that new actors brought to the contention, and the degree of coordination between actors. These mobilising mechanisms are identified and discussed in a narrative that has been constructed on the basis of primary sources including newspaper articles, unpublished documents and interviews, as well as secondary sources.

In what manner, if at all, did the bodong underpin the mechanisms that brought an expansion in the Kalingas' claim-making capacities? This question is addressed by examining the role that structures, symbols and practices of the bodong system played in relation to key mobilising events during the anti-dam struggle. What role, for instance, did bodong meetings, bodong leaders and the pagta play in the 1975 Quezon City Conference or in the NPA's entry into the struggle in 1976? How did the bodong system affect efforts to coordinate acts of sabotage against the dam construction sites? These questions are addressed through a micro-historical study of key mobilising events, which forms the core of this article.

The article, hence, considers the bodong system as a potential organisational resource of the Kalinga resistance. This is not to reify the bodong and move it outside historical temporalities—the development of the bodong is tied to the wider history of the Cordilleras. It is, however, to offer an argument of how a socially, culturally and historically situated political institution, by dint of its established structures, symbols and practices, helped to diminish collective action problems that may otherwise have hampered the mobilisation of the Kalinga anti-dam resistance.

Documents and interviews

Documents

The article draws extensively on press publications and other documentary sources from the martial law period, 1972–81. This was a period of censorship and self-censorship, and the scope for independent reporting on the Chico River Dam issue was limited. As Finin writes, 'reliable public information [on the dam struggle] was extremely scarce', while the main newspaper in the Cordillera, the *Baguio Midland Courier*, was 'warned by the martial law government not to print stories that reflected poorly on the hydroelectric project'.⁴⁸ The situation became more dire when parts of the Chico River Valley were militarised with the deployment of the 700-man 60th Philippine Constabulary Battalion in 1976.⁴⁹ William Claver, a

48 Finin, *The making of the Igorot*, p. 246.

49 Lita Jane Killip, 'As hotbeds form along the Chico River', *Outcrop* 4 (1970): 5.

lawyer from Mountain province who conducted fact-finding missions about government abuses in Kalinga, recalled to the author that he had had to travel through the province at night using hunting paths in order to evade military checkpoints and surveillance helicopters.⁵⁰

Unsurprisingly, few balanced or detailed reports about the dam project were found in major Philippine newspapers such as the *Times Journal*, *Philippine Daily Express*, *Sunday Express* or the *Baguio Midland Courier*. In so far as these newspapers reported on the project at all, they did so generally in a selective manner, relying on official sources while ignoring Kalinga and Bontoc protesters. But even so, they contained valuable nuggets of information, including about the time and place of events and the statements of official actors. They have been supplemented with other sources, including magazines with smaller circulations and, perhaps as a consequence of this, greater editorial independence. This set of sources had limitations of its own, but was a useful complement to the official press. Altogether some 190 texts from more than 15 publications were used.

Interviews

If newspapers and other documents provided written details about events, interviews with Kalingas and other participants in the resistance offered an insider's perspective on the resistance, making it possible to explore processes on the community and inter-community levels within Kalinga society, including bodong meetings in villages and acts of sabotage. Interviews with non-Kalinga supporters, such as clerics, lawyers and insurgents, shed light on their collaboration with Kalinga resisters. Among the non-Kalingas who were interviewed were Jose Maria Sison, the former head of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and Ernesto 'Ka Sungar' Garado, who commanded the Maoist NPA forces in Kalinga in the 1970s and 1980s.

Forty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of thirty-nine respondents. Most of the interviews were carried out in the Cordillera Administrative Region in March–May 2009; three interviews with high-ranking officials of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), an affiliate of the CPP, were carried out in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in June 2009. Most of the respondents (thirty) were Kalingas, all but one of whom had participated in the resistance in some capacity. The nine non-Kalinga respondents were academics, political activists and former NPA members. The interviews lasted between one and four hours. Apart from one, all interviews in English were recorded. The others were written down.

The Kalinga respondents were selected on the basis of their age and community affiliation. Twenty-seven of the thirty respondents were fifty years or older and had therefore been at least fifteen years old in the first year of the dam struggle in 1974. Three were in their forties. Not all Kalinga communities mobilised against the Chico Project but mainly those whose lands were threatened by the dams. For this reason, most of the interviews were with members of the settlements of Bugnay (nine), Tinglayan proper (seven), Duppag (three) and Tomiangan (four, including one in Gaogao, a small roadside clustering of houses near Tomiangan), which would have been directly affected by the dam project. Five interviews were

50 Interview with William Claver, 8 Apr. 2009.

with members of other affected communities (Tanglag, Bangad, Naneng and Basao), while two were with members of Tulgao, a community that would not have been directly affected by the project. One of the respondents from Tulgao, Silverio Daluping, was interviewed because he had played a prominent part in the resistance as an organiser for a church-based NGO, while the other, Johnny Sawadan, is the secretary-general of the Cordillera Elders' Alliance and was interviewed for his knowledge about the bodong system.

Many respondents, especially in the urban areas, spoke English fluently. However, most of the villagers spoke only local and regional languages, which made it necessary to rely on interpreters. The author was fortunate to have the assistance of a PhD student from a Western university who spoke Ilocano (the regional lingua franca) and Futfut (the Kalinga dialect of the Butbut tribe) and a law student of the Butbut tribe who could communicate in several Kalinga dialects in addition to Ilocano and English. The use of an interpreter had the additional advantage of helping to build trust with respondents, as both the PhD student and the law student were well-known in the communities that were visited. The law student was from a community which at the time of the research had peace pacts with Tinglayan, Duppag and Tomiangan, which facilitated research in these communities.

Some testimonies contained factual inaccuracies that probably stemmed from memory lapses, making it necessary to scrutinise accounts and triangulate sources. Despite their limitations, interviews nevertheless offered the best means for exploring how Kalinga participants had organised their resistance internally in their communities. This was partly because the available written material was inadequate for understanding internal developments in communities, but also because, as Stathis Kalyvas suggests, memories of events occurring in highly charged atmospheres may often be vividly remembered. Kalyvas notes in relation to his own work on the Greek Civil War which took place more than fifty years before he conducted his interviews that 'memories of the war among my informants were flush with detail and substance'.⁵¹ The same held true for many of the testimonies collected in Kalinga, where respondents tended to give more detailed accounts of the more contentious episodes of the dam struggle. Ambushes, sabotage, and other vigorous acts of resistance featured vividly in many respondents' minds.

Peace pacts in the Chico River Dam struggle

This section considers five key mobilising episodes in the Kalingas' resistance against the Chico River Dam project and the role that the bodong played in them. The episodes are: the early meetings of Kalinga communities in response to the dam threat in 1974 and 1975; the involvement of civil society activists in the early phases of the struggle; the Quezon City Conference in May 1975; sabotage at the Chico IV Dam site in the spring of 1976; and the collaboration between Kalingas and NPA forces from 1976. All of these episodes saw the expansion of the Kalingas' claim-making capacities through the expansion of the Kalingas' resources of resistance and/or the entry of new actors into the resistance.

51 Stathis Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 409.

Episode 1: The early meetings

After the initiation of the Chico River Dam project in 1973, the Kalingas were initially kept in the dark of the government's plans, learning of them only after February 1974 when the first NPC personnel arrived in the area. Several Kalinga respondents said in interviews they remembered seeing workers set up their camps near their villages; one man from Bugnay remembered surveyors making 'markings on the mountainsides above the villages'.⁵² He said he only later realised that those markings indicated the level to which the dammed river would rise. Some Kalingas were informed of the dam project at formal meetings with local officials, others learnt of it by word of mouth, or by confronting the NPC workers who explained the purpose of their work to them.

In response to what the Kalingas learnt, leaders of the affected Kalinga villages convened meetings to discuss the dam project and to attempt to coordinate their actions. One Kalinga respondent remembered that tribes held meetings in Tinglayan in 1974 to discuss the dam issue,⁵³ and a Bugnay villager also recalled that in 1974 'there were a lot of meetings conducted between villages ... to unite people to oppose the dam'.⁵⁴ Initially the meetings were small in scale and gathered only immediate neighbouring tribes; but as word of the project spread through Kalinga, larger meetings were held. In early 1975 the biggest inter-community meeting thus far was organised in Tanglag, Lubuagan municipality.⁵⁵ Finin notes that the delegates for this meeting came from afar:

The meeting at Tanglag ... was unusual to the extent that never before had a problem of this kind confronted so many Kalinga villages simultaneously. Many of the faces of those present were not yet familiar to each other, although everyone in attendance certainly knew of the communities from which the other representatives came.⁵⁶

Inter-community meetings played an important role in promoting cooperation and coordination between different tribes. Early on they helped to channel information about the dam project. Social activist Joanna Cariño said the meetings made the news of the project 'spread like wildfire' in Kalinga,⁵⁷ while a respondent from Bugnay said the meetings shored up people's determination 'not [to] allow that the burial grounds would be submerged'.⁵⁸ The meetings also provided occasions for tribes to coordinate their responses to the dam construction. Leticia Bula-at, a resident in Duppag, recalled an early meeting between Duppag and Tomiangan that resolved that the two communities would 'cooperate to stop the drilling' at the Chico IV dam site.⁵⁹

Meetings also offered occasions to plan actions. In 1974, people from Bugnay, Basao and Tinglayan proper together attacked the NPC work camps in Maswa,

52 Interview with respondent no. 2, Bugnay, 13 Apr. 2009.

53 Interview with respondent no. 8, Tinglayan, 16 Apr. 2009.

54 Interview with respondent no. 5, Bugnay, 14 Apr. 2009.

55 Finin, *The making of the Igorot*, p. 243.

56 *Ibid.*

57 Interview with Joanna Cariño, Baguio City, 28 Mar. 2009.

58 Interview, respondent no. 2, 13 Apr. 2009.

59 Interview with Leticia Bula-at, Duppag, 19 Apr. 2009.

Basao. One man from Bugnay who participated in the attack describes the incident: 'In 1974, NPC built its headquarters in Basao, a big house with a thatched roof. Later the villagers went ... and burnt down the thatched huts in Basao.'⁶⁰ Respondents in Bugnay and Tinglayan explained that the 1974 attack on the NPC's headquarters in Maswa had been planned in advance at a meeting between representatives from Basao, Tinglayan and Bugnay.⁶¹ The 1975 meeting in Tanglag, in turn, brokered new contacts among tribes, particularly between the more remote ones which had rarely interacted before, while also demonstrating to the delegates the large size and wide span of the resistance.⁶²

In Tilly and Tarrow's terms, the mechanisms at play at these early meetings were *attribution of similarity* (identification of another political actor as falling within the same category as your own) and *brokerage* (production of a new connection between previously unconnected or weakly connected site), as different Kalinga communities realised that they shared a common interest in opposing the dam project and began to forge ties with each other.

The meetings were facilitated by the bodong system. Marcela Yag-ao, widow of the prominent Bugnay leader Mario Yag-ao, said the following about one of the meetings that were held in Bugnay in 1974: 'They all had peace pacts with each other—all the communities that attended.'⁶³ Bula-at in Duppag similarly stated that her tribe's meetings with other tribes gathered members of the '*binodnan*',⁶⁴ a term that refers to all the people covered by the peace pact of a community. The bodong opened pathways between otherwise self-contained communities. The bodong system also provided recognised and well-entrenched procedures for communicating and interacting across community lines. To the question, 'How were the early meetings organised?', Bula-at, who is a Duppag pact-holder, replied: 'Through the peace pact. The pact holder would make a letter inviting the other communities.'⁶⁵ An informant from Bugnay remarked: 'the bodong-holders here talked with other bodong-holders in the nearby tribes to have a meeting and to discuss the dam issue, which was attended by the binodnan'.⁶⁶ Abraham Aowing from Tinglayan, too, explained that meetings were organised using 'the peace pact. The peace-pact holders are the ones who serve as coordinators',⁶⁷ while another respondent from the community of Naneng stated that '[a]ll the peace-pact holders within a tribe had to invite other peace-pact holders. That's how they met.'⁶⁸ The bodong involved a well-established set of practices for communicating across community lines and convening meetings between members of different communities. Kalingas used these to rapidly organise meetings to discuss the dam threat and to coordinate acts of sabotage against the dam construction.

60 Interview, respondent no. 2, 13 Apr. 2009.

61 Interviews with respondents no. 1 (12 Apr. 2009, Bugnay), no. 5 (14 Apr. 2009), and no. 8 (16 Apr. 2009).

62 Finin, *The making of the Igorot*, p. 242.

63 Interview with Marcela Yag-ao, Bugnay, 12 Apr. 2009.

64 Interview, Bula-at, 19 Apr. 2009.

65 Ibid.

66 Interview, respondent no. 5, 14 Apr. 2009.

67 Interview with Abraham Aowing, Tinglayan, 15 Apr. 2009.

68 Interview with Laurence Bayongan, Tabuk City, 26 Apr. 2009.

Episode 2: The early involvement of civil society activists

The events in the mountains were kept out of the public spotlight throughout 1974. The first time they were brought to wider attention was when the anthropologist Mariflor Parpan published an article in the Jesuit publication *The Communicator* on 25 January 1975, which described the devastating impact that the dams would have on the highlanders.⁶⁹ Parpan appealed to Bishop Francisco Claver from Bontoc, who was a Prelate of the Roman Catholic Church in the province of Bukidnon, Mindanao. She implored the bishop to support the opposition to the dam.⁷⁰

Claver responded to Parpan's appeal. In the course of the spring of 1975 he wrote several articles in which he denounced the dam project. One article in *The Communicator* branded the dams as 'genocide' that would bring death to the Kalingas and the Bontocs as peoples.⁷¹ An open letter to President Marcos in the following month expressed that the highlanders '[d]eep down in their guts know damming the Chico is a decree of death for them as a people.'⁷² Later the same year, an article published in the magazine *Impact*, re-emphasised the natives' determination to oppose the dam.⁷³

Claver's involvement in the resistance was a watershed. Using his influence as a high-ranking cleric of the Roman Catholic Church, Claver brought the dam project to the public eye and presumably won the ear also of the government. In the words of Cariño, 'of course a Catholic bishop is an influential person. Previously objections were brushed aside as "sentimental" but a bishop's words carry greater weight.'⁷⁴ In a predominantly Roman Catholic country, the bishop's actions helped to give the resistance momentum.

Other activists, too, lent their support to the resistance. Bishop Claver's brother, William Claver, an attorney, collected information on government abuse in Kalinga province. The Share and Care Apostolate for Poor Settlers (SCAPS) under Bishop Mariano Gaviola helped to fund and organise delegations of Kalingas to the capital on bids to speak with President Marcos. The Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) under senators Jose Diokno and Lorenzo Tañada provided free legal counsel to Cordillerans arrested for their activism.

Such actors boosted the Kalingas' capacities for collective claim-making. The support they gave to the resistance amounted to *certification* ('an external authority's signal of its readiness to recognise and support the existence and claims of a potential actor') and *brokerage*, producing an *upward scale shift* in the resistance, increasing the number of actors involved in it and its geographical range.⁷⁵

What role did the bodong play in involving civil society actors in the Kalingas' struggle? Arguably, the bodong played only a very slight role in this regard. The involvement of the actors was facilitated by mechanisms derived from other assets

69 Parpan, 'The Kalingas'.

70 Ibid.

71 Claver, 'Letter on the Chico River Dam project', p. 126.

72 Ibid., p. 135.

73 Francisco F. Claver, 'On the Chico River project: The progress of the people ... at the nozzle-end of a gun', *Impact: A Monthly Asian Magazine for Human Development* 10, 2 (1975): 212–14. Also published in Claver, *Grassroots pastorals*, pp. 137–45.

74 Interview, Cariño, 28 Mar. 2009.

75 Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious politics*, p. 31.

of the Cordillerans. Parpan, the Clavers, SCAPS and FLAG all had personal ties to Kalinga or Mountain province. Parpan had conducted anthropological research among the Kalingas; Francisco Claver was a native of Bontoc and well respected by both Bontocs and Kalingas; SCAPS had a Kalinga and a Bontoc, Silverio Daluping and James Ngolaban, among its functionaries who were sent to aid the resisters;⁷⁶ and FLAG conducted most of its work in Kalinga through William Claver, who like his brother Francisco was also from Bontoc.⁷⁷ These connections helped civil society supporters to circumvent the government's attempts to conceal the conflict and keep it localised. In Tilly and Tarrow's terms, several of the sites of the resistance were already pre-connected, that is, some of the channels that enabled Kalingas to collaborate effectively with external support groups were already in place when the conflict began and could be quickly activated.

Nevertheless, if the civil society supporters reached out to the Kalingas through existing connections, they were helped by the Kalingas' organisational capacity when they undertook joint actions with the highlanders. That organisational capacity depended in part on the bodong system, which comes across clearly in the case of the Quezon City conference organised some weeks after Bishop Claver's appeals.

Episode 3: The Quezon City conference

On 12 to 13 May 1975, SCAPS convened what they headlined as a Conference on Development at St. Bridget's School, Quezon City, attended by around one hundred and forty Kalinga and Bontoc elders, and a number of civil society representatives.⁷⁸ The conference brought the highlanders' struggle into the lowlands, only miles from the country's political centre, the Malacañang presidential palace in Manila City.

Affirming their unity at the conference, the indigenous delegates drew up a joint *pagta*, which lay down a number of provisions for the resistance against the dam. Among other things, the delegates agreed that 'the people of Bontoc and Kalinga affected by the dam project are prohibited from working on the dam project', and that 'should a Kalinga or a Bontoc from the dam areas be killed while working on the dam project, those who oppose the realisation of the dam project will not be held responsible. The peace pact villages will not answer for the dead victim.'⁷⁹ Furthermore, the conference established an Ad Hoc Committee of representatives from the civil society organisations that attended to provide assistance to the highlanders, while the Bontocs and Kalingas sent a letter of protest to President Marcos, delivered personally by Bishop Gaviola to Defense Secretary J. Ponce Enrile.⁸⁰ The government responded quickly to the pressure. On 22 May, Executive Secretary Alejandro Melchor ordered the suspension of the NPC's operations on the Chico River. The *Baguio Midland Courier* presented this as an expression of the

76 Interview with Silverio Daluping, 22 Apr. 2009; Finin, *The making of the Igorot*, p. 244.

77 Lyn V. Ramon, 'William F. Claver: People's lawyer from the Cordillera', *Bulatlat*, 4 Aug. 2007, <https://www.bulatlat.com/2007/08/04/william-f-claver-people%2%80%99s-lawyer-from-the-cordillera-2/> (last accessed 29 Oct. 2020).

78 Martha Winnacker, 'The battle to stop the Chico Dam', *Southeast Asia Chronicle* 67 (1979): 23–9; Finin, *The making of the Igorot*, p. 243.

79 Friends of the Philippines, *Makibaka!*, pp. 113–14.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

government's willingness to 'quietly look deeper into the problem, and come out with a just and humane solution'.⁸¹ As later events demonstrated, however, the government's response was a tactical withdrawal.

The Quezon City conference marked the convergence of civil society and highlander activism efforts and nationalised the resistance. Not only did the numerous NGOs and church organisations that attended the conference proclaim that they opposed the dam project, but Kalingas and Bontocs were themselves brought into the heart of Metro Manila, which held symbolic importance as the highlanders had not previously organised a meeting in the capital, let alone one styled on a bodong meeting as the conference was. Present at the conference were seven national organisations, including the National Social Action Council, the Institute of Social Order and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, in addition to the Kalinga and Bontoc delegates.⁸² The high profile, large size and central location of the conference made it difficult to ignore for the national government. More so, it demonstrated that the opposition to the dam reached beyond the 'backward' mountain Igorots, and included organisations nationwide, including prominent church groups. Again one may observe the workings of the mechanisms of *certification* and *boundary shifting*: new actors entered the struggle and used their prestige and resources to support the claims of a third actor. At the Quezon City conference this was expressed in a show of unity between the Kalingas and civil society groups, which helped to pressure the Marcos government into temporarily suspending the dam project and reorienting its approach to the Kalingas.

The conference would not have been possible without the efforts of lowland church groups, especially SCAPS, which organised the venue at St. Bridget's School, issued invitations and arranged the transport of the highlander delegates to Metro Manila.⁸³ But its success depended also on the prior organising efforts of the indigenous delegates themselves. The highlanders coordinated their positions, agreed on a common stance on the dam project and communicated with their support groups in Manila when making their logistical arrangements. The peace pact institution played an important role in these endeavours in a number of ways.

Firstly, as we have seen, the Kalinga and Bontoc tribes discussed the dam project, coordinated their resistance efforts and widened their awareness of the dam threat through their early meetings in 1974 and 1975. As a result, the indigenous delegates arrived at the conference having already completed much of the legwork of mutual acquaintance and familiarising themselves with each other's positions on the dam. Those early meetings had, as noted, been facilitated by the bodong system.

Secondly, the Quezon City conference was modelled on traditional bodong meetings. Rituals and procedures associated with the bodong were performed, including

81 Stephen Hamada, 'Andam Mouswag: The government lies low as solution is sought', *Baguio Midland Courier*, 27 July 1975.

82 Rosemary Morales-Fernholz, 'Who controls the public domain in the Philippines?', in *Sovereignty under challenge: How governments respond*, ed. John Dickey Montgomery and Nathan Glazer (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2002), p. 246.

83 Friends of the Philippines, *Makibaka!*, p. 113; Winnacker, 'The battle', pp. 24–5; Nestor Castro, 'In search of self-determination', in *Seven in the eye of history*, ed. Asuncion David Maramba (Pasig City: Anvil, 2000), p. 174; Finin, *The making of the Igorot*, pp. 243–4.

the slaughtering of a pig and the prophetic reading of its intestines, and the articulation of common rules for the resistance in the form of a traditional pagta.⁸⁴ As Rosemary Morales-Fernholz points out, the ‘highly visible bodong ... conference in Manila ... made use of tribal rituals to mount a peace pact agreement’.⁸⁵

Thirdly, the highlanders possessed a corps of officials which could represent the movement competently: the bodong-holders. These individuals had personal links to other tribes and the experience of managing their tribes’ external relations. According to several respondents, most of the indigenous delegates at the Quezon City Conference were bodong-holders, including the eloquent Macli-ing Dulag from Bugnay who became a celebrated spokesman of the resistance.⁸⁶ William Claver, who himself attended the conference, spoke of a Kalinga-Bontoc network of bodong-holders, which had begun to take shape during the early meetings between tribes in 1974 and was ‘formally organised ... when they met at St. Bridget’s college. It was formally organised there, and when they came back after their seminar, consultation, these were the leaders of the villages’.⁸⁷ Castor Halo Jr., the son of a now deceased pact holder from Tanglag who attended the conference, reported that the Kalinga delegates at the conference were all members of a ‘Kalinga bodong association’, which was a coalition of peace-pact holders.⁸⁸ Other informants said that the bodong-holders were given responsibility for monitoring the pagta drawn up at the conference when they returned to their home communities.⁸⁹

Steven Rood argues that ‘while in mainstream cultures, NGOs often need to do “community organising” as a first step, NGOs repeatedly find that indigenous peoples have already spontaneously taken steps in regard to their problems’.⁹⁰ This statement aptly describes the situation among the Kalingas during the dam struggle. Not only did the Kalingas possess a cadre of officials who were well placed to lead the movement and liaise with civil society groups, but they were also accustomed to convening inter-tribal meetings and had a readymade and widely acknowledged template for articulating common agreements in the pagta.

Episode 4: Sabotage at the Chico IV Dam site

After the Quezon City conference, the government scrambled for new ways to curb the resistance. From having initially been aloof to what was happening in the mountains, President Marcos became more actively involved in the dam project through his deputies. The main instrument of government policy on the dam project during this period was the Presidential Assistant for National Minorities, better known under its acronym PANAMIN. Headed by the businessman Manuel

84 Castro, *In search of*, p. 274.

85 Morales-Fernholz, ‘Who controls the public domain in the Philippines?’, p. 246.

86 Finin, *The making of the Igorot*, p. 294.

87 Interview, Sagada, 8 Apr. 2009. Claver also pointed out in the interview that ‘it is a bodong-holders’ association, not a bodong in which the whole community was involved. It was personal.’

88 Castor Halo Jr., ‘Overview of the Chico Dam struggle and the relocation of families from Tanglag to Tabuk’, unpublished manuscript shown to the author.

89 Interviews with William Claver (8 Apr. 2009, Sagada), Bula-at (19 Apr. 2009) and Pedro Bangit (20 Apr. 2009, Tomiangan).

90 Steven Rood, ‘NGOs and indigenous peoples’, in *Organizing for democracy: NGOs, civil society, and the Philippine state*, ed. Sydney Silliman and Lela G. Noble (Manila: Ateneo de Manila, 2002), p. 141.

Elizalde, it was dispatched to the mountains to attempt to bring the highlanders into line.

Elizalde reportedly attempted to bribe and threaten people into laying down their resistance. The peak of his efforts came in December 1975, when he convinced one hundred Kalinga elders to meet with President Marcos in Manila.⁹¹ According to Finin, in their hotels, the elders were made to sign blank sheets of paper, later to be filled with typed statements of support for the construction of the Chico IV dam.⁹² The president then used the sheets as proof to the World Bank that the highlanders had acquiesced in the dam project.

If the Kalingas at first were outmanoeuvred by PANAMIN, they soon regrouped. On 1 January 1976, tribes meeting in Gaogao, Tomiangan, reaffirmed their opposition to the dam project in a resolution that was sent to the president.⁹³ On 15 March, Kalinga leaders of Bangad, Tanglag, Tomiangan and Cagaluan, in consultation with civil society groups, drafted a collective retraction letter to be signed by all Kalingas who had joined the December delegation to Manila.⁹⁴ In addition, Kalingas from affected communities who had not taken part in the delegation would be asked to sign a collective letter of opposition to the dam project, and individuals who had accepted positions with PANAMIN would be asked to resign under pain of being removed from inter-community peace pacts.⁹⁵

Yet the government moved on with the dam project. The December meeting in Manila had not been all bad news for the highlanders—the government had agreed to cancel Chico III Dam in Basao as part of its ‘agreement’ with the Kalingas. However, in the subsequent months the NPC stepped up its activities at the Chico IV Dam site outside Tomiangan. For this reason in the months after the Manila meeting the struggle telescoped onto the Chico IV dam site.

In the spring of 1976, the dam site saw repeated clashes between Kalingas and state forces. What was notable about these incidents was the increasing number of Kalinga tribes who took part. On 4 April 1976, villagers from Tomiangan prevented NPC personnel from unloading building material at the dam site.⁹⁶ The following day, when the construction team tried again to unload supplies, it was intercepted by an even larger contingent, this time including individuals from the communities of Tanglag, Cagaluan and Pasil who had been sent for by couriers.⁹⁷ On the night of 8 May, a large group of people from Tomiangan, Cagaluan and Ableg dismantled all but one of the tents of the Philippine Constabulary, which had set up a camp in the area.⁹⁸ On 30 May, people gathered again to take down the last remaining tent.⁹⁹

How were these joint acts of sabotage organised? There was considerable coordination between the tribes who participated in them. Bodong-holder Pedro Bangit of Tomiangan reported that he ‘requested people of the affected communities to come

91 Finin, *The making of the Igorot*, pp. 245–6.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 246.

93 Friends of the Philippines, *Makibaka!*, p. 116.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

95 *Ibid.*

96 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

97 *Ibid.*

98 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

99 *Ibid.*

here and join us in the struggle' and that as a result 'the people of Pasil and Lubuagan joined and tried to remove the posts of the camps that the military tried to construct'.¹⁰⁰ Another Tomiangan villager recalled how people from Tomiangan and Duppag 'dismantled the [NPC] camps' and how on the following day he was 'sent to Tanglag and Cagaluan to seek their help'.¹⁰¹ Leticia Bula-at of neighbouring Duppag told a similar story: 'If the people saw that the NPC are building the site, they will shout and people will know ... Lubuagan, Pasil, Cagaluan, Tinglayan participated ... Some will go and call all the people.'¹⁰² Another report states that Tomiangan and Duppag sent 'couriers' and 'runners' to the other tribes, requesting their assistance in obstructing the activities of the Philippine Constabulary and the NPC at the dam site.¹⁰³

The bodong system facilitated the carrying out of actions at the dam site in two ways. Most obviously, the meetings convened between communities to discuss the dam threat, which continued in 1976, provided occasions for discussing strategy and planning attacks. Bula-at remarked that the actions were planned at 'celebrations, at meetings ... during peace pact celebrations', at which the elders would 'include [the planning] in the discussion'.¹⁰⁴ She stated that the joint attacks on the dam site were possible 'because of the peace pact'.¹⁰⁵ Another member of Duppag community recalled that 'it was demanded' at meetings in the village 'to act through the bodong to inform other tribes to safeguard the dam site'.¹⁰⁶

Secondly, it was usually bodong holders who sent requests for assistance to other tribes. This reinforces the impression that these officials were increasingly taking on the role of organisers of the resistance. Mr Bangit, a pact holder of Tomiangan, said he personally requested the assistance of the other communities: 'When the installation of the camp [at Tomiangan] started, the people of Pasil, Lubuagan, joined and tried to remove the parts of the camp that the military tried to construct. I requested people of the affected communities to come here and join us in the struggle.'¹⁰⁷ He noted that the obligation to assist in the actions 'was in the resolution', referring to a prior agreement between the communities struck at an inter-community meeting.

Episode 5: Collaboration with the New People's Army

The events in the mountains drew the attention of the New People's Army which was looking to expand its insurgency against the Marcos regime. The first NPA squad that arrived in the dam-affected areas was small in size—counting only a handful of fighters¹⁰⁸—but it was great in consequence, as it marked the beginning of a long period of collaboration between the Kalingas and the rebels. The NPA changed the

100 Interview, Bangit, 20 Apr. 2009.

101 Interview with respondent no. 12, Tomiangan, 20 Apr. 2009.

102 Interview, Bula-at, 20 Apr. 2009.

103 Friends of the Philippines, *Makibaka!*, p. 118.

104 Interview, Bula-at, 19 Apr. 2009.

105 Ibid.

106 Interview with respondent no. 10, Duppag, 20 Apr. 2009.

107 Interview, Bangit, 20 Apr. 2009.

108 Castro, *In search of*, p. 175; Suplay Alunday, 'Overview of the history of the Chico Dam struggle', unpublished manuscript shown to the author. Mr Alunday of the Butbut tribe is a bodong-holder and a former armed fighter in the struggle against the Chico Dam.

dynamics of the mountain resistance, giving the highlanders a sword with which to fight the government troops who were growing in number in the area. The guerillas promised to support the Kalingas in their struggle against the dam, offering them 'training and command'.¹⁰⁹ Ernesto 'Ka Sungar' Garado who commanded the NPA detachment in Kalinga from 1975 to 1986 explained his strategy to the author in an interview:

The NPA will be the front ... Seemingly it was the NPA fighting the government but in every activity [the people] will join because we train the active members. We also train their local forces. The local forces will also fight with us, under the guise that it's actually the NPA fighting the government, in order to avoid reprisals from the military against the tribes. We served as a front and cover.¹¹⁰

The NPA widened the claim-making capacities of the Kalingas by providing them with military expertise, command and discipline, allowing them to meet the state forces on the battlefield.¹¹¹ Strikingly, the involvement of the Maoists does not seem to have alienated other supporters of the Kalingas.¹¹² As military clashes intensified in the mountains, civil protests continued seemingly unabated in the lowlands. On 4 January 1977, eight bishops and two priests sent an open letter to President Marcos urging him to release Kalinga men and women who had been detained in autumn 1976.¹¹³ The continued support for the highlanders from religious organisations was such that the pro-dam governor of Kalinga-Apayao, Almado Almazan, exclaimed in 1978 that '[t]he agitation against the dams is the handiwork of leftist priests.'¹¹⁴ Attorney William Claver also persisted in his efforts to help the Kalingas. Working on behalf of FLAG he helped to secure the release of the aforementioned Kalinga captives in June 1977.¹¹⁵ Thus, far from squeezing out the other actors in the resistance, the NPA complemented them, pairing their civil actions with armed resistance in the mountains.

More importantly, the NPA coordinated its actions effectively with the Kalingas themselves. Several respondents reported that cooperation between the NPA and the highlanders ran smoothly in the early years, although it would become a source of tension between different communities after the dam struggle was won. Lakay Buna-as, an elder of Basao tribe, said that 'the red fighters respected the villagers and their traditions',¹¹⁶ and a respondent from Bugnay, who had joined the NPA in 1980, noted that 'the relationship between the young men who joined the NPA and the pangats [community leaders] was that they had different means of fighting the enemy but they were still united in a common cause. Blood may be thicker than water, but they had a common cause against the dam project'.¹¹⁷ Ka Sungar

109 Interview with Ernesto 'Ka Sungar' Garado, Bontoc, 8 Apr. 2009.

110 Ibid.

111 See also Hilhorst, 'Discourse formation', pp. 136–7.

112 Ibid., p. 137.

113 Friends of the Philippines, *Makibaka!*, p. 122.

114 Pittock, 'Valley of sorrow', p. 31.

115 Ibid.

116 Interview with Lakay Buna-as, Tabuk City, 22 Apr. 2009.

117 Interview, respondent no. 2, 13 Apr. 2009.

himself said he always sought the approval of the village elders before he launched an operation: 'I always consulted them, even in military actions. I had to consult them because the possibility that reprisals will take place and they will always be harassed so we had to be prepared for that'.¹¹⁸ This is confirmed by Hilhorst's research that stresses that the Maoists showed considerable cultural sensitivity in Kalinga areas.¹¹⁹

Given that inter-community killings that were left unsanctioned typically triggered conflicts in Kalinga and that Kalingas were present in both the state security forces and the guerrilla and occasionally fell victim to each other's bullets, it is notable that the NPA's armed operations did not spark off any inter-community fighting. During the late 1970s, according to one respondent, there were 'a lot of ambushes left and right'¹²⁰ which frequently claimed Kalinga lives. What prevented the killings from igniting wider strife?

Tilly and Tarrow dwell on the importance of effective coordination between political actors pursuing a common aim. The mechanism of *coordinated action* denotes 'two or more actors' engagement in mutual signalling and parallel making of claims on the same object'¹²¹ and is essential for combining the resources of those actors to the fullest advantage. This in turn relies on the mechanisms of *brokerage* and *diffusion*, which enable contact and communication between the actors. The success of the NPA's operations in Kalinga depended on all three of these mechanisms. The rebels established close contact with the affected Kalinga communities (*brokerage*) and communicated and coordinated closely with them (*diffusion*) in regard to their military operations (*coordinated action*). The result was smooth collaboration between the NPA and the highlanders.

That collaboration, however, would have meant little for the resistance had the NPA's military operations ruptured relations between the tribes. Actors are not stable, and certain forms of collaboration may damage the constitution and integrity of one or more actors, as happened, for instance, when Communists reached out to Stalin's Soviet Union during the Spanish Civil War, causing the Republican front to rupture.

The bodong system helped to prevent the NPA's operations from tearing up the fabric of the Kalinga resistance. As was described above, Kalingas had historically excluded certain members of the binodnan, including those working in law enforcement, from the protection of the bodong. This was done during the dam struggle as well when Kalinga communities agreed to exclude Kalinga members of the NPA and state security forces from the coverage of the inter-community bodongs in cases where they had killed or injured each other in the course of military operations. This happened when four Kalinga NPC employees were killed during an attack on the Chico IV dam site in 1976—an attack that provoked no revenge from the communities of the dead. Pedro Bangit, a bodong-holder and tribal elder in Duppag, said that stipulations were made in the peace pacts to the effect that 'any conflict between binodnan who are working with the NPA or the military would not affect the bodong'.¹²² Another Kalinga respondent described the provisions in more detail:

118 Interview, Garado, 8 Apr. 2009.

119 Hilhorst, 'Discourse formation'.

120 Interview, respondent no. 2, 13 Apr. 2009.

121 Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious politics*, p. 31.

122 Interview, Bangit, 20 Apr. 2009.

It was important to exclude NPAs and soldiers [from the coverage of the bodong] to avert war. Otherwise the bodong would simply be ignored and there would be war. During that time there was a lot of ambushes left and right so what the elders did was to renew or strengthen the bodong with other villages because they did not want to be affected by the ambushes, which would cause war.¹²³

By excluding armed fighters from the coverage of the bodong, the Kalingas attempted to offset some of the potential destabilising effects of collaborating with the NPA. In the language of Tilly and Tarrow they were able to preserve their cohesion as a political actor and retain their coherent claim-making capacity even as individual Kalingas were killing and injuring each other.

Conclusion

The Kalingas successfully maintained their resistance against the dam project until it was halted in the early 1980s, before being officially cancelled when Marcos was removed from power in 1986. The mobilising potential of the bodong system during the Chico Dam struggle resided in four aspects. Firstly, the bodong promoted closer relations among Kalinga communities, facilitating communication and cooperation between them. Secondly, the bodong system endowed the Kalinga resistance with a recognised corps of officials who managed external relations. These were the bodong-holders whose personal clout and experience of interacting with other communities made them well-placed to take a leadership role in the resistance. Thirdly, the system involved a number of practices that could be used as contentious performances. The traditional bodong meeting was first expanded into an inter-tribal gathering where the dam threat was discussed, and later into a multilateral conference in Quezon City in 1975, where resistance efforts were coordinated, Kalinga unity was asserted, and publicity was garnered. The pagta, similarly, was repurposed to articulate common positions and broadcast common rules in regard to the dam project among the highlanders. Fourthly and finally, the bodong was capable of excluding potentially destabilising acts and individuals from its umbrella of protection, which facilitated collaboration between Kalingas and armed militants with little risk of provoking damaging feuds.

There were, of course, other important reasons for the Kalingas' successful mobilisation. One was the personal connections between Cordilleran communities and lowland activists, illustrated by the examples of Mariflor Parpan, the Claver brothers and members of SCAPS, which allowed the Kalingas to engage influential actors elsewhere. Another reason was the ability to discipline individual Kalingas who violated community interests. The bodong was designed to prevent transgressions between two communities to avoid inter-community conflicts, not to regulate behaviour in relation to a third party, such as the NPC. Furthermore, according to bodong holder Andres Ngao-i, bodong holders were loath to punish people for retaining their sources of livelihood.¹²⁴ Yet individual Kalingas chose to work for the NPC and law-enforcement bodies in violation of community interests. To bring people into line, several respondents said, communities as a whole put pressure on individuals to

123 Interview, respondent no. 2, 13 Apr. 2009.

124 Interview with Andres Ngao-I, Tabuk City, 22 Apr. 2009.

leave their jobs.¹²⁵ Other respondents said that the NPA played an important role in these situations. One elder from the Butbut community said it was ‘the NPA that would be the one [to punish violators of the agreement]. It’s normally the role of the bodong-holder but at this time there was a change so that the punishment was in the hands of the NPA.’¹²⁶

Assisted by the support they received from other actors, the Kalingas’ mobilisation against the Chico River Dam project was underpinned by the existence of shared symbols and practices, a recognised and effective form of leadership and the presence of strong connections between communities. These features, which derived in part from the bodong system, enabled the Kalinga communities to bridge geographical and social distances, coordinate resistance efforts and engage in appropriate contentious performances that helped to frustrate the dam project. It shows the versatility of the bodong and its creative reinterpretation by the Kalingas who deployed it in a time of crisis to thwart a project that threatened their villages and livelihoods.

125 Interviews, respondent no. 5 (14 Apr. 2009), Suplay Alunday (14 Apr. 2009, Bugnay), Bula-at (19 Apr. 2009) and Bayongan (26 Apr. 2009).

126 Interview, respondent no. 5, 14 Apr. 2009.