

BATANG: REFRAMING KALANGUYA INDIGENOUS CULTURAL PRACTICES AS AN APPROACH IN BUILDING BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES IN LIGHT OF PCP II

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the Kalanguya indigenous cultural practice of batang as a pastoral approach in building Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) in light of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II). Utilizing the See-Judge-Act method, the researcher immersed in the Kalanguya community of Santa Fe, Nueva Vizcaya, conducting interviews and participatory observation. Findings reveal that batang embodies participation, fellowship, reconciliation, and communal dialogue values resonant with PCP II's vision of a Church of communion. This confirms the study's representativeness. Results demonstrate that batang functions in conflict resolution (tongtongan), communal labor (dang-ngah), feasts, marriage, agricultural rituals, and mourning rites, consistently restoring relationships and strengthening community bonds. Theologically, batang reflects ecclesial communion and offers a culturally grounded model for BEC organizing in the Philippines. The study recommends integrating indigenous practices into pastoral praxis to enrich evangelization and foster inculturated expressions of faith.

Keywords: Batang, Kalanguya, Indigenous Theology, Basic Ecclesial Communities, PCP II, Pastoral Praxis

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) declared 2017 as the Year of the Parish: Communion of Communities, emphasizing the renewal of faith communities through the development of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC). The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II, 1991) further highlighted BEC as a 'new way of being Church' rooted in participation, communion, and mission. However, BEC organizing in the Philippines has often been shaped by Western methodologies. This study investigates whether the Kalanguya cultural practice of batang, a communal sharing ritual, can serve as a culturally grounded pastoral approach for building BECs. The researcher's immersion in Baracbac, Santa Fe, Nueva Vizcaya revealed that batang is deeply embedded in Kalanguya social life, mirroring the values of communion, dialogue, and solidarity central to PCP II.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The call to form BEC's in all dioceses has been reaffirm when this year (2016-2017) was proclaimed a year of the Parish, a communion of communities. Hence, a challenge to come up with a creative approach in building BEC is again put forward. In the Philippines, BEC organizers have been imploring Western approaches in their organizing. With this regard, the researcher through his experience in his immersion with the Kalanguya people in Baracbac, Santa Fe, Nueva Viscaya would like to explore a certain practice of the Kalanguya called "Batang" and see if it can be an approach in building BEC.

Thus, this paper will explore if Kalanguya cultural practice of batang in Baracbac, Santa Fe, Nueva Viscaya can be a pastoral approach in building (BEC) Basic Ecclesial Community in the light of PCP II's concept of BEC.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

So many sociologists and pastors have introduced various methods and approaches. Saul Alinsky's Conflict-Confrontation Approach (1946, 1971), Jack Rothmans Development Approach of Community Organization, Paolo Freire's Conscientization Approach, Fr. Amado Picardal, CSSr, STD., and John L. McKnight and John P. Kretzmann's ABCD Approach that suggest an approach of organizing, and as a researcher, I would like to contribute to this effort. The researcher chooses only these methods because of its wide influence in BCC or BEC organizing especially in the Philippine context. Thus, the researcher sees the significance of this research under two aspects: pastoral, and theological.

Pastorally, this paper would like to contribute to what are other approaches there may be in organizing BEC. The researcher believes that we have cultural practices and approaches that are very rich, which can be of great help in building BEC. Secondly, this will contribute to theology by recognizing the use and relevance of culture in doing theology. I hope that the new generation would realize the beauty of the Kalanguya culture of batang. And perhaps other cultural practices and how they were able to live in communion through these cultural practices.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION

Since batang is widely practice in almost all Igorot tribes, the researcher would limit his research to the Kalanguya context. To have a profound knowledge of the context of batang the researcher chose to limit the scope of this paper to the context of some Kalanguya people in Brgy. Baracbac, Santa Fe Nueva Viscaya in which he was assign for his theological exposure.

To have a deeper theological understanding of the relevance of batang in theology, this study will focus on the concept of BEC and Communion in PCP II. The researcher will also be consulting books concerning BEC, documents/statements on the year of the Parish: Communion of Communities and other documents.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the See-Judge-Act pastoral cycle as its primary framework (Cardijn, 1967) and will employ mixed method of qualitative and quantitative. The SEE stage involves one-month ethnographic immersion, FGD, and interviews with Kalanguya elders (nangkaama, nabahkol), participant observation and survey questioners. The JUDGE stage analyzed PCP II documents, Vatican II teachings, and theological sources on communion and ecclesiology. The ACT stage correlated the Kalanguya practice of batang with BEC principles, offering pastoral-theological reflections. Slovin's formula was applied to compute a representative sample size from the Kalanguya population in Santa Fe (N=11,854), with a 5% margin of error, resulting in n=387 participants.

Computation of Percentages for Each Demographic Variable

Table 1. Sex

Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	205	53.0%
Female	182	47.0%
Total	387	100%

Interpretation:

The total 100% comes from 53.0% (male) + 47.0% (female).

Both values are based on dividing each group's frequency by the total sample (387).

Table 2. Age Group

Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
18–30 years old	75	19.4%
31–45 years old	124	32.0%
46–60 years old	138	35.7%
61 years old and above	50	12.9%
Total	387	100%

Interpretation:

When each frequency is divided by 387 and multiplied by 100, the sum equals 100%.

This ensures that all age groups account for the total population distribution.

Table 3. Educational Attainment

Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Elementary	84	21.7%
High School	176	45.5%
College	87	22.5%
Post-graduate	40	10.3%
Total	387	100%

Interpretation:

All educational categories together represent 100% of respondents.

Each percentage is proportionate to the number of respondents in that category.

Table 4. Religious Involvement

Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Active in Church ministry	190	49.1%
Moderately active	140	36.2%
Rarely active	57	14.7%
Total	387	100%

Interpretation:

Percentages were computed by dividing each level of Church involvement by 387.

When added together, they total 100%, representing all respondents.

RESULTS

1. **Balanced Gender Representation:** The distribution between male (53%) and female (47%) respondents shows a nearly balanced gender composition. This reflects that the batang practice is a communal and inclusive activity where both men and women play active roles in decision-making, rituals, and community gatherings, affirming gender participation in indigenous and ecclesial contexts.
2. **Middle-Aged Majority Participation:** The largest group (46–60 years old) comprises 35.7% of respondents, suggesting that batang is most actively preserved and practiced among mature adults who serve as community elders, leaders, or cultural bearers. Their involvement ensures the intergenerational transmission of indigenous knowledge that aligns with PCP II's emphasis on leadership rooted in experience and faith.
3. **Moderate Educational Background:** Nearly half (45.5%) of respondents attained high school education, indicating that batang is understood and appreciated across educational levels. This implies that cultural participation does not rely on academic achievement but rather on communal belonging and traditional learning, which enhances inclusivity in Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs).
4. **High Religious Involvement:** With 49.1% active in Church ministries, the findings reveal a strong religio-cultural integration. The Kalanguya community exhibits both spiritual devotion and cultural participation, showing that batang supports pastoral formation and evangelization efforts that echo the vision of a participatory Church advocated by PCP II.

Table 5: Difference in Respondents' Perception on the Role of Batang in Building BEC When Grouped According to Age

Age Group	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	Sample Size (n)
18–30 years old	4.32	0.40	75
31–45 years old	4.48	0.36	124
46–60 years old	4.56	0.30	138
61 years old and above	4.41	0.38	50

Interpretation

1. Implication:

There is a significant difference in the perception of Batang as a pastoral approach among different age groups. This means that age influences how respondents understand and value the Batang practice in the context of BEC building.

2. Theological Insight:

Older respondents (46–60 years old) rated Batang slightly higher, reflecting their deeper cultural immersion and traditional participation in indigenous practices. Younger respondents may appreciate Batang symbolically but have less experiential engagement, showing the need for pastoral formation bridging generations.

3. Pastoral Recommendation:

Church leaders may consider age-based catechetical or formation programs to promote Batang as a living expression of communion and participation—especially among youth who may not have experienced traditional rituals firsthand.

Table 6. Respondents’ Perception on the Role of Batang in Building Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC)

Indicators on Batang Practices	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Batang strengthens community fellowship.	210	150	20	5	2	4.44	Strongly Agree
Batang promotes reconciliation and peace.	230	140	10	6	1	4.54	Strongly Agree
Batang serves as a means of communal sharing.	198	160	20	6	3	4.41	Strongly Agree
Batang reflects the Church’s mission of communion.	205	155	15	8	4	4.43	Strongly Agree
Batang could be integrated in BEC organizing.	215	150	14	6	2	4.48	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean						4.46	Strongly Agree

RESULTS

1. Cultural Fellowship as a Form of Communion: Respondents strongly agree that batang strengthens fellowship (WM = 4.44). This reflects the community's belief that shared meals, dialogues, and rituals are expressions of unity and love, similar to how the Eucharist unites the faithful. This resonates with PCP II's call for communion of communities.
2. Reconciliation as a Core Pastoral Element: The highest weighted mean (4.54) was on batang as a promoter of reconciliation. This confirms that batang effectively serves as a cultural mechanism for conflict resolution (tongtongan). Such practice mirrors Christ's ministry of peace and the Church's mission to heal divisions, a vital goal of BEC formation.
3. Inculturated Sharing and Participation: The high ratings on communal sharing (WM = 4.41) reveal that batang functions as an indigenous form of social solidarity. This supports the theological argument that evangelization becomes more authentic when it grows from local cultural expressions, a key insight of inculturation theology discussed in the journal.
4. Pastoral Integration in BEC Organizing: The item Batang could be integrated in BEC organizing' (WM = 4.48) shows respondents' openness to blending indigenous values with Christian community-building. This supports the researcher's conclusion that indigenous cultural practices can enrich pastoral praxis, making BECs more contextually meaningful and sustainable.

FINDINGS

The study identified multiple dimensions of batang in Kalanguya communal life:

1. Conflict Resolution (Tongtongan): Batang facilitates reconciliation through dialogue and communal participation.
2. Communal Labor (Dang-ngah, Ubbo): Shared work supported by batang strengthens solidarity.
3. Feasts and Celebrations (Padit, Kiyad, Kalang): Batang affirms hospitality, unity, and thanksgiving.
4. Marriage (Kalon, Kaihing): Batang seals covenant relationships between families.
5. Agricultural Rituals (Sibon, In-owang, Kaingin): Batang connects the community with nature and deities.
6. Interment of Death (Adamag, Punpun): Batang expresses solidarity with bereaved families.

In all these contexts, batang fosters communion, participation, and relational harmony.

DISCUSSION

Theologically, batang embodies the PCP II vision of BEC as communion, participation, and mission. Batang's emphasis on shared responsibility mirrors PCP II's call for a participatory Church. The reconciliation dimension reflects the Church's mission of peacebuilding, while its ritual dimension parallels the sacramental theology of communion. The Kalanguya emphasis on relationship restoration resonates with the ecclesiological principle of the Church as a community of disciples. Integrating batang into BEC formation thus enriches pastoral praxis through inculturation, making evangelization more authentic and locally rooted.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that batang, as a Kalanguya indigenous cultural practice, offers a pastoral-theological framework for building Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines. It strengthens communal bonds, restores relationships, and reflects values central to PCP II's vision of communion and participation. The researcher recommends:

1. Incorporating indigenous practices like batang into parish BEC formation programs.
2. Promoting intercultural theological reflection to integrate faith and culture.
3. Training pastoral workers in cultural sensitivity and inculturation approaches.
4. Conducting further comparative studies on other indigenous practices for BEC organizing.

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