

## **Assessment of the Talaandig Knowledge of Good and Evil**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The *Talaandig* is one of the seven *lumad* tribes in the province of Bukidnon. This applied -quantitative survey research used a researcher-prepared questionnaire checklist of good and evil deeds based on biblical principles. Thirty *Talaandig* residents of a *Talaaandig* settlement in Bukidnon were the respondents of the study. It is concluded that indigenous peoples such as the *Talaandigs* have in their core belief basic knowledge of good and evil parallel to the provisions in the Ten Commandments, illustrating that

knowledge of good and evil is embedded in the psyche of human beings originating from the perfection of Eden and the entrance of evil resulting from the Fall of Adam and Eve into sin. Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended. To employ the concepts of good and evil being inherent in the core belief of the *Talaandig* as opening wedge to reach these people group with the gospel. (a) Their highest good deed being sacrifice for the sake of another is a perfect idea to teach about the sacrifice of Jesus for the sake of humanity, to bring reconciliation between God and man. (b) “Killing being their highest evil deed followed by coveting, living together without marriage and stealing can be used effectively to teach about the principles of the Ten Commandments.

## KEYWORDS

Social Science, Talalandig, Good and Evil, Applied-Quantitative survey, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Mindanao, the second largest land mass in the Philippines located at its southernmost region is populated by culturally and linguistically distinct people groups which include the Muslim nationally known as Moro and the non-Muslim peoples collectively called *lumad* (Gaspar, 2000). The *lumads* are indigenous peoples most of whom have resisted the modernizing influence of the nation. Among these are the Talaandig, one of the seven *lumad* tribes in the province of Bukidnon (Ting et al., 2008). The *talaandigs* of Bukidnon are from the stock of aboriginal non-*Negritoid* people called the “*Proto-Manobo*” (Elkins 1984) who settled among the mountain ranges of the province of Bukidnon in Mindanao They were also called “*Bukidnons*” meaning “mountain people,” a general designation derived from the *Cebuan* word “*bukid*,” meaning mountain coined by the lowland settlers or *Montesses* by the Spaniards (Lao 1985).

There are no official censuses of the number of *Talaandig* in the province of Bukidnon since government census are conducted by *barangay*, the smallest geopolitical unit in the country, and the population is not tabulated according to ethnicity. Similar to other aboriginal peoples, the Talaandig are animists who worship the spirits of the unseen world although embedded in their undocumented oral traditions are vignettes biblically sound legends (Noel, Lagunday, Armicen & Cabana, 2015).

This present study is anchored on the evangelistic method used by the Apostle Paul to reach the Athenians with the gospel recorded in Acts 17:16-21. Ellen White stated in the Acts of the Apostles that, his [Paul’s] “principal work in Athens was to bear the tidings of salvation to those who had no intelligent conception of God and of His purpose in behalf of the fallen race” (White, 1990). As a minister-in-training, the researcher believes that the tidings of salvation need to be borne to the Talaandigs,

who being animistic in their religion have “no intelligent conception of God and of His purpose in behalf of the fallen race.” Although not educated according to modern standard, the Talaandigs are nevertheless intelligent people as indicated by the richness of their culture, traditions, mores, and the soundness of their political system.

In Athens Paul used as an opening wedge in his address to the City Council, the Aeropagus, an altar with an inscription, “To The Unknown God” (Acts 17:18) that he saw while “passing through and considering the objects of their worship.” This method of using local culture and belief system as an opening wedge to the preaching of the gospel can be a starting point in developing an evangelistic tool to non-Christian peoples, such as the Talaandigs of Bukidnon.

## FRAMEWORK

### Talaandig Background

The *talaandigs* of Bukidnon are from the stock of aboriginal non-Negritoid people called the “Proto-Manobo” (Elkins, 1984) who settled among the mountain ranges of the province of Bukidnon in Mindanao. They were called *Bukidnon* meaning “mountain people,” a general designation derived from the word “*bukid*,” Cebuan for mountain) coined by the lowland settlers or Montesses by the Spaniards (Lao, 1985).

The Talaandigs practice an animistic polytheistic system of worship as exemplified by the Talaandigs at Migtulod, a Sitio in Mt. Nebo, Valencia City, Bukidnon described by Lagunday, Armechin & Cabana (2015).

For example, the Talaandigs at Migtulod consider the watery boundaries of their settlement of special significance. They are sites where the tribe conducts religious ceremonies termed *pamuhat*, a ceremony intended to ask the tribal god *magbabaya* to protect the tribal territory and prosper its people’s livelihood. Included among these religious ceremonies are the following:

### Tribal Baptism, “Panglang”

Panglang is a “*pamuhat*” dedicated to Panglang a spirit goddess who is a member of the 14 lesser *alabyanon* (second class spirits) who with her servant *Mangonoyamo* takes care of midwives, pregnant women and unborn children (Cole, 1956). The ceremony is done when the tribe baptizes a baby before birth through a sacrifice. The ceremony is done to pray to the spirit gods for good health. The tribe believes that even before the birth of every human being the spirit gods prepare their path. The ceremony involves three chickens to please the spirit gods that control the air (“*kalamag*”), the thunder (“*lugong*”) and lightning (“*kilat*”). The tribe believes that without these elements there is no life. Breathing is made possible through the air; the thunder opens the ears for hearing and seeing through lightning.

The *Panglang* is a miniature of flat-bottomed ark made of the abaca leaf sheath, rattan and bamboo with the feathers of the three chicken sacrifices.

### Prayer and supplication “Pangapog”

The *pangapog* is a form of *pamuhat* described in detail by Lagunday, Armecin and Cabana. In this ceremony, the local *datu* and *baylan* (*women who practice tribal medicine*) when conducting a *pamuhat* spread a white cloth and prepares five (5) quids (cone-shaped rolled betel leaves called “*tinalad*” which consist of betel leaves (*Piper bettle Linn.*), “*apog*” (lime from a burnt land snail shell) and betel nut (*Areca catechu Linn.*) with a one peso coin on the left and an “*ogpit*” (knife) in the farther left plus a dried tobacco leaf “*lagot*” placed adjacent to the quid. The white cloth is a symbol of peace. The quid represent the tribe’s plea to the spirit gods for protection from evil and success in livelihood. The one-peso coin is the symbol of putting weight and meaning in the tribe’s plea. The tobacco is the symbol of the sincerity of the request. The “*ogpit*” is the symbol of the tool that the tribe uses in their daily livelihood endeavors. The quid is also referred by the tribe as its Bible. The betel leaves as the paper and the lime as the ink.

The tribe respects the visible and invisible entities, the good and the evil. In their tribal uniform, black stands for the tribe’s acknowledgement of the unseen and the evil. The black cloth offering during the *pamuhat* is a plea to the god (*magbabaya*) to prohibit the evil spirits from interfering with the tribal affairs. Yellow (“*makalawag*”) is a symbol of positive ideas for the tribe and its constituents.

From these religious ceremonies, parallel forms and concepts can be used to point to the Bible as the source of the true form of worship to the TRUE GOD Who created the heavens and the earth and concepts of right and wrong communicated based on the Great Controversy theme.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. Determine the demographic profile of the respondents of this study;
2. Determine if the Talaandigs’ knowledge of good and evil can be a basis for a missiology approach;
3. Identify the extent to which Talaandig religious ceremonies may be used as opening wedge for preaching the gospel to the people;
4. Show the possibility of replacing the religious ceremonies of the people with dominant gospel-resistant postmodern culture

### METHODOLOGY

#### Research design

This study is applied research in theology that followed the quantitative survey category of research.

Initially, the researcher planned to follow the qualitative method using guide questions shown in the appendices of the original proposal. However, during a

preliminary survey, the researcher realized that the intangible concepts of good and evil were not easy to extract from the *lumad's* mind were not initiated to modern concepts. For example, to the question, "what do you consider as evil"? The response was, "ang *dautan, dautan.*" Thus the researchers decided to follow the quantitative survey method using, a researcher-prepared survey questionnaire formatted so that the respondents can simply check their answers. In addition, periodic community immersion was conducted to observe the religious ceremonies in which the researcher was allowed to observe by the local tribal leaders. Proper permission from the National Commission for Indigenous People (NCIP) office in Malaybalay and the local *datu* were sought. Whenever possible, tribal practices were respected and followed to avoid trespassing cultural tribal taboos resulting in a "*sala*" (unpardonable commission of error of tribal cultural practices).

### **Research Locale**

For safety reason and ease of immersion, *Sitio* Migtulod was selected as the research locale for this study. Migtulod is a Talaandig settlement nestled among the foothills of the Kalatungan Mountain Range about six (6) to seven (7) kilometers southwest from Mountain View College (MVC). It is under the geopolitical jurisdiction of Mt. Nebo, the same barangay that administers MVC. Based on local estimates, the population of *Sitio* Migtulod is roughly 95% Talaandig with a few non-Talaandig spouses brought to the settlement through marriage.

### **Respondents**

The respondents of this study were 30 purposively selected members of the Talaandig community of Migtulod, twelve (12) females ages 32 to 64 and eleven (11) males age 31 to 65 recruited with the aid of the local *datu* (chieftain). Two of the respondents were *datu*.

### **Study Duration and Immersion**

The study was conducted during the semestral break of AY 2017-2018 and afterwards, in the cultural setting of the locality through periodic community immersion. The participants were recruited with the help of tribal leaders whose permission to conduct the study has been obtained. Individual informed consent of the participants was sought and secured before the study. The researcher solicited the aid of Ryan Lagunday, a native Talaandig born and raised at Migtulod whose maternal uncle is the local *datu* at Migtulod. Ryan is the younger brother of a Talaandig MVC alumnus, Noel E. Lagunday (BS Biology '13. The Talaandig dialect being Ryan's mother's tongue, Ryan speaks the dialect fluently and is well versed in Talaandig culture. His assistance was indispensable in this study.

### Instrument of the study

A researcher-prepared questionnaire was used from which the respondents imply marked their responses whether they: (1) strongly agree, (2) moderately agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) moderately disagree and (5) strongly disagree with the listed good or evil deeds.

The first part of the questionnaire sought information regarding the respondents' demographic profile. The second part consisted of lists of deeds classified as good or evil aimed to extract the respondents' knowledge of good and evil. As mentioned above, since this intangible concept was seemingly not easy to comprehend, the questions were focused on actions or deeds that were classified as good or evil based on biblical principles as follows:

#### GOOD DEEDS with their biblical basis

1. Sacrificing for the sake of another person. (Romans 5:8).
2. Being faithful to one one's espouse. (Exodus 20:14)
3. Raising children to be good citizens. (Philippians 3:20)
4. Giving to the poor and less fortunate. (James 2:15, Galatians 6:10).
5. Obeying the tribal rules and the laws of the land (Romans 13:1-7).
6. Respecting parents (Exodus 20:12 and rulers Romans 13:1-7).
7. Executing justice. (Deuteronomy 16:19. You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality “; Proverbs 21:15 “It is a joy to do justice”).

Scale used:

- 1.0-1.9 – strongly agree
- 2.0-2.9 – moderately agree
- 3.0-3.9 – neither agree nor disagree
- 4.0-4.9 –moderately disagree
- 5.0-5.9 – strongly disagree

#### EVIL DEEDS and biblical references

1. Ordinary killing.(Exodus 20:13)
2. Hating another person in the heart. (Leviticus 19:17). “You shall not hate your brother in your heart”).
3. Killing for revenge. (Romans 12:19)
4. Stealing, Taking fruits/produce animals from somebody else's farm. (Exodus 20:15).
5. Having somebody else's wife or husband. (Exodus 20:14).
6. Living together without marriage (Exodus 20:14).
7. Getting someone pregnant who is not your wife. (Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3).

- 8. Dishonoring father and mother (Exodus 2:12).
- 9. Coveting somebody else’s spouse or anything that belongs to the neighbor.
- 10. Disobeying the laws of the land. (Romans 13:1-7).
- 11. Not respecting the tribal god. (No biblical principle, used only to test their loyalty to a Supreme Being). The items were weighted on a five-part Likert scale.
  - 1. 1.0-1.9: Agree strongly
  - 2. 2.0-2.9: Agree moderately
  - 3. 3.0-3.9: Neither agrees nor disagrees.
  - 4. 4.0-4.9: Disagree slightly
  - 5. 5.0-5.9: Disagree strongly

**Data Gathering and documentation**

Data gathering involved a semi-structured interview using the researcher-prepared questionnaire. The questionnaires were brought to the home of the respondents where they answered the questions with the help of Mr. Lagunday. He translated the item into the Talaandig dialect. The interviews and were video recorded with the use of a video camera, a DSLR (Canon EOS 650D) used in the photo documentation. A global positioning system (GPS) (GARMIN GPSmap62s) was used in geographically pinpointing the specific locale of the participants’ residence for easy return in case clarification or additional information is needed. These instruments according to the researcher’s sponsor were personally purchased during her yearly visit to the United States and were made available for this study.

The responses to the questionnaire) were analyzed based on a Likert survey scale using simple statistics such as frequency percentage, mean and rank. The information thus collected is expected to be useful in evangelistic outreach to members of the Talaandig tribe and could serve as a source of information in evangelizing other indigenous peoples in Mindanao and beyond where applicable.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1. Agreement or disagreement of the respondents with the listed good deeds

| Good deeds                           | Frequency of the respondents’ agreement or disagreement |    |                   |    |                            |   |                      |   |                   |   | Mean | Interpretation |
|--------------------------------------|---|----|-------------------|----|----------------------------|---|----------------------|---|-------------------|---|------|----------------|
|                                      | Strongly Agree  | %  | Mod-erately Agree | %  | Neither Agree nor disagree | % | Mod-erately disagree | % | Strongly disagree | % |      |                |
| Sacrifice for the sake of another    | 21  | 70 | 9.0               | 30 | 0                          | 0 | 0                    | 0 | 0                 | 0 | 1.33 | Strongly agree |
| Faithful to spouse                   | 29  | 97 | 1.0               | 3  | 0                          | 0 | 0                    | 0 | 0                 | 0 | 1.03 | Strongly agree |
| Raising children to be good citizens | 28  | 93 | 2.0               | 67 | 0                          | 0 | 0                    | 0 | 0                 | 0 | 1.07 | Strongly agree |

|  |    |    |     |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |      |                                  |
|--|----|----|-----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|----------------------------------|
| Obedying laws                          | 28 | 93 | 2.0 | 67 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.07 | Strongly agree                   |
| Respecting parents and rulers          | 29 | 97 | 1.0 | 3  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.03 | Strongly agree                   |
| Giving help to poor and less fortunate | 29 | 97 | 1.0 | 3  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.03 | Strongly agree<br>strongly agree |
| executing justice                      | 27 | 90 | 3.0 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.13 | Strongly agree                   |
| Overall Mean                           |    |    |     |    |   |   |   |   |   |   | 1.10 | Strongly agree                   |

Table 1 above shows the understanding of the respondents regarding good deeds. The overall mean of 1.10 indicates that the respondents strongly agree with the listed good deeds. None of them disagreed with those good deeds. The highest numbers of respondents (70%) “Strongly agree” with the item “sacrificing for the sake of another, although one third (30%) of the respondents only “moderately agree” with this concept of sacrificing for another suggesting that possibly the Talaandigs are individualistic society that each mind his/her own business. Arranged numerically based on mean of the number of respondents that checked the particular deed are the following; faithful to one’s spouse (97%), respecting parents and elders (97%), helping the poor Needy (97%), executing justice (90%). These are all sound biblical principles that the respondents strongly agree with. These can be used as a springboard in the preaching of the gospel to the Talaandigs and other indigenous peoples if applicable.

That seventy percent (70%) of them strongly agree with this concept of sacrifice is unexpected in view of the culture of revenge such as the practice of “*magahat*” by some *lumad* tribes (Sumagpi, 2018), also practiced by the Talaandigs in a milder form. According to one of the datu, revenge is focused only on the offender unlike the *magahat* practiced in other tribes in which anybody found in the community during a declaration of a *magahat* is killed even those who are not involved in the problem. This concept of sacrificing for the sake of another can be used to point to the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf (Romans 5:8) as an opening wedge for the preaching of the gospel.

Table 2. Respondents’ agreement or disagreement with the listed evil deeds

| EVIL DEEDS                  | Number and Percent of Respondents |   |                   |    |                            |   |                       |    |                    |     | Mean | Interpretation    |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------|----|----------------------------|---|-----------------------|----|--------------------|-----|------|-------------------|
|                             | Strongly Agree                    | % | Mod-erately Agree | %  | Neither agree nor disagree | % | Mod-erately dis-agree | %  | Strongly dis-agree | %   |      |                   |
| Ordinary killing            | 0                                 | 0 | 0                 | 0  | 0                          | 0 | 0                     | 0  | 30                 | 100 | 5.0  | Strongly disagree |
| Hating another in the heart | 0                                 | 0 | 3                 | 10 | 1                          | 3 | 4                     | 13 | 27                 | 90  | 4.63 | Strongly disagree |
| Killing for revenge         | 0                                 | 0 | 6                 | 20 | 0                          | 0 | 0                     | 0  | 22                 | 73  | 4.33 | Strongly disagree |
| Stealing                    | 0                                 | 0 |                   | 1  | 3                          | 3 | 10                    | 26 | 87                 | 4.9 |      |                   |

|   |   |   |   |    |   |   |   |    |    |    |      |                   |
|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|---|----|----|----|------|-------------------|
| Having somebody else's spouse                 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 25 | 83 | 4.53 | Strongly disagree |
| Living together without marriage              | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3  | 29 | 97 | 4.97 | Strongly disagree |
| Getting someone pregnant who is not your wife | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3  | 29 | 97 | 4.83 | Strongly disagree |
| Dishonoring father or mother                  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 4 | 13 | 26 | 87 | 4.83 | Strongly disagree |
| Coveting someone else's spouse                | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  |   | 1 | 1 | 3  | 29 | 97 | 4.97 | Strongly disagree |
| Disobeying laws of the land                   | 0 | 0 |   | 1  | 3 |   |   |    | 26 | 87 | 4.83 | Strongly disagree |
| Not respecting tribal gods                    | 0 | 0 |   | 1  | 4 |   |   |    | 25 | 83 | 4.87 | Strongly disagree |
| Overall mean                                  |   |   |   |    |   |   |   |    |    |    | 4.79 | Strongly disagree |

Table 2 above shows the agreement or disagreement of the respondents with the listed evil deeds. In this case, strongly “disagree” meant they do not agree to do the listed deed classified as evil, meaning they understand that the deed is evil. That was how it was explained by Mr. Lagunday. The mean of 4.79 indicates their strong disagreement to the listed deeds meaning they strongly believe that the listed deeds are evil, something they do not agree with (“*dili kauyon*”). The mean of each category indicates that the respondents strongly agree that the listed deed is evil. The highest mean was for “killing followed in numerical order based on number respondents are as follows, coveting (4.97), living together without marriage (4.97) and stealing (4.90). These data mean that principles of the Ten Commandments are basic to their knowledge of good and evil although they do not know it as such. This is in accordance with Romans 1:19, 20 which states, “Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse. Surprisingly, having somebody else’s spouse received a relatively lower mean of 4.53 but still in the strongly disagree category or they disagree to do the deed, for it is evil. This suggests that morality is relatively not highly valued among the Talaandigs at Migtulod. Revenge also had a lower mean of 4.63 still in the strongly disagree category confirming that the Talaandigs have a milder form of revenge and not the “magahat” practice of other tribes as described by Sumagpi, (2018).

Answer to objective no. 3 is shown in the succeeding paragraphs. Religious ceremonies that can be used to as opening wedge in the preaching of the gospel are listed below. These ceremonies are described in detail by Lagunday et al., (2015).

### 1. Tribal Baptism, “Panglang”

Based on our personal observation and through listening to mission reports, the most effective means of communicating truths is through stories. The panglang can be used to communicate the truths in John chapter 3. The story of a professor of a powerful

Jewish university coming surreptitiously in the darkness of night to consult a young Teacher from the hinterlands of a backward town called Nazareth only to be told he has to be born again! Will make an interesting story to catch the attention of listeners in an evangelistic campaign. How? The incredulous professor asked, 'I cannot go back to my mother's womb. "The young Teacher calmly answered, Jesus "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Panglang can be related to being born again to be able to enter the kingdom of God since Panglang is done when the tribe baptizes a baby before birth through a sacrifice. It fits right in with the new birth concept.

The Panglang ceremony involves three chickens to please the spirit gods that control the air ("*kalamag*"), the thunder ("*lugong*") and lightning ("*kilat*"). The tribe believes that without these elements there is no life. Breathing is made possible through the air; the thunder opens the ears for hearing and seeing through lightning. With this ceremony, the truth about the one True God who made the heavens and the earth and who controls the *kalamag*, *lugong* and *kilat* (Job 37-40) can be communicated effectively.

## **2. Prayer and supplication "Pangapog"**

Prayer and supplication is a basic Christian concept that can be communicated through the Pangapog that will point to the one True God who answers prayer. In the pangapog, the "quid" that is considered the Bible can be used to point to the true bible, the word of God.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Indigenous peoples such as the Talaandigs have in their core belief basic knowledge of good and evil parallel to the provisions in the Ten Commandments illustrating that knowledge of good and evil is embedded in the psyche of human beings originating from the perfection of Eden and the entrance of evil resulting from the Fall of Adam and Eve into sin.

From the Talaandig religious ceremonies, parallel forms and concepts can be used to point to the Bible as the source of the true form of worship to the TRUE GOD who created the heavens and the earth and concepts of right and wrong communicated and the origin and final eradication of evil can be communicated based on the Great Controversy theme.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended. To employ the concepts of good and evil being inherent in the core belief of the *Talaandig* as opening wedge to reach these people group with the gospel. (a) Their highest good deed

being sacrifice for the sake of another is a perfect idea to teach about the sacrifice of Jesus for the sake of humanity, to bring reconciliation between God and man. (b) “Killing being their highest evil deed followed by coveting, living together without marriage and stealing can be used effectively to teach about the principles of the Ten Commandments.

(c) To use the *panglang* ceremony as an illustration to teach about baptism. Especially by use of the story of Nicodemus as an illustration. A highly educated professor who came to seek advice from an unknown teacher from the hinterland of Nazareth only to be told to be born again because unless he is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (d) to use the *pangapog* ceremony to teach about prayer and supplication, specially teaching about Romans 8:26 which says, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning’s which cannot be uttered.” (e) to replicate this study among other indigenous groups to assess their core belief in good and evil to be able to make a generalized conclusion about the universality of the core belief about good and evil embedded in the psyche of humanity wince the fall of man from the perfection of creation.

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