

# *The Globalization of Kalinga Tattoos*

From the Philippines to the U.S.A.

By Tom Kips

November 2010



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## Table of Contents

<b><i>Acknowledgements</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><i>-1- Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
1.1 Tattoos in a Globalized World .....	5
1.2 History of the Region .....	8
1.3 The Word Igorot.....	9
1.4 A short history of Tattooing in Kalinga.....	11
1.5 Globalisation .....	12
1.6 The Spatiality of Tattoos .....	14
1.7 Methodology .....	15
1.8 Chapter Outline .....	17
<b><i>-2- Kalinga Batek</i></b> .....	<b>19</b>
2.1 Understanding Kalinga Batek.....	19
2.2 Tattooing in Rites of Passage .....	20
2.3 Batek in Rites of Separation .....	20
2.4 Batek in Rites of Transition.....	21
2.5 The Kalinga Concept of Beauty .....	27
2.6 Batek in Rites of Incorporation .....	32
2.7 Migration and the Change in Tattooing.....	34
<b><i>-3- Mobility And The Change In Kalinga Tattooing</i></b> .....	<b>39</b>
3.1 The Spanish Period.....	39
3.2 The American Period.....	43
3.3 The Americans in Kalinga.....	45
3.4 Missionisation .....	48
3.5 The Contemporary Period .....	51
3.6 The Mobility Hypothesis.....	54
<b><i>-4- Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon</i></b> .....	<b>57</b>
4.1 Tattoos in Contemporary Western Culture.....	57
4.2 Agency .....	58
4.3 The Commodified Body.....	58
4.4 Migration to the United States of America.....	61
4.5 Differential Inclusion and Tribal Tattoos .....	65



<b>-5- In Conclusion.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>76</b>
Appendix 1: Maps .....	77
Appendix 2: The Mobility Hypothesis .....	79
Appendix 3: Kalinga Tattoos .....	80
Appendix 4: Tattoos of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon.....	82
Appendix 5: Receiving a Tattoo.....	84



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*Salamat!*

Tom Kips

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## **-1- Introduction**

*‘Globalization’ is not about what we all, or at least the most resourceful and enterprising among us, wish or hope to do. It is about what is happening to us all.’*

Zygmunt Bauman (1998; p. 60)

### **1.1 Tattoos in a Globalized World**

#### ***Snapshot 1: Modern Day Headhunters***

*In 1998, in the midst of the Polynesian tattoo revival, a group of young Filipino-Americans from California embarked on a journey to the islands of Hawaii. There they met Hawaiians who were busy researching their past and their Hawaiian tattoo tradition. The Filipino’s learned about Polynesian oral history and folklore, and upon returning to the U.S. mainland set out to revive their own tattoo heritage. They started researching the history of the Philippines and its people and established the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon tribe.*

*The Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon (translated as mark of the four waves, referring to the popular notion that the Philippines archipelago experienced four ‘waves’ of immigrants) is an organization dedicated to the revival of traditional culture and tattoos of the Philippine islands. For the tribe members in California tattoos are an important way of maintaining their culture and identifying themselves with their Filipino roots. Many of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon tribe have traditional tattoos combined with more modern designs, describing their situation best; traditional aspects of their identity combined with the modern values of the United States.*

*Christian<sup>1</sup>, one of the co-founders of the tribe is a short, stocky built man in his mid-thirties. His hair is short on the sides but very long in the back, reaching past his shoulders. A hairstyle similar to that of Ifugao and Kalinga men depicted in pictures from the early 1900s. He comes across a little militant and is quite brash in his statements about how Christian missionaries destroyed Filipino culture. Christian has many tattoos, but most noticeable is the chest piece which extends to cover both his arms. The chest piece is based on the Kalinga*

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<sup>1</sup> Christian is a fictitious character. I’ve created him based on several tribe members. By doing so Christian functions as a spokesperson for the tribe and allows the reader to view the different tattoos through his eyes. His outlook on life as well as his statements and comments are based on or literally adapted from real members.



*male chest tattoo and designed by himself. A tree is depicted in the middle of his chest and different Kalinga patterns extend in half circles from his chest to his shoulders and upper arms. The tree is a reoccurring theme in the tattoos of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon members. What I also notice about Christian is that he's very proud of his tattoos although his chest pieces signifies that he is a warrior, having taken many heads to be allowed the tattoos. He states:*

*'We have a unique cultural heritage and we want to expose its great beauty. We travel to universities, attend cultural events and tattoo conventions in California to educate young and older Filipinos about the roots of our culture. I liken myself to a 'contemporary headhunter' because I hunt heads and educate them whenever I have the opportunity.'*

### ***Snapshot 2: The Pride of Kalinga<sup>2</sup>***

*I'm a little nervous when I sit down on the wooden chair and stretch my left leg. I've just shaven part of my leg, just under my left knee. Whang Od looks at me with a little smile. She's the only known mambatek<sup>3</sup> that still tattoos people the traditional way and at 87 years of age she's in the last years of her life. Whang Od makes me feel like I'm speaking to my grandmother, a soft and kind woman who's seen the way of the world. She has very fine bone structure and I can't help but think that she must have been a very pretty woman when she was younger. Her house is small, made of wood and she lives alone supporting herself by working the family fields and occasionally tattooing people. Whang Od learned the art of Kalinga tattooing from her father and started helping him when she was a young girl. Her arms, the upper part of her chest and her shoulder blades are completely tattooed with Kalinga designs.*

*I look at the old lady and her limited eyesight worries me. She has glasses but she never wears them, proud as she is. Whang Od has already mixed her ink, made of char and water, and is dipping the needle in it. She uses a thorn from an orange tree which she has fixed into a piece of wood. This device will be piercing my skin as Whang Od taps the piece of wood with a stick. To calm my nerves I light a cigarette but it doesn't help. She looks at me and asks if I'm ready. I nod. I've been tattooed before on places deemed quite painful but this was all done with a professional tattoo machine, never with a thorn from an orange tree. I'm a little*

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix 5 for pictures

<sup>3</sup> A mambatek is someone who tattoos people, in other words, a tattoo artist.



*worried about my shin since the skin is very thin in that area and this means the thorn will probably be piercing the bone. Whang Od begins. She makes a little line in my leg and checks the blood that flows freely from the wound. She tells me that my blood is good and that we can continue. I look away and the pain overwhelms me. I focus on the grazing carabaos in the distance and all I hear is the metronome tap-tap-tap as the thorn enters my skin.*

*The design that adorns my left leg is a band made up of fifteen diamonds, representing the stars in the night sky. To me it's an accumulation of a lot of things. It represents my journey to Kalinga, the people I've met and the end of four and a half months of fieldwork. The design is common among men and women in Kalinga, whereby its mostly tattooed on the upper arms of women. The tattoos are called batek and have been around for thousands of years. They are mostly found on the older generation whereas the younger Kalinga's don't have them or seem to care about them. A frequently heard reason for the demise in tattooing is that due to education and Christianity the younger generation is no longer interested in getting tattooed. In the beginning of my fieldwork I remember feeling sad when I realized that the symbolism, meaning and art of this age old practice will become extinct when the last tattooed people in Kalinga pass away. It's a cultural practice slowly vanishing due to various processes that have, and still are influencing Kalinga society.*

*After two and a half hours, Whang Od is done. My leg has swollen to twice its size, bleeds and feels very sore. She washes the wounds and tells me that I'm not to bathe for two days, not to eat fish or salted meat. After that I should wash the tattoo carefully and keep it moist. We slaughter a chicken and splash the blood on the fresh tattoo while someone calls upon the Gods to make my tattoo heal fast and without infection. It is done. I've been marked for life.*

Tattooing is a very physical, very personal experience. The pain and excitement of getting tattooed cannot be understood without actually experiencing the insertion of a needle with ink in the body. Nor can someone understand the social freedom or constraint resulting from having a tattoo. These experiential aspects of tattooing make it a ritual and cause affinity between those who have tattoos and exclude those who don't.

This is a thesis about people who mark their bodies permanently. An obvious question to ask someone who chooses to mark their body is why. Why would you tattoo yourself? What if





you don't like the tattoo in the years to come? What if you grow old and the ink won't be as clear as it was? I've often had to answer questions like these and most of the time it was people without tattoos who asked them. What I realized during the research for this thesis is that these why questions always have to do with aesthetics. But tattoos can be much more than just aesthetics. They harbor in themselves a story, a history, a love lost or a struggle overcome. They are identity, resistance or in more anthropological terms, a way to make the body space into body place. This thesis is therefore as much about identity, culture and history as it is about tattoos.

## **1.2 History of the Region**

The northern part of the Philippines, called North Luzon, is roughly cut in two by a sharp mountain range. Today the region consists of 5 provinces: Benguet, Mountain Province, Apayao, Ifugao and Kalinga. This mountainous area is home to lush pine forests, wild mountain rivers and peaks over 2.000 meters in height, the tallest of them being mount Pulag at 2.922 meters. The mountain range, called the Gran Cordillera Central, is inhabited by a people commonly referred to as *Igorots*. The people of the Cordillera are believed to have arrived to North Luzon in separate migrations from Southeast and East Asia. Archaeological evidence supports this origin although controversy persists as to the times and places from which the different migrant groups have come (Dozier, 1966; 22).

H. Otley Beyer (1918) believed that the people of the Cordillera arrived in separate migration waves. That is some 25.000 to 30.000 years ago when the ancestors of the Negrito migrated into the Philippines. Around 5.000 B.C came a group he called 'Indonesian A' and their descendants are found in the provinces of Apayao and parts of Abra, Kalinga and Ifugao. Another wave came from Southern China around 1.500 B.C. and Beyer called them 'Indonesian B'. Their descendants are supposedly found in parts of the provinces Ilocos Norte, Kalinga and Ifugao (Prill-Brett, 1999; 2). Then between 800 and 500 B.C. a more advanced group of migrants is said to have arrived bringing with them copper and bronze tools. Some two to three hundred years after that the Malays migrated to the southern parts of the archipelago (Prill-Brett, 1999; 2).

Beyer's Separate Migration Theory is highly debated. More recent studies agree on migration from parts of Southeast and East Asia but do not support the different waves of migrants. It is believed that the original migrants of Northern Luzon and the Cordillera had a common



culture and that the cultural differences among the people are primarily the result of change in situ (Dozier, 1966; 22). Eggan (1941, 1954), Scott (1958) and more specifically Keesing (1962; 319) have used this particular explanation in accounting for the cultural difference among the inhabitants of the Cordillera (Dozier, 1966; 22).

### **1.3 The Word Igorot**

According to Scott (1969; 155) the word *Igorot* is composed of the root word *golot* which means ‘mountain chain’ and the prefix *I* meaning ‘people of’. Thus the word *Igorot* can be seen as meaning people of the mountains. Since the Spanish period and possibly before that, the people of the Cordillera Mountains have become known as the *Igorots*. Anthropologist Prill-Brett (in Finin, 2005 p. 11) relates the origin of the term *Igorot* to headhunting which was widely practiced among the *Igorot*. Prill-Brett (in Finin 2005 p. 11) makes an association with the Ilokano (a language spoken in the lowlands on the west side of the Cordillera Mountains) word *gerret*, meaning to cut off or slice. Whatever the exact root of the word is, in Spanish times the term *Igorot* was used as a derogatory term to describe the savage, headhunting and backward tribes of Northern Luzon in the Cordillera Mountains (Scott, 1969; 154). On the contrary, Spaniards referred to people of the lowlands as *indios* which they also called the indigenous population of America (Scott, 1974; 3). This term did not have a derogatory connotation but was a simple result of Columbus’s mistaken notion that he had reached India when he discovered the Americas. As such the Spaniards called most of the people in their colonial empire *indios*.

In identifying the people of the Cordillera as *Igorots* there are several problems. As Eggan (1963; 349) observes:

*‘Important differences in agriculture, settlement patterns and social institutions... cut across geographical lines and dialect groupings. The basic unit is the village or group of related villages; as one goes from one local group to another, changes occur in both dialect and custom, without sharp linguistic breaks. There are no ‘tribes’ in the ordinary sense, and the larger ethnolinguistic units recognized by ethnologists have little basis in native society.’*

Scott (1974; 2) notes that its accurate to refer to the people in the Cordillera by the names of the six different ethnolinguistic groups in which they can be divided, the Isneg, Kalinga,



Bontoc, Ifugao, Kankanay and Ibaloy. In this research I focus on one mayor ethnolinguistic group, namely that of the Kalinga and the cultural change that is taking place within Kalinga society. I've spent 4,5 months in the Philippines gathering data for this thesis. In those months I stayed in the village of Tulgao in the Kalinga province<sup>4</sup>. The people from Tulgao call themselves the *iTurkao*, meaning the people from Tulgao. The *iTurkao* are considered the royal blood of the Kalinga's. According to legends this is because all Kalinga tribes have their roots in this village.

*After spending some time away from my fieldwork site I return to Tulgao. In Tinglayan I get off the bus and look for familiar faces. Near one of the restaurants I find Gilbert. We exchange greetings and soon I'm on the back of his motorbike driving up the steep hills towards Tulgao. The clean, crisp mountain air smacks me in the face. Green fields, waterfalls and deep valleys pass on my right side as Gilbert expertly drives his bike over the narrow winding road to his village. I've been staying with the Aggalao family since the beginning of my fieldwork and their house has become a home away from home. I've missed the freshly brewed coffee and the sweet, cold, early morning mountain air.*

*The last part of the journey, where we have to go downhill after going uphill the whole way, is too steep to do by bike. Gilbert goes ahead with the motorbike and I follow. I stop every now and again to take in the view. In the background the high mountains with lush pine forests covering them like a warm blanket rise up towards the sky. Tulgao is set in a valley which is cut in half by a majestic waterfall and a small river with cold mountain water. On the other side of the valley I can see the rice fields and the houses of Dananao, another Kalinga tribe.*

*I jump over the small wooden fence that marks the beginning of the village and several pigs shoot away at my feet. I'm greeted by some smaller kids and one of the Aggalao grandchildren. 'Welcome back uncle Tom', the little boy shouts as he runs towards the family house. The Aggalao household is a cozy one. Parents Alex and Corazon have their room downstairs while I sleep upstairs in one of the brothers' rooms. Gilbert and his wife Analyn also live in the house and have their room next to mine. Usually we enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinner downstairs in the kitchen where the whole family and whoever might be there eats together. There's always a thermos filled with coffee on the table. The coffee beans grow just*

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1 for maps of the fieldwork area.



*outside the village and are handpicked and roasted over a fire in the backyard. After that they're ground and boiled water is poured on top. Great, pure Arabica coffee.*

*After exchanging pleasantries and the gifts I brought from Manila I make my way towards the village shop where I usually buy my cigarettes. On the way I greet the people I've come accustomed to during my time here. I shout greetings at a family friend who is plowing the rice fields. I have a cup of coffee with Mario and inquire about his father who's health is getting worse. The people from Tulgao are friendly and open, humorous and hospitable. Nothing at all like the way they are portrayed in Manila, as savage, blood thirsty headhunters.*

#### **1.4 A short history of Tattooing in Kalinga**

The first time the word *tatow* appeared in the English language was in the written accounts of Captain Cook's first voyage to the island of Tahiti in 1769. The word referred to the markings found on the skin of Polynesians. When Magellan arrived on the islands of Samar and Leyte in 1521 and the Spaniards made their way through to the Visayas (a group of Philippines islands just west of Samar and Leyte) they encountered strangely painted, fierce looking men. They called them the '*Pintados*', or the painted ones (Scott, 1994; 20). Of course these men were not painted but had their full bodies tattooed.

In the Philippines the term for tattoos is *batuk*, which refers to the marking found on snakes and lizards (Scott, 1994; 20). Among the different groups found in Northern Luzon the word *batek* (in Kalinga), *fatek* (in Bontoc) and *fatok* (in Benguet) are all derived from the sound of the tapping of a stick on the tattoo instrument which pierces the skin (Salvador-Amores, 2002; p. 108).

In 1885 Dr. Schadenberg, a German pharmacist living in Vigan, made three excursions in the in Northern Luzon and noted that:

*'Warriors with five enemy heads to their credit were heavily tattooed and unhesitant about discussing the fact that Spaniards had been counted among them'.*

(Quoted in Scott, 1974; 314)

In the early 16th century traditional tattooing is widespread in the Philippines but very little is known or written about the practice (van Dinter, 2005; 85). In these times tattooing was a



common practice among the warrior tribes in the Cordillera region including the Kalinga's. During the arrival of the Spaniards headhunting and tattooing were being practiced more extensively than in the time of the Americans (Krieger, 1926; 89). During Spanish colonization the Kalinga were a people where head taking was an intricate element of their culture. Killings and counter killings were quite common as were feuds between different villages and regions (Dozier, 1966; 55). The tattoos, earned by a warrior after a successful headhunt, were a symbol of male courage and bravery and had the function of modern day military decorations (Scott, 1994: 20; de Raedt, 1969: 95-100).

In an 1898 article published in *American Anthropologist*, Daniel G. Brinton takes stock of what is known of the people of the Philippines in anticipating the annexation of the archipelago to the United States. About the people of Northern Luzon he states:

*'Many of these have never been converted to Christianity and preserve their ancient customs of tattooing their bodies, filing their teeth and from time to time indulging their ancestral tendency to head-hunting'. (Brinton, 1898; 303).*

Many foreign ethnographers reinforced the idea that tattooing was done primarily and solely in connection with the practice of headhunting (Salvador-Amores, 2002; p. 110). Until today much of the tattooing and tattoo designs in the Kalinga province are still best understood within the context of headhunting. Nonetheless anthropologist Ikin Salvador-Amores (2002) has shed light on the intricate practice of Kalinga tattooing. She shows the roles and functions of the Kalinga *batek* and how these tattoos are cultural symbols of intricate rituals. Nevertheless Kalinga society is undergoing revolutionary change due to various processes which will be discussed in this thesis. It's within this context that we should view the changes that are taking place in the realm of Kalinga tattooing.

### **1.5 Globalization**

In this day and age the word globalization is on everyone's lips. According to sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1998) our current postmodern world is one of *'new world disorder'*. A world that has lost its totality and meaning. A world which is made up of a bundle of powers and power blocks whereby it's not certain how these blocks and bundles fit together, or how they are going to react to each other. This new world has lost the clear dualities between the First and Third world and borders between countries, people and culture have become



increasingly vague. The concept of globalization emphasizes a world where the global relationship between capital, goods, ideologies and people have intensified on a scale never seen before. In this world we witness an exchange of information and cultural interaction on an unprecedented scale (Inda & Rosaldo, 2008).

Within the post-modern chaos several scholars have tried to document the process of globalization. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996) created a model to make more sense of the complex globalization process. Instead of using 'old world' notions such as centre and periphery he tries to make the chaos a little less chaotic by using new concepts. Appadurai (1996) speaks about 'scapes' and distinguishes between *'finance-*', *'ideo-*', *'ethno-*', *'techno-*' and *'mediascapes'*. These 'scapes' flow over the world and with neither one being dominant. By dividing the world into 'scapes', Appadurai (1996) shows us that cultural spaces are no longer connected to one single place. Nowadays it's possible to enjoy Japanese food in Utrecht. Traditional Japanese dishes are no longer 'stuck' within a certain geographic place but widely available.

In the 21st century several scholars (see for example Ho, 2005; Sassen, 2001; Tsing; 2000) note the importance of studying the globalization discourse itself. These authors are critical towards the image portrayed by social scientist of global capitalism as an *'all powerful monolith'* (Ho, 2005; p. 138). Sociologist Baumann (1998; 60) for example describes globalization as:

*'anonymous forces, operating in the vast – foggy and slushy, impassable and untamable- no man's land, stretching beyond the reach of the design-and-action capacity of anybody's in particular'*

If we follow authors such as Baumann (1998), globalization is ungraspable and we as humans are not able to withstand the all encompassing power of this globalization tsunami. Within this discussion Anna Tsing (2000) calls for the critical analyses of the discourse on globalization. She states that three elements make the acceptance of this global so attractive to social scientist:





*'Several features attract and engage an expanding audience for imagining the globe: first, its futurism, that is, its ability not only to name an era but to predict its progress; second, its confluences of varied projects through which the populist and the corporate, the scientific and the cultural, the excluded margins and the newly thriving centres, all seem wrapped up in the same energetic moment; and third, its rhetoric of linkage and circulation as the overcoming of boundaries and restrictions, through which all this excitement appears positive for everyone involved'* (Tsing, 2000; p. 71).

Tsing (2000) states that accepting '*futurism*' is problematic since it is difficult to predict the future and within this discourse it seems as if the past has become irrelevant. She states that it is difficult to know what consequences certain changes in the global will have. According to Tsing (2000) we are too easily drawn to conclude that all the transnational and transcommunal ideas and activities adhere to the same ideological system of globalization. She states that if we analyze the changes and effects only according to this new global landscape,

*'we would miss the pleasures and dangers of this multiplicity'* (Tsing, 2000; p. 75).

Related to these statements is the article on 'dubbing culture' in Indonesia where author Tom Boellstorff (2003) states that:

*'I highlight that this suffering and injustice is caused not by a singular 'globalization', but by a complex network of interlocking economic, political, and social forces that are not always in agreement or absolute dominance'* (Boellstorff, 2003; p. 304).

In researching globalization it's thus very necessary to be critical on the phenomenon of globalization itself. Or in the words of Karen Ho:

*'We need to look critically at globalization as not simply a fact, but a hope, a strategy, and a triumphalist ideology. Such a call reminds anthropologists that hegemony is not only hard work but also boastful'* (Ho, 2005; p. 154).

## **1.6 The Spatiality of Tattoos**

Tattooing and tattoos are very much connected to, or rooted in place. Tattoo styles are therefore often described as connected to place such as the ubiquitous Japanese design, a



Maori tattoo or the Samoan style. This connection to place is not only a characteristic of tattooing but is found within most cultural practices (Kuwahara, 19).

People however, do not confine themselves to one place but rather move between places (whether forced or freely). This is also the case for a lot of Filipino's. According to James Tyner (2009; p. xiv) nearly five million migrant workers from the Philippines are employed in over 190 countries and territories. Due to the historical ties with the United States, many Filipino's have migrated to the U.S. and form communities in for example Los Angeles.

When analyzing space and place, space only becomes place when people conceptualize it. Political and economic powers act upon space and transform it into place where the relations between tattooing, identity and social relationships are intertwined (Kuwahara, 20). In terms of tattooing, the body can also be viewed as another important space. Tattooing one's body is exactly the process of making one's body space into place. By tattooing it we possess, territorialize, conquer and cultivate our body.

In this thesis I will show how the demise of Kalinga tattoos in the Philippines and the revival of these same tattoos in California are a logical consequence of Spanish and U.S. colonization policy in the Philippines and the exploitation of the Filipino body in the United States. I will show that the process of tattooing can be seen as a strategy in dealing with, and an act of resistance against, unequal power structures experienced by Filipino-Americans. Tattooing can be viewed as a process of making one's body space into place by permanently marking the skin and thus exercising individual agency.

## **1.7 Methodology**

*'... the world of humankind constitutes a manifold, a totality of interconnected processes, and inquiries that disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it falsify reality. Concepts like 'nation', 'society' and 'culture' name bits and threaten to turn names into things. Only by understanding these names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading interferences and increase our share of understanding'*

(Eric Wolfe, 1982; 3)



In the context of globalization I wonder how it can be that one tradition is fading while at the same time, albeit in another geographical and social context, the same tradition is revived. To answer that question this research is multi-sited. On the one hand I have spend time in the village of Tulgao, Kalinga where I have done most of the data gathering. Secondly, I have followed the people from Tulgao in their migration to the city of Tabuk focusing on the change with respect to their perceptions about tattoos and tradition. Thirdly, I have conducted interviews with members of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon tribe who migrated from the Philippines to the U.S. By following the people in their movements across the globe I've been able to identify what processes play a part in the simultaneous demise and revival of Kalinga tattooing.

In analyzing the changes that have taken place and the processes that cause it I will draw upon the framework purposed by Raven (2008; 19) who describes modernization as a process of change from an agrarian society to an industrialized society whereby globalization is nothing but a much faster paced change on a global scale.

In our post-modern world, we experience something called '*time-space compression*' (Harvey, 1989). Through faster paced social and economic processes we experience the world around us as much smaller. Distance and time are no longer restrictions in organizing human activity. It's for example quit easy to remain in contact with someone who lives in Australia, even visiting that person has become much easier and quicker. Anthony Giddens (1990) also focuses on the reorganization of space and time in the social and cultural realm of people. Giddens (1990) conceptualizes his point by coining the term '*time-space distanciation*' whereby he distinguishes between space and place. According to Giddens (1990) place is the local and physical setting of a social activity. In pre-modern society place and space were always located together since geographical dimensions of social life were dominated by the physical being of local activities (Giddens, 1990). Ernest Gellner (1983; 29) describes this situation as:

*'The one-to-one, on-the-job method is practised when a family, kin unit, village, tribal segment or similar fairly small unit takes the individual infants born into it, and by allowing and obliging them to share in the communal life, plus a few more specific methods such as training, exercises, precept, rites de passage and so forth, eventually*



*turns these infants into adults reasonably similar to those of the preceding generation; and in this manner the society and its culture perpetuate themselves’.*

Because of modernization social interactions are no longer constrained by space, or by physically being there. According to Giddens (1990) in post-modern society space and place have floated apart and social contacts are relationships between ourselves and the ‘distant’ other. The local is thus more and more formed by social influence of these ‘distant’ others.

The process described above is exactly what is happening to Kalinga society. Through increase in mobility many Kalinga are travelling and coming into contact with other worldviews. As is the case for the members of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon tribe who through their tattoos and modern communication techniques find themselves and their surroundings influenced by those who are not there.

With this thesis I do not only aim to address the revival and demise of the Kalinga *batek*, but also to identify what specific processes cause the simultaneous demise and revival of this age old practice. I look at how the traditional tattoos of the Kalinga are becoming extinct in the Kalinga province but are revived, reused and reinvented in California. By analyzing the processes that cause the demise and revival of traditional Kalinga tattooing I will shed more light on the intricate workings of this thing we call globalization. This thesis is therefore not only a thesis about tattoos and tattooing. It’s just as much a thesis about globalization and an inquiry into its intricate, complex workings of interlocking economic, historical, political and social forces that shape and change the world we live in.

### **1.8 Chapter Outline**

In the next chapter I will focus on the meaning of Kalinga *batek* and what functions these tattoos fulfill in Kalinga society. In doing so I’ll document the changes that have taken place in rural Kalinga society. I’ll discuss the Kalinga concept of beauty and the shift in perception of what is deemed beautiful. Additionally I’ll discuss what happens to Kalinga tattoos when people migrate from a rural setting to a city.

The subsequent chapter deals with the history of the region. I’ll start with a historical overview starting in Spanish colonial times and move on via the American period to how things have changed in Kalinga society today. I’ll end the chapter with what I call *The*



## *The Globalization of Kalinga Tattoos*

*Mobility Hypothesis*, where I identify the main processes that cause cultural change in Kalinga. I propose the influence of mobility as the key factor causing these changes, especially with respect to traditional tattooing practices.

Next I'll discuss tattoos in contemporary western culture and address the processes that cause the revival of Filipino tattoo culture in the United States. By doing so this thesis will show that the tattoos of the members of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon tribe are first and foremost a strategy of resistance against the stereotyping and stigmatization of their body. Furthermore I'll show that by tattooing themselves the members of the tribe regain control over their bodies and by doing so create their own place and identity within the patches of identities that are ascribed to them. This thesis ends with a conclusion recapturing the demise and revival of Kalinga tattooing and places the findings back into the global landscape.



## **-2- Kalinga Batek**

### **2.1 Understanding Kalinga Batek**

To understand the meaning of the Kalinga *batek*<sup>5</sup> we must take into account the importance of the rituals associated with the practice of tattooing. However, the understanding of these rituals and their symbols cannot begin before we recognize that a ritual is an attempt to create or maintain a particular set of assumptions in which rites of passage are evident (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 111). These rites embody the basis for social relations in the community. They are visible expressions which enable people in the community to identify and know their society. At the same time people in the community achieve total personhood through these rites of passage (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 111).

Victor Turner (1967) developed the idea of *communitas* which involves social integration into society with the power of symbols. The idea focuses on how public rituals with symbolic meanings reinforce a sense of solidarity within a particular society. On the nature of symbols, Turner writes:

*'I found I could not analyze ritual symbols without studying them in a time series in relations to other events, for symbols are essentially involved in social processes. From this standpoint the ritual symbol becomes a factor in social action, a positive force in an activity field. The symbol becomes associated with human interests, purposes, ends and means, whether these are explicitly formulated or to have been inferred from the observed behaviour. The structure and properties of a symbol become those of a dynamic entity, at least within its appropriate context of action'.*  
(Turner, 1967; 20).

Salvador-Amores (2002; 128) concludes that the Kalinga *batek* give an individual a sense of identification with a culturally defined collective and thus enables a sense of community, or *communitas* in the words of Turner (1967). She states that Kalinga tattoos are deeply ingrained symbols, used as visual markers in the advancement of a Kalinga's personhood (Salvador-Amores (2002; 112). When a Kalinga passes from one stage to another, for

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<sup>5</sup> For pictures of Kalinga tattoos see appendix 3.





example from childhood to adulthood, a ritual is performed to mark this advancement. The tattoo is an important symbol in this ritual and visually marks the transformation of the Kalinga self into a new stage of being.

The Kalinga *batek* thus functions as a visual marker as to what stage or position an individual has within Kalinga society together with a sense of belonging to that specific community. I will now elaborate more on the specific meaning the Kalinga *batek* has in different rites of passage.

## **2.2 Tattooing in Rites of Passage**

In identifying the role played by the Kalinga *batek* Salvador-Amores (2002) conducted research in the village of Lubo. She adopts the model introduced by van Gennep (1962; 10) who distinguishes three stages in rites of passage; rites of separation, rites of transition and rites of incorporation. Van Gennep (1962; 3) analyzed the changes in the total person that concern the passage from one stage in a person's life to another whereby the nature and destiny of the body changes accordingly. These could be for example, birth, puberty, marriage parenthood and advancement to a higher class (van Gennep, 1962; 3). Rites of separation have to do with the ritual removal of an individual from society as in the case of death; a funeral ceremony is conducted. Rites of transitions concern the separation of the individual prior to the incorporation back into society as in the case of initiation. The rites of incorporation involve the reunion of the individual with society or his or her new status.

Although the model has some flaws especially concerning the rigidity of the boundaries between the stages, Salvador-Amores (2002) finds it useful in the context of the Kalinga *batek*. I will follow the analysis of Salvador-Amores (2002) and add my own findings to hers.

## **2.3 Batek in Rites of Separation**

One of the first ceremonies to be performed starts with childbirth and pregnancy. The main tattoo found in context of these rites of separation, the literal separation of the child from the womb, is the *lin-lingao* (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 113). These tattoos are small x-marks found on the forehead, both sides of the cheeks and nose of the pregnant woman. The tattoos provide protection from evil spirits that dwell in the village. The Kalinga believe that these are the spirits of enemies killed by warriors. These spirits are thought to revenge their deaths by taking away the children. The *lin-lingao* work to confuse the spirits as the x-marks on the



face makes that the spirits are unable to recognize the person they want to exact revenge upon (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 113). During my research in Tulgao I met only a few women with these specific marks on their face. They however, all claimed these marks were made for beautification. All other persons I asked about the x-marks also claimed the same meaning. Based on these findings I conclude that although the x-marks exist in both communities they have different meanings.

When a child survives the first two or three years of his life, it undergoes the *gammid*. This is a ceremony whereby the grandparents officially recognize their grandchild. The child is brought to the house of the grandparents where the grandfather holds a feast and the child receives a gift. This gift is commonly a necklace made of beads and is treasured throughout the child's life (Dozier, 1966; 93). This rite of passage can be seen as a rite of incorporation; the child is now officially seen as member of the family and community.

## **2.4 Batek in Rites of Transition**

### ***Batek among Males***

For males their childhood lasts until they are about 15 to 18 years old. At this age a young man will have his *igam*. This ceremony marks the beginning of adolescence (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 114) and is meant to establish his adult status whereby the now adult male is able to participate in adult activities such as the headhunt. The *igam* is actually comprised of several preparatory rites. The first of which is when the boy is sent out by himself to hunt or fish called the *lames nu wangwang* (he is separated from the community). The young man hunts or fishes until he is successful, he then returns to the village and jumps over the ladder at the village entrance called the *sipotan*. This *sipotan* is an important passage point as it separates the village from the outside world. The physical jumping over the ladder is an expression whereby the individual reenters the community and does not leave his soul 'outside' in the enemy world (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 115).

In the Tulgao dialect the *igam* is called *tankil*. Taya-an (84) is an old man who was 20 years old when he fought the Japanese. He and his companions were called the bolo-men because they fought the Japanese carrying only their bolo's<sup>6</sup>. Taya-an tells me about how certain rituals have changed. He tells me how his family butchered a dog for his *tankil* and that they

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<sup>6</sup> A bolo is a machete.



drank *basi* (sugarcane wine). The *tankil* used to be an important ritual making a boy into a man and marks the beginning of a possible successful career as a warrior. Taya-an explains that nowadays the *tankil* ceremony is hardly practiced anymore. It depends on the family whether the ceremony is practiced but mostly the baptism of the child has replaced the *tankil*.

Upon entry in the village the young man is stripped of all his clothes, called *karaka*. This ceremony is believed to bestow good health and luck (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 115). The young man has now made his first step into becoming an adult and is allowed to participate in the *baruknit* (where inter village conflicts are settled) and can join a headhunt, called *kayaw*. The period of *igam* (wherein the young man is in transition to becoming a full adult) is finished after the young man has participated in his first successful headhunt.

Edward P. Dozier explains how such a first headhunt could take place:

*'An ambitious young man accompanies experienced warriors on his first headhunting expedition. In his first encounter with the enemy he guarded against panic, watched the behaviour of seasoned headhunters and learned to be calm and collected. He also carefully observed the proper wielding of the spear, head axe and shield. If his party took a head in his first headhunting venture, even if himself he did not take part in the kill, he was entitled to his tattoo'. (Dozier, 1966; 204).*

The young man has now participated in his first *kayaw* and has successfully become a full adult. Upon return to the village the headhunting party jumps over the ladder at the entrance of the village and the warriors are greeted by the cries and chants of the villagers. Subsequently the *canao* (in Tulgao dialect the *canao* is called *tumo*; a big victory feast with singing and dancing) is held for the warriors and the heads that they have taken. The young man who participated in his first headhunt will now receive his first tattoo (Dozier, 1966; 200). Usually the first tattoos that the young man receives are three parallel lines on the lower arms, starting at the wrists. This tattoo is called the *gulot*, which literally means the 'cutter of the head' (Billiet and Lambrecht, 1974; 31) and will mark his new identity as an adult and his status as a successful warrior (Salvador-Amores; 116).



Dozier (1966; 202) notes that the main reasons for participating in a headhunting operation are: 1) to retaliate an attack by enemy headhunters, 2) to take a life to please the spirits after a relative died in an accident or of natural death (the Kalinga believe that if one dies a head must be taken to sooth the spirits (Dozier; 1966; 164)) and 3) to gain prestige and renown. Dozier (1966; 202) finds this last reason to be the most important one as he found this to be the reason most often cited by his informants together with the fact that a successful headhunter is held with respect and high esteem by the community.

If the young man is now brave and lucky enough he will participate in further headhunting raids and perhaps become the one who makes the kill and takes the head. He will become more and more experienced as a warrior, add to his victims (Dozier, 1966; 204), gain prestige and respect and be awarded with an elaborate chest tattoo called the *biking*. This tattoo is perfectly symmetrical and starts with horizontal patterns along the stomach. On the chest several lines, consisting of three smaller parallel lines, flow from the beginning of the chest to the shoulder. The young man has now become a feared and respected warrior or *maingor*. Salvador-Amores (2002; 116) notes that:

*'The batek session of the maingor is the solemn milestone in the maturity for males. It marks the total departure from childhood and adolescence'.*

Lakay Ayat (89) is one of the few men left with a traditional *biking*. He is originally from the village of Sumadel and now resides in Tinglayan Poblacion with his family. Lakay Ayat is an old man and a little deaf. He walks slightly hunched because his back has grown that way due to his work on the fields. Every morning Lakay Ayat walks to his fields and works on them all day, strong as the old man still is. His chest is adorned with a great *biking* made by a tattoo artist from Sumadel. He is one of the last traditionally tattooed warriors left. We sit in the house of his children and fresh ground Kalinga coffee is brought for me to drink. I'm together with anthropologist Anayn Salvador-Amores and Lakay Ayat is visibly happy a woman is joining our conversation. He shows his tattoos as the old man proudly smiles at us.

During the Second World War Lakay Ayat fought the Japanese and he killed five. He tells me he took two heads and speared another three and therefore he was entitled to his tattoo. Lakay Ayat is a proud man and people in the village treat him with respect, both because of his age



and his warrior status. According to Lakay Ayat the younger generation doesn't get tattoos because they are afraid of being labeled as a *tulisan*<sup>7</sup>. When he was younger, he travelled a lot but would conceal his tattoos. One day some Ilokanos saw his tattoos and asked him why he got them. After he told them the reason they jokingly labeled him a *tulisan* although they respected him because he fought the Japanese.

Within Kalinga society male tattoos are a powerful image since they are very much connected to being a warrior. As is observed by Dozier (1966) and Salvador-Amores (2002) being a successful warrior used to be the ultimate career path for any Kalinga youth. However, times change and nowadays being a warrior is frowned upon. During my fieldwork I noticed a lot of reluctance to speak about the reasons for one's tattoo(s). One of the things I attribute this too is the feeling of shame about what someone has done to deserve the tattoo. During several interviews men first stated they got the tattoos to attract women or to be cool. Later on these men would slowly begin telling me what actually happened and speak about their feelings regarding the tattoo(s).

Gabriel Pagton (61) for example, got his tattoo in 1982. His tattoo is a contemporary design made by Mario Batang-ay (57), the local tattoo artist. Mario learned how to tattoo in prison. In 1971 he held up a truck and went to prison for his crimes. He has 5 tattoos himself, a picture of a person on his thighs, a ginebra (a local drink) logo, a medicine logo and a picture of a snake and eagle. Mario doesn't use the traditional tattoo instrument but rather ties together several needles in a row at a slight angle. This bundle is fixed by thread and a piece of wood. Mario tells me he regrets his tattoos and would not let me photograph them. He's a kind man who works hard on the family fields and his English is very good for someone who never finished elementary school.

Gabriel is hesitant to speak about his tattoo and tells me he doesn't like them and how he covers his tattoos whenever he travels outside the village. According to him:

*'My tattoo makes it difficult to find a job because people will know that I'm a warrior and have been involved in killing'.*

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<sup>7</sup> *Tulisan* is an Ilokano (Ilokano is a language spoken mostly in the northern part of Northern Luzon) word which translates as a wanted person or in other words, a criminal.



He continues:

*'Because of Christianity being a warrior means killing and killing is no longer something to be proud of'.*

In 2008 three brothers<sup>8</sup> from Tulgao left the village late at night and walked to the village of Sumadel to avenge their nephew who was shot by a man from Sumadel. In the early morning they ambushed a citizen of Sumadel and fired their guns. In the olden days a *kayaw* like this would be done with spears, axes and bolo's. However times have changed and nowadays firearms are the weapon of choice. This means that there is less face-to-face combat and killing a person has become much 'easier'. The three men however, missed their target and hurried back to their village. The people from Tulgao gathered around to welcome them back. Since they did not kill anyone they didn't have a *tumo* but they did butcher several chickens for their safe return. A few months later the peace pact between the two villages was restored. The brothers are considered warriors, even if they did not kill anyone. Nonetheless, they didn't get tattoos because the prestige of such a tattoo has disappeared. As one brother told me:

*'Before a warrior was respected because of killing. Now with Christianity killing is a bad thing'.*

All in all the *kayaw* does still take place every now and again. Though this happens very seldom compared to before. Nowadays the practice of revenge and killing is frowned upon. A career as a warrior is no longer something to be proud of and doesn't give one the prestige and status it used to. Whereas in the olden days warriors would proudly show of their tattoos and would boast about their heroic adventures at feasts and celebrations, nowadays men conceal their tattoos and many of them stated they would remove the tattoos if they could. Together with the fact that many rituals in rites of passage are no longer performed or other rituals have emerged, it's clear that the male tattoo no longer carries the weight it once had. In today's society the male *batek* has almost completely lost its function in a community rapidly changing.

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<sup>8</sup> I've decided not to mention the names of the men involved, they were open enough to tell me their story but were hesitant to appear in this thesis with their real names.





### ***Batek among Females***

Tattooing is not only found among males in Kalinga society. Females also have elaborate tattoos found mainly around the neck, shoulder blades and on the upper and lower arms. Young women receive these tattoos when they are around 13 to 15 years of age. This coincides roughly with the period of their first menstruation called *dumara* (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 117). Just before, or just after a young woman has her first *dumara* she is tattooed with designs of the centipede on her arms, neck and shoulder blades. According to Salvador-Amores (2002; 117) the tattooing helps the smooth flow of blood from the vagina and the tattoos mark that the woman is biologically ready to have children, a prerequisite for marriage.

After females are tattooed and have menstruated for the first time they are able to participate in a ceremony called the *adumba*. The *adumba* is a dance ceremony conducted when the men return from a headhunt. The men encircle the women during the dance but without touching each other. This dance is an opportunity for a woman to find a potential mate for marriage and thus the *adumba* indicates that a young woman is of marrying age and capable of bearing a child (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 117). The tattoos on both males and females make them more attractive and after the dance the role of the young woman has changed.

Most of the older women I interviewed fondly recall the days were they would dance at the *adumba*. Palau (64) is the daughter of the famous warrior Wanawan was a famous warrior from Tulgao and his image is very much connected to the image of the Kalinga headhunter. Pictures of his tattooed face and torso are found on touristic attributes such as bags and t-shirts. He became famous as a warrior when he was tattooed on his face after a battle between Tulgao and Lubo before WW II. It was, en still is, not very common to tattoo the face. Wanawan's tattoos made him famous all over the region, adding to his legend as a fearsome warrior. The villagers would call him *iru-u-up* (meaning the face of an owl) because his facial tattoos reminded them of an owl. The cry of the owl is seen as a good omen before heading into battle.

Palau tells me how the tattoos for females were mainly to add beauty and that they would show-off their tattoos during feasts where they would dance with colorful bead jewelry and *tapis* (native dress). Her house is made of wood and I'm offered food. In Kalinga society it's very important to offer food or something to a guest. While in Tulgao someone explained the



importance of the food and drink. According to him a Kalinga is responsible for their guest from the time the guest has consumed something until it passes through the guest's system. So if something would happen to the guest, for example after dinner, the host family is responsible and with that the whole clan. It's therefore a very powerful gesture, meaning the host will be responsible even if the guest were attacked. In that case the host has to avenge the attack to save face.

Palau and her family offer me some rice and snails found in the rice fields with some vegetables. While she is telling a story about how she would dance at feasts, her face lights up and she demonstrates how they would dance and adds:

*'Tattooed women were a sight to be seen and many young men approached me for marriage'.*

After the girl has participated in her first *adumba*, she is now considered a woman with the responsibilities and tasks that go along with this new role in society. The *adumba* is therefore an important rite of passage for a young woman as she changes into an adult. The tattoos and the participation in the *adumba* signify the acceptance, the sense of belonging to the community and the corresponding identity associated with adulthood and full participation in the social life of the community (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 118).

In contemporary Kalinga society the *adumba* is not practiced any more. First of all there are less headhunting raids and subsequent feasts. Secondly, youngsters nowadays try to look good through fashionable clothes and mobile phones. They meet each other in different ways, have boyfriends' and girlfriends' and study outside the village where they meet and hang-out with people from different backgrounds. The *adumba* therefore has also lost its function in Kalinga society.

## **2.5 The Kalinga Concept of Beauty**

Besides the function as a permanent marker of one's place in society the Kalinga *batek* also has a strong aesthetic component. Young women with elaborate tattooing are considered beautiful, the Kalinga concept of beauty is called *ambaru*. This concept of beauty is not only restricted to tattoos, similar designs are also found on pottery, shield design and other forms of material culture (Salvador-Amores; 125). The tattooed women therefore become *ambaru*



when they receive their tattoos. For men the tattoos make them handsome and strong, called *mangkusdor* (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 125). In older times people without tattoos (called *dinuras*<sup>9</sup>) were regarded as weak beings and considered a bad omen for the community (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 125). Women with tattoos were considered more beautiful while tattooed men incited fear and respect due to their fierce nature as a warrior. Tattooed men and women therefore were preferable marriage candidates within Kalinga society.

Agyao is a slender man with a goatee and the *ullalim*<sup>10</sup> singer of Tulgao. He is illiterate but is very respected in the community. He's regarded as a wise man and his oratory skills are legendary. We sit outside his house and have freshly brewed Kalinga coffee while we smoke tobacco. Agyao rolls the dried tobacco leaves in newspaper and makes thin cigarettes while we speak. He tells me the story of how the village of Tulgao came to be. Tulgao in the village dialect is called Torkao and the people of the iTorkao tribe are seen as the royal blood of the Kalinga's.

*'A long long time ago there was a man who went out hunting with his dog. His name was To'or. While he was hunting it started raining and raining. For several days the rain continued and soon the valley in which To'or was hunting flooded. To'or and his dog had to climb a tree to escape from the water. After another couple of days the rain stopped. In the distance, high up in the mountains To'or saw a fire and thought to himself that there must be someone else who has escaped the flood since his village had completely been destroyed. After some days the water began to subside and soon To'or and his dog could climb out of the tree. They started walking towards the fire that was still burning in the distance. After a while they reached the middle of the valley where they saw a spring. Kneeling by the spring was a beautiful woman. She stood up and looked at To'or and his dog. 'I'm Ka'au' she said. 'This is a good spring with fresh water. It's a good place for people to live and grow crops'. Soon after To'or and Ka'au were married and had many children. Their children had many children and so the village of Torkao came to be.'*

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<sup>9</sup> In Tulgao dialect (iTorkao) one would be called *chiruras*. In iTorkao the *d* changes to an *ch* and the *n* becomes an *r*. The neighboring village of Dananao is therefore called Chararao in iTorkao.

<sup>10</sup> The *ullalim* are ballads chanted by talented bards, either men or women, far into the night at Kalinga festal or recreational gatherings and peace pact assemblies. The *ullalim* are not only ballads but also distinctive epics or romances. They deal with Kalinga notions of bravery, beauty and romance (Billiet and Lambrecht, 1970, p. 2).



Agyao smiles after he has finished the story and takes a drag from his cigarette.

*'You see now' he says with a grin, 'Noah wasn't the only one who survived that flood'.*

In contemporary Kalinga society the concept of what is beautiful has changed. During the interview with Agyao I asked him what the hero *Banna* and the heroine *Onnawa* looked like in the story<sup>11</sup>. Agyao answered:

*'Bana was a very handsome man, tall, very strong, a great leader and a great singer with many tattoos. His wife was equally beautiful with light skin, long dark hair reaching her knees and beautiful tattoos'.*

The ullalim called *Marriage between Enemies*, translated by Billiet and Lambrecht in 1974 starts as follows:

*'Says the ullalim it is said:  
Long ago there was a gentleman  
in the village of Dulawon  
a terrible crocodile.  
His fear-inspiring tattoo  
all over his chest displayed  
reached his shoulder blades'*

(translated by Billiet and Lambrecht (1974, p. 67))

From both accounts we can clearly see the connection between beauty in both men and women and tattoos. Due to various processes this concept has changed. In former times men

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<sup>11</sup> There are many *ullalim* that concern Banna who is from the famous village of Dulawon. He plays an important role in all the dominant episodes of the story in which his valor, daring, loyalty and faithfulness are needed. At the same time the heroine, Onnawa, is perseveringly loyal to her lover Banna. Even though her father, the stubborn chief of the village of Lukiban and the hereditary enemy of the Dulawon clan, rejected her handsome husband while she was already pregnant (Billiet and Lambrecht, 1974, p. 3).



would wear g-strings made of bark and women would only wear a skirt made of bark. Habun Bulawit<sup>12</sup> tells me:

*'I got my tattoos before I got married. When we were young we didn't wear clothes, our tattoos were a sort of clothes. Later my father brought a cotton blanket from Abra which we cut into pieces and wore as a skirt. Only when I got married I started to wear western style clothing'.*

Habun tells me a story about how her tattoos made her more beautiful especially when dancing in combination with jewelry made from beads. She encouraged her daughter to get tattoos but her daughter refused because she believes tattoos destroy the skin and doesn't find them beautiful at all.

During my interviews about beauty and tattoos with women in Tulgao, I found that there is a large difference between the older generation who have tattoos and the younger that don't. Mostly the younger women feel that tattoos are not needed for beautification. The older generation however still feels strongly about tattoos and being tattooed: Tarokai Balingyaw (61) received her tattoos when she was 13 years old. She says that she's proud of her tattoos and states:

*'it keeps my skin looking young; because of my tattoos my skin doesn't wrinkle'.*

Tarokai has both her arms tattooed with traditional designs and her Christian name Rosa on her left arm. She added this for the 1982 election because she can neither read nor write and tattooing her name on her arm made registering to vote easier. She is proud of her tattoos and recalls that many men came to court her because of her beauty.

A similar finding comes from an interview with the sisters Karay (70) and Amayo (72)<sup>13</sup>. The sisters' parents were both tattooed but only Karay, the youngest, is tattooed on both her

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<sup>12</sup> Habun doesn't know her age. She remembers the Japanese coming to Tulgao and the villagers fleeing into the mountains. I estimate her age at around 75 years.

<sup>13</sup> Both sisters don't know their exact age so I have estimated their respective ages.



arms. She also has several dots tattooed on her throat as medicine for goiter<sup>14</sup>. When growing up Amayo was called *chiruras* which is a derogatory term for women who are not tattooed and people made jokes about her. People would comment how she was not brave enough to endure the pain of getting a tattoo and would prefer to marry her younger sister. It took Amayo long to get married, her husband however did have tattoos. When speaking to them about the tattoos of Karay they both think they are very beautiful and when Karay travelled in the area to other villages people would comment positively on her tattoos. They state that the younger generation is too educated to get tattoos and think it was beautiful in the past but not anymore.

While conducting interviews I noticed that especially the older generation still feels proud about being tattooed. They fondly recall the times when men came to court them and when they would dance at village feasts. When I asked Kanu (75) after the interview if I could take a picture of her and her tattoos, she told me to wait. She returned a few minutes later wearing a beautiful *tapis* (Kalinga dress) and jewelry made of beads. She explained that this would be the way she would dance in the old days. She also told me that when she was younger women would compete for tattoos because they all wanted to be the most beautiful girl in the village. According to Kanu tattooing people '*is not beauty anymore*'. The younger generation doesn't consider tattooing or tattoos to be important for beautification. As Louisa Tawatao (42) states:

*'Tattoos nowadays are not needed for beauty. Finishing your degree is more important and also adds to your beauty'*.

Analyne Aggalao (20) has no tattoos. She was born in Tulgao and went to high school in Baguio (the largest city in the Cordillera region) and attended college in Bontoc. After one year of college she dropped out to get married. To her the tattoos of the older generation are quite normal. However she states that:

*'In the past tattoos were a trend but my generation has other trends. Young people go to school outside the village and through education they are more exposed to other trends. Nowadays being natural is the most beautiful thing'*.

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<sup>14</sup> Tattoos were also frequently used for their medicinal power. A number of women in Tulgao have dots on their throat to cure goiter. Another medicinal tattoo is a circular one which is tattooed to rid the body of ringworm.





Clearly a change has taken place in the overall concept of what is considered beautiful in Kalinga. Several processes play a part in this change. In the next chapter I will elaborate on what processes have caused and are still causing this change.

## **2.6 Batek in Rites of Incorporation**

### ***Marriage***

Marriage in Kalinga society is a very clear marker of permanent incorporation into a family and society. After the now grown up woman and the man have courted each other during the *adumba* dance the arrangements for marriage start. A process of dowry exchange takes place between the two families and a wedding date is set. Then the *kopya* ceremony is performed where a blessing is carried out over the newly wed couple. The in-laws host a large feast for the whole community celebrating the marriage. Besides a union between two people, a wedding in Kalinga is a union of two collective groups of families now tied through blood. The tattoos of the women in context of marriage are said to encourage fertility (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 118).

### ***Advancement to a Higher Class***

Male tattoos are an important visual marker for the incorporation into the warrior (*maingor*) class. In pre-Spanish times a dominant warrior class existed called the *kamaranan*. A warrior could advance to this 'elite' warrior class by participating in a number of successful headhunts (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 119). Warriors who have killed ten or more are permitted to elaborate insignias on the side of their stomach, back, thighs, legs or even cheeks to show their immense bravery and fierceness. These include symbols of head axes, stars and lizard eating centipedes. Barton (1949; 230) calls these tattoos 'badges of honor' similar to modern day military soldier badges and they were proudly worn by the warrior class.

The greatest of these tattoos was the *dakag* tattoo which is found on the back of a warrior. This tattoo is only tattooed on a warrior who is recognized for exceptional and unsurpassed bravery (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 121). This very rare tattoo was the highest achievable 'badge of honor' and the culmination of Kalinga manhood. A man wearing this tattoo was sure to be a member of the elite warrior class *kamaranan*.

It used to be so that a man who had earned tattoos had social privileges, religious roles and political influence in his community (Salvador-Amores, 2002; 121). As the warrior grows



older and gains even more respect he can become a respected elder or a *pangat*. The *pangat* is a consultant in peace pacts between communities and tribal groups. Even today the few surviving tattooed men continue to carry significant roles and influence in their communities.

I meet Lauren Bayonan in the municipal building of Tabuk, of course I'm offered coffee and something to eat. Laurens is a big man, dressed impeccably behind a large desk overseeing his office. He is friendly and very proud of his cultural heritage. According to him a shift has taken place in the way one becomes a *pangat* in today's society:

*'The most important thing for a pangat is to enjoy the respect of his community. Before one could gain a lot of respect by having a tattoo which was a visible marker. People would respect you and they would listen because of your reputation.'*

Laurens continues:

*'Nowadays this respect standard has changed. The tattoo is of less importance than before. Nowadays its more about what kind of education you have had, what kind of job and social standing'.*

It's late in the evening when I visit Robert Salabao at his house in Tabuk city. Robert Salabao is the ex-mayor of Tinglayan and originally from Tulgao. He has done well for himself. His house is large, on a big piece of land with hefty mango trees in the front garden. Robert himself is a stern man to look at. He's broad in the shoulders, a little taller than the average Filipino male and a little intimidating. He invites me in and I'm served coffee by one of his daughters. After a while Robert relaxes and he begins to tell me stories of his youth:

*'I remember the heavily tattooed men from my youth, they would walk around as if to say you should be a warrior too. In my youth if a man didn't have tattoos he wasn't considered important and was not really seen as a man'.*

Being a *pangat* and/or a peace pact holder are is considered very important and heavy tasks. Usually a peace pact holder is considered a *pangat*. Robert Salabao explains to me what it means to be a peace pact holder and what the requirements are:



*'Whereas in the olden days one was only considered a real man if you had tattoos, today it has changed. It is a large responsibility to be a peace pact holder and most of the time people choose a peace pact holder or the peace pact is inherited. Nowadays it's not necessary to have tattoos although they will add to your recognition as a brave man which in turn will earn respect from you fellow tribesmen. It's however more important that a peace pact holder is a responsible man, financially capable of entertaining and caring for visitors, having a large clan, being a wise man and a good citizen'.*

## **2.7 Migration and the Change in Tattooing**

Tabuk is a city in the northern part of the Kalinga province. A lot of people from Tulgao have migrated to the city of Tabuk since the eighties. Tabuk is considered as the rice granary of the Cordillera region since the city's main economic focus is on agriculture and the production of rice. According to the 2000 census Tabuk had a population of 78.633<sup>15</sup>. Most of the migrants from Tulgao live in the baranggay<sup>16</sup> Nambaran. Between 1995 and 2000 Nambaran's population grew from 2084 to 2723<sup>17</sup>, with most of the inhabitants belonging to the Tulgao tribe.

The difference between the village of Tulgao and Nambaran is quite large. Tulgao is set high in the mountains of the Cordillera range, with one jeepney travelling in the morning down to Tinglayan (which is on the main road) and one in the evening going back up to the village. To reach Tulgao outside of these times one has to walk four hours uphill or find one of the young men in Tinglayan and ask them to take you to Tulgao on their motorbike.

Tabuk in comparison is a dusty, humid city set on the plains of the Cagayan valley and lacks the clean, crisp mountain air so enjoyable in Tulgao. Nonetheless, public transport is abundant, internet cafes and restaurants are easy to find and Tabuk plays host to a variety of secondary schools and colleges. Also seated in Tabuk is the Apostolic Vicariate of Tabuk where the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM) oversees all mission stations and parochial clergy in the Kalinga province.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.tabuk.gov.ph/index.php/where%20to%20stay/34-City%20Info/57-facts-and-figures>

<sup>16</sup> A baranggay is administrative area within a larger area, something similar to a neighborhood in the Netherlands but with an official government representative in the form of the baranggay captain.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.tabuk.gov.ph/index.php/where%20to%20stay/34-City%20Info/57-facts-and-figures>



Vincente Tayyab (1949) is seen as the first person who migrated from his native village Tulgao to the city of Tabuk. He migrated to Nambaran in March 1975 because in Tulgao he was dependent on the fields of his forefathers to supply his family with the necessary resources. Vincente explains that the population in Tulgao kept growing and the income from his fields were limited and therefore food was scarce. He decided to move to Tabuk in search of greener pasture.

*'Here in Nambaran I'm close to the market whereas in Tulgao the market was in Tinglayan. There is a good hospital here, good schools for my children and an abundance of food. I can go to the convenience store and buy whatever I want.'*

Most citizens of Tulgao that moved to Tabuk did so around the mid eighties. During those days an earthquake hit Tulgao and the population of the village was at its peak. All the migrants from Tulgao I spoke to in Tabuk stated they moved to the city in search of greener pasture and an easier life. Luis Siyao (1949) moved to tabuk in 1986. He states:

*'In Tabuk there is more work, enough food, closeness to the hospital and educational institutes.'*

Due to the large migration to the city, something Father Noel van der Plaetsen of the CICM calls *'the emptying of the mountains'*, the situation in Tulgao has become better. There is enough food and the village is much less crowded. However, the citizens from Tulgao were not the only ones that migrated to the city. Other people from nearby villages and tribes have migrated to Tabuk as well. This causes trouble according to Laurens Bayonan:

*'The large migration to Tabuk causes more intertribal conflict. Before different tribes lived in villages separated from each other, in Tabuk however this is not the case. Members of different tribes live together in this city.'*

Although most trouble is just common crime, sometimes this causes tribal conflict. Especially when the victim and the perpetrator are from different tribes. Tribal conflict is very disturbing for the tribes involved. Since no one is safe because retaliation is directed not at the individual or family level but at the tribe level, every member of the tribe is in danger of being hurt. This



often means trade is hampered and that college students have to break of their studies to return home as Robert Salabao illustrates:

*'I went to Lubuagan to pursue higher education after finishing school in Tulgao. Unfortunately the peace pact between Tulgao and Lubuagan was cut off and I had to transfer to Bontoc to finish my education. My college life was on and off due to tribal conflict and often times I had to return home for my safety. I would have graduated in 1971 but due to tribal wars I finally graduated in 1983'.*

It's clear that tribal warfare very much disturbs the daily life of the people involved. Dr. Alex Aggalao (1945) is specialized in the *bodong* system. The *bodong* is the Kalinga peace pact system which exists between two tribes and governs the terms of peace. Nowadays it's often accomplished through amicable settlements. Dr. Aggalao is a citizen of Tulgao and I stayed with his family in their cozy house during my time in the village. His wife, Corazon Aggalao is the head teacher of Tulgao elementary school. Alex and Corazon have five sons, two of them still reside in Tulgao while the others live in Tabuk and Manila. Alex travels between Tulgao and Tabuk where he works with the city council on peace and peace pact negotiations. He's considered a *pangat* and holds two peace pacts with other tribes. During one of our many chats Alex estimates that most of the tribal conflict starts in the city.

*'Because different tribes live so close to each other and they for example get into a fight after a party, it is not a fight between two men. It straight away becomes a feud between two tribes. This is where most of the tribal conflict starts.'*

Nonetheless, much is done to enforce peace among the different tribes since tribal conflict benefits no one. Nowadays there is a *bodong* council on the provincial level, neutral tribes mediate when problems occur, the religious sector is very active and even on the baranggay level there are peace and order councils. In Tabuk for example, if something happens the police and several negotiators are deployed to assess the situation and make arrangements so tribal war doesn't occur<sup>18</sup>.

With respect to tattoos the migration to the city also causes changes. As Luis Siyao notes:

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<sup>18</sup> According to Laurens Bayonan, administrator of the municipality of Tabuk



*'The tattoo in Tabuk is now more about fashion. Girls have flowers or a sun tattooed on their bodies'.*

Walking through the barangay of Nambaran in Tabuk, I notice several men and women of my age. One man in particular stands out because he looks like a rocker and has barbwire tattooed all over his right arm. I ask the friends I'm with what the tattoos are all about and Gilbert Aggalao<sup>19</sup> explains that this particular guy thinks he is the Filipino Axl Rose<sup>20</sup>. Gilbert is the youngest son of Alex and Corazon and he has a tattoo on his right hand. It's a circle with the letters GIG inside it, surrounded by several dots. He explains that during his college years he and his friends formed an fraternity and that the initials GIG stand for the phrase *'God Is Good'*.

Vincente Tayyab has also noticed a change in tattoos:

*'Nowadays the youngsters tattoo themselves more to belong to a certain group, like a fraternity or a sorority. Also women nowadays have tattoos but they are roses or other marks for beautification. These tattoos have nothing to do with being a mingor. The older people with tattoos cover themselves when they go out because they are afraid of being labeled as barbarians.'*

Where in Tulgao the male tattoo is still very much connected to being a warrior this has lessened a lot in Tabuk. Although the older generation of migrants from Tulgao still feel strongly about the traditional tattoos and their meanings, the younger generation adopts a different outlook. The younger generation knows the meaning of certain tattoos on older men in the community they however adopt their own system of meaning about the tattoos they inscribe on their bodies. In essence the meaning of the tattoo remains the same, they function as beautification, provide the bearer with a sense of belonging to a group and work as visible markers of identity. The designs used are nonetheless more modern than the traditional designs of the older generation but the connection to being a warrior has disappeared. The Kalinga youth gets tattoos for different reasons than to mark themselves as brave men or as

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<sup>19</sup> Gilbert Aggalao worked as my guide, driver and translator.

<sup>20</sup> Axl Rose is the lead singer of the notorious rock band Guns 'n Roses.



## *The Globalization of Kalinga Tattoos*

members of their tribe. This total departure from the meaning and the function of the Kalinga tattoo is probably the reason why the Kalinga youth isn't at all interested in the designs of their forefathers. They tattoo themselves with barbed wire, roses, a sun or other more contemporary designs. Besides the fact that some of the Kalinga youth has tattoos, a large number of them doesn't have or want tattoos. During a cultural festival I chatted with Sabas (24) about Kalinga culture and my research. Sabas stated that he would never want a tattoo and that he thinks it's a bad thing that some of his peers have tattoos.

*'I would never get a decent job if I had a tattoo. In Manila they would think I was in some kind of gang or something. Besides in Kalinga a tattoo is still very much connected to bad things.'*





### **-3- Mobility And The Change In Kalinga Tattooing**

*'[Intermarriages] are of course the result of considerable mobility in recent years of all mountain people, although the Kalinga appear to be especially enthusiastic about travel. Young Kalinga are eager for education. In Baguio alone there are some three hundred Kalinga students from all areas. Most of these students are attending private colleges and trade school. A similar number are reported to be attending school in Manila. In addition, there are many Kalinga wage workers in Baguio, Manila, Tabuk and in the mines of northern Luzon. Kalinga of different regions are therefore coming into contact with one another as well as with other mountain people and lowlanders. It is clear that the isolated nature of Kalinga life and the character of Kalinga culture will undergo revolutionary change'.*

(Dozier, 1966; 51)

Nowadays one can still find tattooed men and in Kalinga although only the elderly have the characteristic tattoos. According to anthropologist Ikin Salvador (2002; 127) migration, education and religion have created new values which are different from the ones held in times when tattoos were abundant and thus have caused traditional tattooing to disappear. But what processes exactly cause this change is not clear. Vague terms such as education, migration, modernization and religion are used. In this chapter I will present a hypothesis on what caused and is causing this change. I'll start with a historical overview starting in Spanish colonial times. I choose to start from a historical point of view because I agree with what Eric Wolfe (1982; p. xvi) says:

*'Social historians and historical sociologists have shown that the common people were as much agents in the historical process as they were its victims and silent witnesses'.*

#### **3.1 The Spanish Period**

In 1521 Spanish explorer Ferdinand Magellan claimed the islands of Samar and Leyte for the Kingdom of Spain. In February 1565 the colonization of the Philippines began when Miguel de Legazpi planted the Spanish flag on Philippine soil. De Legazpi got word of gold mines



that existed in the Cordillera Mountains and within 6 months after the invasion of Manila he sent his grandson Juan de Salcedo on an expedition to search for Igorot gold (Scott, 1974; 9). The first contact between the Spanish and the natives was soon to follow and would last more than three centuries (Scott, 1974; 4).

The discovery of Igorot mines promising large returns in gold. Because the Spaniards were in desperate need of gold to fund their war against the Protestants and the Dutch, they set out to occupy the gold mines. The much needed religious rationale for the military expeditions were provided by the Dominicans and the Jesuits:

*'Everybody agreed that these Igorots would be better off both materially and spiritually in a great and progressive Christian kingdom than wandering naked through the mountains in undisciplined liberty with neither king nor master to look after their common weal, and that the collection of tribute and exploitation of gold mines would be just compensation and necessary support for a church and state that could and would provide better government and salvation than they could provide for themselves'.*

(Scott, 1974; 5)

All in all it seemed like a win-win situation, the Spaniards would 'save' the pagan Igorots from burning in hell and would bring these 'savages' wealth and prosperity while at the same time they would extract the gold they needed to fund their war. The Igorots however thought otherwise and defended the mines and their way of life viciously as the following account from Lieutenant Colonel Guillermo Galvey describes:

*'Just as I was a rifle shot away, I found myself in a rain of stones, arrows, spears and pointed sticks which the pagans threw at us from behind a high wall, having left nothing but open land without a tree so that we were exposed to their direct aim. I opened fire, advancing little by little. In a minute I had 10 wounded, and each time one of us fell, the Igorots were inspired all the more'.* (Expedicion a Caian en diciembre del ano 1833. Quoted in Scott, 1974; 215)



The mountain fastness of Northern Luzon contained a population which effectively resisted the Spanish colonizing efforts. Among them were the Kalinga. Due to the extreme isolation of the area, the Kalinga remained isolated and untouched by Christianity and Spanish domination for the whole period of Spanish colonization (Dozier, 1966; 28). The early Spanish attempts to bring Christianity to the natives were in the hands of the Dominican missionaries. These missionaries started from the north east side of the Cordillera, working from the Cagayan Valley along the lower Chico River (Keesing 1962; 221). The first missions were established in 1604 at Tabang and Piat along the banks of the Chico river. In 1612 the missionaries ventured further west into the mountains and established a mission in Tuao among the people known in the seventeenth century as the Itaves, Itavi, Itawis or Tawish. It is not clear which historic ethnic groups were designated by these terms but these people are probably the ancestors of the present day Ibanag, Isneg and Kalinga (Dozier 1966; 30). In 1688 a mission outpost was built in Tuga, about sixteen miles south of Tuao. This mission was setup to convert the southern and western 'heathens' in the present day Kalinga province (Dozier; 1966; 30). The Spanish however, never got further into Kalinga country than Tuga and the entire mission program was abandoned in 1718 after the Cagayan Valley revolt (Keesing, 1962: 224).

Military advancements also failed. In 1859 the Kalinga were governed by the 'Comandancia of Saltan' under the newly created Isabela province. The jurisdiction of the Kalinga changed to the 'Comandancia de Itaves' in the Cagayan Province. These political-military jurisdictions served to control the uprisings of the mountain folk and to protect the missionaries (Keesing, 1962; 235). However, the Spaniards failed to subjugate the Kalinga despite the numerous military posts established within Kalinga territory and headhunting, killings and old feuds remained day-to-day life (Dozier 1966; 32). Spanish influence however was greater on the people of northern Kalinga than southern Kalinga and Dozier (1966) finds this to be one of the reasons for the cultural differences found between the two groups. He states that until the construction of trails and roads from the south during the American period, the main entry point to this area was from the north and thus concludes that the southern Kalinga were always more isolated and more 'untouched' by the Spanish (Dozier, 1966; 35).

In 1898, the Spaniards left the Cordillera. The result of the Spanish domination included building horse trails (in those areas where they built up effective military control), introduced coffee, cacao and citrus fruits. On the other hand they stole pigs, chickens and rice; punished



one village by leading their enemies against them from another; burnt houses, cut crops and introduced smallpox. The grimmest result of their period of rule was nonetheless more subtle. The Spaniards created a distinction between lowland and highland Filipinos which contrasted submission, conversion and civilization on the one hand with independence, paganism and savagery on the other (Scott, 1974; 7). This contradiction was to linger on long after they had left. Even more so, the distinction between lowland and highland Filipinos is still felt today.

Laurens Bayonan worked in Manila for some years and he acknowledged that most folks in the lowland areas look down on the people from the Cordillera and have a wrong idea of Kalinga. Although Laurens feels it's getting less and less he tells me a story of his time in Manila:

*'One day I showed up at work wearing a suit and a tie because it was an important day and we had to look presentable. When co-workers found out I was from Kalinga they looked at me and remarked that they thought Kalinga men only wore g-strings<sup>21</sup>.'*

I've personally experienced the same awkward outlook people have towards the Cordillera and Kalinga in particular. When I remarked to my Filipino friends in Manila that I was going back to Kalinga for my research they all warned me to be careful. When I asked them why they referred to the savage, headhunting image that still persists in the lowlands. I personally believe it's this image that is one of the mechanisms that causes a decline in traditional tattooing. Also the portrayal of Kalinga as backward and savage causes some youngsters to feel ashamed of being a Kalinga, as Laurens Bayonan notes:

*'I see some of these youngsters that can't even speak their native dialect or refuse to answer in their native dialect. I see them being ashamed of who they are and it saddens me very much'.*

In one case I heard of, Kalinga students had to deliberately conceal being from Kalinga because during a tribal feud it could become very dangerous. I found that in Baguio (the largest student city in the Cordillera) some boarding houses refuse students from Kalinga due

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<sup>21</sup> In the olden days Kalinga men would wear a loin cloth which is referred to as a g-string today.



to the fact that the owners want to stay out of harm's way in case a tribal feud breaks out. The distinction between high- and lowland Filipinos is therefore still felt today.

Jessie Guyang is a teacher and married to one of the Baranggay captains of Tulgao. She studied outside of Kalinga but returned to her native village to be a teacher and to get married.

*'When I was studying people remarked that I was from the mountains which made me feel inferior. They said the people from the Cordillera are headhunters and pagans. Back then I felt inferior and bad about myself. But now I'm proud of being a Kalinga'.*

Even though the contradiction between high- and lowland still persists, the Kalinga are also proud of their heritage. They often refer to the fact that they were never conquered by the Spanish and are proud of their independence. All in all, slowly but surely the contradiction the Spanish left behind is becoming smaller especially due to the fact that travel and mobility is becoming easier and faster throughout the country. People from different backgrounds are now studying, living and working together on a scale never witnessed before. This however influences the appearance of traditional tattoos profoundly. By tattooing the body with traditional Kalinga designs one clearly marks oneself as a person from Kalinga. The fact that the high-/ lowland distinction is still in place in combination with the powerful connotation the tattoos have in the minds of people not from Kalinga, causes a feeling of inferiority, being ashamed and being ostracized among those who still carry the tattoos. Many of the tattooed people I interviewed stated that they would remove their tattoos if this was possible because they felt ashamed of them. Furthermore, most of the tattooed people will cover their tattoos when they travel outside of the village because of the negative experiences they've had. As Katik Wayaway (63) explains:

*'My daughters don't have tattoos because they will feel ashamed when they go to school. I myself have experienced this. When I go to Tabuk or to Bontoc I always cover myself up because people will look, stare and laugh at me when I don't. They will think I am some kind of criminal.'*

### **3.2 The American Period**

At the end of the nineteenth century the Philippine Islands were becoming much more attractive to the rival powers of Spain because of the increased attention on the Chinese



Empire as a possible market for Western European products (Fry, 2006; xiii). Most countries in Western Europe were beginning to find that their home markets were unable to absorb the full output of their growing industries which started with the Industrial Revolution. Great Britain, the pioneer of the revolution, carried out her industrialization on the basis of Adam Smith's book *The Wealth of Nations* and was very focused on the principles of free trade. When in 1832 the manufacturers and the mercantile classes gained control of the British Parliament, they immediately acted to terminate the monopolistic charter of the English East India Company (Fry, 2006; xiv). This resulted in the first Anglo-Chinese War in 1839. Once the following Treaty of Nanking was settled and Britain gained control of the island of Hong Kong together with the opening of the ports of Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo and Shanghai, it meant the opening of China to world trade (Fry, 2006; xiv). Sir Henry Pottinger (quoted in Fry, 2006; xiv) stated about China that:

*'All the mills of Lancashire could not make stocking stuff sufficient for one of its provinces'.*

This quote emphasizes the excitement that had risen among the manufacturers in Britain as to what a vast market laid before them. The vision of almost limited market opportunity was also held by the Americans and the French and they made arrangements to be sure of a piece of the Chinese pie (Fry, 2006; xiv).

While in the aftermath of the American Civil War, political power had transferred to the industrialists and financiers, interests in China were of prime importance (LaFeber, 1971; 7). The Americans moved to strengthen their maritime position in the Pacific Ocean. The Spaniards became increasingly worried with the position of the Philippines since the European and Americans were showing their determination in breaking the barriers of trade with China and were even prepared to use force in doing so. Because of its proximity to China, the fine ports and the natural resources, the Philippines became a favorable location (Fry, 2006; xvi). Then the Cuban revolution broke out in 1895 and the Americans got caught up in the action. The American people had always seen Cuba as laying in their sphere of influence, they even tried to buy the island of Spain in 1848 (Fry, 2006; xix). When the revolution broke out and Spain was unable to restore peace and order the Americans were eager to intervene. With the backing of the press, President McKinley could not withstand the



popular pressure and the United States declared war on Spain in April 20, 1898 (Fry, 2006; xx).

On May 5th 1898, 4 days after the Americans were victorious in Manila Bay, senator Henry Lodge wrote the U.S. embassy in London:

*'We want a great deal more than a coaling station there. We now control practically one side of the Pacific Ocean, the position of the Philippines would make us the controlling power in the Pacific and the future of the Pacific is the future of the world's trade with the East'. (Lodge, 1898, quoted in Fry, 2006; xx)*

When the Americans made peace with the Spaniards they bought the Philippine islands and after the leaders of the rebel government in the archipelago were captured, the Americans took their first steps to gaining control of the Cordillera (Fry, 2006; xxiii).

### **3.3 The Americans in Kalinga**

In 1899 the first commission was established by President McKinley to guide the governmental affairs in the Philippines. Explorations were made mostly to identify the possibilities for the building of roads and perhaps a railroad into the mountainous area. These thorough exploring parties led to the fact that in the first decade of American Rule many parts of the Cordillera which before had been unknown, had been visited and explored. As a result the knowledge of the mountain people had increased a lot and it was now time to restructure the political organization of the region (Fry, 2006; 32). One of the members of the commission was Dean C. Worcester who more than any other individual determined the political destiny of the mountain people of North Luzon (Dozier, 1966; 37). The main task of the new colonial government was to establish law and order and establish roads and trails so travel and trade was made easier throughout the mountainous area. Worcester started with the construction of a road from the lowlands into Baguio in 1905, opening up the land of the mountain people to government officials. Shortly hereafter vehicle roads were being built and bridges, ferries and telephone lines were appearing in this previously remote area (Dozier, 1966; 37).

The establishment of the Mountain Province followed in 1908 consisting of five sub provinces: Benguet, Bontoc, Apayao, Ifugao and Kalinga. Dean C. Worcester appointed the





post of Lieutenant Governor of Kalinga to Walter Franklin Hale and he became the first governor of the sub province Kalinga. The Americans were more subtler in their colonial subjugation and were allowing the mountain people to practice their tribal lifestyles and way of governing. Governor Hale was especially good at this and established himself in Lubuagan (Southern Kalinga) in 1908 (Fry, 2006; 44). The Kalinga's called Governor Hale *Sapao* and he was described by one of his colleagues as a:

*'straight-shooting, rough riding, hard-drinking cowboy who is just as much of a wild man as any Kalinga'.* (in Scott, 1979; 76).

According to Fry (2006; 44) Hale ran a highly personal form of government and modified rules to fit existing traditional practices. He managed to forge bonds between regional leaders and encouraged peace-pact institutions based on Kalinga traditions to bring down feuds (Fry, 2006; 45 and Dozier, 1966; 39). Furthermore, Worcester segregated the Army by keeping lowlanders away from the Cordillera and making sure the Cordillera was governed by highlander troops under direct American supervision.

*'As they are familiar with every footpath... they cover their territory rapidly and completely when the occasion demands. They are far less likely to commit abuses than [lowland] Filipino soldiers would be, for they are dealing with their own people, while Filipinos would be dealing with people whom many of them dislike and despise'.* (Dean H. Worcester in Finin, 2005; 50).

As the region became more and more peaceful, the Americans started building roads into Kalinga from both the north and the south. Their early travel in the region proved to be difficult as most trails presented challenges to even the best horses. As this example from Dean Worcester as he travelled to a Banaue chief's house, painstakingly shows:

*'being obliged to plunge down through the rice terraces to the bottom of the deep canyon and then climb two almost perpendicular earthen walls before reaching the house of the chief. I was completely exhausted when I began this climb and did not feel comfortable clinging like a tree frog to the face of a clay bank with nothing to support*



*me except rather shallow holes which could be better negotiated by Ifugaos, possessed of prehensile toes, than by men wearing shoes'. (Dean Worcester in Finin, 2005; 57)*

The Americans focused themselves on the improvement of trails from coastal areas across the Cordillera's rough terrain. In addition to making their own travel easier, the building of a transportation network promoted internal trade and thus stimulated peaceful interaction between the different Kalinga tribes (Finin, 2005; 57). By increasing the mobility of the region, thereby 'opening' the province up, the Americans created more internal trade and thereby created intertribal dependence. This created a further need for peaceful relations among tribes as the following account illustrates:

*'The peace pact between Tulgao and Tinglayan has existed for more than 100 years and in this time has never been broken. One of the main reasons for this are the economic ties between the villages. In the past there would be an abundance of rice in Tulgao and people from Tinglayan would come up to Tulgao to buy rice and sell their goods. Nowadays Tulgao people go down to Tinglayan to sell their goods and buy there. The main reason for this shift is that Tinglayan lies along the main road from Bontoc to Tabuk so there are many shops with regular supplies in comparison to Tulgao which lies higher in the mountains and is less accessible.'*

(Dr. Alex Aggalao in an interview about peace pacts)

The Americans also started to focus their attention on health issues and education. The first director of education David P. Burrows started making plans for the introduction of an education system in the region. In the second decade of the century the first schools were opened in Kalinga (Dozier, 1966; 41). Hygiene was introduced as a subject in schools and in 1932 a hospital was established in Lubuagan (Dozier, 1966; 44). This was mostly done in combination with the mission outposts in the region, although the Americans did establish public schools in comparison to the Christian mission schools. All in all more educational possibilities started to emerge, people were able to travel more and faster and there was more peace in the region. More and more Kalingas started to travel beyond their villages, trade with other tribes or engage in wage work outside of their village or even their province. Young Kalingas started to travel further to attend school as the area was 'opened up' even further.



During WW II however, the Philippines was occupied by Japan from December 1941 until April 1945. During this time the Kalinga harbored the Americans and served as feared guerrillas against the Japanese. The few tattooed men that are still around today, acquired their elaborate chest tattoos during this time when they took the heads of Japanese soldiers. The Philippines received independence on July 4th 1946.

*A warrior has passed away. Last night old man Batang-ay, father of contemporary tattoo artist Mario, passed away. He was one of the last war heroes still alive in Tulgao. In the days after his death the wake is prepared. The whole village and people from other places visit the family to pay their respects to the old man. Mario's family butcher a dog, a pig and a carabao and the meat is divided among the villagers. We drink sugarcane wine and ginebra. The men sit outside and the women sing songs to soothe the spirits of the dead. The men discuss all matter of village politics and a lively discussion is already taking place when I come to pay my respects. Old man Batang-ay lies in a simple coffin with a feather sticking out of a headband. I ask Mario about the feather. 'It's something the old man wanted. He couldn't speak very much in his last days but he clearly asked me for the feather. We call it su-oy and it's the mark of a warrior'.*

### **3.4 Missionisation**

During the American period the missionaries were finally successful in entering the region. In 1925, the Roman Catholic order of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary from Brussels, Belgium was the first to establish a mission among the Kalinga in Lubuagan. This mission was led by Fransisco Billiet and the Catholic order came to be known as the Belgian Fathers (Fry, 2006; 149). Interestingly, Dozier (1966; 44) notes that Christianity was being accepted though that did not mean that the Kalingas had discarded pagan beliefs and customs. He notes that the mountain people simply added what Christian concepts and practices seemed important to them but the deeper values of Christianity were not internalized.

The missionaries worked parallel with the Americans and most objectives were consistent with each other. Cessation of headhunting, introduction of formal education and the construction of infrastructure were equally important for missionaries and colonial officials alike (Finin, 2005; 64). Education has always been important in accomplishing the missionary task as is clearly seen in the first edition of the CICM constitution, which reads:



*'The CICM is to preach the good news to the people of China, to establish the Christian community and to take care especially of abandoned children.'* (CICM, 2007; 63)

Father Mike Seys (79) has been a father in Kalinga for quite some years, he was born in Belgium and is missionary from the CICM. He notes the importance of education:

*'Education is the key to change, because to achieve peace we must educate the people. Education is the first step, then come roads and with that more and better communication between the tribes so peace can be achieved but the starting point is education.'*

The focus among the CICM missionaries was mostly on the young, as father Noel van der Plaetsen (79) explains:

*'Many of the older folks did not convert to Christianity so easy so our focus was very much on the youth. This is one of the reasons we first started building primary schools'*.

From a missionary perspective education can be seen as the proclamation of the news of God and Jesus Christ. It is therefore not surprising that as soon as the missionaries were settled, they started building schools. In Kalinga the first CICM parish was built in 1925 in Lubuagan, in 1930 one followed in Naneng and in 1936 another parish was opened in Salegseg. After the independence of the Philippines the missionaries carried on with their work in Kalinga and in 1950 a parish was opened in Tinglayan. Two more followed in 1969 and 1970 in Bulanao, Tabuk and Pinukpuk. The last parish to be opened in Kalinga by the CICM was the one in Tanudan in 1979 (CICM, 2007; 126). This completed the Christianisation of the Kalinga province and nowadays most, if not all Kalinga's consider themselves Christians. As the whole Cordillera opened up and the Kalinga became more mobile through the roads that were built, the missions and schools were bringing about changes in beliefs and attitudes 'preparing' them for the modern world to come.



Bishop Prudencio P. Andaya jr. resides is young for a bishop. He is a very friendly man and when we meet we have a large lunch in his house at the Apostolic Vicariate in Tabuk. The Bishop grew up in Kalinga although his parents are not native Kalinga's. As we enjoy the lunch he is very inquisitive as to what my research is about and what I've found so far. I can tell he's very open minded and modern in what the role of the church should be in Kalinga. Bishop Andaya has a keen interest in Kalinga culture and through different projects he tries to encourage cultural awareness among the youth. Another one of his main areas of work is peace and he works a lot with families that have been affected by tribal feuds. One of the main changes in the practice of tattooing that occurred with the coming of the missionaries was a powerful shift in perception with respect to the status of being a *mingor*. Bishop Andaya explains:

*'I believe that in Kalinga killing was very much institutionalized, it still is to some extent today. If something happens to someone straightaway the whole tribe is involved, one person is at fault but the whole tribe is responsible. Compared to the olden times this has already changed'.*

Most of the tattooed men in Tulgao emphasized how they are ashamed of their tattoos and what they stand for. Mario Batang-ay (1949) for example, wouldn't let me photograph his tattoos. He told me that:

*'in today's culture tattoos don't have a place anymore, this is because of Christianity'.*

While interviewing Lakay Ayat in Tinglayan two older gentlemen join the conversation. They are both retired teachers and are more than happy to tell me their opinions. As we drink so more coffee and Lakay Ayat has left for his fields, Abdon Abuli and his friend Jaime Macaiba speak to me about the changes in Kalinga with respect to their tattoo tradition. Abdon explains to me that:

*'If you get tattoos you are great warrior. I don't have tattoos because I'm a Christian'.*

His friend Jaime Macaiba continues:



*'We are adapting ourselves to good culture and we leave the bad, the killing behind'.*

Abdon adds:

*'We now know we are all brothers and that we come from the same family.'*

Besides promoting education and peace through education, the CICM and other missionaries have a direct influence on the peace pacts as well. Together with other intermediaries the religious community plays an important part in peace negotiations or in intervening if something happens. According to Laurens Bayonan this is because:

*'People trust the government less but trust more the religious organizations.'*

During the war between Mangali and Lubo the church successfully intervened. Both parties suffered many casualties but were stubborn in restoring peace and the fighting and retaliation kept on for a long time. The tribal feud went as far as Baguio where students from both tribes had to fear for their lives. The religious community led by father Noel van der Plaetsen and the Bishop, together with a native ex-peace pact holder, were able to successfully mediate and the peace pact was restored.

### **3.5 The Contemporary Period**

Today the region is relatively peaceful. After Philippine independence the old Mountain Province was abolished. The area is now split up into separate provinces and subsequently the former sub province of Bontoc was renamed the Mountain Province. Today the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) consists of 5 provinces: Benguet, Mountain Province, Apayao, Ifugao and Kalinga, which is almost the same as the Americans first planned the political organization of the region.

Travel is now easier than ever and the people from Kalinga travel throughout the region and beyond. When I made my way from Baguio to Tinglayan and from Tinglayan to Tabuk, everywhere along the route the road was being worked on. Workmen were inserting dynamite into the hard rocky mountain slopes and roads were being broadened. Also a large scale road



project is underway whereby the roads are being paved. Once this is finished travel through Kalinga will be even easier and faster.

Older Kalinga men and women told me of the times when travel was much slower. In 1937 the road from Bontoc to Tabuk opened up. When Abdon Abuli was growing up he walked from his house in Tinglayan to his school in Bontoc which took him the whole day. Later he told me about how there was a bus service which did the route once a week. Nowadays there are several bus or jeepney services going to Bontoc or Tabuk from Tinglayan.

Alex Aggalao agrees that there is much more peace now than before. He explains:

*'There are much more peace pacts now than before and less tribal conflict ends in tribal war. If a war occurs it lasts much shorter because so many mechanisms have been developed to ensure peace. Nowadays most tribal conflicts are settled through an amicable settlement rather than retaliation as was often the case before the 1960's. I believe the amicable settlement and the further involvement on the provincial and municipal level in combination with tribal intermediaries and the religious community, causes more peace and less conflict. However, we see that tribal disputes mostly originate in the city where many tribes live together on a small space'.*

The further modernization of the region also brings other development. More and more Kalinga youth are obtaining higher education and travel far away from their ancestral land to receive their degrees. The effect of education is twofold, on the one hand Kalinga youth is becoming better educated and are moving away from their villages to the cities in search of jobs. Many of them are also very successfully integrated in wider society. On the other hand pursuing further education outside their ancestral domain causes a loss of culture or even identity.

Ernest Gellner (1983; 27) compares the way education is organized in a modern society to that of a modern army:

*'A modern society is, in this respect, like a modern army, only more so. It provides a very prolonged and fairly thorough training for all its recruits, insisting on certain*





*shared qualifications: literacy, numeracy, basic work habits and social skills, familiarity with basic technical and social skills’.*

This so called *exo-socialisation* is a key feature of modern day societies including the Filipino state. Men and women alike are now being produced and reproduced outside their local intimate unit through state organized, standardized education systems (Gellner, 1983; 37). What this means for Kalinga culture and more specifically Kalinga tattoos is that now the Filipino state and Filipino culture, whatever that maybe, are inevitably linked. For most Kalinga youth this means further involvement and adaptation of a more mainstream culture. This centrifugal power of state organized education in combination with more travel to places where Kalinga youth comes into contact with people with different worldviews is one of the reasons for the demise of Kalinga tattooing.

Cirilo Bawer (1945) is a retired teacher from Lubuagan who is very much involved with the cultural heritage of the Kalingas. He’s very straightforward in his opinions about the loss of culture in Kalinga and places the blame with the Church and the way education is organized. He calls the loss of culture ‘dismemberment’. According to mister Bawer the current educational system serves a one-size-fits-all curriculum whereby local traditions are pushed to the background.

*‘When I married my wife we had a traditional wedding. When I returned to school after my wedding I was expelled by the fathers because I didn’t marry in the Church before God. This made me realize what the effect of the Church was on traditions and local customs.’*

From that point onwards sir Bawer decided to get involved with the rich cultural heritage of the Kalingas. His daughters are members of a traditional dance group who perform throughout the country. Mister Bawer also organizes cultural festivals and sings the *ullalim*. He tells me how it hurts him to see traditional ceremonies such as the *igam* being replaced with baptism. Cirilo Bawer is tall for a Filipino. He stands at around 1.82 and has dark skin with piercing eyes. His house is a coming and going of people. Two of his daughters are staying with him when I visit. His grandson is at the house together with his son in law who is a famous photographer. Another lady, studying traditional musical instruments also resides in



the house. People drop by to ask sir Bawer about some last instructions for the cultural festival that is taking place the next day. Mister Bawer is a proud man, proud of his people and his cultural heritage which he tries hard to teach others about. He's also a patient man, taking time in his busy schedule to answer some of my questions. With respect to the tattoo tradition of the Kalinga, he tells me:

*'If no one tells you your tattoos are important and that they are beautiful and are a part of who you are as a person, but you hear that tattoos are bad because they are connected to killing and war of course a demise will take place.'*

The next day I wake up and make my way over to the cultural festival. I witness an interesting mix of traditional and modern elements. During the day different ceremonies are re-enacted and by night there is a fashion show. During the fashion show girls and boys model traditional attire with a modern twist. Bawer's grandson Sky (5) is dressed as a Kalinga warrior complete with tattoos, spear and shield and he shocks and awes the public in attendance. When he enters on stage the crowd goes wild with excitement for the little boy. Nevertheless, sir Bawer is very aware of the fact that times are different and that Kalinga culture is undergoing rapid change:

*'I know this modernization thing will eventually get us here. I see my grandson watch MTV and copy the dances he sees on the TV. The only thing I can do is try to delay the process and create a little awareness.'*

### **3.6 The Mobility Hypothesis**

The title of this chapter has everything to do with mobility. In the post-modern world we can see an exchange of information, ideologies and cultural interaction on a scale never witnessed before. In this new post-modern society mobility plays a crucial part. This is not a new idea. Zygmunt Bauman (1998) speaks about our modern world in terms of mobility whereby he goes as far as to deem mobility as the new stratifying factor (1998; 86). What is new however is the fact that in the previous chapters I've shown how Kalinga is going through significant change on many levels, one of them being cultural. I believe, based on the findings in this research, that mobility is a factor causing many of the changes I've described. With respect to



tattooing in Kalinga I dare to say that mobility is the key factor causing change. It is therefore that I have documented the change in tattooing and coined it The Mobility Hypothesis<sup>22</sup>.

Kalinga society has undergone major changes and as we speak, is involved in a process of further change. Now the fact is that culture is fluid and changing all the time. What makes the post-modern era different is that this change is happening at an unprecedented scale. Diederick Raven (2008) explains modernization as the transformation process from an agrarian society (he calls this *Agraria*) to an industrial society (*Industria*). Globalization is the same process but radicalized (Raven, 2008; 19). With respect to culture the question remains whether this globalization will lead to a 'global' culture whereby specific differences become increasingly blurred. Raven (2008; 20) gives an example of a traditional fisherman's village in Morocco. The EU has a bilateral trade agreement with the Moroccan government regulating fishing activities. This means that fishermen from Europe can now fish in Moroccan waters, in turn the Moroccan government receives payment to compensate the Moroccan fisherman who suffer from the deal. All in all a win-win situation except for the fact that Moroccan fisher villages are emptying since there is no more work. These traditional fisher villages are losing their characteristic nature and with that their traditions and their specific culture (Raven, 2008; 20). According to Raven (2008) this specific case can be related to the change that is taking place whereby we are moving from *Industria* to a globalised world (*Globalia*).

In Kalinga a similar change is taking place. Kalinga society is changing very rapidly and for Kalinga tattooing mobility is the key element causing change. After Spanish rule the Spanish left behind a distinct difference in the minds of the people, portraying the people from the Cordillera as savage and pagan versus the lowlanders as civilized (Scott, 1974; 7). This distinction is still felt today.

With the coming of the Americans the province of Kalinga was severely 'opened' up and mobility was increased through the building of roads and transport possibilities. The Americans, through Governor Hale, made progress in pacifying the region through enforcing peace pacts among tribes. The increase in mobility and peace made it able for the missionaries

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<sup>22</sup> For a graphical representation of the processes causing change and the outcomes with regard to traditional Kalinga tattoos, see appendix 2.



to enter in territories which were deemed 'wild' and 'savage' in Spanish times and large scale Christianization of the region was the result. The coming of the missionaries in combination with the American efforts led to more educational possibilities for the average Kalinga. Kalingas are now travelling further from their ancestral land to obtain higher education and are increasingly coming into contact with other worldviews as such.

Eriksen (1993; 103) notes that industrialization entails great geographical mobility and the need for standardization of skills. This can only be achieved through state organized educational systems with a similar curriculum and causes '*cultural homogenization*' (Eriksen, 1993; 103). This centrifugal power of education in combination with more travel causes Kalingas to adapt to more mainstream culture leaving specific traditions behind.

Furthermore, I have shown that Christianity brought with it a different worldview creating change in the way tattoos are viewed in Kalinga society. This in combination with a highland lowland distinction causes many tattooed folks to feel ostracized once out of their own community where their tattoos are not so much frowned upon. Even more so, due to more mobility and peace many tribes are now more dependent on each other than ever before when it comes to economic relations and trade.

All in all we should view the changes with respect to Kalinga tattooing not as a result of the process of globalization *an sich*, but as the complex interlocked, interwoven processes of Christianisation, education, peace, migration, travel and more trade caused by an inevitable increase in mobility. It is therefore that with this thesis I advertise the influence of mobility in the Global, not so much as the '*new stratifying factor*' (Baumann, 1998; 86), but as the key factor causing cultural change on the local level. What will happen to Kalinga tattooing in the future remains to be seen. On the one hand Kalingas are eager to retain their cultural heritage, on the other hand they are:

*'Adapting [themselves] to good culture and leaving the bad behind'*<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Adapted from the interview with Abdon Abuli and Jaime Macaiba.



## **-4- Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon**

*'My tattoos bring me a sense of my people's history. I think the ancestral spirits keep the tradition alive by working through me so that I can lay this all down for others to experience'* (Lee-Way, Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon member)

### **4.1 Tattoos in Contemporary Western Culture**

What struck me while watching the World Cup football in South Africa, were the number of football players visibly 'wearing' tattoos. When one compares this to the World Cup tournaments in earlier years, the number of players with tattoos has significantly increased. I believe this is due to the fact that tattoos have been accepted in mainstream Western culture and have become reasonably 'normal' in Western society.

After an early period where tattoos were associated with criminals, sailors, circus 'freaks' and exotic 'savages', the popularity of tattoos in mainstream western culture increased in the 1960s and 1970s (Vail; 2000). Orend and Gagné (2009; 494) claim that tattoos were accepted by broader segments of society in the 1980s, while in the 1990s white suburban females were the fastest growing demographic in the tattoo market (Donovan 1997; 1, in Orend and Gagné, 2009; 495). Even more so it is estimated that by the last years of the 20th century 15 percent of all Americans have at least one tattoo (Orend and Gagné, 2009; 495).

The question that remains is how to explain the abundance of permanent body modification within the postmodern world. According to Sweetman (1999; 52-53) tattoos serve as a way to anchor the self in this postmodern world, similarly several scholars have assessed that tattoos are used to signify identity (Giddens, 1991; 31) and group affiliation (DeMello, 2000; Velliquett and Murray, 1999). Turner (1999) maintains that tattoos are a symptom of the crisis of identity in postmodern times where:

*'body marks are commercial objects in a leisure marketplace and have become optional aspects of a body aesthetic, which playfully and ironically indicate social membership'* (Turner, 1999; 41).



Whatever the case may be, it is clear that tattoos concern the body and vice-versa. Social scientists generally agree that the body is socially constructed. Foucault (1973 and 1979) for example, shows that the body is controlled and constrained by society. The body is embedded in a social system which reads it in a particular way. With respect to tattooed bodies, they are constructed and constrained by society. We must therefore focus on the way the body is formed by society and the way the body is used as an expression of culture to understand the profusion of tattoos in the post-modern world. Anchored in this process is the concept of agency which I will discuss first before moving on to the commodified body.

#### **4.2 Agency**

According to Emirbayer en Mische (1998) agency deals with the capacity inherent to every human being with which a person is able to influence the circumstances of one's life. Within this circumstances you are influenced by society on the one hand and your own choices on the other. Or as Karl Marx stated:

*'Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past'* (Marx, 1852).

Within the debate surrounding agency, sociologist Giddens (1979) focuses on the question whether a person is influenced more by society or by his own choice. Giddens (1979) calls this *'structure'*. *'Structure'* deals with a person's environment defined by the rules and characteristics of the society in which that person lives. This society can restrict choices and therefore influence *'free'* choice. Think of a woman who has all the necessary qualifications but is not allowed to work a certain job due to the rules and regulations. She might really want to do this specific job, the society in which she lives takes away her choice. Agency in this case is the capacity to change your situation. The woman in question might use her right to vote to try and change her predicament. Giddens (1979) views both agency and structure as an interacting, completely interdependent entity. Without structure there is no agency and vice versa.

#### **4.3 The Commodified Body**

*'Commodification insists upon objectification in some form, transforming persons and their bodies from human category into objects of economic desire'*



(Sharp, 2000; 293).

Postmodernists argue that the commodification of culture is made possible by the fragmentation of society. Specifically when individual identities are less rooted in kinship and geographic communities, individuals are influenced by consumer culture to believe that they can purchase individual and group identity through the products they buy or the tattoos they mark their bodies with (Orend and Gagne, 2009; Root, 1996; DeBord, 1995).

With respect to tattooing, Mary Kosut (2006) compares the repackaging of tattoos as desirable and hip, to the pillaging of the 1970s punk subculture by the so-called culture industry. She argues that previous confrontational visual codes such as spiked and mohawked hair, ripped clothing, safety pins and now tattoos often signify trendiness and conformity rather than rebellion and transgression (Kosut, 2006; 1038). Because, unlike clothing or a particular hairstyle, tattoos are permanent and because they are not worn upon the body but inscribed into the body, Kosut (2006; 1040) conceptualizes tattoos in contemporary western society as an:

*'Ironic fad – a popular cultural trend that, due to its permanent nature, cannot be as easily discarded as a pair of jeans'.*

In considering a tattoo as a consumer product we must also make clear that the act of consumption, or receiving the tattoo, is a lengthy and ritualistic process. According to Kosut (2006; 1041) we can distinguish three different stages, preplanning, receiving the tattoo and the after-care regime/healing process. The act of receiving a tattoo is therefore completely different than the act of buying a pair of shoes or other consumer products.

Many social scientists agree that the body is socially constructed (Orend & Gagne, 2009; Foucault, 1978; 1995), however scholars disagree as to whether those who alter their bodies are deceived or conned into conforming to social and cultural pressures or whether they are active agents in constructing their own bodies (Orend & Gagne, 2009). Douglas (1966) maintains that the body is a metaphor for the social system in which the physical body is an expression of culturally imposed meanings. On the contrary, Frank (1991; 46) argues that social bodies are the result of individual agency. Davies (1995) in an interesting study on cosmetic surgery, concludes that women's use of cosmetic surgery is an act of agency. The





act of tattooing one's body has in itself an enormous amount of agency and I therefore tend to agree with Frank (1991). Sweetman (1999) emphasizes this point by addressing the fact that a tattoo is a product whereby the consumption cannot be divorced from its mode of production. You can wear Nike shoes in total ignorance under what conditions the shoe was fabricated or what the origin of the shoe might be. In contrast tattoos:

*'Demand one's presence as producer, consumer and living frame for the corporeal artifact thus acquired'* (Sweetman, 1999; 64).

Secondly, tattoos invite another level of engagement since they become a permanent addition to the body (Kosut, 2006; 1042). It is therefore that being tattooed or getting a tattoo is unlike the consumption of any other bodily good and has in itself a large degree of agency.

In an article about corporate logo tattoos Orend and Gagne (2009; 502) conclude that since tattoos have been mass produced and mass marketed, therefore gaining wider acceptability throughout mainstream culture, they have become commodified and their utility as an act of rebellion has become limited. They also find that the heavy tattooed members of their research sample thought that being heavily tattooed was a way of exercising agency and marking boundaries between those who used tattoos to signify resistance and those who had succumbed to the pressures of popular culture (Orend and Gagne, 2009; 502).

In analyzing the tattooing practices of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon tribe<sup>24</sup>, I find it helpful to draw on the work of Michel Foucault, who has argued that the body is constructed by *'a great many distinct regimes'* and that it is *'the prisoner of culture'* (Foucault, 1986; 380). According to Foucault (1995; 136) this can only be achieved *'through a strict regimen of disciplinary action'*. In his research, which mostly took place in prison, Foucault argues that the social exercise of power over bodies is carried out through what he calls the *'panopticon'*, a metaphor for the way institutions constantly watch and seek to control people. He concludes that the power of the panopticon is exercised as people self-regulate. However, Foucault (1978) also argues that because power is exercised discursively:

*'where there is power, there is resistance'* (Foucault, 1978; 95).

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<sup>24</sup> For pictures of some of the tribe members' tattoos see appendix 4.



Power is therefore not a zero-sum game in which certain individuals have it and others do not. Instead power is diffused in society and therefore people are not passively manipulated into internalizing dominant ideologies, nor do they lose agency as they are pressured by bodily discourse (Orend and Gagne, 2009; 497). For Foucault (1978; 95) because the *'body is invested in power relations'* it can also express *'body power'* not as *'property but as strategy'* (Foucault, 1995; 26). I therefore believe that tattooing oneself can be seen as a powerful act of agency and as a strategy of resistance in a society which has commodified the body. Furthermore I believe tattooing can be viewed as a process whereby the one tattooed is making one's body space into place. By tattooing the body we possess, territorialize, conquer and cultivate our body and thus regain a certain level of perceived control of our self.

#### **4.4 Migration to the United States of America**

According to the Economist (1998:38) some 4,5 million Filipinos work abroad sending home between five and ten million dollars a year in remittances. Due to the ferocity of U.S. colonial exploitation, mismanagement of the Philippines by the country's elite and globalized capitalism, many Filipinos have left their homeland behind (San Juan, 1998; 190). Filipinos can be found in more than 130 countries the world over, however, the vast majority of Filipinos have settled in the United States (Okamura, 1998). The 2000 U.S. census showed that Filipinos, totaling 1,8 million, comprised the second largest immigrant group as well as the second-largest Asian American group in the United States. But why the United States?

Yen Le Espiritu (2003; 25) makes a clear argument; *'Filipinos went to the United States because Americans went first to the Philippines'*. Other scholars argue that Filipino migration to the U.S. is a *'by-product of U.S. policies towards and in the Philippines'* (de la Cruz, 1998; xiv). In each case it's clear that Filipino migration to the U.S. started after American colonization. This started with several hundred individuals being sent to study in the U.S. Often times these were the children of prominent Filipino families whose loyalty the colonial regime hoped to win (Espiritu, 2003; 27). Even more so, the 1920's saw an increase in Filipino migration with the majority of Filipino immigrants settling in California. Ever since California has been a 'hotspot' of Filipino culture in the United States.

In 1998 a group of young Filipino-Americans made a trip to Hawaii where they came in contact with Hawaiians who were busy reviving their tattoo tradition. After coming back to California, they started researching their own history and tattoo traditions and soon the Tatak



Ng Apat Na Alon was born. While the traditional practice of *batek* is becoming extinct in the Kalinga province, on the other side of the globe a revival of this practice is being set in motion.

So far, 100 of the 150 members of Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon tribe are tattooed with traditional designs inspired by the indigenous peoples of the Philippines. According to one of the members, his tattoos are important for several reasons:

*‘almost every culture has been documented except our own. My tattoos serve as an opportunity to enlighten other people to an aspect of my culture which receives little attention. Tattooing breaks with the general mold of what is defined as ‘acceptable’ in the Filipino-American community so, in a sense, I have been educating my peers and even my parents with these tattoos.’*

The Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon is an organization dedicated to the revival of traditional culture and tattoos of the Philippine islands. As their website states:

*‘Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon intends to resurrect the positive, repair the negative and move into the future while keeping their roots firmly planted in the past. A people without knowledge of their history and culture are like a tree without roots. Our ancestors are the roots on the tree of life and all the branches tell their stories. The leaves are our parents. We should all support each other as we grow towards the skies, but so many of our generation are like seeds which have not been watered.’<sup>25</sup>*

Christian is one of the members of the tribe. He states:

*‘We have a beautiful tattoo culture and it is slowly deteriorating. We want to rekindle the spiritual art forms of our ancestors and to inspire our people to believe in the past; because a people without knowledge of their history, origin, and culture are like a tree without its roots.’*

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.apat-na-alon-tribe.com/history.html>



Other tribe members have tattoos from other parts of the Philippines such as Mindanao or the Visayas which have different symbols and patterns than those from Kalinga. Interesting to see is that many of the tribe members' tattoos have Polynesian influences in the intricate designs, some of them even using Christian symbols or more contemporary pictures of animals such as the carabao or the eagle, the national emblem of the Philippines.

For many of the Tribe's members their ethnic identity is a big theme. None of the members have similar tattoos. Each tattoo is designed to 'fit' the person 'wearing' the tattoo and each tattoo has a different story. These stories are about the person's history, their ambition in life and their ethnic 'place'. When speaking about his identity Christian is very clear:

*'Of course my tattoos are a part of my identity. Through them I show people who I am and where I'm from and what my story is. Don't get me wrong, I love this country but I'm not a typical American. When people see me walking down the street they won't say hey he's an American!. Because of the way I look I'm not your typical American. But that's ok because I'm not. I'm also a Filipino'.*

Through their tattoos the tribe members visibly show that they are different and that they belong to another group of people as well. In discussing the process of society or group formation Cohen (1985) states that boundary formation plays a critical role. *'Boundaries [which] are themselves largely constituted by people in interaction.'* (Cohen 1985:13) The result of this interaction is the process of making a distinction between the 'ingroup' and 'outgroup'. In essence this means deciding whether someone belongs to the group or not. Wimmer (2002) links the process of creating a 'cultural compromise' to the concepts of 'ingroup' and 'outgroup'.

*'A cultural compromise thus entails a certain way of defining the borders between us and them, a blueprint for organizing exclusion and inclusion.'* (Wimmer 2002:8).

In doing so Wimmer (2002) explains that the process of 'social closure' is the formation and preservation of group boundaries, through which the 'we' and 'they' group are distinctly differentiated. According to Castles and Miller (2003) this distinction is made by rules and practices further emphasizing who is 'in' and who is 'out'. Important in the process of



boundary formation between the 'ingroup' and the 'outgroup' is the 'familiar' and the 'foreign'. *Social closure* then stabilizes who's 'in' and who's 'out'. The boundaries are formed and preserved by practices shared by the members of the group. Wimmer (2002; 8) calls these '*diacritic elements*'. The concepts of 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' are also used by Castles and Miller (2003). They believe society and group formation is the product of both 'other-' and 'self-definition';

*'Other definition means ascription of undesirable characteristics and assignment to inferior social positions by dominant groups. Self definition refers to the consciousness of group members of belonging together on the basis of shared cultural and social characteristics.'* (Castles and Miller 2003:33).

For the members of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon the definition of self is enhanced by the way the group is set up. With a system of ranks and colors a tribe member can move up in the organization, starting as an *Anak* (which translates to children or child) with a color code to *Amang* (which translates as father). A member can move up the ranks by representing the tribe and its ideals on important occasions and by contributing to the tribe's mission. Eriksen (2002) stresses the importance of stereotyping in forming a group:

*'Group membership and loyalties are confirmed and strengthened through stereotyping and the articulation of conflict or competition. This mutual demarcation process can be called dichotomisation.'* (Eriksen 2002 :28).

The importance of stereotyping, according to Eriksen (2002) in creating societies and groups lies with boundary formation:

*'Stereotypes are crucial in defining the boundaries of one's own group. They inform the individual of the virtues of his or her own group and the vices of the other, and they thereby serve to justify thinking that 'I am an X and not a Y'.'* (Eriksen 2002:25).

The Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon does this by using essentialistic images of their own group. The website of the tribe has many pictures of the members depicting themselves with feathered headbands, head axes, spears, shields and g-strings. They look like fierce headhunters in these



pictures with their tattoos giving them an even more powerful look. Many of the pictures are made against backgrounds of perceived typical Filipino images, such as a group portrait in a jungle setting or a woman against a backdrop of the Banaue rice terraces. On one of the pictures a tribe member is seen wearing a necklace made of tusks. His eyes and mouth are spread wide while his tongue is sticking out and almost touches the chin. A fearsome look but not very typical for the Philippines as this image is more prominent among the Maori from New Zealand, especially during the performance of a war dance called the Haka.

The tribe members are dedicated to reviving tradition and call upon others to be:

*'proud of the culture before the raping and pillaging of the Spaniards. They called our poetic beliefs and beautiful cultures, pagan and savage, we are but primitive barbarians to them!'*<sup>26</sup>

By portraying themselves in 'traditional' or 'native' attire they wish to return to the days before Spanish occupation. But in doing so they emphasize a certain image of the Filipino, as an aggressive, savage headhunter. An image people in Kalinga are trying hard to get rid of. On the other hand they use images from photographs taken in the early 1900s and make them their own, using these images to produce their own perception of how the 'traditional' Filipino man and woman were and behaved before Spanish occupation. It's clear that the tribe members have to a certain point fabricated a cultural image about their ancestors. They have a strong focus on tattoos which in turn function as clear *diacritic elements* in forming their group.

The only question that remains to be answered is why tattoos and not other forms of material culture? To answer this last question I will need to draw on the historical ties between the Philippines and the United States and use the concept Espiritu (2003) calls '*differential inclusion*'.

#### **4.5 Differential Inclusion and Tribal Tattoos**

Anthropologist Yen Le Espiritu describes the Filipino encounter with the United States as one of *differential inclusion*. She defines this concept as:

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.apat-na-alon-tribe.com/contact.html>



*'the process whereby a group of people is deemed integral to the nation's economy, culture, identity and power – but integral only or precisely because of their designated subordinate standing.'* (Espiritu, 2003; 47).

The differential inclusion of the Filipino's began with the colonialisation of the archipelago. As I have argued before, economic interest pushed the United States to cross the Pacific. For the Philippines this meant a consistent, disruptive and well articulated ideology depicting foreign rule over the Philippines as a blessing (Espiritu, 2003; 50). These colonial ideologies formally justified and codified the subordinate status of Filipinos creating a separate juridical and cultural space for Filipinos as a separate category of beings (Espiritu, 2003; 50). This discourse of inferiority, immorality and incapacity, travelled with the Filipinos as they migrated to the United States and prescribed the racialization there (Espiritu, 2003; 57).

*'In other words, Filipino immigrant lives are shaped not only by the social location of their group within the United States but also by the position of their home country within the global racial order.'* (Espiritu, 2003; 210)

None of the members of the *Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon I* interviewed reported incidents of discrimination or racism but all explain something that might best be described as not completely belonging to, or belonging to more than, the society they live in. Christian illustrates this point by emphasizing:

*'Look man, us Filipino's are seen as workers, as laborers or housemaids. If you say you're a Filipino most probably people will think you are a housemaid or work as a cleaner. That's just the stereotype people have about us. Or we are seen as nerdy Asians or something like that.'*

*'With these symbols on my body I have control over who I am. These tats are me and I'm these tats. People don't know a lot about what it means to be a Filipino but through my tattoos I do have a connection with what it means to come from the Philippines.'*





According to Espiritu (2003; 47) the inclusion of Filipino's in American society was made possible only when it was coupled with the exploitation of Filipino bodies, land and resources. From this perspective I believe the tattooing of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon members can be seen resistance against symbolic incarceration of the Filipino body and in it lays a powerful use of agency. By piercing the skin with the tattoo needle and inscribing their perceived history, culture and life story into the skin the identity of the bearer becomes visible. By doing so a clear distinction is made between those who are members of the group and those who are not. The members use the tattoos and their bodies as a medium to resist the processes of stereotyping and stigmatization of their bodies in U.S. society by clearly distinguishing themselves from others. As Fisher (2002) states:

*'Modern day tattooing can be analyzed as a form of resistance to or a symptom of a culture that has commodified the body (Fischer, 2002; p. 92).*

Tattooing according to Fisher (2002) is at the same time a process of resistance against and a symbol of commodification of the body. I believe the tribe's tattoos should be viewed from this framework. By tattooing themselves the members of the tribe create their own place and identity within the patches of identities that are mostly ascribed to them and by doing so regain control over their bodies. This however, is only possible in a society where tattoos are an accepted symbol of resistance. It's this structure that makes the tattoos of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon possible as a form of resistance against the commodification of their body and enable them to use their agency in making their own body place of the body spaces that are mostly shaped by the forces of differential inclusion.



## **-5- In Conclusion**

This thesis has examined how a specific tattoo culture has changed through experiences of colonialism, mobility and migration. I've shown how Filipino men and women are transformed by these experiences and how they in turn have altered and remade the social world around them.

In the olden days warriors would proudly show of their tattoos and would boast about their heroic adventures at feasts and celebrations. Nowadays however, men conceal their tattoos and stated they would remove the marks of their warrior past if they could. Many rituals in rites of passage are no longer performed, or other rituals have emerged to replace them. From this point of view it's clear that the male tattoo no longer carries the weight it once had. I've also shown how the concept of beauty has changed among Kalinga women rendering the beautification aspect of the female tattoo useless. Furthermore, this thesis documents how the younger generation is moving away from the traditional tattooing practices towards more modern designs. These modern tattoos have meanings and connotations that are totally different from the traditional tattoos worn by the older generations.

An important process in explaining the demise of the tattoo culture in Kalinga has to do with the distinction between lowland and highland Filipinos. This distinction is still felt today as I experienced firsthand. By taking a historical starting point I've shown how the Spaniards created this distinction which contrasted submission, conversion and civilization on the one hand with independence, paganism and savagery on the other. With the coming of the Americans mobility was increased through the building of roads and transport possibilities. The Americans pacified the region and enforced peace pacts among tribes. Large scale Christianization of the region was the result. The coming of the missionaries brought with it a different worldview creating change in the way tattoos are viewed in Kalinga society. Nowadays travel is much easier than ever and often times Kalinga youngsters study outside their native communities and travel to other parts of the Philippines to find work. The centrifugal power of state organized education in combination with more travel is an additional reason for the demise of Kalinga tattooing.



The members of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon tribe have also been a focal point of this thesis. By tattooing their bodies the tribe members create their own place and identity within the patches of identities that are mostly ascribed to them. In doing so the members of the tribe feel they regain control over their bodies and are able to choose and make their own identities in a society where the Filipino body is coupled with exploitation. These tattoos should therefore be viewed as a process of making one's body space into place by permanently marking the skin. In doing so the tattoos become a symbol of resistance against the incarceration of the Filipino body in American society. I argue that this process is only possible if society permits. That is, if the structure of society is so that tattoos are 'allowed' to be used as a strategy of resistance.

Tattoos and their respective ideologies are very much transnational. They flow from geographic location to geographic location where they are remodelled or re-rooted within the social and cultural context of that specific site. I argue that changes with respect to Kalinga tattooing are not caused by a singular globalization *an sich*, but is the result of a complex interlocked, interwoven process of Christianisation, education, peace, migration, travel and more trade caused by an inevitable increase in mobility. I therefore believe that the influence of mobility is the key reason causing cultural change on the local level. Local and global structures of inequality (power structures), caused by the colonisation of the Philippines by the Americans, are the main reason for the revival of these practices. I've shown how the process of tattooing for the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon members should be seen as a strategy in dealing with and an act of resistance against, unequal power structures experienced by Filipino-Americans.

By focusing on the specific processes causing change this thesis critically analyzed the discourse of globalization itself. I think we should beware of portraying cultural change in the post-modern world as the sole result of a singular globalization. Instead the focus should be on what underlying economic, political and social forces shape and cause change in the cultural landscape and by doing so, the cause of cultural change becomes much clearer.



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## **Appendices**



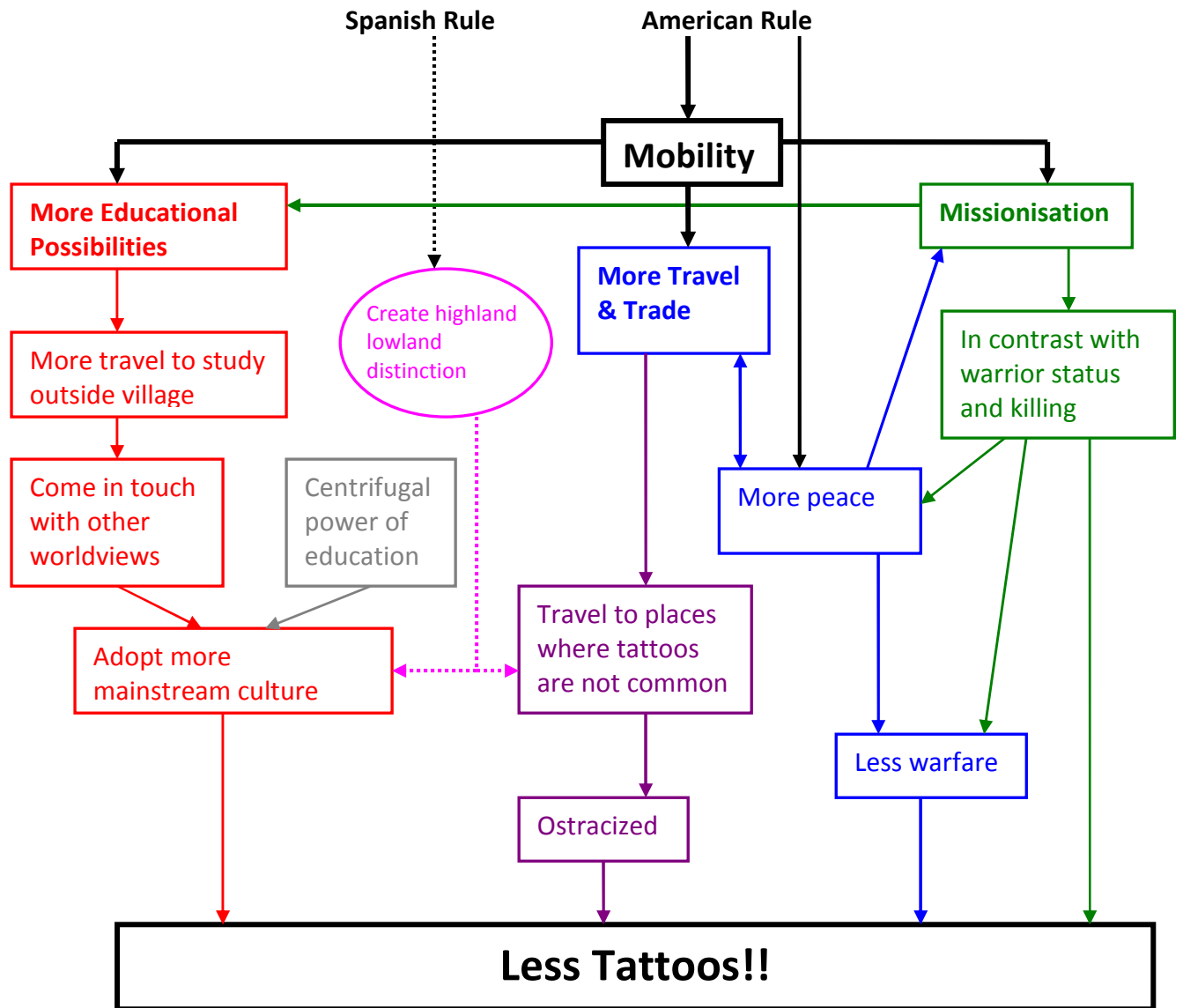
## Appendix 1: Maps

Kalinga lies on the largest island of the Philippine Islands, Luzon. In the North part of this island we find the province of Kalinga and its capital Tabuk. Kalinga subdivided into several municipalities. My fieldwork mostly took place in the municipality of Tinglayan.





Appendix 2: The Mobility Hypothesis



Appendix 3: Kalinga Tattoos

Traditional Male Tattoos<sup>27</sup>:



Lakay Ayat.

Lakay Patricio Accad.

Pedro Anag from Dananao shows his massive *dakag* back tattoo.

Contemporary Male Tattoos (all made by Mario Batang-ay)



Piklit has the ginebra logo tattooed on his chest

Bokakaw with a contemporary tattoo

Tattoos of people are common modern tattoos

<sup>27</sup> All pictures taken by author.





**Female Tattoos in Kalinga<sup>28</sup>**



Chumayag.



Kanu.



Katik.



Bokakaw's mother, Tarokai and Machao. Notice the tattoos on Machao's neck to cure her goiter.



Lakay Patricio Accad and his wife Agnes.

<sup>28</sup> All pictures taken by the author.





**Appendix 4: Tattoos of the Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon<sup>29</sup>**



Elle Festin, co-founder of the tribe wears a contemporary version of the traditional Kalinga *biking* that is comprised of traditional and modern tattoo styles<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> These pictures a courtesy of Tatak Ng Apat Na Alon

<sup>30</sup> Pictures from <http://www.larskrutak.com/articles/Philippines/index.html>





Lee-Way has adopted a contemporary Bontoc Igorot style that combines traditional and modern design elements. He chose motifs that were related to his family, Bontoc roots and culture<sup>31</sup>.



Eric Barrios wears the traditional insignias of his Visayan ancestors: "Like the nomadic turtle who carries his home wherever he goes, my tattoos carry forth my ancestral heritage. As a Filipino-American my tattoos show that I know myself, my roots, and my people."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Pictures from <http://www.larskrutak.com/articles/Philippines/index.html>

<sup>32</sup> Adapted from <http://www.larskrutak.com/articles/Philippines/index.html>





**Appendix 5: Receiving a Tattoo**



Whang-Od tattooing the author, after which the tattoo is blessed with a slaughtered chicken and fresh chicken blood is put on the leg to make the tattoo heal faster.



Whang-Od and her sister who is also tattooed by her.