

Bless the Gin

Local morality and moral breakdown in a Kalanguya village of Ifugao, Philippines



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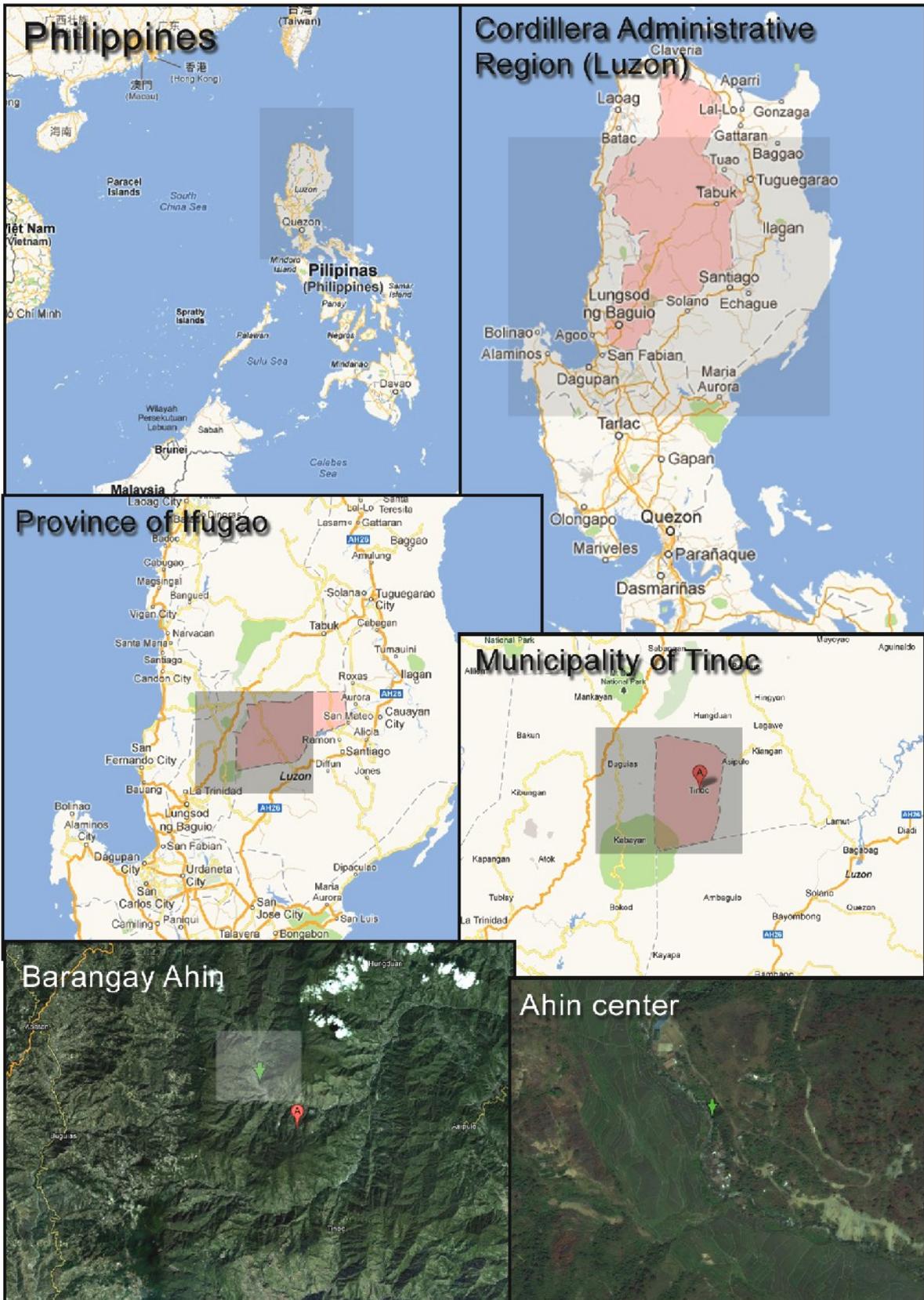
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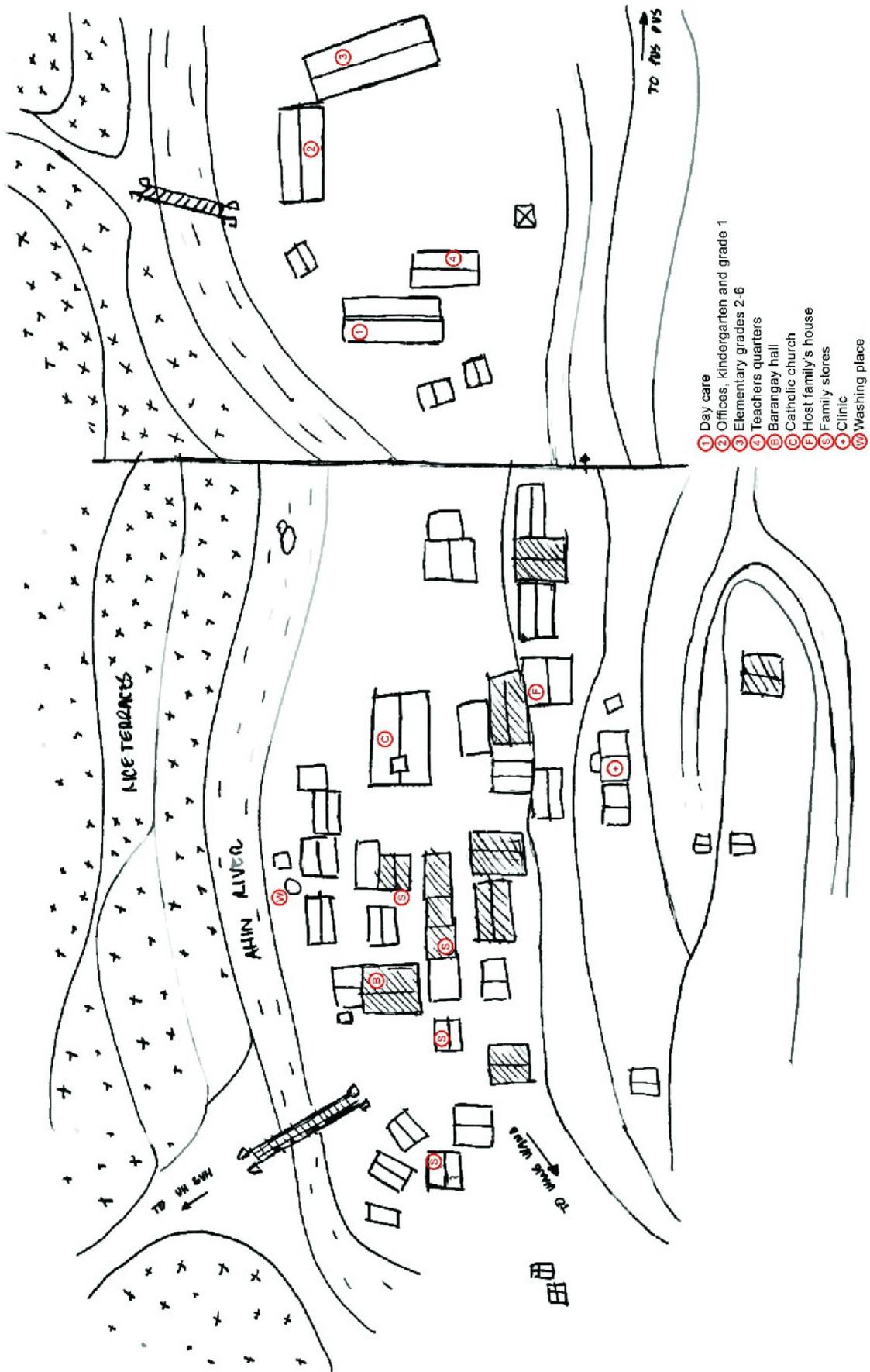
Cover photo: This photograph was taken in the main settlement of Ahin, in front of the Catholic Church. Abraham, one of the most respected Kalanguya elders, sleeps off his debauch on the main square, after yet another drunk night.

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- 1 Day care
- 2 Offices, Kindergarten and grade 1
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- 6 Catholic church
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Glossary Kalanguya terms

<i>Abuno</i>	Cultural practice. When a woman gives birth, others will replace her and work in her fields without payments. Also in case of recovering from surgery.
<i>Ahin</i>	Remote barangay of Tinoc, Ifugao, CAR. Literally means “Salt”.
<i>Aliguyon</i>	Son of Ifugao gods Bugaran and Balitok. Renown warrior.
<i>Ampahit</i>	Dwarfs, smallest kind of spirit in watershed/spring.
<i>Anap</i>	Process of looking for the problem an ill person has (using oil, stick or cards).
<i>Antinganting</i>	Amulet that prevents you from accidents. In Kalanguya: <i>kudlah</i> .
<i>Ayak</i>	Curse. <i>Inayak</i> : to curse.
<i>Babba-ing</i>	If you do a ritual to not be ashamed, for example when the fixed date of a wedding had passed already; you butcher a pig.
<i>Baghtu</i>	Abandoned practice. Identify the guilty by throwing eggs at the backs of suspects.
<i>Bales</i>	Revenge system. Two persons to be killed for each victim.
<i>Baliti</i>	Old, big tree. Fell in the river when people stopped offering. House of spirits.
<i>Balitok</i>	God who came to earth to court Bugaran. Son of Wigan.
<i>Balhan</i>	Positive cultural practice. Solicitation, giving of money in emergency case.
<i>Bayanihan</i>	Tagalog. Other people will help for free the one who cannot afford to repay.
<i>Baki</i>	Prayer of the old priest.
<i>Barangay</i>	Smallest administrative unity in the Philippines, village.
<i>Bibiyaw</i>	Spirits in the forest and mountains. Gardeners of the gold.
<i>Bilin</i>	Advice given by knowledgeable people, mostly elders.
<i>Bingbinga</i>	charm, talisman from dried leaves that brings good luck in specific occasions.
<i>Need</i>	to be prayed for by <i>mabaki</i> .
<i>Bugaran</i>	Compared to Mary or Eva. First women, mother of Aliguyon.
<i>Bulul</i>	statue of old man to put in granary to protect the <i>palay</i> , rice plants.
<i>Bu-uh</i>	Sitio of barangay Ahin.
<i>Canyao</i>	Ritual feast.
<i>Culting</i>	Prayer to bless the drinks/the person who paid for it.
<i>Dahngah</i>	When you have work that needs more hands, give helpers meat in return.
<i>Dak-ai</i>	(or <i>ator</i>) gathering place where old men used to teach young boys.
<i>Dau-da-wak</i>	Ritual they did before when the expected day of birth passed and the baby would not come out.
<i>Gumun</i>	Dream that predicts the future.
<i>Hangbu</i>	Ritual to receive good blessings after a sign or omen (mostly from ancestors).
<i>Hidit</i>	Ritual in which they call the ancestors to take a new death person with them.
<i>Igorot</i>	Literally <i>i</i> : People <i>gorot</i> : from the mountains
<i>Impabah-il</i>	A butchered pig not to be eaten by all family-members. For example a man who have done adultery should not eat it, because he will do it again.
<i>Inayak</i>	To curse.
<i>Kabuñyan</i>	Highest God.
<i>Kalanguya</i>	Ethnic group originary and mostly based in Tinoc, Ifugao. Also separate language.
<i>Keleng</i>	Thanks giving, feast done for example after harvest. Different amount of animals to butcher.
<i>Llawá</i>	'Bad'. Example: married couple sleeping in a new house that has not yet been blessed.

<i>Lawit</i>	Ritual after burial when the people call for the spirits of the relatives of the death to come down and don't go with the death.
<i>Liau</i> to	Thunderstorm. When someone is hit by the thunder some people will butcher not let the bad luck pass to other family-members.
<i>Lúpon</i>	Elders elected by the brgy captain, always present at <i>tungtung</i> .
<i>Ma-ayak</i>	Opposite of <i>mabaki</i> , priest who knows how to curse someone.
<i>Mabaki</i>	Old/Traditional priest. He who does the <i>baki</i> .
<i>Mabdang</i>	Spirits in the water, in rivers, creeks and with rain. Souls of drown people.
<i>Mahangbu</i>	To accept a blessing from the souls of ancestors by doing rituals or service (Thanksgiving) because if not, the blessing will go to another person.
<i>Maktum</i>	The person who knows what should be done, the process of culture.
<i>Mapha-ak</i>	Herbalist, traditional healer with plants.
<i>Mapahangan</i>	Unseen spirits distinct from the <i>bibiyaw</i> . They may steal the souls of humans.
<i>Malas</i>	Bad luck.
<i>Ma'anap</i>	Woman who can see what the problem is with an ill person.
<i>Mamuntus</i>	Same as <i>Ma'anap</i> .
<i>Minatay</i>	Soul. Of the dead for example.
<i>Pahang</i>	Ritual to change a lazy, aggressive or immoral individual.
<i>Papatayan</i>	Sacred place where God or the spirits are supposed to be.
<i>Pekdel</i>	Ritual done by scarce harvest, everybody provides small money, butcher, people from other places cannot enter the sitio then, signs with warning are on the roads.
<i>Pihyew</i>	"Not allowed". Taboo, blasphemy.
<i>Pudad</i>	Ritual done to free a person from the grip of dead people, forcing him to commit immoralities and crimes, usually <i>mabdang</i> .
<i>Sapatá</i>	Negative cultural practice. Promise to God, swearing.
<i>Suerte</i>	Good luck
<i>Tanong</i>	Ritual done to search the lost soul of a person in the three 'spheres' were the spirits live: <i>Kabunyan</i> (the sky), <i>Kalluthan</i> (the earth), <i>Dalem</i> (the underworld).
<i>Timbal</i>	Civil wedding
<i>Tungtung</i>	Amicable settlement by elders, custom law
<i>Ubbu</i>	When you give people who work for you meat. You will have to help them in return.
<i>Wangwang</i>	Barangay of Tinoc, Ifugao, CAR. Three hours hiking from Ahin.
<i>Wigan</i>	God. Father of Balitok. Gives the first palay to Bugan to plant rice.

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1. Introduction

Will anthropologists dare to enter the vast and thorny field of morality? Can they maintain the objectivity required by a proper science, while empathizing with their informants just enough to grasp the meaning and discover the origins of their moral choices? Questions like these have been answered with decades of misinterpretations, misunderstandings, misapplications of concepts which cannot simply be described and enlisted as kinship relations and rituals can. Questions that have been rhetorical for a long time in the shadow of postmodernism, finally see the light and are cautiously being answered. In a process of disciplinary maturation, cultural anthropology finally catches on with the millenarian experience of philosophical ethics in the nature of morality. It forms its own perspective: descending from the heavens of speculative and normative philosophy it looks at the everyday moral statements of actual living people. Stepping away from meta-ethical issues and inquiries on how humanity *ought* to act, it observes how humans *do* act, and tries to understand why they choose to do so.

Many scholars have, especially in the last decade of our discipline, extensively written about the role of local moralities and their impact on the various social and cultural phenomena.¹ Morality is important because choices are important, this is true for every rational agent on earth (Gensler & Spurgin 2008). The choices we make are not arbitrary or matter of personal preference: they are the manifestation of deeper beliefs about right and wrong, what has value to us, and what has value to us as a community (Darwall 2002). The understanding of those beliefs is often underestimated in its importance, under-theorized, confused, eschewed as subjective and irrelevant. Ethics as a science and all its ramifications push us to better examine and clarify those beliefs and values,² making sense of the following choices and attitudes. It helps us understand and improve the framework we use to make those choices, the differences of belief it causes, addressing and clarifying moral issues which arise in social spheres such as politics, medicine and business (Gensler & Spurgin 2008; Timmons 2002). Obviously, since it affects all dimensions of human life, ethics as a science never stands alone. It connects, reacts and is influenced by disciplines as sociology, psychology, neuroscience, anthropology. We will for example see how discourses on moral relativism are prompted by anthropological ethnographic data (Cook 1999).

1 See the work of Howell (1997), Laidlaw (2002), Zigon (2008), Fassin (2008) Heintz (2009), Faubion (2011) among others.

2 We call philosophical ethics (moral philosophy) the philosophical investigation of questions about morality. Ethics is divided in three areas: normative, applied and meta-ethics (Gensler & Spurgin 2008; Oxford Dictionaries).

In their fieldwork, anthropologists have always stumbled upon moral views and local moral systems. While in a way it is true they have therefore been studying morality all along, it is, as Zigon (2008: 2) puts it, a matter of focus. Deemed a side-issue, seen as synonymous of social habits such as religious practices and reciprocity, a deeper understanding and anthropological study of morality *itself* has been hindered for a long time. With regard to the new moral branch of anthropology, some considerations are to be made.. Firstly, the purpose of moral anthropology is *not* promoting values, 'do good', telling what is right from what is wrong. This is the field of normative ethics. An anthropology of moralities analyzes and interprets the way social agents form, justify and apply their judgments on good and evil (Stoczkowski & Fassin 2008). The researcher does not start with meta-ethical questions such as if moral claims are true-apt, but from the *everyday lives* of actual living people, with an inductive way of reasoning (Zigon 2008). Secondly, morality is a complex phenomenon, which is influenced by and influences almost all the social and psychological dimensions of human life. No research can control *all* the variables at work, nor make insightful, relevant contributions without limiting its scope (Howell 1997).

The main purpose of this research is coming to understand how the cultural cognitive framework in which people live and think, influences their moral views, manifesting under form of everyday moral statements and choices. We call the broader structure that informs such moral views the 'local moral system'. More specifically, this research will focus on how the influences of institutional, public and embodied (acquired habits) aspects of local morality shape the moral views of a small community. First it will identify those issues which are considered of moral importance in the village. Secondly, data will be collected on the mentioned aspects of local morality. Thirdly, 'moral samples', morally relevant issues or views pertaining to the family will be related to the local moral system and its various dimensions. The central question that inspires the anthropological fieldwork is thus as follows: How are moral views of a family in a rural village of Luzon, Philippines, guided by the local moral system?

In the best interest of the project, both actual fieldwork and theoretical framework will be limited in their coverage of issues and extent of ramifications.³ Furthermore, the participant

³ With regard to the theory, this means considerations about for instance neuroscience or evolutionary psychology will be avoided, notwithstanding both have made insightful and essential contributions to the study of morality. See for instance work by Dunbar and Barrett (1999, 2002, 2007) and Laurence Tancredi (2005)

observation carried out is limited to the moral world of a family in a rural village of Luzon, Philippines, as to limit the complexity of global and social influences as much as possible. The local population retains traditions, values and views which are closer to the tribal history and animistic beliefs. This makes the local moral system more original and “uncontaminated”, perhaps limited in its scope. The duration of the fieldwork has been approximately ten weeks, in the months between January and May of the year 2012. It is of relevance to mention that the fieldwork was carried out in co-operation and company of Eva Krah, fellow anthropology student. Being local religion her research subject, this teamwork was most fruitful and methodologically advantageous. The informants were more at ease talking in group and with a couple, and the sharing of relevant observations was also extremely useful. Regarding techniques, most of the data was collected through semi-structured and informal interviews, building on information obtained in previous interviews and informal conversations. Because of the scarce availability of electricity in the village, the use of qualitative data management programs has been less than initially intended. While occasionally local views on morality have been subject of direct conversations, most of the relevant information on local moral views has been obtained in a more indirect fashion, asking for opinions first and looking at actual attitudes thereafter, in order to maximize the reliability of the data. Whilst for some informants the subject was too complex to discuss, other had a clear view on the matter; Questions and topics have been attuned accordingly.

The theoretical framework, based on literature research, is divided in two chapters. The first is about the concept of morality within cultural anthropology, its history and past misapplications. This chapter the issue of cultural and moral relativism. The second chapter analyzes how morality is locally structured, and the various aspects of a moral system according to Jarrett Zigon. While the third chapter is the actual theoretical core of this research, the first two can be seen as its underpinning, justifying and putting 'local morality' into a scientific context.

The third chapter concerns the region of interest, where the fieldwork will take place. It is followed by four chapters dedicated to the empirical part of the research. The data collected during the anthropological fieldwork will here be presented. Chapter four describes the institutional aspect of the local morality in Ahin, Philippines. The main topics discussed will be schooling and custom laws. Chapter five: the public aspect, containing remarks on the religious politics, legends, traditional rituals. Chapter six addresses the embodied aspect of

morality, with reflections on the shifting moral dynamics and the motivations to act morally. The last chapter of the empirical section analyzes two 'local moral samples', and their relation to the broader moral system; Elements out of the previous theoretical and empirical chapters will here be called upon to perform the analysis. In the conclusion these moral issues will finally be related to the community-wide moral breakdown to which the empirical data points. It is intention of this research, that these themes will, by integrating the anthropological theory of Jarrett Zigon on morality with the empirical data collected during fieldwork, create an understanding on some local morally-questionable issues such as heavy drinking.

2. Theoretical Framework

To avoid terminological confusion from the beginning, some definitions of the main concepts used in this research will be given. In the anthropological lexicon, ethics acquired a connotation that draws on Kantian doctrines regarding the freedom of rational agents (Heintz & Rasanayagam 2005) and the Foucaultian ideas on self-fashioning and ability of actors to submit themselves “freely” to particular “moral codes” (Faubion 2012). Ethics is thus a self-reflexive process of moral adaptation.⁴ Morality is defined by the Oxford dictionary as “principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior”.⁵ To better fit the anthropological context in which this notion is used and studied however, morality should be interpreted as those discourses articulated in various degrees of pressure and power by institutions and public outlets. When in a personal or individual context, morality should be seen as the embodied dispositions that unconsciously support and allow acceptable lifestyles (Zigon 2010).⁶

Relativism is a generic label that contains a variety of different views that all share the claim that the truth-value of statements is valid only in the particular context or framework where they originate (Becker 2007: 6). Cultural relativism holds that cultural values are arbitrary (Kottak 2002). In some of its forms, this theory asserts morality to be relative to cultures: the rightness or wrongness of actions depends on the moral code of the culture to which one

4 In other words, as Zigon (2010: 5) describes it, “a conscious acting on oneself either in isolation or with others so as to make oneself into a more appropriate and acceptable person not only in the eyes of others but also for oneself”.

5 This definition applies best to the normative fields of philosophical ethics, where moral 'principles' have actual epistemological meaning.

6 This concept is also defined as “habitus”, or an embodied ability that is not just physical in nature, but also involves cultivated moral sensibilities and passions (Heintz & Rasanayagam, 2005). The difference between morality as habitus or embodied dispositions and ethics, is that the first are not thought of beforehand, while the second is a conscious process triggered by moral breakdowns (Zigon, 2010).

belongs (Timmons 2002). It follows that, for example, slavery is not right or wrong taken apart from cultural standards (Gensler & Spurgin 2008).

The anthropological study of local morality is the study of those complex and deep systems of belief that regulate social conduct. Such systems include religion, local law, education, family values, cultural practices and beliefs among others. While there is a difference between the local moral system and the moral choices people finally make, such a system provides the framework in which moral experience makes sense (Zigon 2008: 52), and triggers personal emotions or the community's reaction when the established 'moral good' is infringed or promoted by individuals.

2.1 Morality misunderstood

For millennia philosophers have been writing and debating about morality, its importance in human life undisputed. From Aristotle's ideas on human flourishing to Kant's theory of right conduct, the discussion has mainly been on *what is good* and how we *ought* to behave. In cultural anthropology, moral propositions have for a long time been conflated with practices and habits, subjective and relative to culture. In the last decades, however, various social scientists have lent a better ear to philosophical ethics and risen above such definitional confusion. Ethical convictions about what is good, right or wrong, are not simply a set of arbitrary, unrelated opinions: they are deeply rooted in our conception of reality, in a more or less coherent 'moral structure', guided by normative reasons and sensible to social changes, ultimately manifesting in moral judgments, practices and beliefs (Darwall 1998).

2.1.1. History of moral anthropology

K.E. Read was, in the mid- fifties, one of the first to do an explicit, in-depth anthropological research on morality. He argued that, since anthropology is a discipline modeled on the natural sciences, the study of phenomena like morality were - unreasonably - for a long time eschewed as non-objective (Read 1955). In the decades after Read, however, post-modernistic trends triggered an interpretative and humanistic turn in the discipline: anthropologists began to focus their attention on the more encompassing system their informants lived in, and with that, the exploration of their moral worlds (Zigon 2008: 4). Notwithstanding how they defined morality and how they looked at it, many of the pioneers of anthropological fieldwork did,

even if indirectly, study local moralities.⁷ These anthropologists did however often conflate morality with economic exchange, reciprocity or religion (Read 1955: 235). This led many contemporary thinkers to the conclusion, that morality as a concept was, except for few unpopular exceptions, generally misunderstood within our discipline (Cook 1999; Howell 1997; Heintz 2009; Zigon 2008).

Following up to critiques of philosophers and calls for an anthropology of moralities,⁸ in 2006, starring Didier Fassin and Wiktor Stoczkowski, a debate on the issue found place.⁹ Fassin's plea for an anthropology of morality was unanimously recognized and accepted; some conditions were however suggested, meant to avoid the interpretative mistakes and terminological confusion of the past. Stoczkowski (2008) in particular expressed his concerns about common analytical traps fieldworkers would have to deal with. Furthermore, a methodological framework had to be made to make the study of such a complex subject possible. Jarrett Zigon is among the first “philosophically aware” anthropologists to explicitly focus on local moralities in his fieldwork, providing an anthropological theory of moralities which takes a phenomenological approach in analyzing the way morality and ethics is socially used (Zigon 2010). His theory differs from the philosophical assumption that morality exists anywhere in the world, and rather “sees all particular social contexts defined not by one morality and its ethics, but rather by a unique local moral and ethical assemblage” such an assemblage is constituted by institutional, public and embodied aspects (Zigon 2010: 5).¹⁰ Before addressing more in detail his theory and methodology, this research will discuss why exactly morality was misunderstood and how the anthropological perspective on the subject has changed.

2.1.2. Analytical traps in moral anthropology

The key statement that exposes the confusion in anthropology regarding morality is one made by Ruth Benedict in the 1930s: “We recognize that morality differs in every society, and is a convenient term for socially approved habits” (Benedict 1934: 3). While such statement may seem innocuous at first glance, it is fundamentally wrong to conflate “approved habits” with

7 Evans-Pritchard's work on the Azande and Malinowski's study of Trobriand societies are some examples.

8 See among others Read 1955; Edel & Edel 1959; Howell 1997; Laidlaw 2002; Heintz 2005.

9 The summary of this debate was published in *Anthropological Theory* (2008 8:331, *Should anthropology be moral?*).

10 The awareness of the philosophical thought on morality, and the integration in some parts of his theory (such as Aristotle, Kant, Foucault and Weber) made his approach of a completely different level than past research on morality both in quality and effectiveness.

morality. The mistake is similar to the one mentioned earlier: confusing morality with cultural practices such as economic exchange, reciprocity and religion (Read 1955: 235). Benedict was most likely talking about the different statements, practices and issues she encountered in her travels, and seemed – to her – having moral characteristics. As many scholars in the last decades have pointed out, social habits and practices do often not even have a moral reference; discerning between moral and non-moral is crucial but tricky, especially with regard to alien cultures (Cook 1999; Zigon 2008).¹¹ In anthropological research, morality should thus be seen as a system rather than a bunch of principles.

Nowadays, anthropologists do not longer attempt to provide a full depiction of a small-scale society (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011). In the past, the local morality of such society was described along with other local customs in long lists of supposed “values and moral principles” (e.g. Fürer-Haimendorf 1964: 276). As said before, such moral concepts were sometimes religious beliefs, etiquette and values completely unrelated with morality (Zigon 2008: 5).¹² Today we can benefit from the insights and experience ethnographic tradition has given us. The first step in doing this is to identify the analytical traps.

The first, as said earlier, is the thought that morality can be codified in terms of principles and rules. Contrary to a discipline such as normative ethics, in real life situations this would in fact be misleading: the existence of principles such as 'one should not be cruel' *cannot* be inferred from a statement such as 'I shouldn't have said that to him, it was cruel' (Cook 1999).¹³ Secondly, morality has to be distinguished from culture. Conflating morality with culture makes the concept and study of it pointless. Such an approach would lead, as in the past, to superficial lists of “socially approved habits” which are remotely or not at all related to the moral world of informants.¹⁴ The third mistake anthropologists made studying morality is what Cook (1999) calls “the projection error”. This, as Cook explains it, consists in “thinking, on account of their similarity, that the actions of an alien people are actions of

11 As John Cook (1999) points out, the lack of knowledge on the moral reference of statements and social habits, precludes moral-relativistic claims on basis of anthropological data.

12 Although contemporary anthropologists interested in morality such as Zigon have criticized such “lists” and views on morality, it is all part of an hermeneutic enrichment the term has undergone in the last century. If today we interpret and approach morality in a more subtle and holistic way, it is thanks to those “misapplications” of past anthropologists, together with influences and criticism from moral philosophers.

13 While this may seem a subtle distinction, it makes a great difference in the practice of participant observation. It is one of the reasons why in anthropological research an *interpretative* approach to the local conceptions of morality has to be undertaken (Zigon 2008). This means that we explicate a moral world not by enlisting a set of rules, but by showing the underlying relationships with the social reality and ontological views of the individuals. It follows that we understand morality as a dynamic and shifting phenomenon, interconnected with all the social cultural dimensions.

14 This is why Howell (1997) in the introduction of an edited collection of essays on morality, states the importance for anthropologists to focus on a very specific practice or space in order to be able to understand and analyze the subtle detail of people's moral lives.

the *same* sort as actions that might occur in – or that one is familiar with from – one's own culture” (Cook 1999: 93).¹⁵ Similar to the third, the fourth mistake is involving and imposing personal moral views on the people we study.¹⁶ When personal moral values and epistemological values coexist and conflict, the anthropologist should not renounce the latter in order to defend the former (Fassin & Stoczkowski 2008: 331). The awareness of such personal system of values is necessary for the successful understanding of an alien morality.

2.1.3. Social habits and moral propositions

Most people would agree that when we say “it is wrong to drive on the left” this is not a moral issue. Would an Englishman, doing fieldwork on local morality in the Netherlands, describe “driving on the right” as immoral? Dutch informants will tell him that driving on the left is “wrong”. He would, however, probably discover that there is an arbitrary common agreement in the Netherlands to all drive on the right side of the road, and would dismiss this habit as not morally relevant. As Howell (1997: 4) states, it is precisely the challenge for anthropologists to discern between “values which are derived from a larger metaphysical whole and actual behavior and practices”.

In his work on the Azande, Evans-Pritchard shows how witchcraft is a significant concept within Azande morality (Zigon 2008: 49). It “embraces a system of values which regulate human conduct” (Evans-Pritchard 1968: 63). What the famous anthropologist was able to see, unlike many others in his time, was how morality could be used as a tool for trying to understand religious practices. Conscious of the broader system of moralities behind it, Evans-Pritchard saw witchcraft as just one manifestation of it. The underlying cognitive framework in which statements and practices originate should always be understood before making claims about their meaning and moral significance. According to Zigon (2010), the obviousness of “cultural and historical diversity in moral systems” anthropologists as Fiske and Mason see, comes from ethnographic data which is not at all focused on local moralities, but on the contrary see morality as a side issue and even then exchanges non-moral values for

15 This occurs when one witnesses alien people acting in a certain way, one is ignorant of their actual motivations, and the action itself appears to be similar to an action of the same sort one may witness in the own culture (Cook 1999). The anthropologist thus “projects” his own conceptual luggage on the people he is studying.

16 Stoczkowski warns us for this tendency: “anthropological research necessarily mobilizes a system of values of which the anthropologist is, sometimes unconsciously, a carrier” (Fassin & Stoczkowski 2008: 331). Such tendency often takes the form of a supposed “mission” anthropologists have to “defend, to lavish the benefits of its science and of its action on those in need” (Stoczkowski 2008: 349). This view of anthropological data as a “instrument for moral improvement” (Stoczkowski 2008: 349) hinders the analytical process.

moral ones. Ironically, such anthropological data also serves as “proof” for arguments underpinning moral relativism.¹⁷

2.1.4 Cultural and moral relativism

Clifford Geertz once observed that, with regard to the discussion of anthropology and relativism, “what looks like a debate about the broader implication of anthropological research is really a debate about how to live with them” (Geertz 1984). When relativism and anti-relativism are seen as responses to these implications, the discussion can begin.¹⁸ While this is not the space to discuss at length the various viewpoints, when studying local moralities, awareness of the ongoing discussion on relativism is crucial: such a discussion in fact justifies morality as an anthropological subject of study.

There is a tension, as (Zigon 2008; Zigon 2009) calls it, within our discipline. The reflection on the 'supposed' intercultural diversity on moral beliefs and cultural relativism has led many anthropologists to believe in a certain relativity of values, and embrace the moral theory of ethical relativism (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011; Zigon 2008:11). The central idea of said theory can be expressed as “what is right and wrong for the members of a culture depends on the basic moral norms of their culture” (Timmons 2002: 40). At the same time however, they criticize and address fiercely moral issues in the cultures they come to know and hear about.¹⁹

The discussion on the role of morality in cultural relativism dates back to the 1950s. In these years, Kluckhohn argued that “The principle of cultural relativity does not mean that because the members of some savage tribe are allowed to behave in a certain way that this fact gives intellectual warrant for such behavior in all groups. Cultural relativity means, on the contrary, that the appropriateness of any positive or negative custom must be evaluated with regard to how this habit fits with other group habits. Having several wives makes economic sense among herders, not among hunters. While breeding a healthy skepticism as to the eternity of any value prized by a particular people, anthropology does not as a matter of

17 Philosopher John Cook (1999) discusses this phenomenon in his book "morality and cultural differences", making use of many examples from the ethnographic tradition, starting with pioneers such as Tylor and Frazer.

18 According to Geertz, relativists want us to worry about provincialism: the conceptual context of our society should not limit us in our perceptions and intellects. On the other side, the anti-relativists are concerned about an "spiritual entropy". By relativizing everything, everything and nothing is of importance (Geertz 1984).

19 Within feminist anthropology for example, the debate on female genital mutilation and the “unjust” oppression of women in Islamic culture has been raging for decades, and is in some way still ongoing. While certain moral opinions and judgments are certainly understandable in a more personal and informal setting, it does raise questions about academic objectivity, endangering once again the scientific status of disciplines like anthropology.

theory deny the existence of moral absolutes” (Kluckhohn 1944: 43). It follows that there are good reasons to separate moral from cultural relativism. For when we can properly discern between cultural practices and moral principles, we find that it is those practices, and not the principles that are relative. Morality and moral statements imply in fact a truth-value unknown to cultural habits and practices. Label morality as 'relative' would thus mean advocating the relativity of such truth-value.²⁰ But before saying a moral proposition is relative, we have to be able to disagree about its truth. This implies that we must have a common background, common concepts and beliefs to actually understand and give sense to those propositions (Stout 2001). Relativism requires something to be true in one cognitive framework and culture while false in another, but as Swoyer (1982) puts it, “The relativist seems unable to tell a convincing story about what it is that can be true in a relative sense. A difficulty arises in trying to maintain simultaneously that two frameworks are sufficiently different for one thing to be true in one while false in the other and that they are sufficiently alike to share something which could thus vary in truth value” (Meiland and Krausz 1982). In other words, it is difficult to define a moral proposition as relative when the groups involved differ in such a radical way they would lack the conceptual resources to express the truth-value of one and the same proposition.²¹ It appears to be the fundamentally differing nature of the conceptual frameworks in which we utter moral statements and judgments, that tricks us in embracing a moral theory of relativism.

What does anthropological research tell us about morality? Cultural anthropology studies this diversity of customs, coping strategies and traditions people all over the world have developed and acquired in time (Kottak 2008). According to many scholars, the resulting anthropological data leads to the conclusion that culture is relative (Kottak 2002). The same reasoning does not however apply to morality. When we think it does, we confuse local non-moral values and practices with morality (Cook 1999, Zigon 2008: 11). What this data does tell us, is that people around the world differ in customs and traditions, that people make different moral statements. The diversity of moral principles cannot however not be inferred from this diversity (Cook 1999: 131; Stout 1988; Timmons 2002). Anthropologist – not to

20 This while, as Zigon argues, morality has for a long time not even been a topic of specific focus and interest, “but instead a side issue that is called upon for analytic purposes when thought to be needed” (Zigon 2008: 11).

21 Swoyer argues that the truth-value of such a proposition may however be relative in a “weak sense”, namely that certain things that are true in one group and its conceptual framework may not be expressible in the other, and thus “a fortiori not true in another” (Swoyer in Meiland and Krausz 1982: 105).

mention Ruth Benedict in her time – have neither the data nor the arguments to make such claim yet. Notice that the caveat in all this is not that moralities do not differ within cultures, even more so: in any particular culture or local setting there is a range of moralities (Zigon 2008: 13). What it does mean, is that moral relativism as an *ethical theory* does not follow from anthropological data on morality. We cannot properly underpin moral principles to be relative, that what is right for me is wrong for others and it's all *true, based* on anthropological research. As this research will show, differing moral values and views, can and should be carefully analyzed by means of participant observation. The resulting data will often show that those values and views can often be explained by the particular environmental, cultural, historical and social variables at work.

The intercultural diversity of moral norms is by far not proven, certainly not obvious as Fiske and Mason (1990) claim. As we have seen, misleading moral diversity, projection-errors, cultural practices mistaken for moral values, and many other misinterpretations form the shaky grounds moral relativism is based on.

2.2 Local Morality

As said earlier, we can talk of 'local morality' only insofar we acknowledge moral diversity and grant morality a place in the relativism of cultures. This does not exclude the existence of a moral truth, nor does it imply radical moral relativism (Stout 1988; Meiland and Krausz 1982). It does however mean cultural, social and historical forces can lead to a variety of moral 'alternatives'. The awareness of the variables and forces at work shaping local morality gives us the ability to study each moral system as an unique entity, part of the distinct culture. When establishing the existence of separate, coherent systems in every society, few things must be acknowledged. Firstly, it should be recognized that within any given society, multiple moralities can exist (Heintz & Rasanayagam 2005).²² Secondly, the effects of power-relations in regulating and influencing moral ideas and practices (Zigon 2008; Heintz & Rasanayagam 2005). Thirdly, the dynamic nature of not only the various components of local moralities,²³ such as the changing policies of a government in time, but also of the ethical sensibilities of individuals. All persons, as free moral agents, are in fact repeatedly confronted with moral

22 While often an encompassing system can be identified, some components of a local moral system are variable. People may in fact adhere to different religions and be part of different groups.

23 Even if some connections and structures between them may stay the same for centuries, "it is almost axiomatic that social conditions are always changing" (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011: 112).

breakdowns, which lead them to continually evolve and revise their position in the local moral system (Zigon 2010; Foucault 2000c; Heintz & Rasanayagam 2005). Since these chapters serve as theoretical framework for an anthropological fieldwork limited in time, our discussion on local morality will focus mainly on those patterns and aspects of morality that influence everyday moral choices.

2.2.1. Moral languages

Language can both be seen as a metaphor and the normative source for local moralities. As a response to the fall, in the post-modernistic discourse, of intuition as the “rational arbiter” in the ethical debate, language came to be seen by many as the only normative resource for the ethical (Becker 2007: 6).²⁴ From an anthropological viewpoint, this very concept of language as a normative resource constitutes the main problem with the study of local moralities. As Stout (1988: 62) puts it: “most moral propositions entertained in the one culture have no analogues in the other. They don’t share enough conceptual ground, it seems, to disagree with, or to translate, each others sentences”. This does not mean understanding within cultures is impossible. While, for instance, we may lack the conceptual resources needed to express and correctly interpret some moral propositions that a cannibalistic society sees as true (and vice versa), acculturation and hermeneutic innovations make, with time, such understanding possible.²⁵

All moral languages different cultures over the world employ, have their own concepts, way of reasoning, logic. The deep link of the words and constructions we use in our language with the conceptual framework in which we think and by which our choices are influenced is key in the understanding local morality. The best approach to an alien moral system would thus be shifting, to begin with, our focus from the sentence to its context. We create, like Stout (1988) says, the “common conceptual ground” we need to even disagree or translate such sentence. This arduous process is hindered by the anthropologist's own moral luggage. Furthermore, the tendency to think the actions of the alien people to be comparable with the actions one is familiar with, leads to morally relativistic conclusions such as “what

24 Language, a comprehensive notion interwoven with culture, ratio and historical context, became more than the simple utterance of sounds, it contained, in a way, the truth-value of moral propositions. Many of those concerned with ontology and meta-ethics followed this Wittgensteinian view on language.

25 Additionally, If those propositions were in fact true, and if we did have a language with the conceptual resources for the correct interpretation and translation of such moral propositions and beliefs, those propositions would be true also in our moral language.

they consider morally wrong is considered good in that other culture” (Zigon 2008; Cook 1999).²⁶ With the purpose of overcoming such cross-cultural cognitive differences, philosopher Charles Taylor (1985: 205) suggested a “language of perspicuous contrast”. This, according to Taylor, “would be a language in which the possible human variations would be so formulated that both our form of life and theirs could be perspicuously described as alternative such variations”. In other words, our moral discourse and the one of the culture investigated, would be seen as alternative possibilities derived and relative to the very same human constants at work in both societies.²⁷

2.2.2. Moral and ethical assemblages

It is a central contention of this research that many classic ethnographies have described and analyzed parts of the local moral system, meaning the various aspects which directly or indirectly influence people's moral views. Some have gone more in depth than others, but never explicitly describing and “unfolding” the moral world of the studied society, with all its domains, influences and connections (Zigon 2008). Morality can in fact be observed from many viewpoints and in almost all the layers and facets of a culture. Religion, law, sexuality, health are just some of the most obvious and perhaps easy to relate to as anthropologist with an European cultural background (Howell 1999). In his outline of an anthropological theory of moralities, Jarrett Zigon (2010) states that when we consider the moral system of a particular society or group, we distinguish “various institutional, public and personal moral discourses and ethical practices” which explain and influence the individual’s moral judgments and choices. Zigon called those combined moral aspects or discourses a “unique local moral and ethical assemblage” (2010).

The first aspect of morality is the institutional. Formal and non formal organizations that wield varying amounts of power over individuals exist in all societies, and they often claim to bear the truth with regard to morality. Adhering to such morality is generally a requirement to be part of those institutions, even though the not following or transgressions of members often goes unnoticed. The strictness of rules and amount of control institutions employ also varies. Some examples are organized religions, the government, elder councils,

26 As discussed earlier on, the reason why such conclusions are inappropriate - with regard to the study of morality - is that such an action, done by alien people, may be in fact related in a very different way to morality than it is in one's own culture.

27 Once we obtain this perspective, such language might, according to Taylor, reveal distortions or inadequacies in their, our or both languages of understanding (Taylor 1985: 205).

and broader international organizations such as the UN.²⁸

The second aspect Zigon (2010) describes is that of the public discourse. The everyday interactions between persons and all public articulations of morally charged beliefs, views, fears and hopes are part of it. While certainly interrelated with the institutional moralities, those articulations do not directly follow from them. Media, the arts, legends and stories, parental educations and opinions are among others part of such public discourse. Philosophical and social scientific debate is also part of this discourse, personal opinions and views meet each other in this dimension, influencing and shaping the future discourse.

The third aspect of morality, the embodied dispositions, is “one’s already cultivated everyday way of being in the world” (Zigon 2010: 8). These un-reflective and un-reflexive dispositions of everyday social life are attained over a lifetime of living in a certain cultural context, performing, thinking and expressing almost unconsciously actions and sentences that entail a certain moral value. Being an ‘naive’ observer, the fieldworker sees details of those embodied dispositions the native does not, and more importantly he does not take such habits for granted (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011: 88).²⁹

Related to the third dimension of morality, Zigon recognizes the existence of a conscious reflection by persons on their moral habits or embodied dispositions. This is what he calls “ethics”: the moment persons become reflexive about how they are in the world and what they should do. Zigon here integrates in his theory the Foucaultian notion of ethics, which the philosopher described as “the conscious practice of freedom” (Foucault 2000).³⁰ According to Zigon (2010) when people face a decision, a painful event, an injustice and such, a moral breakdown occurs, which confronts and forces the person to reflect upon an appropriate ethical response. Such moral breakdowns should not only be seen as dilemma’s which require a decision, but especially as those events which involve suffering and pain, which prompt the shift towards an “ethical mode”. The ethical moment can also be triggered by interactions with other people, leading to an inner reflection on what kind of person one wants to be. In this creative process, new moral persons and worlds originate, and there is a

28 Notice that even if individuals do not always precisely follow the rules and agree with those institutional moralities, their influence is always real and substantial.

29 As said earlier on, the informants are not the only ones to have these acquired dispositions: the “moral habits” and cultural norms of the anthropologist himself should not stand in the way during research on moralities, or endanger its objectivity (Stoczkowski & Fassin 2008).

30 According to Michel Foucault (2000), when reflexive upon their own embodied dispositions, people are consciously working on becoming what in their cultural context is seen as a moral person. It follows that freedom is an ontological condition for ethics. The meaning of freedom of choice and its relation to morality is an important and vast topic, which we cannot pursue in this space.

slight opening from where the individual can break free of all the institutional, public and embodied moralities against whose pressure and influence he may seem helpless. As Zigon (2010) notices however, the three domains of morality play a great role in informing and guiding the ethical reflection and the direction towards which the person eventually develops and changes. It is this struggle to repeatedly remake oneself when confronted with moral breakdowns, that the essence of ethics resides.

While this ethical moment most certainly is crucial in the development of moral views, it is a central contention of this research that the attention of the anthropologist should especially be directed to the actually observable - public and institutional - aspects of the broader moral system. Only once the local moral system, in which the described ethical moment takes place, is thoroughly analyzed, one may attempt to describe the personal process of choice-making. Moreover, as the empirical chapters of this research will show, there is more to the embodied aspect of morality than Zigon suggests in his theory: such moral dispositions are not merely acquired by living in a certain cultural context, but also shaped by the lives of those members who are characteristic for said cultural context. The embodied moral disposition can thus be understood not only as pertaining to an individual, but to the whole group.

2.3 Conclusion

Recapitulating, we have seen how morality is a social phenomena that cannot be ignored nor easily put aside, and should be an *explicit* subject of interest for anthropologists. While once eschewed as subjective and impossible to study properly, today we place it in a 'measurable' broader cultural and cognitive framework in which it develops and changes, along with the population. Moral principles of individuals, let alone populations, cannot be inferred from statements, but such statements can be used as starting point for further inquiry in the tacit aspects of culture such as the local morality. After decades of misinterpretations and misapplications, we have acquired the theoretical and analytical tools necessary to separate morally relevant issues and statements from social practices and personal preferences. It is with those tools this fieldwork will be carried out. It is the task of moral anthropologists to collect around the world the pieces of a great puzzle called morality. Each local moral sample will, once thoroughly analyzed, reveal something about the truth-value of moral principles, or leastwise foster a better intercultural moral and ethical understanding.



Illustration 1: View of the central settlement of Ahin



Illustration 2: Ahin, central village, view of the main street and Catholic church

3. The Kalanguya of Ahin

Luzon, the location where the anthropological fieldwork of this research took place, is the largest island of the Philippines, host to a great multitude of different ethnic groups each with their own dialects and traditions. The common name for these indigenous people is *Igorots* or *Cordillerans*, and they mostly occupy the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), in the center and north of the island. The word *I-gorot* literally means 'people from the mountains', and although during Spanish rule (from the 16th until the 19th century) it acquired a negative connotation, synonymous of 'savage, backwards', in the second half of the past century it regained its true meaning (Scott 1975, 1993). Filipino, a nationalized version of Tagalog (language spoken in eight provinces), is the official language of the Philippines. The second official language, English, is a reminder of the American occupation, which lasted almost fifty years. *Kalanguya* is both the name of the tribe and the dialect present in the specific region of interest for this research.

3.1 The Kalanguya

The Kalanguya are one of the seven major ethno-linguistic groups who occupy the mountainous Cordillera Administrative Region (see the maps). Until recently they were not considered, even by anthropologists, as a separate group, but listed as a child-tribe of the Ifugao. Despite the lack of national and international recognition however, the Kalanguya recognize the language, songs, dances and other forms of cultural knowledge as uniquely theirs (Arsenio and Stallsmith 2008). The original territory of the Kalanguya is Ahin, known as the first Kalanguya settlement, Tinoc, the broader location of origin of the Kalanguya, has only recently become a separate municipality, since the indigenous status of the ethnic group is now officially recognized.

Historically the Kalanguya faced frequent aggression and invasions from the northern head-hunting tribes, together with epidemics and famine one of the reasons for the several waves of emigration. The first occurred in the early years of terrace building when headhunters from Ifugao and Mountain Region tribes in neighboring villages attacked their settlement. The peaceful Kalanguya did not put up any resistance and fled. The invaders however, were forced to leave when an epidemic caused many deaths among them. Kalanguya legends tell that they had incurred the anger of the gods by attacking and driving

the peace-loving Kalanguya tribe out of their land (Daguitan 2010: 35). These waves of emigration are the reason the Kalanguya tribe is nowadays scattered all over several provinces and regions, maintaining however their own dialect and occasionally returning to Tinoc, the only fully speaking Kalanguya municipality in the Philippines. Traditionally each family had their house close to their own gardens and rice-terraces, living very distanced from each other. This could be one of the reasons the tribe never had the military power to ward off the attacks of their enemies; the lack of social contact also contributed to the shy personality of the Kalanguya that is still observable today.

3.2 Ahin

Ahin is the barangay (smallest administrative division in the Philippines) where the anthropological fieldwork of this research took place. Its inhabited centers spread out over a steep valley marked by the wild Ahin river, the village is said to be the first settlement of the Kalanguya tribe. Ahin is one of the twelve barangays of Tinoc, municipality of Ifugao, province of the Cordillera Administrative Region, in the north of the Philippines (see map1). As many of the barangays in the Cordillera's, Ahin has one small central village, composed by circa fifteen households, and more than ten smaller *sitios* scattered around the valley, the farthest at a ten-hour hike.

The whole Tinoc region, in the high mountains of the East Cordillera, is a very isolated municipality, in many ways cut off from other parts of Luzon and lowland Philippines. Up to 1996, Tinoc was the only municipality in the whole country not accessible by motorized vehicles. Only in 2006 the road network was completed but leaving four of Tinoc's twelve barangays – including Ahin – only accessible by foot, and with no form of public transport. Some barangays are as far as a ten hours hiking distance from the first bus-stop along the rough, uncemented central road. To reach Ahin, one has to hike three hours from the nearest bus-stop close to the neighboring barangay Wangwang. Ahin is located in a green valley, surrounded by steep mountains covered with pine trees, amid beautiful rice-terraces, the by far most important means of sustenance for the farming villagers.³¹

31 Notwithstanding the hundreds of square meters of rice terraces, the Kalanguya of Ahin can only eat five months off the rice they harvest once a year. The remaining months villagers settle for the *Camote* (sweet potato) and garden vegetables. Every family has at least some free-ranging chickens around their house that are to be slaughtered and eaten during special occasions. Many severely emaciated small dogs wander through the village in search of food. Dog meat is considered a delicacy dear especially to men, eaten mostly while drinking. Unlike in the past, today only a few villagers own pigs or *carabao* (water buffalo) since they are very expensive to grow. Their meat is distributed only during special occasions such as the *canao*, a ritual feast, or at weddings or funerals.

The elementary school in the central village provides employment for around ten teachers, only few of them from Ahin itself, and there is one midwife permanently present. Nevertheless, 95% of the villagers are dependent from agriculture and even the teachers have their fields or gardens where they work in the evenings and weekends. There is only a very small money economy since only a few people (the teachers and some barangay officials) are hired and paid by the government, while the rest of the villagers harvest the rice they plant themselves, build their own houses with the wood they cut in the forests, leaving almost no necessity for having cash money. Problems arise only in cases money is needed for buying medicines, paying for hospitalization or for the education of children.

In Ahin there is no electricity, no internet signal and only one old brand of cell phone has rare signal in some places. There are however some houses with a small solar-panel capable to light few bulbs and a radio, while the school and barangay hall have water dynamo's, that work when the rain has been abundant. Some families sell alcohol, candies and soft drinks but there are no real shops, nor cafes. According to a study of a local researcher there are 218 households in the whole Ahin area from which 162 are below poverty threshold (Daguitan 2010: 4), but in the 'center' (the area closest to the road) there are only a dozen of houses with only a few families living there (see map2). Some villagers however, live as far away as twelve hours hiking distance, close to the border of the Benguet province. There are many houses high up in the mountains, completely invisible from the river that flows down the valley. Central in Ahin is the barangay hall, comparable with a municipal hall; a gathering place used for meetings or trainings. This is also the place to receive and host visitors. In front of the central Catholic Church there is a small square with a public washing place and clotheslines where women hang their clothes to dry. Besides this Catholic 'mother church', there are two smaller Catholic churches, scattered all over the surrounding mountains. In other *sitios* (inhabited areas) of Ahin one can find a Lutheran church and at one hour distant from the barangay hall, the unfinished Pentecostal church. Far most of the people officially belong to the Roman Catholic church, but according to local studies nearly half of the community still adhere to the traditional belief system (Daguitan 2010: 41), even though they might be baptized as Catholics.³²

32 Christianity in general was introduced relatively late in the area. Whereas other parts of the Philippines were successfully Christianized by the end of Spanish colonization (1671 to 1896) Christian religions first came to Tinoc with the arrival of Catholic priest Fr. Silbano Castel in 1951 and American Lutheran missionary Pastor Juraine Hornig in 1960 (Daguitan 2010: 42).

4. Empirical section: Introductory remarks

4.1 Kalanguya moral terminology

A word that is both misleading and key in identifying the moral statements made in Ahin is '*pihyew*'. Informants translate this as 'not allowed' or as 'taboo'. It has a different meaning however than the word '*llauwa*', which simply means 'bad', often said to children when they are doing something that should not be done, like playing with fire. The notion of 'taboo' seems to have a different connotation than the one it has in English and European languages: it is not something bad, secretive and avoided in conversations, for instance, incest. Such things are just said to be *llauwa*, bad, together with crimes like murder or child abuse. *pihyew* has no exact translation in the English language: it refers to those actions that involve blasphemy and the infringement of cultural codes. More specifically, the incorrect performance of a ritual or traditional prayer is considered as morally wrong and of bad consequence: it will disrupt the balance and harmony in the relationship with spirits and ancestors. What defines something to be morally right or wrong often pertains to the 'border' between the world of the living people and that of the unseen beings. Countless examples can be given to underpin this: While doing the *baki*, the traditional prayer, forgetting to name one ancestor may cause serious trouble for the *mabaki* (he who does the *baki*, the traditional priest) himself and all the people involved. When somebody commits a crime, and a pig is butchered after the amicable settlement, only some selected elders may eat from the meat, otherwise the blame of the crime will spread to the people eating (*impabah-il*). If a blessed chicken is prepared for a child that is too lazy, no one may eat from it, if someone does, his personality may also change in unpredictable ways (*Tanong*). Especially after a ritual such as the *pahang*, done when someone commits an immorality such as adultery, there is a period of 'penitence' inflicted upon the person in which he must stay in his house, without working. It depends from the action how long this period will be. According to some informants, this period of 'penitence', in which working is *pihyew*, was longer in the past, up to some months. Nowadays it is usually not longer than three days. Summarizing, the word *pihyew* is thus always used in relation to rituals and traditional practices. It indicates those actions that are 'not allowed' or 'taboo' during or after a ritual.

Moral statements that bare no relevance to the traditional religious system and are thus just *llauwa* (bad) or *pehed* (good) come from a long oral tradition preserved by 'cultural

experts' such as the *mabaki* and some elders. The Kalanguya of Ahin consider immorality to be *doing 'llauwa'* or *being 'llauwa'*. Committing adultery or stealing is immoral but also being aggressive or lazy and having other similar 'personality flaws' is immoral. While the word *llauwa* is associated with the actions and personality of people, the word *pihyew* is associated with the sacred and religious rituals, it can be translated as blasphemy. In this research, all that is *pihyew* will be considered part and relevant for the local moral system, since it plays a crucial role in determining the moral views of people. A statement such as “unmarried boys and girls should not touch” may be promoted by elders, but is not frowned upon and seen as critical as *pihyew*'s are. Also the *mabaki* may promote or condemn certain actions and immoralities, but he will only interfere and perform healing rituals when called upon. Such moral rules originate in embodied dispositions of the people, those habits and unconscious attitudes that are part of a cultural baggage transmitted to the young from a young age, mostly just through example. A boy will not touch a girl for various reasons: An embodied disposition consisting in a great shyness (the Kalanguya as a tribe are, together with the Ibaloy, well-known throughout the northern Philippines for their shyness), reinforced by the rules and the moral lessons brought by Christianity. This combination of culture and religion is added to the public fear for sexual misconduct, and the encouragement of the whole community for both boys and girls to preserve their sexual purity. It is difficult and maybe irrelevant to discern which moral rules came from the original Kalanguya tradition and which are introduced by Christianity and other foreign influences. Besides, most of those traditional rules overlap with the Christian ones: informants say for example the *bilin* existed long before the Spaniards came. The *bilin* is a list of 'oral commandments' of the old tradition. They are very similar (and are replaced) to the Christian 'ten commandments'. It features rules such as “thou shall not kill” and “do not destroy others property”. Since those rules were not written, but orally transmitted by elders and the leaders, with the coming of Christianity and the Bible the *bilin* came to be seen as obsolete: informants will say that it was just “all those things that were considered bad in the past”. Today, whenever an elder will give his advice to the people during occasions, religious services, amicable settlements, it will also be called *bilin*. It can thus be translated as 'advices from knowledgeable people'.³³ Simon, hard-working farmer and part of the Pentecostal church, active in an even more remote location deep in the valley of

33 Note: all the citations of informants are literal transcriptions of interviews. Grammatical errors and expressions are intentionally preserved for research purposes.

Ahin, reacted a little uneasy when confronted with the supposed Pentecostal restrictions on alcohol. He filled once more the glasses with rice-wine, and went for the traditional arguments regarding drinking:

“It is not bad when you drink and just keep quiet. Only when you box and get violent. Girls may also drink, but in the Bible it says “not too much”. It depends also from the person, there are different people. “do not drink too much” is a *bilin*, an advice. Especially for teenagers. But when you drink a little it is like a medicine.” (*Simon, farmer and Pentecostal lay-leader*)³⁴

It is key to notice that even the elders, while 'doing *bilin*', will differentiate between something that is just 'advisable', something *llauwa* (bad) and something *pihyew*. There are good reasons for all of these rules, the consequences of which differ however in gravity. While holding hands with a girl may get you some bad looks from elders, hiking in a particular area where *bibiyaw*, the natural spirits, are known to dwell (this is *pihyew*), may get you killed.

Reassuring, statements that bare moral relevance in Ahin can be grouped in three categories: *bilin* (or advice), *llauwa* and *pehed* (bad, good) and *pihyew* (blasphemy). Of course, these categories often overlap or coincide. The gravity depends from the point of view: Murder is considered a graver immorality than interrupting a ritual, but this last action can result in the deadly wrath of the unseen, which may affect the whole community, while the first action can be 'amicably settled'. It can be said that two forces motivate individuals to act morally: a 'human', practical and public one, and a 'spiritual' one, driven by the fear for ancestors and spirits. It is crucial at this point to recollect Read's (1955: 235) warning regarding the conflation of morality with other social phenomena such as religion. We can however recognize here a common pattern in the anthropological study of moralities: The existence of a phenomenon that is the key to understand local morality and vice versa. As discussed in the theoretical framework, Evans-Pritchard illustrates in his work on the Azande how witchcraft “embraces a system of values which regulate human conduct” (Evans-Pritchard 1968: 63). In a similar fashion, the belief in an unseen, spiritual world is closely related to the moral world of the Kalanguya. In the same way “it is witchcraft” may be translated as “it is bad” according to Evans-Pritchard (1968: 107) so can “it is *pihyew*”.

34 Open Interview, house of the informant, 5 April 2012

Religion, or the spiritual world in the case of the Kalanguya, relates to morality in that it provides, as Zigon (2008: 52) puts it “a conceptual framework within which moral experience makes sense”. This notion shall become more clear during the coming chapters, where the influence of the unseen on Kalanguya morality will be examined further.

4.2 New and old vices

Alcoholism (as consequence of the availability of cheap liquor) and gambling are two of the 'new vices' which traditional customs and the elders experience have neither remedy nor rules for. The awareness of the immorality of these two practices is mostly promoted and divulged by christian churches: missionaries and lay-leaders attending seminars in the city bring moral arguments and rules to the community. In Ahin it is often the case that those who are critical about the christian moral superiority consider drinking and gambling not to be immoral, just sometimes disadvantageous. According to some villagers, such immoral attitudes can be caused by the fact that an unseen being has 'stolen' the soul of the vicious person. In this case a ritual as the *pahang* can be performed, in which the *mabaki* will try to find the lost soul and call it back to its owner. It is however not always the case a vice is acquired, sometimes the person is, as some put it, “just born that way”: a gambler or an alcoholic. Traditional beliefs, concerning nature, fate, and all those moral issues present from “time immemorial” are always taken with great graveness. This may not be immediately apparent, since most people giggle and laugh when telling stories or talking about the traditional beliefs, that is, the unseen spirits, the *baki*, the rituals. Once their stories are met with the sincere interest and respect of the listener however, most informants will turn serious. People show moreover an extended knowledge about which things are *pihyew*, the spirits that dwell in the forests, and other cultural practices. This knowledge shows that the heyday of traditional religion is not so far away, its manifestations fading but surely not forgotten. Morality is an intrinsic part of this tradition, sometimes integrating with the imported Christian morality, sometimes being overruled, sometimes resisting and alive in the imaginary of the people, manifesting itself in the actions and choices they make.

Experience is crucial in determining what is of moral importance for the family, and most villagers in general. Like in most cultures, moral rules are the result of a long tradition, of the experiences of the forefathers. The Kalanguya of Ahin would say that whenever something is good, it is because it has 'proven' to be advantageous, or to bring good luck.

When something is considered bad or evil, it has 'proven' to bring bad luck. According to the Kalanguya oral tradition, unseen, natural spirits called *bibiyaw*³⁵ often bring bad luck, that is why nowadays they are identified by some as daemons, or the devil. Good or evil, these spirits can definitively influence one's life. Informants report that by cutting a tree without asking the *bibiyaw* to go away, the woodcutter may accidentally destroy the house of an unseen spirit, and by doing so experience their wrath, through sickness or accidents. Whether someone invented these spirits to make people respect their environment does not matter for the natives. The fact remains that still today woodcutters who do not chase the *bibiyaw* away before cutting a tree, will be punished. Experience proves the existence and power of the unseen. It may be said that ascribing accidents and diseases to unseen forces is a way of giving chance, good and bad luck, a 'face': that of the *bibiyaw*.

A Kalanguya will be alert every second of his day, to avoid trespassing that line between the unseen and the real world, to notice and interpret every sign coming from 'the other side'. Omens take form of birds passing by, snakes crossing the road, visions and dreams. Even today, some locations in the forest or mountains are deemed as “places where the *bibiyaw* live” and it is *pihyew* to go there. In short, one has to act according tradition to obtain blessings, avoid bad luck. This has implications for the moral choices that will be made: a project may be aborted, a forefather may be remembered and offered a sacrifice or a collective activity may be performed. This is a good example of why Kalanguya say you should always be alert to *omens*, the signs nature could reveal. Many informants report that, when something bad is about to happen, there is *always* a sign, mostly in the form of dreams and animals. Freddy is a quite educated, young and unusually assertive teacher, with lots of stories and jokes. As most people, when the topic of spirits comes up, he laughs at first, looks for the outsider's reaction, and then turns very serious. He backs his belief in *omens* up with countless anecdotes and personal experiences.

“You should, when a bird come, and cross your way, you must speak first, talk, and say - if it is a bad *omen*, you repeat it. If it is a good *omen*, never mind. - So when he does it again, that's when you better go back. And even a snake, sometimes, but mostly it is bird. [...] Its like, there is always a sign. Some say, that is why God created animals, he can not speak to you directly, he is sending the animals for you to talk.” (Freddy, elementary teacher)³⁶

35 Locals sometimes compare these beings to the *fairies* of western folklore.

36 Group interview, informant's house, 22 February 2012

5. Institutional aspect

5.1 Governmental and custom laws

As we have seen, Jarrett Zigon (2010: 6) defines institutions as “those formal and non-formal social organizations and groups that are a part of all societies and wield varying amounts of power over individual persons.” Due to the peculiar uniqueness and social isolation of Ahin however, it may be more convenient to think of the institutional aspect of morality as an 'external' aspect: It includes those instances outside the isolated community that came in contact with the Kalanguya of Ahin and now influence their moral world. Examples of external institutions are the national Filipino government, of which the Kalanguya became part of, and the Christian Churches, introduced by roaming missionaries in the sixties.

Filipino governmental law has an extended system of custom laws and minority rights granted to indigenous communities, due to various reasons: firstly, the isolated and difficult to reach location of some barangay's (there was no road connecting Ahin to the lowlands until 2006), in some cases people would have to hike for days to reach the nearest courthouse. Second, the financial situation of the farmers, who cannot afford an attorney and until a few years ago could not even sell their crops and make cash money due to a lack of roads. Third, the strong and deeply-rooted customs and traditions of the cordillera indigenous tribes, who maintained their customs and sometimes even their independence during the long colonizations. Fourth, the militant and well-organized activism for the rights of self-determination and ancestral domain that managed to turn the attention of both the Filipino media and international community on the situation of the Igorot tribes in the last decades. Notwithstanding the fact custom laws cover most of the legal issues, there are few crimes that can not be settled locally: any person growing and selling marijuana plants has to be immediately arrested by the barangay captain and directly handled over to the national police.³⁷

The *tungtung* is the 'amicable settlement' that the Kalanguya may perform, in accordance with Filipino custom laws, thanks to their status of indigenous people. It is a kind of local court that settles any kind of local conflict and crime. Such cases range from murder to land disputes (this last one being the most common case). The *tungtung* also settles those actions that are considered immoral by the community. A significant example is adultery: the

³⁷ Because of the lack of roads, marijuana was in the past the main source of money for the inhabitants of isolated villages, since it is one of the few 'crops' worth planting that can be carried of the back to the cities without getting spoiled.

one cheated on will set a date for a *tungtung*, and will obtain reparation costs for the 'moral damage'. In this case the *mabaki* will also perform a ritual to avoid the 'mistake' from happening again. There have been recent cases of rape, murder and adultery, but most of the settlements concern land and money disputes.

There are six parties involved in a standard *tungtung*: the complainants, the respondents, the captain, the *lúpon*, the elders and the public. Each of them will shortly be described. The complainants are the ones setting the date for the *tungtung* and accusing another party, family or individual. They will divide the expenses of the food and liquor with the accused party. It is compulsory in fact to butcher a pig or chicken before the *tungtung* and to drink afterwards. The respondents are the ones being accused of something: be it a crime, infringement of previous agreement, violation of property etc. The barangay captain is addressed as 'chairman' and has the function of moderator: he will hear the different accusations and defenses, opinions and arguments, and finally voice out the verdict, proposed and approved by the *lúpon* and the elders. The *lúpon* are those respected community members, mostly seniors and barangay officials, who are selected by the captain and have to attend every *tungtung*. Their role is to advice and be witnesses of the settlement, they will sign the official document with the accusation and the verdict.

The elders are the ones doing most of the talking, giving moral advices, recollecting the family relations and property boundaries, sometimes even telling stories during the settlement itself. Their word carries more weight than others, and the verdict will often be reached based on their opinion. The *tungtung* is also an important venue for the public manifestation of morality: Taking place circa five times a year, it is in fact one of the few occasions left in which the village elders have their saying and can share publicly the traditional moral lessons. While giving their advice in this public gathering, they will give examples in the form of old stories and moral teachings, attaining from an old oral tradition. The elders are said, during the *tungtung*, to be in contact and “hear the voices of the ancestors”.³⁸

Since the amicable settlement is completely in the hands and performed by members of the community, but its form and existence is controlled and allowed by the government, it can be seen as an example of the overlapping institutional and public aspects of morality. The

38 The rest of the people present, the public, has the function of witness: everyone will sign a presence list so that in case the verdict is not honored they can be called upon as witnesses, present on the day the settlement found place.

tungtung is an old way of settling disputes, and retains therefore some of the ancestral traditional customs: the ritual drinking and eating before and after the settlement, the intervention of elders and their moral lessons, the role and presence of the *lipon*, respected community members. The government is involved merely on a bureaucratic level: The official documents on which the issue and verdict of the settlements are reported are given to the national police, who may in some very rare instances investigate further.

5.2 Schooling

Schooling may still be considered as an external moral influence for the Kalanguya people of Ahin since basic education was introduced relatively late in this region of the Philippines. It is often seen by elder informants as one of the mayor things that changed the Kalanguya culture and way of living. Especially since the majority of the youth nowadays goes to a neighboring village (Wangwang, at a three-hour hike) for high-school and sometimes bigger cities for higher education, a lot in the social dynamics of Ahin changed. Children will in fact see and hear about different ideologies and moral viewpoints, and sometimes reject the traditional Kalanguya ways. This is in some cases cause of great sorrow for the family but in others of pride.

“There is no bad in education. The schools opened in 1952. The only thing that is changed is the values. The schools and the education is good. They changed the way of life of the Kalanguya people. Example: before elders are highly respected in the community. Now their children go to school, they finish education, they become professional, it is the reverse. We can not say it is bad. Because like me, I have children who successfully finished studies. Out of my joy, I must respect them. It does not mean that I changed the values.” (Rex)³⁹

Not far away from the central village of Ahin there is a day-care, a kindergarten, an elementary school (six grades). While education was brought to Ahin by external instances as the Government and the Church, most of the influence pertains actually more to the public aspect of the local morality: Teachers inculcate their own beliefs and values, each with different approaches and pedagogical views. There is no standardized national policy on the teaching of religion and morality, and teachers often have an understanding with some

parents, who allow them to use certain (corporal) disciplinary methods. One of the subjects teachers have to somehow dedicate time to, is called “good manners and right conduct”, which educates the children in morality. The freedom granted to the teachers, combined with the lack of rules is cause of greatly divergent approaches: Some teachers say all morality should come straight and only from the Bible, and will cite verses from the Bible during lessons, others mix their Christian values with cultural beliefs. Some of these cultural beliefs are Kalanguya, other come from other provinces and tribes, depending on where the teacher comes from. The moral views of the parents and those of the teachers may conflict, and the children are sometimes caught in the middle. When confronted with this issue, one teacher answered:

“...sometimes they (the parents) cannot understand, it will hurt their feelings, if you have stated something... That will develop sometimes conflict between the people and the teachers. So it needs also for them to be... educated. Especially those parents who did not... eh... how do we call this... below... the standard of education. Which they did not reach, or they did not graduate... illiterate.”
(Beth, elementary teacher)⁴⁰

Not only the children, but also the parents should according to some be educated in morality and religion. Disagreements between teachers of the different grades does not often result in conflict, since according to the headteacher everybody is free in inculcating their own views.⁴¹ Teachers are informed of the legally permitted and forbidden measures they can adopt in schooling children. Sometimes however, since especially the elementary teachers are often from the village or Kalanguya speaking themselves, agreements are made with the parents to educate the children in accordance to tradition:

“The government law is to not use hands or violence in disciplining the children, but sometimes we teachers have an understanding with the parents, they want us to discipline their children when they misbehave, according to Kalanguya culture.” (Freddy, elementary teacher)⁴²

Given the isolated setting of the village the government has not a great impact on the moral

40 Open interview, elementary school, 5 March 2012

41 This result in some teachers showing even the youngest children of the kindergarten the most bloody and violent war movies. The rule on this matter is “as long as it is relevant for the subject”.

42 Informal interview, elementary school, 14 February 2012

views of the people nor many standardized schooling methods. Only those ordinances that are relevant for the barangay are passed through the mayor of the municipality to the barangay captain,⁴³ who will inform the villagers when necessary in general assemblies or public gatherings. While in theory the government should be seen as the highest authority in morality (Zigon, 2010), the empowerment granted to native tribes such as the Kalanguya make this municipality a 'special case'. The same applies for schooling: national standards only require teachers to teach certain subjects and general topics; practically no rules regarding religion, ethics or time management are imposed.

Posters and wall-writings with moral lessons or sayings are attached all over the classrooms, sometimes coming from the Bible, sometimes popular sayings, from other countries or even movies. The nature of the moral lessons depends on the teacher who introduced it. Usually however every moral lesson is welcome and accepted. In the day-care (children from two to four years old), books and stories are read with a final 'moral lesson'. Such books are often in English and with western children stories, such as "the fox and the raven" by La Fontaine. It is, according to many, the task of the teachers to educate the children in morality, and they must also 'inculcate' religious views. Like everywhere, teachers have different religious and moral views, but the difference with Ahin is that some teachers will openly try to convince the children 'paganism', the traditional Kalanguya religion, is evil; others who sympathize with the traditional ways and are Kalanguya themselves will do the opposite. The children are thus exposed to very different viewpoints and often end up refusing both. There is no religion class, since the Catholic catechist stopped volunteering. Catechism may however be re-introduced in the near future, due to the efforts of the newly assigned Catholic priest in the municipality of Tinoc. Informants of other Christian denominations approve of this, since the children will learn 'general Christian values' and not the specific doctrines. Most people are however not knowledgeable about the practical consequences of those specific doctrines, not even the lay-leaders.⁴⁴ Some years ago all the children had to sing the national anthem followed by a Christian prayer before class. The prayer has however been removed since according to the headteacher (member of a very strict Christian sect) it is not good for children "to just cite a memorized prayer". In the day-care and kindergarten the children do however pray together before class.

⁴³ The mayor of the barangay, elected each year.

⁴⁴ A lay-leader is a member of any particular Christian church who followed some seminars and is appointed to be the priest's or pastor's representative in his absence. He may perform some of the rituals, like giving communion and officiate the mass.

5.3 Christian Churches

J: “Was your father a Christian?”

R: “Yes he was a Christian....yes he was a little bit a Christian.... (short silence) ...but even while he was not a Christian, he taught me well. That I should not take the property of my companion. And my father knew how to pray the baki to Kabuna and to the...spirits yes. We then knew already God, but we had no religion. Now we have the name of Kabuna and it is Jesus. The Americans came and they taught us that it has a name: Jesus. Yahweh.” (*Rosanna, key informant*)⁴⁵

Notwithstanding the existence of many different Christian denominations and churches in this small barangay, local people are not really involved, interested or knowledgeable of the theological debate and differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. It is the attitude and actions of the members define the character and value of the specific church. Especially lay-leaders are expected to be as perfect as Jesus himself, and the smallest mistake may lead to criticism of other denominations and to the moving of members to a 'more pure' religious group. This phenomenon will be described in the public aspect of local morality.

Probably due to the demonization of the traditional religion by the Spanish conquistadores and more recently by Christian missionaries, almost all of the Kalanguya are today eager to ensure to visitors they are “already Christian”, being Christianity often associated with modernity and progress. Inconsistencies in thought, knowledge and actual acting are however sometimes very obvious. Patterns of traditional ways of thinking, divergent priorities and still living cultural practices are sometimes cause for confusion or conflict. The whole reason for example why a Kalanguya butchered animals in the past and prays or butchers today is to receive something:

J: “so does a prayer always need to have an effect?”

Luis: “It must be. We expect that it shall have a good effect. (giggles)”

J: “When there is no effect, what is the reason?”

Rosanna: “We will pray again. Maybe they have sinned. (laughs) they must have to pray. Some they will look in the bile, so when what they want is not seen in the bile, they will always butcher until the bile.. is good.”

J: “Can't it be, that God has another plan?”

Rosanna: (does not understand the question)⁴⁶

45 Structured interview (alone), Ahin barangay hall, 13 February 2012

46 Open group interview, host family's house, 23 February 2012

The Christian churches reach their followers through masses, the Bible, radio stations, roaming foreign preachers (today mostly Jehovah Witnesses, in the past both Protestant and Catholic), the Catholic priest, stationed in Poblacion, Tinoc, who occasionally visits Ahin, and the lay-leaders. The lay-leaders are local people who chose to lead the local churches (usually two for each), and are present in all Christian denominations. They are not fully informed priests or pastors, but they took seminars and are appointed by the priest or pastor. While their knowledge may be limited, they have the power and authority to perform the Sunday services and in the case of the Catholic church give the Holy Communion. They can be seen as the mediators between an institutional aspect of morality, being the international Catholic church for example, and the public aspect, being the Catholic community of Ahin. They bring the moral teachings of the Vatican to Ahin. Most Christians in Ahin do not know anything about the Pope or other religious leaders, and even the Catholics are often quite critical about them. A *Mabaki* who also claimed to be Catholic, voiced out an unspoken critique common among the villagers when asked about the Pope:

J: "Do you, as a Catholic, recognize the authority of the Pope? Do you listen to him?"

Abel: "I will throw back a question: If the Pope will say a prayer for a sick person, are you sure the person will be cured?" (*all present informants and interpreters laughing*)

J: "The pope does not pray to cure, that is not the function of the priest in Christianity. The hospital is for curing."

Abel: "It proves that, when a priest prays and the believer is not healed, they always go back to the traditional way..."⁴⁷

According to many informants, what the *mabaki* says here is true. Sometimes the doctors in the hospitals tell them they cannot cure the sickness, and send them back to their villagers to get healed in the 'traditional way'. Although the healing powers of the Christian leaders are said to be weak, they still are put in a position of great moral power, since they are educated and knowledgeable about the Bible. The Catholic church is well aware of the native cultures it comes in contact with, and has, in time, planned specific policies and taken well-thought attitudes towards it. The main objective is to preserve those cultural practices that are not against the Christian teachings, and eliminate or 'purify' the rest. Through a process called *inculturation* the traditional beliefs and practices that are not considered 'morally acceptable'

47 Open interview, informant's house, 22 February 2012

by the religious leaders (in the Catholic case the Vatican) or conform to the Christian theology are eliminated. As the local Catholic priest puts it:

“Well... as the signs would say it, there is a big hope that these... traditions that are against our faith will be... little by little eliminated. There is a big hope. As I have said the people are becoming more and more aware of our Christian way of worshiping Gods, doing our rights, so [...] Unlike before that at their young age they are already doing the *baki*,⁴⁸ and it is very rampant, that I even suspect that every head of the family knows how to do the *baki*. But this time, they only know now how to do the sign of the cross... (giggles) ...but not *baki*. so... that is a big hope!” (*local Roman Catholic priest*)⁴⁹

The inculturation strategy implemented by the Catholic Church is perhaps disputable from an anthropological viewpoint, but also coherent and logical from a religious one. The local culture and tradition undergoes a selection that can be considered merciful if compared to other colonial histories, since it salvages at least the 'morally accepted' and majority of practices. One may say that such a moral hegemony belongs only to God, and this 'one' saying it may as well be the local priest. As an anthropologist one cannot but feel a sense of loss, but the fact remains that many of the villagers are more than relieved they got a chance to escape a tyrannical and expensive way of communicating with the Gods.⁵⁰ The call for change often comes from the people themselves, although it is difficult to imagine a small, isolated and already Christianized community stand up against or resist a well orchestrated and enforced indoctrination strategy by an worldwide institution such as the Catholic Church. It should also be said that such a policy is at least transparent and available for the international community to reject and criticize, while other Christian denominations present in the barangay are way less organized or maybe less conscious of their effect on the local culture and indigenous people.

“...those are the traditions being preserved, in a Christian way. So we don't fear that their traditions (will be lost)... actually that is what we are concerned about, that though we “purify”, we don't allow these tradition to be lost. Because that is our heritage, that is our identity, as people living in the Cordillera's... that are our unique characteristics.” (*local Roman Catholic priest*)

48 Traditional way of praying, done by the *Mabaki*, by reciting long lists of ancestors and gods.

49 Open interview, informant's temporary house, 1 March 2012

50 In the traditional religion, the priest would butcher sometimes three pigs or more just to communicate with the unseen spirits. The cost of those pigs would be so high that the family requesting the ritual would have to work for years just to pay for it, and often get indebted.

It is crucial to observe how even for those radically against the traditional belief system, the power of the unseen spirits and the traditional prayer is great. There are in fact some instances when according to informants only the *mabaki* can be of help, since the sickness is caused by the *bibiyaw*. Sometimes new and old tradition collaborate, when the family involved is Christian. Some diseases inflicted by ancestors or spirits cannot namely be cured by Christian prayer alone. This applies also when someone has a special kind of dream, which often are believed to be messages sent by ancestors.

Rossanna: Sometimes, even if they are dead, our ancestors they come though the dream and say “you come and fix me, I want the cemented, I do not want to be in the soil”. they want their tomb to be cemented. Sometimes they will give a dream they are... they have no clothes, they are wet, cold, freezing... Then we do *bagua*. We must have to do this, because even though they did not tell through the dream that they are cold, at once we make it very clean and butcher pig, and buy a dress and put it there, or just pray. It depends to them if they will get, we just put it there and do a service or a *baki*, and then they will take the clothes. You ask for long life and blessings for the family, strong to work... give *suerte*. That we pray. We also butcher the chicken or pig, and then we see, if the bile is good, then the accidents will not happen.”

Nero: “that is why now, no need to *baki baki*, the father (priest) also will do that. By praying to God. Then we butcher a chicken.”

J: “So you still need to butcher?”

Nero: “yes, yes... because the father, no believe for the bile....”

Rosanna: “It depends. If the people want to see the bile, they can see. Even if the priest will pray that... even me for example, I have a dream, Samson told, that I call the priest to pray that. And when I see the bile, it is not good, and the priest says - never mind the bile - and I will say fine, but if the priest already went away, I will do the butchering again, until the bile is good. Because my mind is not at rest. Some of us cannot do this. But mostly I experienced they always see the bile.”⁵¹

Mixing traditional, original Kalanguya beliefs and practices with acquired customs and Christian religion is a common phenomenon in Ahin.⁵² The same applies for moral lessons, in an effort to integrate and fit new perspectives and ideas in the existing cultural context. When this results in misconceptions or inconsistencies, people, apart from few lay-leaders, often fall back on tradition or the embodied ways of reasoning. One example is what, in Ahin, is often said to be one of the main weaknesses of the Christian religion: Forgiveness.

51 Group interview, informant's house, 7 April 2012

52 My fieldwork companion Eva Kraus researched the religious syncretism of Christianity and Animism in Ahin. Data pertaining to this topic are analyzed more in detail in her bachelor thesis “Whichever works”.

6. Public aspect

6.1 Traditional rituals

According to Kalanguya tradition, in some cases, negative personality traits such as being aggressive, lazy or grouchy are acquired. When a person behaves differently, for example during adolescence, it is believed that the person literally lost his soul, for example while hiking in the mountains. Sometimes the ancestors are involved. When this happens the family will call the traditional priest to make the soul to come back. The *baki* is done by a traditional priest with extensive knowledge about Kalanguya history and the traditional religious system. During this prayer the 'old priest' as they are also called, recites long lists of ancestors and Gods, asking for their intercession. Pigs or chickens are butchered as an offering, mostly for the *bibiyaw* involved or the ancestors. One of the few *mabaki* left in Ahin is Abel, a reserved, intelligent senior villager, living somewhat isolated and far from the other settlements of Ahin. He explained there are numerous rituals that can be done when immorality is involved:

“...When an individual is lazy for example, and they want him to change they will do *pahang*. [...] they will call his or her soul back. They will also do it when the person is very aggressive, a thief, a lazy person. [...] Also when someone is acting immoral like in case of adultery.”

J: “So all these characteristics are not in-born then, they are acquired? Like when someone lost his soul in the forest?”

Abel: “it is acquired. For example if someone suddenly change they wonder why someone is like that, then they do the *pahang*. Or in Christian way they do the service and pray over the person. We do it also with crazy people to become normal.” (*Abel, traditional priest*)⁵³

The *pahang* is ritual performed in case the soul of a person is stolen by the *Mapahangan*. The role of the ancestors is to guard the souls of their progeny. If the ancestors are not properly remembered and honored however, for example by cleaning their bones and improving their graves, they will also pay less attention and neglect to guard the souls of the living. When this happens the *Mapahangan*, natural, unseen spirits distinct from the *bibiyaw*, will steal the soul of the person. This can have various effects: a woman may not be able to bare a child, a person could become aggressive or lazy, illnesses, vices such as gambling or alcoholism can affect the person. When a knowledgeable elder (*Ma'anap*) asserts that a person has in fact lost

his soul, the *pahang* ritual is done. It consists in asking a favor to the *Mapahangan*: the *bibiyaw* (in this case they perform their duty as messengers) will be sent by the *mabaki* to the different places where the *Mapahangan* live, and they will search the lost soul. There are five 'houses' where the soul can be. These houses are 'searched' in order of 'distance', meaning that the younger persons soul will be in a house close to the earth, those of elders farther away in the sky.

If the *pahang* ritual does not solve the problem, or in case the victim is a child, the *mabaki* will perform the *tanong* ritual. Here help will be asked not to the *Mapahangan* but to the gods of heaven, earth and underworld. Like in the *pahang*, the old priest will send the *bibiyaw* to look for the lost soul. This time however he will not look in the houses of the *Mapahangan* spirits, the *bibiyaw* will be sent to search for the lost soul in three places: *tanong Kabunyan* (the sky), *tanong Kalluthan* (the earth), *tanong Dalem* (the underworld). During the ritual, a chicken will be blessed. To prevent people from eating it (which is *pihyew*, blasphemy) the chicken will be then buried.⁵⁴

A third ritual that is done in case of immorality is the *pudad*. This ritual is performed when the souls of those persons who died in accidents, like the *Mapdang* (souls of the drowned people) in the river, force a living person "to do bad things and act immorally". This were the 'bad souls' also during life, for example aggressive persons. If this is the case, the *mabaki* will do the *pudad* ritual, releasing the 'victim' from the grip of the 'evil ancestor'. It is however not always the case spirits or ancestors are the cause of someone committing immoralities or being an immoral person. The Kalanguya spiritual system is extremely complex, with hundreds of names of problems and rituals that can be performed. The *mabaki* are the ones doing the *baki* and thus performing the actual rituals, but there are other characters, mostly elders, having a role in this spiritual belief, for example the already named *Ma'anap*, who interprets the origin or cause of a problem, and the *Mapha-ak*, comparable to an herbalist, knowledgeable about the secret powers of plants. These elders are greatly respected among the community, even if today some people totally reject the traditional belief and its spiritual leaders, they still will say "also the devil has his powers", referring to the unseen beings and the traditional priests. Furthermore, most of the youth, studying or working in the cities, is critical about the 'traditional ways', but will still admit to be scared to walk

⁵⁴ In a variation of this ritual, some informants report that when a child is excessively aggressive or lazy, a chicken will be blessed, which the child then has to eat entirely on his own. This ritual is said to be extremely effective.

alone in the forest, close to big rocks and watersheds, since the *bibiyaw* may live there. Everybody is afraid of attracting bad luck.

6.1 Politics of religion

When Christianity was introduced in the region, in the second half of the 20th century, locals experienced a change in the motivation for acting morally: The first concerns the dichotomy ancestors-afterlife. It should be noted that traditional priest are still active today and some households are radically traditional in their religion, while most households mix Christian faith with cultural practices and faith, and a small percentage completely rejects 'pagan' traditions and customs. In the neighboring barangay Wangwang, accessible by road and with electricity, Christian churches seem to have a firmer grip on the beliefs of people:

“...Unlike in the traditional way, where the ancestors will be the ones to call me, as Christians we believe that when we die, God will be waiting for us. And that's why we try to be good, because as they say: whatever we do on earth, will influence our life after we die. If we do wrong, in the next life we will have to suffer.” (*Flor, Lutheran*)⁵⁵

There is a difference between what the informants call the 'traditional way' and 'the christian way': in the first the motivation for acting morally is in the world itself, manifesting in the moral teachings of the forefathers, the fear of punishment by parents, elders and the community itself, the interaction and presence of 'unseen spirits' in nature who will retaliate and bring bad luck. In the Christian way, one acts morally to have a good afterlife, and be accepted by God. Some informants can however not let go of what their parents and elders taught them, they believe and experience fear for the various unseen beings, they obey the teachings of the forefathers even without being able to explain it. Some interviewed people are aware of the difference and still accept it, by stating both their belief in the Christian God, the Bible, and the unseen spirits. In practice locals mix and practice those two different ways in various degrees.

Local morality is often the result of a syncretic encounter between the Christian and the traditional morality. Villagers will, even when born and raised as Christians, mostly unconsciously hold on to their traditional way of understanding morality. Converting to

55 Group interview, Wangwang barangay hall, 20 February 2012

Christianity does not radically change the ways parents reprise children, nor does it make the moral lessons taught by elders outdated. The general tendency is to fit all the moral lessons, traditional Kalanguya, western secular, Christian and even coming from other religions, in a Christian framework. This causes some conflicts, misunderstandings and confusion in the moral agents themselves: the concept of Christian forgiveness is for example seen as a 'flaw' by some natives just because it is so different than the traditional morality, wherein a wrongdoing would be immediately punished with diseases or death. Christian 'tolerance' deeply changes therefore the motivation for acting morally.⁵⁶ This makes the fear people still experience for the traditional unseen beings still necessary for motivating the young to behave righteously; it leads parents to still see traditional morality as meaningful and not fully replaceable by the Christian one.

In Ahin, like in most cultures, the attitude and moral purity of persons is of great importance for the public opinion. While, for those more leaning towards the traditional culture, persons who go against the moral lessons taught by the elders are frowned upon, for those who 'abandoned' the traditional morality for a Christian one, those who do not act accordingly are silently condemned. As one informant says, "a Christian should be perfect as Christ himself, otherwise he is not a Christian." Luis did some years in college, and has a very sharp insight in the religious dynamics of his own community:

"...But I think, nowadays, because there are many religious sects, it is like politics. When some are doing something, the other sect will criticize them. It is like politics. Even if they didn't understand the philosophy or logic behind, they just join because of the sin, the actions of the priests for example. [...] Pagans transformed into Catholics or Lutherans, because of some criticism from the pagans, and from the pagans done to the Catholics, from the Catholics done to other religions, because of... criticism or other wrongdoings, they think that when you are in the religion you are almost the same as the God (giggles) Everybody has done mistakes, so you will transfer to another religion. It is happening." (*Luis, key informant*)⁵⁷

While the traditional moral system had an high degree of social control and was mostly implemented by the belief in unseen beings and the fear for retaliations, accidents and

⁵⁶ Since the Catholic church is seen as the more 'liberal' one, people would, especially in the beginnings of Christianity in the regions, often transfer to the more radical and conservative denominations. This still happens today, but more based on the purity of the lay-leader than the characteristics of the christian denomination itself.

⁵⁷ Open interview, informant's house, 20 March 2012

diseases, the Christian moral system is far less strict. When someone sins he will be forgiven by God, there will be no *bibiyaw* capturing his soul or causing some disease or accident. The elders have less power to control and punish the wrongdoings of the young, the external influences, even if limited, show different attitudes and possibilities. Since some of these 'wrongdoings', for example gambling, are fairly new in the region, there are no traditional rules or spirits that will punish such immoralities. The inhabitants of Ahin are today caught between the traditional past and the 'modern' future, making it so that many are less motivated to do the right thing, and follow what is culturally seen as good and right. Somehow, since the modern Christian teachings, especially Catholic, are more 'liberal' and forgivable, local people cannot accept a Christian making a mistake, or 'sin', and still call himself a Christian. If this happens, faith in the particular church will be damaged.

It can be said that in some way contact with western civilization destroyed the moral order in the land of the Kalanguya. The shift from immediate punishment to a reward in afterlife changed the very motivation for people to act morally. The introduction of new vices which elders have no moral lessons for, and in fact are sometimes views positively by them results in a very confusing scenario: on the one hand the youth learns Christians moral lessons, which condemns drinking and giving priority to work, on the other hand they see their respected elders consuming great quantities of alcohol and skipping mass to plant peanuts.

7. Embodied aspect

7.1 Internalized attitudes

In the previous chapters we already discussed some embodied aspects of local morality. This important component of the broader local moral system shall be approached from a different perspective than the one Jarrett Zigon intended in describing the “moral assemblages” (Zigon, 2010). The embodied dispositions of locals are in fact not seen as processes involving a change and moral breakdown stretching over a longer period of time, but more as those internalized beliefs and attitudes which bear some relevance for the local moral system. One of these what we can still call 'embodied dispositions', is the way of reasoning, the cognitive patterns that the Kalanguya people have formed along the centuries. These ways of reasoning are transmitted from parents and community to the children no matter what the religion,

education or ideology is. It manifests itself most clearly in the difficulty of people to understand certain concepts. One example is the already mentioned way locals struggle to accept the Christian forgiveness: If God always forgives, why should I stop sinning? Traditionally, the main reason for acting morally was retaliation and punishment. This is a deeply-rooted cognition hard to change. Another example of such cultural cognitive patterns is the purpose of praying: as cited earlier, an informant reported “a prayer must have an effect, it is expected” if the prayer or *baki* fails to heal a person, it simply means the spirits are not satisfied, they require more butchering of animals to let the soul in peace. The butchering will therefore go on, until the “bile is good”.

J: Is there such thing in Kalanguya culture as fixed things, destined to be so?

Abel (traditional priest): There are no permanent things. We have ways, we can always do something, bring change with rituals and prayer.⁵⁸

In short, what should be kept in mind is that the most tacit aspects of morality, the ones that finally determine the choices people make in everyday life, are hidden in the memories of individuals. When not making a life history, the anthropologist is limited to reporting those moral breakdowns and embodied moral dispositions that are community-wide, those that bare relevance for the overall local moral system. In Ahin, one of those 'cultural breakdowns' concerns the motivation itself for acting morally.

7.2 Shifting moral dynamics

It sometimes happens that confined native communities around the world find themselves between two different traditions, each of them with a wide range of moral requirements. It is the situation Joel Robbins describes in his work on the Urapmins of Papua New Guinea (Robbins 2004). Zigon (2008) cites this case as an example of society-wide moral breakdown, being the Urapmins caught between a new Pentecostal culture and their original Urapmin one. Like the Urapmins, the Kalanguya find themselves constantly questioning their own moral views when confronted with the newly introduced ones. From this creative process a new moral identity arises; sometimes it compromises, sometimes it finds parallels, sometimes it rejects. People who sympathize with the traditional religious system are eager to find parallels

58 Semi-structured interview, informant's house, 22 February 2012

with the Bible, for example by comparing the Virgin Maria to *Bugan*, a legendary woman or goddess in Kalanguya oral tradition.

There are however more than two forces at work when it comes to the weaving of cognitive patterns: Various layers of Christian doctrines, acquired cultural impositions, swift intensive cultural 'injections', newly introduced technologies and ideas... it all comes together in the collective Kalanguya mind, determining the embodied dispositions which finally influence the moral views. The history of acculturation, Filipino politics and religious influences are too extended and complex to outline in this space. It is however essential to notice and report how all these encounters with the cultures and phenomena outside the valley of Ahin have changed the very way of thinking of people on morality. There has been no revolution when Christianity came, no ideological uprising when basic education was introduced: Each layer was added to the existing ones, assimilating the advantages, with a blind spot for the in-congruences and internal conflicts between those layers. Little by little however these conflicts surface, and trigger the moral breakdowns Zigon (2007) describes.

There is a kind of mild awareness of the shifting moral dynamics among the inhabitants of Ahin. An issue for example that informants often bring up when questioned on morality is the 'recent' change in obedience of the children. Many adults still recollect a time when children were obedient to their parents and respectful to their elders, and are puzzled why this changed. An interesting comment was made by Pitch, former barangay captain and farmer. During a long interview, he candidly shared his religious views and social concerns on his barangay. Many questions informants cannot answer, but when it comes to issues like obedience, everybody has an opinion:

“...What I am comparing today is different before and different now, the children. Because before, if the parents says that if you are dismissed in the school you come early and you pound the rice, you cook. But today if you see the children, they will come late, they will not do their works... they have less respect now. But some of the... old man say that it is because of the noodles. You know that? The commercial ones. Those are, they suspect, those are the effects on the children now. Because before, the noodles are not present, here in our country. So that is one suspect. It is why children now obey less.” (*Pitch, farmer, lay-leader and former barangay captain*)⁵⁹

Let us be aware here of the analytical traps when researching morality mentioned in the theoretical framework: Morality cannot be codified in terms of principles and rules (Cook 1999). In moral anthropology one should explicate a moral world not by enlisting a set of rules, but by showing the underlying relationships with the social reality and ontological views of the individuals (Zigon 2008). To create a proper understanding of the local moral system of Ahin, we should thus, analyzing the aforementioned villager's opinion, not formulate a local moral principle, but consider the recent social and economical changes that led to such opinions. We see then that the Kalanguya of Ahin experienced a shift in the embodied dispositions regarding fear. On this topic, Luis had a clever opinion:

“Since the religion started in... somewhere there in your place, the Spaniards think that everywhere in the world is the same. So they came to the Philippines, not knowing that the pagans here are... good. Because the natives, when they say “don't cut those trees, there are *anitos* there... they will kill you!” the people will not do it. But now that there is religion they will just cut the trees! They don't fear the *anitos* anymore. Because according to the western culture, God is somewhere in Israel.”⁶⁰

The isolated location of the barangay made it so that until a few decades ago children saw no alternatives in attitude, knew not more than their parents or elders did. Christianity and education changed all that: children now see disobedience and violence in the movies and in the schools outside their barangay of origin, hear of different religions and ideologies, they are far more 'educated' than most of their elders. Furthermore, the embodied fear for reprisal, punishment and 'bad luck' faded in time: laws made corporal punishment illegal, and Christian forgiveness misbehavior a lot more tempting. While motivations do of course vary, it is undeniable that the moral dynamics in Ahin have changed: as many other communities around the world, the Kalanguya find themselves stuck between the old tradition and the cultural pressure of globalization. Through empirical data we can now truly see the dynamic nature of morality encountered in the theoretical literature.⁶¹ The somewhat disorienting shift in moral views, triggered by the powerful alien perspectives Ahin came in contact with during the last half century, led to a community-wide moral breakdown of the moral system. Today this system is still slowly adapting, shaping the moral future of the Kalanguya.

60 Open interview, informant's house, 23 February 2012

61 Zigon 2010; Foucault 2000c; Heintz & Rasanayagam 2005

8. Local moral samples: Bless the gin

In the previous chapters we have analyzed the major moral influences present in the life of the Kalanguya. To better understand how all these variables and influences are related and work together to shape the moral views, a sample of moral issue found in Ahin will be analyzed. As mentioned earlier, drinking is one of the 'new vices' which reveal some interesting local perspectives on morality. H.W.Scott, in his ethnographic work on the Igorot of the Cordillera's, reported a statement made by a native Cordillieran seventy years ago:

“The fiestas of the Christians aren't worth anything because it's all just a lot of noise-making with bells and drums and muskets, and then everybody just goes home to his own house and eats what little he has. But the fiestas of our leaders are not like that. They are good-tasting and satisfying [...] They kill animals by the dozens and everybody drinks until he passes out” (Scott 1993: 24).

As Stoczkowski noted during the debate on moral anthropology discussed in the theoretical framework, the study and analyze of the way social agents form their moral judgments “includes, of course, an effort to unveil or explore the moral prejudices of the anthropologist himself or herself” (Fassin and Stoczkowski 2008: 331). One may imagine moral views on heavy drinking are hard to set aside, especially when arguments against it seem so self-evident. A long history of the Anthropology of drinking has to be taken in consideration when studying the symbolic meaning of drinking behavior.⁶² In the past, behavioral and medical scientists have often criticized anthropologists for concentrating on the functional and positive effects of drinking, disregarding the negative. During the last decade however, anthropologists more often reported the abuse and destructive effects of alcohol around the world (Singer 2008). This research is neither medical in nature nor meant to express judgments, and because it needs to be morally objective, it will simply report the local form of a world/wide phenomenon, in order to create understanding for its moral relevance and value.

Long before the first missionaries came to Ahin, rice-wine (circa 30% alcohol) was already abundantly present at every occasion. Most families would and still brew one or two jars of rice-wine, and offer it to visitors during special occasions or feasts. Nowadays however, the unlimited availability of cheap and widespread 'Ginebra San Miguel' (Filipino

62 Mary Douglas (1987), Paul Spicer (2008) and Dwight B. Heath (1982) among others made important contributions to this field.

brewed gin, 40% alcohol), makes drinking much less controllable: with just few bottles all the guests can get drunk. Since giving feasts and providing food and liquor increases social status, families will be ever-looking for occasions to celebrate. During our stay in Ahin, a man gave a party, that almost 30 persons attended, the majority of which got drunk. It was the third birthday of one of the man's grandsons.

Missionaries that came in the seventies did condemn the consumption of alcohol, but the Kalanguya custom of drinking during occasions and offer rice-wine to esteemed visitors is today practiced even by the members of the most radical Christian denominations. Priests and Pastors seem to have a hard time to convince even their own lay-leaders to lay off the bottle. During the fieldwork, we went to visit a Christian lay-leader in his house, where we talked for a long time, eating indigenous chicken and drinking rice-wine. During the evening a Christian prayer-meeting was scheduled at the house of our host family. When the lay-leader came in to officiate the meeting, he was completely drunk, since he stopped, already tipsy from our visit, along the way to drink gin with other villagers. He held a sermon of almost an hour, mixing several languages and dialects, making very little sense. None of the few dozen guests interrupted him, and only when he finally walked out to urinate, they continued the meeting singing songs. One hour later, everybody was happily drinking and laughing together.

It is of importance to notice that the amount of alcoholic beverages consumed in Ahin would be considered more than problematic in any European country and high even for Filipino standards. Nevertheless, the villagers are aware of the physiological dangers alcohol brings, and there are some unspoken rules limiting the factual yearly casualties: it is prohibited for not yet graduated young men to drink, since they must focus on their education first. Drinking when not yet adult will, as one informant puts it “destroy your future”. Furthermore, stories of tipsy woman getting raped in other villages have more effect than all the holy scriptures combined: consumption of alcohol is for woman always discouraged. Drinking is most of all for adult working men. During one party, some young boys around the age of fifteen who already left school and worked in the fields got drunk. We heard later that evening that some elders left and other men were really upset and indignant, since according to them young people should not drink. This is clearly considered immoral.

In the moral evaluation of drinking from the villagers perspective it is crucial to note the use of alcohol in traditional rituals and official occasions. As described in a previous chapter, after the *tungtung*, the two parties must drink together with the barangay captain to

sanction the reached agreement. Furthermore, during butchering of animals the *mabaki* or an elder will bless the liquor (rice-wine in the past, nowadays usually gin) and the most respected person or guest present will drink first. The multitude of rituals and practices which involve or are related to alcoholic drinks in some way points to a very unique local perspective. The consumption of alcoholic beverages is deeply rooted in local practices and imaginary:

“Sometimes the arranged marriages are made just for fun, while drinking, at one point one may say - I have a son - and the other - oh, I have a daughter, let's marry them! -. (*Freddy, elementary teacher*)

“...even me, as lay-leader, that is my problem, sometimes like this when we are drinking I don't know I drunk too much... because of the story (laughs)” (*Pitch, lay-leader and farmer*)

“...when they (the children) go to the city they will buy bread and other viands like the noddles, then they come back, of course the parents are very happy because they taste different food. Like also those liquor, what we know here is only Ginebra, but when does go abroad they come back, go home, they bring some other imported and at least we can taste it.” (*Nero, barangay captain*)

The government of the Philippines has issued more than one ordinance to fight this 'disruptive' activity, and in neighboring villages, where christian denominations are even more present and active, liquor bans have been established. It is however the case that in remote areas of the Cordilleras even if there is a liquor ban most men, including the barangay officials and captains, ignore it. When questioned about it, they will say that during special occasions it is allowed to drink. During our stay in a village with liquor ban, one of this occasions was a rainy day.

Whilst widespread alcohol consumption is present in most of the barangay's of the Cordillera Administrative Region, it is the general attitude towards this activity that distinguishes Ahin. Probably due to its remote location and difficult accessibility, combined with the still living tradition and practiced culture, this community has not yet been persuaded of alcohol's 'immoral status', resisting the moral pressure of both church and government. Aside from ritualistic purposes, informants report drinking to be an important way of socializing, and in some cases a 'medicine': one of the oldest man in the village suffers from an ulcer the *mabaki* cannot heal, so he will drink strong liquor most of the day, and be more often drunk than sober. He is the most respected and wise elder of the barangay.

“Those who already indulge in liquor they can and should drink, because they will not be shy and tell the truth. It can also be a medicine: Isabelo and Calapio (elderly people) for example, they do not feel the pain when they drink.” (Luis, *key-informant*)⁶³

As mentioned earlier, the Kalanguya are known to have very small village centers, of only few households, and the majority of the remaining households scattered along the mountains, often extremely isolated and remote, impossible to reach by car or motorbike, hard to reach even by hiking. The families live close to their vegetable fields and spend most of their time working in them. This is said to be the main reason for the shy nature of the Kalanguya people. Many informants report that drinking helps in loosen up people, and promotes happiness. In fact, villagers will often gather at night in the houses of those who have electric light (provided by small solar panels or water-dynamos) and do what they call “happy happy”: Numerous bottles of gin or brandy will be opened, plates of dog meat or *bloody bloody* (snack made of animal blood) will be eaten, someone will play the guitar and sing old American country songs, and everybody will get drunk. When someone is tired and lives far away, he can “just lay on the ground or everywhere he wants and sleep”. The people of Ahin love sharing stories, listening to the guitar music and be together, probably because they spend so much time alone in the fields. An informant, when questioned about the issue, stated: “Like women and food, liquor brings happiness. How can we live without?”⁶⁴

It can be said that the Kalanguya of Ahin are caught between tradition and technology, still looking for a compromise, but little motivated to implement it. Tradition in fact prescribes the usage of rice-wine, historically however this was somewhat a luxury product (especially the yeast needed to produce it) available only during certain periods of the year, and therefore it was mostly consumed during big parties such as the *keleng*⁶⁵ given by the upper class of the village. Nowadays however, the availability of cheap liquor and yeast to make the rice-wine has disrupted the historical balance: drinking has retained its positive moral status, and there seems to be no will, especially from the elders part, to reconsider this. It is in fact the elders, those who traditionally were, and still are, the most respected members of the community, who maintain this practice, ever-looking for excuses and money to open yet another bottle of *ginebra*.

63 Informal conversation, Ahin, 4 April 2012

64 Very informal conversation, Ahin, 24 March 2012

65 The *Keleng* is a thanks-giving feast, usually given after harvest. Many animals will be butchered and everybody will dance, eat and drink together.

9. Conclusion

In the first chapters, legitimizing an anthropology of morality, taking into account its theoretical underpinnings and methodological approach. In the empirical section, the the three basic aspects of local morality have been 'filled in' with the observational data and testimonies collected in the barangay of Ahin, Philippines. The result, as expected, is not the lists of supposedly moral principles social scientists reported in the past. Instead, true to the new anthropological approach to morality, this research sketched a rough portrait of the local moral system, by outlining statements and observations in order to create an understanding of the local dynamics and variables involved in the shaping of moral views in this small community. Looking back at both the theoretical and empirical data, an empirical, a methodological and a theoretical conclusion can now be drawn.

The main aim of this research and its fieldwork was to unveil and shed light upon a moral world that often feels vague and elusive, both for outsiders as for the ones living in it. Zigon (2010) provided moral anthropologists with a framework in which the study of morality is made possible. Apart from minor adjustments to the specific context, the application of this framework and the somewhat reification of morality fostered the understanding of local morality as it should be: a dynamic phenomenon, connected to social, cultural and historical variables. While few decades ago anthropologist possibly would have enlisted statements such as “touching is immoral” and “drinking liquor is good” as Kalanguya moral principles, even this very research, limited in time and scope, has shown a more encompassing system prone to change. We have for example seen how the permissive attitude towards heavy drinking is correlated to the traditional past, hospitality customs and social life. Being part of a society’s culture, morality adapts, evolves, interacts.

The task of anthropology is neither to nail down people to their culture, nor to strap them to their traditions. Anthropological theory stems from objective, judicious (Stoczkowski 2008) and thorough observation, participation, reporting (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011). Although innumerable environmental variables and the unrelenting development of societies make it hard to draw a line under any topic in anthropology, it is the insights acquired along the way that count. The greatest advancement to which Jarrett Zigon has contributed is to, knowledgeable of the dynamic nature of morality, developing a strategy in which anthropological research still makes sense: identifying the broader system in which moral

views rise, change and die. Once variables such as custom laws, schooling and traditional religion are understood, overall local moral views appear to be much more logical and intelligible.

Donagan (1979: 68) describes a circular motion of moral reasoning: a moral concept is created by comparing and reflecting on specific moral cases. This concept is applied to new cases. The concept is then revisited and refined according to how well it fits in the new cases. Sometimes the concept breaks down, and a new one has to be created. One of the things the empirical data of this research shows is the impending community-wide moral breakdown the Kalanguya of Ahin are facing. Many barangay's before Ahin have fallen for the western globalizing cultural pressure and the efforts of Christian churches to 'purify' traditional practices and mentality. Not being attached to the national electricity has delayed this process of moral standardization, but even without the full presence of external forces the signs are there. Attempts to harmonize ideological inconsistencies often lead to confusion and internal conflicts among individuals, who after decades of adaptations are slowly moving towards what some called "progress". Informants would say in Ahin they are "already Christian", but many believe butchering to be much more effective than the Christian prayer, and according to the local Catholic priest "saints are not yet introduced, since people would confuse them with the ancestors of their pagan religion". As Donagan (1979) theorized, each person in Ahin is trying to fit old views in a new framework, evaluating and refining, in what Zigon (2010) called the "ethical moment". This creative and evaluative process is however strongly guided by the moral system and external influences we analyzed in the last chapters.

The methodological framework for the study of moral anthropology proposed by Jarrett Zigon (2010) has been of great help in forming an holistic view on the local morality, analyzing each distinct aspect of the moral assemblage. While the scope of this research is too limited to entail the individual, creative aspect of ethics, it gives an overall idea of the broader moral and cognitive framework in which the ethical moment (Zigon 2010) people's experience takes place. This will hopefully foster a better understanding of the resulting moral views and choices individuals have and make. As for the three aspects of morality identified by Zigon, it seems that in the case of Ahin, and isolated communities in general, it makes more sense to talk about an external aspect of morality instead of an institutional aspect, since in such a setting institutional moral influences are alien to the traditional local morality and are thus seen by the locals themselves as a cultural force coming from outside their

community and 'traditional ways'. Furthermore, the 'embodied aspect' of morality has taken, during this fieldwork, a meaning that goes beyond the 'habitus' described by Zigon. Next to being "one's already cultivated everyday way of being in the world" (Zigon 2010: 8) and "unreflective and unreflexive dispositions of everyday social life attained over a lifetime of socially performed techniques" (Mahmood 2005 in Zigon 2010), the moral embodied dispositions also include those culture-specific cognitions family and other close community members pass on to individuals from a young age. In the case of Ahin, we have for example seen how a certain pragmatic attitude towards religion is widespread among the small community, manifesting in statements such as "prayer must have the desired effect" and "forgiveness is not useful".

Let it be known that, with regard to the discussion on moral relativism mentioned in the theoretical framework, this research does not support, neither with its empirical data nor its conclusion, a relativistic view on morality. While, as we have seen in the case of Ahin, cultural and historical variables may in fact lead to sometimes radically diverse local moralities, such variance does not define the moral status of moral principles (Cook 1999: 131; Stout 1988; Timmons 2002). From the viewpoint of moral philosophy, for all we know heavy drinking may be an universal good, especially since from an anthropological one, research shows this practice has not lost its cultural value (Douglas 1987), and survived the test of time, unlike, for instance, slavery has (Stout 1988). Traditionally, in the case of the Kalanguya, the social value and effect of drinking may be far more advantageous than the possible health problems it causes.⁶⁶ The existence of moral truths is thus, in conformity with the theoretical discussion, not refuted nor ruled off.

With regard to the discussion on cultural and moral relativism, the empirical data collected proves the point made earlier in the theoretical framework. Notwithstanding how easy it is to give in to moral relativism, more accurate, knowledgeable and scientifically sound research has shown in the past years anthropological data to be everything but evidence for moral relativism (Stout 1988; Cook 1999; Zigon 2008). On the contrary, the moral breakdown of long isolated communities as Ahin point to the formation of a globalized morality. Individuals, communities and nations move towards the moral common-ground Stout (1988) predicted and Swoyer (1982) theorized. When two moral truths coexist, re-

⁶⁶ An interesting follow up of this research may be drinking among the Kalanguya from an anthropo-medical perspective. It seems in fact that the health problems correlated to heavy drinking are unusually uncommon in Ahin. Possibly due to alimentation or lifestyle.

evaluation is bound to happen. The religious and ideological incoherence's displayed by informants in Ahin are symptomatic of moral choices left unsettled. Villagers as well as religious leaders are aware of this. What this means for the discussion on relativism is that local morality and principles are not as rigid and certainly not as easily pinpointed as Benedict (1934) Fürer-Haimendorf (1964) and Fiske and Mason (1990) among others thought. The discussion on moral relativism is one that transcends the decades and the disciplinary trends of anthropology. There are authors both in favor and against this moral theory, and while moral anthropology originated and made great progress just in the last decade, it is still considered as a matter of course that anthropologist embrace a theory of moral relativism (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011), as foreshadowed by cultural relativism. Morality is the one crucial aspect of peoples live that is most difficult for an anthropologist - and social scientists in general - to gain perspective on. It is essential in understanding of why people do what they do, why they believe what they believe. Why the Kalanguya of Ahin butcher their pigs, and bless the gin.

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Appendix: Honorary adoption document

"A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SANGGUNIANG BARANGAY OF AHIN, THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS, WOMENS ORGANIZATION, FARMERS ORGANIZATION & TEACHERS ADOPTING JOHANNES RENDERS AND EVA FRANCISCA MARIAH KRAH, BOTH FROM THE NETHERLANDS AS SON AND DAUGHTER OF BARANGAY AHIN, MUNICIPALITY OF TINOC, PROVINCE OF IFUGAO, PHILIPPINES."

WHEREAS, barangay Ahin is known to be the first seat of the Kalanguya Tribe in the Cordilleras;

WHEREAS, as part of the native culture of the Kalanguyas particularly in barangay Ahin, any visitor including visitors who lives with the tradiitons of the people of the barangay for atleast two (2) weeks or more are considered sons/daughters of the barangay;

WHEREAS, JOHANNES RENDERS AND EVA FRANCISCA MARIA KRAH have lived for seven (7) weeks w/ the people in the Ahin community;

WHEREAS, to be distinct from other names, the boy shall be named "BAHYUN" and the girl shall be named "BANGANAY" which are native names of the Kalanguya Tribe;

WHEREAS, in view of their good intent/purpose and interest to research about Kalanguya Culture and how it flourished, how do kalanguya people in Ahin look at life, the undersigned signatories hereto acknowledge them as brother and sister of the Barangay;

NOW THEREFORE; On motion duly seconded by the body, be it

RESOLVED as it is hereby resolved to adopt as it is hereby done Adopting JOHANNES RENDERS and EVA FRANCISCA MARIAH KRAH as son and daughter of Barangay Ahin and ti named "BAHYUN" and "BANGANAY" which are native names of the Kalanguyas;

RESOLVED further & FINALLY that copies of this resolution be given to them in good faith and other copies shall be kept in the Barangay for record purposes;

DONE this 7th day of April 2012 at Barabgay Ahin, Municipality of Tinoc, Province of Ifugao, Philippines.

Unanimously carried:

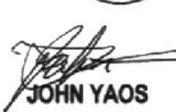
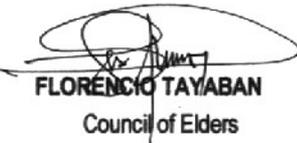
 EDUARDO MARTIN Barangay Council	 ELIZABETH AWILAN Barangay Council	 FELIMON TABUNNAC Barangay Council
 JOHN YAOS Brgy. Council	 ALEX GAYAHO Barangay Council	 FRANCIS AWILAN Farmers Organization (AFDO)
 FLORENCIO TAYABAN Council of Elders	 FIDELA TAYABAN Womens Sector	 ANTHONY KAWAKAN Teaching Staff
		Approved:  SAMSON BENITO Barangay Captain



Illustration 3: A small version of Kalanguya "happy happy": music, gin and stories.



Illustration 4: Empty bottles of Ginebra San Miguel are stacked under the houses



Illustration 5: Man is preparing the rice-field for planting helped by a carabao



Illustration 6: The main valley of Ahin

