

**The Rise of the Elderly Women:  
Controversy, Hierarchy and Matriliney in Yap (*Wa'ab*),  
Federated States of Micronesia**

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## Abstract

My dissertation describes the intricate interplay among land, leadership, and matriliney on the Pacific island of Yap (*Wa'ab*), in Micronesia, as the background needed for understanding perplexing local responses to a proposed resort development. Since 2011, a Chinese business consortium headquartered in Chengdu, Sichuan, has presented a plan to build the resort on a large tract made up of adjacent land parcels owned by several Yapese households and communities, which were asked to formalize title to their lands and lease them to the project for a term of at least ninety-nine years. The plan provoked an unprecedented dispute over the legitimacy of traditional chiefly authorities in Yap, an island society (population approx. 11,500) long known for its robust hierarchy, strong traditionalism, and cultural pride.

The controversy undoubtedly reflects the erosion of the land basis for traditional chiefly authority, itself a concomitant of the gradual transformation of Yapese life since the nineteenth century: whereas previously land was the main source of sustenance and the primary referent of personal and political identities, Yapese today are increasingly involved in the cash economy, leading to intense anxiety and doubt over the long-term viability of the island's fragile economy. But the controversy also expresses the culturally unique position of Yapese elderly women (*pulwelwol*) who are highly respected for their long experience of years of difficult labor on the land, a labor that is culturally elaborated as the physically exhausting work (*magaer*) that produces nourishment along with a deeply embodied tie between specific land parcels and their own uterine offspring. This work of the elderly women is central to the dynamics of traditional Yap land transference. While Yapese men represent themselves as the land's "voice," claiming a form of authority that is symbolically sedimented in named land parcels, the elderly women are recognized as embodying the physical labor essential to reproducing the land in its productive, socially meaningful forms, and they are accorded a decisive, behind-the-scenes authority in land-ranking, landownership, and land-transference. This authority is expected to be exercised very quietly, and elderly women are ordinarily reticent to take public speaking roles beyond their immediate village communities.

In the controversy over the Chinese resort, the elderly women have for the first time in Yap history presented themselves in island-wide public forums as an organized political force. They have taken on the role of ethical guardians of the land itself. Their demonstrations spotlight the most important dilemmas and dangers facing Yapese in the resort development controversy, and by implication the contemporary era: whether to hold fast to a way of life that is increasingly challenging but where the land is still in their own hands.

## Acknowledgement

Customarily, the length of acknowledgement parallels with the density of the analysis. My dissertation certainly does not follow that rule. However, reflecting on the years at UVA, I have realized that I am deeply indebted to the legacy of love—the true hidden intellectual heritage of David Schneider. I would like to seize this opportunity to express my deep gratitude, which also motivates me to the future revision and elaboration of my work.

Doing research in Yap, the island of stone money, has been embedded in my mind since 2005. At that time, I had just finished my MA thesis on exchange and personhood in Yami (*Ta'o*) people on Lanyu (*Bongsho no Ta'o*). As an angry young student devoted to economic anthropology, blaming every discontent of life to capitalism, I was looking for a setting for the comparative research of money symbolism—in contrast with the egalitarian Yami society. Signs appeared on the way: anthropologist Inez de Beauclair had done research in Yami and Yap in the mid-twentieth century, and a piece of stone money was displayed in the Museum of Ethnology, Academia Sinica. My friend, who was conducting her fieldwork in Palau, introduced Yap to me. For many reasons, among them Yap being known as the “Island of Stone Money” with a complex hierarchy, and David Schneider’s well-known reflection on kinship stemming (indirectly) from Yap, Yap has become the most ideal field site for me. When applying for UVA, I did not know that Ira Bashkow has done a detailed historical study of David Schneider’s fieldwork in Yap in the Stockingian tradition, nor that Schneiders’ students were concentrated here. Upon hearing Lise Dobrin’s introduction of Ira’s interests in the graduate student orientation, I felt that my hope of studying Yap began to mature.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### Chinese Expansion in the Pacific

Along with its economic growth and increasing overseas investments, China's influence at the global and regional scales has drawn increasing attention from development studies and policy-making analysis (Wesley-Smith 2007; Zhang 2007; Shie 2007; Yang 2009; Breslin 2009; Wesley-Smith and Porter 2010; Lanteigne 2012; Brant 2013). Despite the synthetic analysis of China's engagements in developing countries, including Latin America, the Middle East, Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia, and particularly Africa (Taylor 2006; Alden 2007; Lee et al. 2007; Eisenman, Heginbotham and Mitchell 2007; Santisco 2007; Rotberg 2008; Brautigam 2009; Ellis 2009; French 2014), China's relation with Oceania has come to the academic foreground only recently (see Wesley-Smith and Porter 2010:12). However, since Obama has issued the pivot back to Asia-Pacific—or, “intensifying the US role in the Asia-Pacific region” (Manyin et al. 2012: 1), the Pacific seems to have regained its spotlighted-position on the world stage (Clinton 2011; Manyin et al. 2012; Campbell and Andrews 2013).

In fact, from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China's growing involvement in the Pacific—such as enhancing trading relations,<sup>1</sup> increasing Chinese-sponsored infrastructure projects, participating actively in significant regional organizations (such as the Pacific Islands Forum) and initiating the China-Pacific Islands Forum Cooperation Fund—has generated diverse responses in academic discourses. Challenging Chinese overseas aid projects as being political rather than economic (Henderson 2001), scholars have cautioned that China's geopolitical strategy may replace US

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<sup>1</sup> For example, according to Yang (2009), China's estimated annual aid to the Pacific is between US \$100 million and US \$150 million, ranked as the third in the region, only behind Australia and the US. Based on the report of National Bureau of Statistics of China, China's trade with the fourteen island states has skyrocketed from US \$121 million in 1995 to US \$1,229 million in 2006 (Yang 2009: 140). According to Wesley-Smith and Porter, the value of trade had reached US \$743 million by 2006, more than four times the total in 1999 (Wesley-Smith and Porter 2010: 17).

dominance in the Pacific (Henderson and Reilly 2003; Windybank 2005; Haddick 2014). Along with China's engagement in the area, its diplomatic geopolitics has become more intricate. Under the umbrella of "checkbook diplomacy" dwell a variety of monetary and equipment donations, financial assistances, development projects (in forestry, agriculture, mineral extraction, tourism, power and energy sectors, see Shie 2007: 312), larger flexibility and openness concerning the allocation of financial aid, and, most significantly, the emphasis on "soft-power"—the non-coercive ability to influence other countries via its "culture, values, and institutions" (Shie 2007: 323) by, for instance, broadcasting Chinese TV programs, increasing student exchanges and business affiliations, encouraging the study of Mandarin and tourist development...etc. Consequentially and unsurprisingly, China's outreach to the Pacific has released several post-colonial island nations from the unilateral dependence on the US since the end of World War II; it has also incited the discourse of "the China Threat" from the Western states that used to dominate the area. Therefore, the regional geopolitics has become a nuanced board game of Chess or Go (*Weiqi*) (Crocombe 2007, 2009; Shie 2007; Zhang 2007; McElory and Bai 2008; Zhao 2012, 2013; Kelly 2014; Ratuva 2014).<sup>2</sup>

Given the diverse cultures, languages, traditions, colonial histories, wartime memories, and trajectories of modernity in the Pacific region, the mental structures of the Pacific island countries are intriguing, sometimes floating between the two superpowers. On one hand, Pacific nations welcome Chinese-friendly aid, investment, and cooperation projects. As the President of Federated States of Micronesia commented, China seems to be more attentive to the recipient countries' needs, while Western states tend to employ aid for their own long-term leverage "even more than China" (Crocombe

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<sup>2</sup> In this section, I emphasize the dynamics between two superpowers across the Pacific—United States in North America and China in Asia. However, I am not neglecting Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Philippine, Indonesia, and Malaysia, which are important players in the regional geopolitics.

2009).<sup>3</sup> However, Pacific countries are not innocently and unilaterally leaning toward merciful benefactors; they are shrewd and suspicious of donors' intentions. While Christianity has become dominant in the area, China's religious persecution on the mainland has often been raised as an issue by their Pacific partners (Shie 2007: 316). Foreign nations' friendly sponsorship is not always appreciated especially concerning national security and state sovereignty.<sup>4</sup> The social and ecological consequences that accompany mining companies and Asian immigrants in inland Papua New Guinea, for example, have been a topic of concern among anthropologists in ASAONET (Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania) discussions. In addition to the military analysts' caution on China's skyrocketing advancement in military technology (Haddick 2014), discourses on "the China Threat" could also be observed in case studies conducted in New Zealand, Solomons, Palau and Samoa, which have highlighted anti-Chinese incidents stemming from the investment's poor working conditions, from the competition between Chinese and local businesses, from the relative isolation of Chinese settlements from the nearby indigenous population, and from the particularities of the Beijing-Taipei rivalry and its detrimental effects on domestic politics (Wesley-Smith and Porter 2010; Brady 2010). Researchers have pointed out: The intensified competition in "checkbook diplomacy" between Beijing and Taipei—which has motivated international aid from China and Taiwan to the Pacific countries—risks political maneuvering instead of island's long-term gains (McElory and Bai 2008; Zhang 2009; Brady 2010).

The Pacific islanders are living in a geopolitical and cultural milieu which is much more complex than the international powers might have fathomed. Witnessing the US' gradual withdrawal in

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<sup>3</sup> The financial assistance sponsored by China usually comes with fewer restraints. For example, while other donor countries would request parts of the subsidies be allocated for foreign technician advisors, China does not require those conditions, as exemplified in the following quote:

"[S]imilar help from other countries would include sending in their technical advisors so at the end of the day, the money all goes back to them through the huge salaries of their own people. But the Chinese government only provides the money and it is up to the Vanuatu government to decide how it is spent" (Deputy Prime Minister Serge Vohor's reported statement, quoted from Shie 2007: 315)

<sup>4</sup> In Papua New Guinea, when China offers to build an office complex for the Foreign Affairs Department, politicians worried about the potential risks in national sovereignty and security (Shie 2007: 316).

the Pacific since early 1990s, the islanders felt, as Shie has described, a sense of abandonment (Shie 2007).<sup>5</sup> While I was doing dissertation fieldwork in Yap,<sup>6</sup> a deep worry permeated among the Yapese concerning the islands' economic vitality, which had been heavily dependent on foreign aid. The Yap State Governor commented that the foreseeable termination of the Compact of Free Association between Micronesia and the US would be a “funeral for the Federated States of Micronesia” (Yap State News Brief, August 13, 2012).<sup>7</sup> This deep concern had propelled him to seek foreign investments, hoping they would bring economic viability to Yap. The Governor could not foresee at that time, however, how foreign investment offered with the benign intent of enhancing the island economy might bring on an unprecedented controversy among the local population.

Even though the geopolitical climate in the Pacific has been changed drastically, there are still very few in-depth ethnographic studies investigating how Chinese developers are perceived from the local islanders' point of view, specifically from a perspective of people with strong sentiments toward their own cultural identity and history. The dis-articulation between the grand international scale and the local point of view may result from the division between academic disciplines; nevertheless, it is not the experiential reality lived by the Pacific inhabitants. Take me—a naïve anthropology student—for example. I was originally hoping to carry out research on the relationship among food, gender and hierarchy in Yap—with some ambition to revisit the renowned American anthropologist David Schneider's historic field site. However, upon my arrival in 2012, I quickly found myself immersed in a swamp of worries, fears, and anxieties shared by islanders encountering an unfamiliar developer with

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<sup>5</sup> Those events indicative of US' withdrawal from the Pacific include: closing the US Embassy in Honiara, Solomon in 1993; closing the regional office of USAID (United States Agency for International development) in Fiji in 1994; reducing the Peace Corp volunteer missions amount into half between 1995 and 200e (Shie 2007: 323).

<sup>6</sup> Yap is a high volcanic island in the Western Caroline Islands, one of the four states comprising the Federated States of Micronesia.

<sup>7</sup> The Compact between the U.S. and the FSM assures the FSM citizens' free entry into the US for work and education, use of US dollars, eligibility for several US federal programs. The US maintained the military denial of other foreign power over this area, also offered 1.4 billion aids during 1986-2001 (Pinsker 1997: 301; Egan 1998: 47). The Compact was renewed for another 20 years in 2004, valid through 2023.

intentions to transform the small island into a resort Paradise. Additionally, because the developer came from a huge continental country with a drastically different package of cultural ideals, the islanders keenly sensed lack of foundation for mutual understanding. In Yap—an island known regionally and ethnographically for its resilient hierarchy, elaborations on “traditions and customs,” and substantial emphasis on secrecy in communication and knowledge transmission—the development project has provoked a remarkable wave of local reaction. Although the development project was initially welcomed by island officials, over time, opposition has been aroused among the Yapese population, fueled by concerns over the environmental impact, the loss of scarce land to foreign ownership, and the resulting impairment of the land on which Yapese cultural vitality is based. Living on Yap during the peak of the controversy, also observing a distinctive pattern of gendered and generational rupture, my dissertation focus has therefore reoriented to this focal concern shared with the islanders.

In this research, I plan to delineate the controversy evoked by a Chinese tourism investment—Exhibition & Travel Group (ETG)—in Yap (*Wa’ab*), Micronesia.<sup>8</sup> I will investigate how the initially benevolent attempt to construct Yap as an “island paradise” for international high-end tourists—which is supposed to boost the government’s revenues and to enhance the local economy and employment—has been adversely conceived by the islanders as a cultural disaster. In order to unravel that dilemma for the Chinese developer as well as for the local population, I will briefly discuss in the next section the distinctive interweaving of hierarchy, matriliney, and secrecy inherent to Micronesian politics. Then, I will explain the cultural particularity of Yap, which may help to contextualize the development controversy, as well as to answer why Yap is chosen as a field site for this study.

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<sup>8</sup> Yap is called *Wa’ab* (*Uav*) by its inhabitants (Müller 1917: 2). According to a Yapese, *Wa’ab* means “similar (*wa*) to dust (*a’b*).”

## Matriliny, Secrecy, and Hierarchy in Micronesia

Anthropology in Micronesia, in contrast to the acanonical nature but canonical position of Melanesian studies (Dalton 2000),<sup>9</sup> has distinctive intellectual “lineages” that have influenced anthropological research topics: chieftainship, social organizations, especially kinship and political structures (see Bashkow 1991; Marshall 1999). Overall, Micronesia has been portrayed through “a heavy blanket of secrecy” because of the military bases present and the hands-off colonialism practiced there (see Price 1966; Flinn 1992; Hezel 2001; Hanlon 1998; Petersen 1999). The concept of “secrecy” here is intriguing from both colonial and indigenous perspectives. It refers to the secrecy of American military governance (Price 1966), as well as the Yapese cultural valuation of secrecy, manifested in their reticence to verbally reveal knowledge and their interactions with the nineteenth-century Spanish colonial power.<sup>10</sup> Yapese secrecy is also reflected in their interactions with each other (Throop 2010: Ch5; see Petersen 1993 for research on Pohnpei).<sup>11</sup> The political and cultural characteristic of being secretive has casted a misty cloak over Micronesian ethnographies.

Scholars have commented on the relative “insignificance” of Micronesia in the advancement of anthropological theories (Kiste and Falgout 1999; Alkire 1999). Likewise, in the Austronesian world, Micronesia offers a unique case of “presence of absence” within the studies of hierarchy in the

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<sup>9</sup> Dalton specifies: by “acanonical” he refers to the features of improvisation, flexibility and fluidity of Melanesian cultures. In contrast to its privileged position in anthropological theories, the improvisation of Melanesian cultures have been challenging to theoretical canon-formation (Dalton 2000: 284)

<sup>10</sup> For example, the historical records reveal that, in encounters with the Spanish powers of the late nineteenth century, the Pohnpeians preferred “fighting back when offended,” yet the Yapese tended to “withdraw in the knowledge [of] their superiority” (Hezel 1995: 24-25).

<sup>11</sup> For example, “unthinking honesty” is considered childish (Throop 2005, 2010: Ch5), and the Yapese avoid direct eye contact, since looking into another’s eyes during conversation is considered an intrusion into that person’s inner thoughts (Throop 2005, 2010).



Austronesian world.<sup>12</sup> For example, while Micronesian societies have been designated as “house societies” by Lévi-Strauss (1987[1976-7]), research on Micronesia is largely absent in discussions about house societies (Fox 1993; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Joyce and Gillespie 2000). Instead, discussions about Micronesian hierarchy focus on semiotics of landscape, honorifics, hierarchy of emotion, and secrecy (see Lutz 1988; Parmentier 1984, 1985, 1987, 2002; Petersen 1993; Keating 2000, 2002; Throop 2008, 2009, 2010). Those diverse topics are illuminating but deviate from the classical anthropological literature of hierarchy, and its profound intellectual trajectory tracing back to Mauss, Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss, and the Leiden school and its rich empirical studies in Indonesia (see Mauss 1990[1950]; Dumont 1980; Lévi-Strauss 1969[1949]; Mabuchi 1974[1958]).

## Sea of Matrilineality

In kinship studies, Micronesia is known for several characteristics: matrilineality (“matrilineage” and “matriclan”), siblingship, adoption, fosterage, “ritual kinship,” the “equation of land and kin,” and food sharing (Schneider 1961b; Silverman 1971; Brady 1976; Marshall 1977, 1999a). Simply speaking, kinship in Micronesia is structured through land. Land is ranked, as determined by precedence<sup>13</sup> or warfare, and occupied by “named, ranked, exogamous matriclans” (Marshall 1999a: 108). There are numerous exceptions to the general characterization of “matri-clan” in Micronesia as “localized,

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<sup>12</sup> For instance, it has been a long concern in the Comparative Austronesian Project at Australia National University to explore the indigenous metaphors of hierarchy, and to enrich the meaningful comparison between Austronesian-speaking world and India—the anthropological “homeland” for hierarchy theory (Jolly and Mosko 1994; Fox 1993, 1997; Fox and Sather 1996). Nevertheless, the only case-study about Micronesia in this Comparative Austronesian Project is the paper about Satawal, where hierarchy is built on precedence and the contested claim of origin. The paper is contributed by Ken-ichi Sudo (Sudo 2006[1996]).

<sup>13</sup> The association between precedence (settlement sequence) and authority is a common phenomenon in the Austronesian-speaking world. Literally, precedence is “an oppositional notion based on the assertion of a relational asymmetry. It is thus a socially-asserted claim to difference that generally involves an affirmation of some form of ‘superiority’ and/or ‘priority’” (Fox 1993, 1997).

property-holding matrilineages.” For example, Micronesian “cognatic systems of descent” in the Chamorro of Guam, Kosraens, and Nukiuoro; patrilineal relatedness in Mokil; and the puzzling “double descent” of Yap — a combination of patrilineal land holding, virilocal marriage residence, and sacred “matriclans,” which are non-localized exogamous groupings conceptualized as descending from single ancestresses and possessing certain prohibitions about eating and other activities (Schneider 1984: 87; Marshall 1999a: 108-109). The mystique of Yap’s “double descent” is worthy of our attention, for it best illustrates the inappropriateness of anthropological grand modeling (Schneider 1965, 1984).

## Yap: Basic Information

Yap, called *Wa’ab* (*Uav*) by its inhabitants (Müller 1917: 2),<sup>14</sup> is a high volcanic island in the Western Caroline Islands of Micronesia, located at 9°30’ north latitude and 138.5° east longitude (Lingenfelter 1975: 5; Throop 2005: 98). In the contemporary world map, Yap State, including Yap proper and the nearby sixty-six atolls encompassing approximately 500,000 square miles in the Western Caroline Islands (Yap State Statistical Yearbook 2009: 1), is one of the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia. Compared to the Eastward smaller coral reef atolls, Yap Proper has higher ecological stability and is less vulnerable to typhoons in the summer (see Lutz 1988).

It is believed that Yap Proper has been settled since 3,300 BP (Throop 2005: 100) by the people from the Philippines or eastern Indonesia (Lingenfelter 1975: 15; Egan 1998: 35). Another hypothesis is that it was populated possibly from the Bismarck Archipelago (to be specific, the Admiralty Islands) in Papua New Guinea (Kirsch 2000: 169; Throop 2005: 101; Ballantyne 2005: 23). As with its origin, the

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<sup>14</sup> The meaning of *Wa’ab* is unknown (Throop 2005: pages). According to a Yapese, it means “similar (*wa*) to dust (*a’b*).” *a’b* is light dust which could be blown by the air, contrary to *fiyath*, dust which is “settled on the ground” (fieldnotes).

language of Yap is not easily classified, given extensive borrowing from different language groups—Oceanic and non-Oceanic (Blust 1988: 58-59; Ballantyne 2005: 22; also see Tryon 1995: 28). As an Austronesian language, Yapese probably belongs to the Western Malayo-Polynesian, or “a highly conservative” Oceanic language (Ballantyne 2005; Throop 2005: 99-101). Resonating with the archaic and complex origins of the language, the “racial characteristics” of the Yapese people also display unusual variety in Micronesia—some Yapese are like Caucasoids but some are similar to Melaneisians (Lingenfelter 1975: 14-15).

From the view of “Europe and the people without history” (Wolf 1982), Yap was “discovered” by the Portuguese and Spanish in the sixteenth century. However, Europeans largely forgot about Yap until the nineteenth century, when it became a major regional trading center and was colonized by foreign powers—first by Spain, and then in turn by Germany, Japan, and the U.S. (Müller 1917:1; Hezel 1983: 15). After being administered by the U.S. as Trust Territory from 1947 to 1986, Yap along with three islands (Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae) and numerous small atolls in Western Caroline have become an independent state, the Federated States of Micronesia.<sup>15</sup> According to the state census of 2000, the population size of the Yap state is 11,241, including 7,391 on Yap Proper and 3,850 on the atolls. Depending on US economic aid through the Compact of Free Association,<sup>16</sup> the Federated States of Micronesia’s import/export ratio is hugely unbalanced. A subsistence economy prevails in Yap, with an

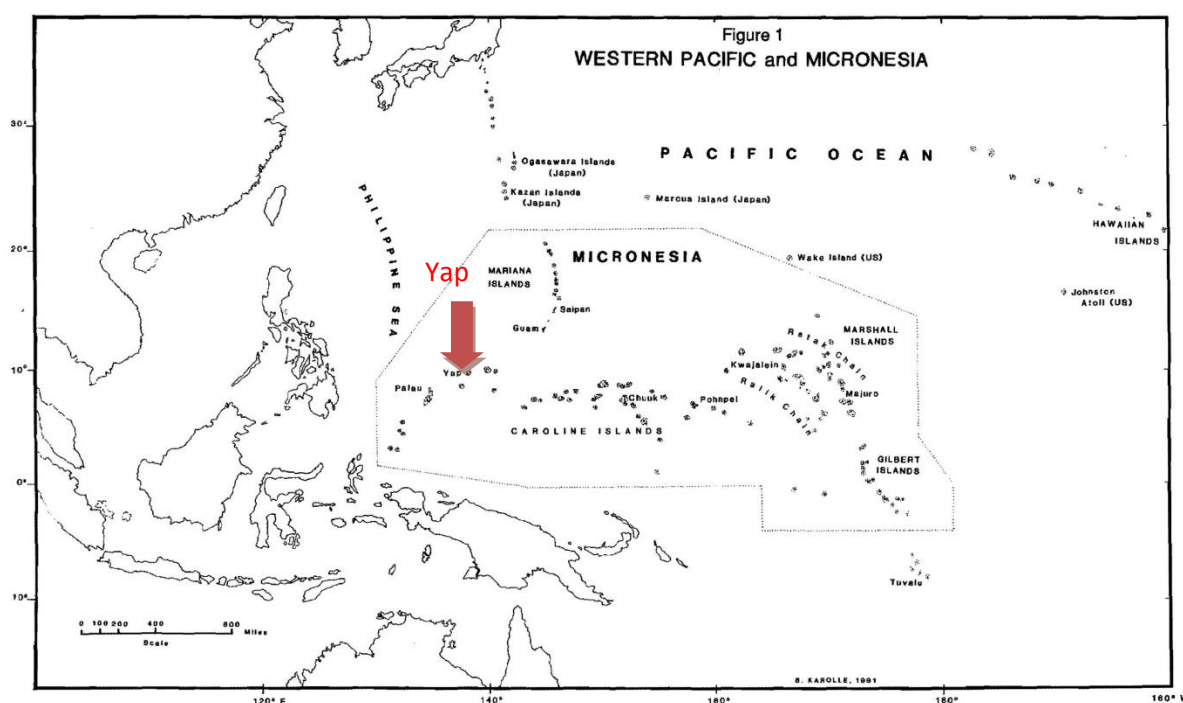
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<sup>15</sup> The FSM government was implemented in 1979, but is still contingent on US and UN authority. The trusteeship relationship with the US was terminated and superseded by a Compact of Free Association between the FSM and the US in 1986 (Pinsker 1997: 152).

<sup>16</sup> The compact between the U.S. and the FSM assures the FSM citizens’ free entry into the US for work and education, use of US dollars, and eligibility for several US federal programs. The U.S. maintained the military denial of other foreign powers over this area, and it also offered 1.4 billion aid during 1986-2001 (Pinsker 1997: 301; Egan 1998: 47). The compact was renewed for another 20 years in 2004.

implicit gender division: male fishing and female growing crops (Yap State Census Report 2000: 87, 104).<sup>17</sup>

Traditionally, the main staple for the Yapese is taro (*Cyrtosperma chamissonis*), supplemented with yams, bananas, bread-fruit, and chestnuts (Lingenfelter 1975: 11-12; Egan 2004: 27, also see Addendum 1). Now, production has declined, coupled with the increasing consumption of imported food, such as rice, ramen, canned mackerel and canned meat (Englberger, Marks and Fitzgerald 2003; Egan, Nero and Burton 2006).



**Figure 1-1: Western Pacific and Micronesia (Karolle 1993: 2)**

<sup>17</sup> Even though this image of gender division of labor has been conveyed in ethnographies and in statistics books (also see Egan 1998), I am not very sure about that affirmation. Based on my feasibility research in 2008 and 2011, the gender division is not strict—women could also go fishing with men, and sometimes men have their own piece of land to grow taro for themselves, especially when the men are in a high (*tabugul*) position.



Figure 1-2: States of Micronesia (Karolle 1993: 3)

## Hierarchy in Yap

Even while undergoing several types of social change, contemporary Yapese still display strong traditionalism. Yapese have long been known for their cultural conservatism and robust hierarchy which are exceptional in this region of the Pacific (Hezel 1983; Bashkow 1991; Throop 2010: 31). Numerous travelers and anthropologists have remarked upon the dramatic deference Yapese show to hierarchical superiors. Their customs of deference, still observed today, include softness of speech, aversion of direct gaze, stooped walking, combing of hair tightly; and an unwillingness to substitute traditional loin cloths for Western garments (Hezel 1983: 266; Bashkow 1991: 195). Their resistance to cultural change is attributed to their cultural valuation of careful deliberation, thoughtful action, and a morality that

emphasizes mutuality of being—how the individual internalizes community goals into their own desires (Throop 2010: 31; Sahlins 2011a, 2011b; Keating 1998).

## Yap in the Evolvement of Kinship Studies in Anthropology

In addition to its widely known cultural conservatism and indefatigable hierarchy in the Western Pacific, Yap has long been known in anthropology for its difficulty in being categorized in any kinship theory classification. In the era when kinship studies were dominated by descent theory, Schneider tried to classify Yap kinship as “double descent” (Goody 1961, Schneider 1962),<sup>18</sup> which he later repudiated (Schneider 1984). Schneider’s main reason for altering his previous assumption stems from the inapplicability of the descent concept to the indigenous mode of relating—specifically the male mode of relatedness, *tabinaw*, once understood as “patrilineage” but which actually means “house estate” (Schneider 1984: 21; McKinnon 1991: 29).<sup>19</sup> While rejecting the appropriateness of *tabinaw* with the

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<sup>18</sup> Goody (1961) distinguished the “full double descent system” and “complementary descent groups.” Schneider, in his 1962 paper, tried to apply Goody’s “double descent” model to the Yapese. However, one implicit thread in Goody’s account was that he noticed the confusion between River’s definition of unilineal descent groups based on exclusive membership and the “kindred” and “bilateral” models of the Pacific, where “locality,” a “non-kinship” criteria, was also counted as constituting kinship (Goody 1961). Later on, Andrew Strathern pointed out that in New Guinea, eating the food grown from the land is crucial to “making kinship” because “food grown on the land is thus impregnated with ancestral spirit” (A. Strathern 1973: 31).

<sup>19</sup> *Tabinaw*, once understood as “patrilineage,” actually means “house estate” (Schneider 1962, 1984). Membership in the *tabinaw* is not based solely on descent, but defined by both birth—those born on the land, and marriage—those who marry into land holding groups. In addition, *tabinaw* is an “estate to which people are attached” rather than an ancestor-oriented descent group. That is to say, a marrying-in woman and her children’s membership in *tabinaw* is earned by their work and proper behavior: “respect and obedience” (Schneider 1984: 85-6). Otherwise, they might be “thrown away” from the *tabinaw*—the children deprived of their names by their father or father’s sister and the in-marrying wives and children’s (until they marry out) being removed from the naming repertoire of *tabinaw* ancestors.

Schneider argues: if insofar as descent is defined by (1) its politico-jural function, (2) a common ancestor, and (3) consanguinity (Schneider 1961a: 2; 1984: 85-87), then *tabinaw* does not fit any of the criteria. In contrast, *genung* (“matriclan”) membership groups are based on descent from “a founding ancestress, and share certain prohibitions which enjoin...members through activities, foods, origins and myths” (Schneider 1984: 87). Therefore, Schneider reasons that *tabinaw* is not a patrilineal group, while *genung* is a “matriclan.”

concept of descent, the female mode of relating through matrilineal descent remains undenied (Schneider 1984: 87).<sup>20</sup>

Even though “matri-clan” is a salient designation of Micronesian social organization, scholars have been very aware of the inappropriateness of this label (Petersen 2009; Marshall 1999a), and they have pointed out that siblingship (Marshall 1977; 1999a), adoption (Brady 1976),<sup>21</sup> sharing land (Silverman 1971), and nourishment (Schneider 1961b, 1969) also play important roles in forging kinship. Nevertheless, the cultural value placed on bio-genetic relatedness of what counts as kinship still prevails, regardless of the prominent phenomena of adoption (see Marshall 1981, 1999a; Flinn 1985),<sup>22</sup> just as the appellation of “matri-clan” or “matrilineal societies” is still a predominant anthropological classification of Micronesia (see Petersen 2009; Hage 1976; Hage and Marck 2003).

Despite the question of classification—whether Yapese *tabinaw* is a “patrilineage” or not—scholars concur that the Yapese indigenous modalities of “being related” are distinctively gendered. The male mode (*tabinaw*) is marked by people’s association to land and hierarchical relations—including the distinction between *tabugul* (“pure”) and *taay* (“impure”), land inheritance, *tabinaw* history, and *runguy* (“compassion”)<sup>23</sup>—while the female mode (*genung*) is marked by egalitarian idioms, such as “coming

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<sup>20</sup> Concerning this well-known self-repudiation, which has led to the reconfiguration of the cultural basis of kinship (Schneider 1984), Bashkow discussed the subtle colonial political dynamics between the colonial power that Schneider was understood by the Yapese to be associating with—even though Schneider himself tried his best to avoid this colonial contact (Bashkow 1991; 2006: 15-19).

<sup>21</sup> In fact, the high frequency of adoption in Micronesia has already challenged the prior assumption of blood relation in constituting kinship (Brady 1976; Silverman 1971; see Marshall 1999a).

<sup>22</sup> Marshall argues: in Chuuk, “biological (especially uterine) siblingship provides a prototype for other significant social relationships and cultural identities” (Marshall 1999a: 112). Even though Marshall allows openness of non-biological relatedness, such as friendship, to create kinship, the strong premise of biological connectedness is still underlying the concepts of “sibling” (see Marshall 1981).

<sup>23</sup> Throop translated *runguy* as “to feel compassion, pity, sympathy; to be sorry for” (Throop 2010: 299). He further argues that the dynamic interplay of *runguy* and *gaafgow* (suffering), personified in a woman’s life trajectory from her natal village to her husband’s land, motivates the translation of land from one (matri) clan to another one (Throop 2010: 56).

from the same belly,”<sup>24</sup> sharing of food and “clan membership” (Labby 1976a; Schneider 1962, 1969: 10, 1984: 33, Egan 1998, 2004; Throop 2005, 2010). While knowledge about *tabinaw*, such as its ranking, history, membership, and naming repertoire, is known among the Yapese themselves, knowledge about *genung* membership is considered private and not easily revealed (Egan 1998: 74, 101).<sup>25</sup>

In the past, *genung* has often been portrayed as a relation of sharing (“matri-clan” membership, also sharing substance) equality, love, and compassion (Schneider 1969, 1984). In contrast to *tabinaw* (house estate, or erroneously understood as “patriline”), *genung* represents human fertility (Labby 1976a). *Tabinaw* and *genung*, understood as “land” and “people” respectively, constitute two main reproductive axes whose dynamics facilitates culture reproduction, just as means and force of reproduction in a Marxist paradigm (Labby 1976a). In a Dumontian paradigm of hierarchy, *genung* is understood as being inferior to, and encompassed by *tabinaw* (see Lingenfelter 1977, although he did not follow Dumont’s framework). Therefore, I argue that by examining the female mode of relating—*genung*—the outstanding persistence of Yapese hierarchy, and the structural oscillation between hierarchy and equality, would be unraveled.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, *genung* relation is not codified and not rendered legible to the state bureaucracy and foreign developers. Being doubly cloaked—by the male and by the state bureaucracy—its resilience and its essentiality of Yapese hierarchy is revealed in the unprecedented controversy that is the subject of this dissertation.

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<sup>24</sup> Whether “coming from the same belly” implies biological relatedness or not is still a question. See Bamford (2004) for a discussion of how the idea of “one blood” in fact means the relatedness of being contained, rather than being related via corporeal substance, such as blood.

<sup>25</sup> The reasons for *genung* secrecy are complex—Yapese informants may have withheld disclosure due to the researcher’s male gender (Egan 1998: 74) and due to the sensitive politics of the post-war colonial situation (Bashkow 1991: 232-233).

<sup>26</sup> As I said before, Throop attributed the persistence of Yapese hierarchy to the cultural valuation of deliberation, thoughtful action, and morality on mutuality of being (Throop 2010: 31). Nevertheless, I take a different approach—to investigate gender relation encompassed in pronounced hierarchy.



## Kinship, Land and Personhood in Yap

Based on the previous ethnographies and my field research in Yap, I argue that the concealed knowledge about matriliney—understood as *genung* or *nik* in the case of Yap—entails the sensitive fluidity of local hierarchy. I contend that the female mode of relating (*genung* or *nik*) contributes to people's attachment to land (*binaw*). The secrecy of the female mode of relating reveals the subtle dynamics of land ownership. Similar to other places in Micronesia, land in Yap is given a primordial value in every dimension of social interaction (Müller 1942[1917]; Schneider 1969; Marksburly 1979; S. Price 1975; Labby 1976a, 1976b; Egan 1998; Lingenfelter 1975, 1977, 1979; Throop 2005, 2010). Land helps to sediment “rank, position, and authority,” the value and power in which successive generations' continuous labor has been invested (Throop 2010:43). It has been emphasized throughout the ethnographic literature that “Land is the chief,” and the person is the land's “vehicle or conduit, its ‘voice’” (Labby 1976a:16; Throop 2010:43). Yapese people not only consider land to be the source of foods that sustain life, but also consider persons themselves to be the very extension of that land—one's personal name, identity, ranking are all endowed according to personal relation to the land (Throop 2010:96). Furthermore, one's identity not only comes from being born into a certain land, but the relation must be stabilized by matrilineal connection to the land through in-married woman's continuous labor investment (*magaer*). Female labor investment is epitomized as a cultural authority given to *mafean* (“father's sisters and their descendants”).<sup>27</sup> *Mafean* can divest one of one's Yapese name and thus sever one's relation with the land. For Yapese, *mafean* are as powerful as *piluung* (“chief”).

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<sup>27</sup> *Faen* is the word-stem of *mafean*, means “owner” (Labby 1976a: 36) or “ownership” (Throop 2005: 240). *Mafean* is commonly glossed as “father's sister and its descendants.” Father's sisters, especially the eldest one, are charged with the authority of “protecting” the *tabinaw*, such as approving names of their brothers' children, depriving their names in case of their behavioral dishonor or disobedience. Depriving the name by *mafean* is considered as the utmost powerful sanction in Yap, because it means being stripped of one's relation to land (Egan 1998:114) and cultural identity as well (Huang fieldnote). Therefore, *mafean* is greatly respected in Yap.

Given the cultural significance of the land, it should be clear that the political-cultural upheavals evoked by the afore-mentioned foreign investment are largely contingent on land relations, which has been aggravated by the investor's failure to pay close attention to the gender constituent of hierarchy. Although the project promised the increase of yearly tax revenues, employment opportunities and infrastructure improvement, the fact that it necessitated leasing land over several generations risked severing people's continuous engagement with the land, as well as undermining the gendered authority to the land. Thus, my dissertation aims to investigate the entangled relations of the "structure of conjuncture" (Sahlins 1981) of the investment controversy in Yap. By delineating how an investment project stumbled into the muddle of local politics and then provoked unprecedented controversy, I will discuss the following points. First, I will lay out the present-day international power shift in the Western Pacific that has entailed the introduction of foreign investment into Yap. Secondly, I will unravel the encompassed gender constituents in traditional Yapese hierarchy, which has been less accessible to the outsiders, has not been recognized in the modern state bureaucracy, and was unknown to the incoming investor. Finally, I will portray how the controversy is interpreted as a sign of political-cultural crisis in the milieu of rapidly changing Pacific island societies. By disentangling the knots in the controversy, by presenting the voice of the weak, this project will reveal the structure and dynamics of the cultural clashes evoked by the expansion of the Chinese into the Pacific.

## Research Design

I conducted my on-site fieldwork in Yap from March 2012 to August 2013. During my stay in Yap, I mostly lived in two villages of different ranks in the eastern part of Yap (see Fig. 1-3). In the first

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*Mafean* rights endure at least for three generations, designated *mafen ni bi'ec* ("new mafean"), *mafen ni le'* ("coconut shell mafean") and *mafen ni bod* ("blackbird mafean") (see Egan 1998:115; 2004: 31; Labby 1976a: 54).

phase of my research, I lived in Makiy, a lower-middle-ranked village in Gagil Municipality, where I had already been adopted into a Yapese family and been introduced to the village women. In the second phase of fieldwork (September 2012 to July 2013), I moved to Wanyan village, a village ranked second only to Gachpar in Gagil Municipality—Gachpar is one of the three highest ranking villages in Yap. In August 2013, before I departed Yap, I lived in Toruw in Maap Municipality with a family for two weeks.

Living in Makiy and Wanyan were very different experiences. In fact, my participation in the anti-development trend has shaped my fieldwork, as well as my residence. During the first phase of fieldwork, I stayed with a host family in Makiy, followed their daily routines, also went to visit another old man in Fanif, for he was more able to answer my endless questions. We were not confined to the house—we went to visit the relatives in Tho'l in Tomil Municipality a lot—a very low ranking village. I also spent time in the Seventh Day Adventist School, socializing with their Philippine teachers, and joined their church activities a lot—including the Saturday Sabbath, and their evangelical workshops in Wanyan.

My first host family in Makiy consisted of an elder woman, my Yapese mom, who lost her husband in spring 2008. During my first visit in summer 2008, she lived with her son in a tin-roofed, concrete house outside the village. The house was close to the village, but separated from the village by the main road. There were two other house compounds near our house. My Yap mom explained, they lived in the village before, but there were too many noises and too much bothering, so she moved out to the current place.

My Yapese mother in Makiy was a short, strong, tough woman, and definitely resolute. Villagers liked to come to their house. She said, from the time when she was young and had married into this house, people had always loved to come to visit them. She and her husband took care of the village kids, sometimes there were twelve of the kids in the house—just like a kindergarten. I was also a witness to

how neighbors loved to come visit. When I arrived, a young couple in their early twenties, together with their nine-year-old son and an infant, often came to the house. Our closet family member in the village is my Yapese mother's deceased husband's sister's daughter. Her children stayed at our house all the time. Her daughter was my guide and guard during my first visit in 2008.

When I came to Yap in summer 2011, I was completely unaware of the development project, despite the fact that the Chinese developer had already come. Until the very end of my stay, an elder friend from a high-ranking village in Gagil Municipality revealed the news to me. He was surprised that I did not know anything about the Chinese investment, and told me the plan he had heard, which included "golf courses, casinos, and huge hotels." Upon hearing the news, I was completely shocked.<sup>28</sup>

I began my dissertation fieldwork in spring 2012. Though my main research interest was in studying how the shifting food-consuming patterns might affect local hierarchy and gender relations, I began to be more and more concerned about the Chinese development. Being the only person who understands Chinese in the midst of the uncertain, worrying and fearful population, I gradually became involved in siding with the anti-development Yapese, helping distribute the petition letters, the aim of which was to require the state government to slow down the process until "the people in Yap get well-informed" (see Appendix 1 for petition letter). I also visited the Legislature frequently, conversed with the senators, the officer in Women's Interest Office, the consultant of Youth's organization, and participated in the public hearings at the Legislature. A lot of time I went to my host family's house with deep anger and confusion, but slowly I realized that they were even more bewildered and fearful than me, for Makiy directly subordinates to certain *piluung* in Gachpar—"they own our lives." Sensing that my active involvement in the ETG-related affairs might be harmful to my host family, I seized an

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<sup>28</sup> The elder, who is a modest, polite and sincere person, expressed everything in a reserved and humorous manner. He debriefed the news about ETG without strong emotion, even jokingly commented "Yap is very small. If they come, we don't have any land to live on, maybe we will all live in the sea." He was certainly worried about the large-scale investment, but still expressed his thoughts a calm manner. Upon hearing of it, I became angrier than he was.

opportunity to move to Wanyan in September 2012. Wanyan is also in Gagil Municipality, but the ranking is higher than Makiy. Wanyan also bears an antagonistic relation with Gachpar, and was not as pro-development as Gachpar. A high-ranking patron generously had his nephew lease me an apartment, so Wanyan also became my host village.

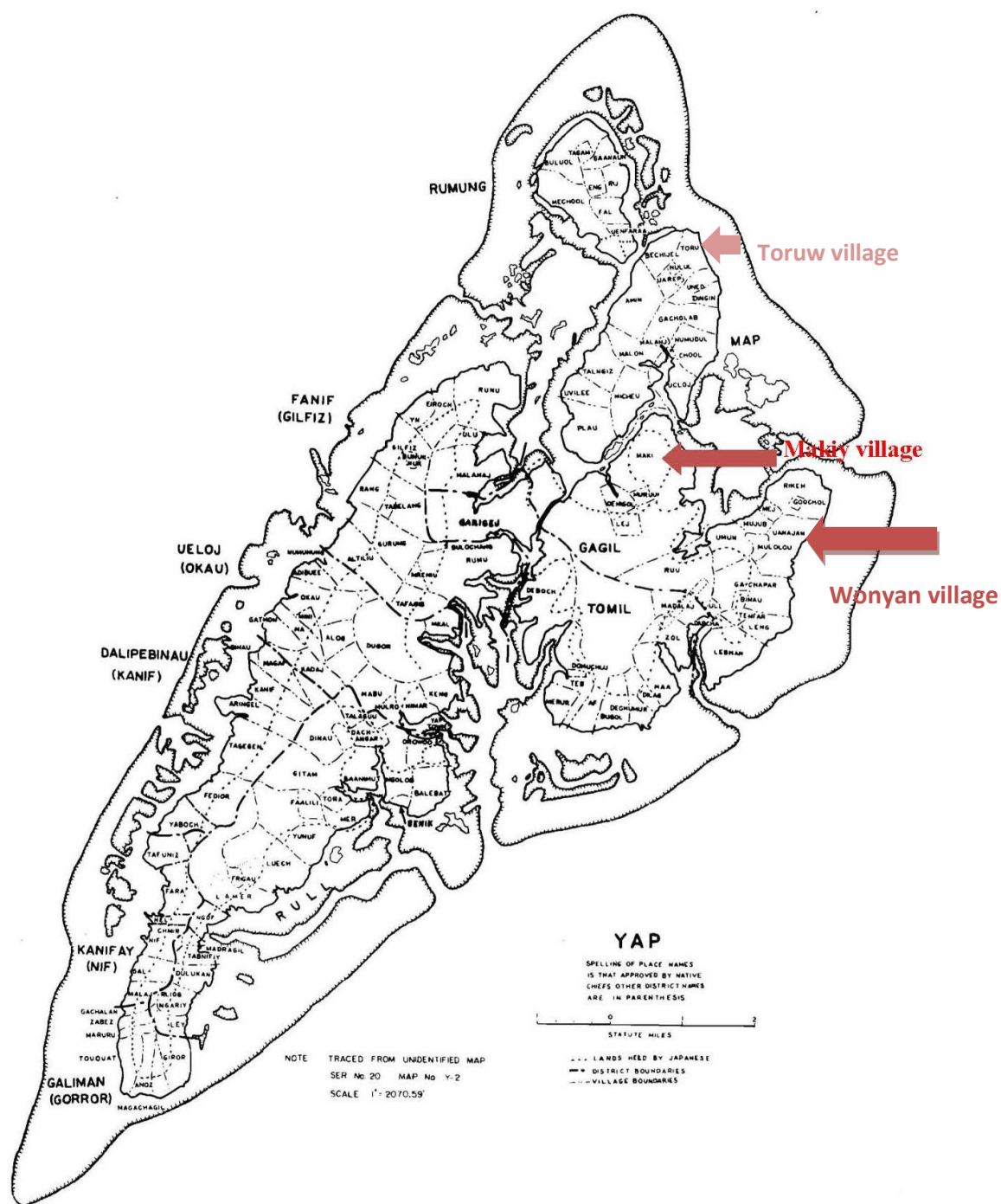
My second phase of fieldwork began in September 2013, after I moved to Wanyan. Since then, most of my time was spent in visiting the anti-development group members. During most of the days when there were no meetings, I visited my acquaintances via Makiy and Seventh Day Adventist connections. The days in Wanyan was filled with conversations and visits, the only pity was I did not live with a host family in Wanyan and therefore was less caught up in the substantial fabric of daily life in Wanyan as I had been in my previous living situation.

In August 2013, I stayed in Toruw, Maap Municipality, with a host family about two weeks. Toruw is a village that remained suspicious of the development project. During my stay in Toruw, I followed their daily life, and also went to visit an old man, who was able to answer my questions concerning customs—he had a lot of leisure time. I also consulted the medicine man in Toruw—he was the one who introduced me to my host family there (his sister’s family); he was very well-versed. He was busy, and had “clinics” three days a week.

My presence in Yap was nevertheless controversial. Initially, people were suspicious about my purpose because of my nationality, and also because I came at a sensitive time—almost the same time when the Chinese consortium expressed interest in tourism investment in Yap. My response was to actively associate myself with the anti-development people—it was not wise and deliberative enough. Nevertheless, I felt I at least contributed a little in assisting them with looking into “who ETG are,” when the locals were tormented by uncertainties, worries and fear. Originally I just surfed the internet, looked for “ETG,” and passed the reliable information on to them. Later on, feeling that the information

about ETG's project should be available to more Yapese and the concerned people, I helped with videotaping and disseminated the public meetings and hearings in Yap State Legislature. I also maintained a blog (wordpress), and uploaded all available information to it. Those involvements upset the pro-development Yapese though. The Yapese politics of avoidance—enemies will refrain from confronting each other—somehow saved me from embarrassment, but also blocked me from the opportunity to approach the opponents.

My data demonstrated the weakness of my field methods—I did not have enough chance to talk with the Yapese who favored the Chinese development. Therefore, my thesis is inevitably lop-sided. Nevertheless, by delineating the event and my observation, I hope to indicate the real stakes of the controversy, which included the uncertainty as to whether to choose a non-land-based lifestyle, and taking the risk of losing land that was their means of production and source of identity. It is the dilemma faced by every Yapese, regardless of whether they agree or disagree with the Chinese development.



**Figure 1-3: The Map of Yap Proper and where I stayed** (Gifford and Gifford 1960: 149)

## Outline of Chapters

After the introduction, Chapter Two will discuss how females present themselves in Yapese daily life and their connection with the land. It will discuss how work (*margar*), especially gendered work, articulates the complex relations between land and kinship. It will further document how resilient hierarchy is encoded in persons and bodies. The division between *tabugul* (“uncontaminated”) and *ta’ay* (“contaminated”), which is fundamental to Yapese hierarchy, is inscribed in every concrete “code of conduct”—for example, partaking of the food raised on the land and cultivated by highly segregated groupings according to gender and age, thereby observing strict behavioral regulations in a highly gendered landscape and seascape. Intriguingly, such division, which anchors the well-known Yapese hierarchy, was “introduced” from outside. This chapter will also discuss matrilineality, and how it motivates marriage movements and landownership transference. The father’s sister’s authority, which marks the transition of landownership, will be investigated here. This rule of hierarchy is embodied, silent, un-uttered, and happens only occasionally at certain critical points of time—particularly relating to the moments of life and death.<sup>29</sup> It is a rule to which state authority and Chinese developers are oblivious. Or, it has become subverted through the gaze of modernity.

Chapter Three and Four will discuss hierarchy and power respectively, including the symbolic tripartite structure of hierarchy, hierarchical village landscape, village rankings, and the arena of social life conventionally designated as “political.” The Yapese hierarchical structure displays a distinctive feature: a tripartite ideology, ramifying from domestic life to inter-village and the island-wide

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<sup>29</sup> Sisters’ spiritual authority over her brother’s children can also be seen in Mabuchi’s comparative ethnologies between two classifications: the Indonesian and the Oceanian (Mabuchi 1974a[1958], 1974b[1964]).



configuration. *Dalip pi Nguchol* (three supporting cooking stones),<sup>30</sup> the three most prestigious *tabinaw* (“estate”) signifies this tripartite structure. In contrast, Yapese politics highlights the opposition, or “checks and balances” between two confrontational alliances: *ban piluung* (chief’s side) and *ban pagal* (young men’s side), or *bulce* and *ulun*. In contrast to *Dalip pi Nguchol*, which has become obsolete, the opposition between *bulce* and *ulun* is still operating now, and the idea of “checks and balances” has permeated Yapese life on different scales—domestic or public. In Chapter Four, I will also discuss the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”), one major factor in the development controversy. The Council of *Piluung* originally derived from the colonial construct, but now it is a government branch—the “fourth branch” in addition to executive, legislature and judiciary. The Council of *Piluung*, along with the Council of *Tamol*, has the right to veto Legislature’s Bills concerning “customs and traditions.”<sup>31</sup> It is visible, audible, legible to the state, vocal and discursive, easier for outsiders to perceive, and closer to the Western idea of “power.”

Chapter Five highlights the local response to the Chinese development, as well as its background—in the context of a difficult modern state with its political uncertainty and economic insecurity. Chapter Six emphasizes the Yapese elderly women, who have become the major group expressing their disagreement with the development. This chapter will also foreground the land registration process, and how Yapese perception of the world is through the lens of lands.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion, which also offers a summary and synthesis of key points.

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<sup>30</sup> *Dalip* means “three.” *nguchol* and has two meanings: personal name and the three supporting stones of a cooking pot (see Jensen et al. 1977: 46-47; Throop 2010: 299).

<sup>31</sup> *Piluung* are traditional leaders on Yap; *Tamol* are the traditional leaders on the neighboring islands belonging to the Yap State.

## Chapter Two: *Binaw, genung, ngea magaer* (Land, Matriline, and work)

### The Exceptional Elderly Women's Voice

To comprehend the role of elderly women in the development controversy of 2012, it is important to keep in mind that for elderly women speaking openly is considered extremely rare and abnormal—although not disrespectful.<sup>1</sup> Elderly women, or *pin ni pilibithir*, “had a very strong say in the internal affairs of the estate” (Labby 1976a: 77)—that is, in family affairs. Elderly women are respected at the village level as well. In each village in Yap, women meet regularly to discuss community issues, such as village services (cleaning the village paths and grounds), communal finances (such as village women's saving account), dancing performances, commands from the higher villages, etc. Elder women usually take important roles in the village meetings<sup>2</sup>—they are in charge of the women's bank account. Their decisions usually carry a lot of weight. Although they might not like to talk in the meeting—a common tendency for most Yapese women—elderly women's opinions are highly respected in the

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<sup>1</sup> There is a fine line between “abnormal” and “disrespectful.” Although those elderly women's opinions were disapproved of, often condemned by high officials, and regarded as “emotional” or “irrational,” this implied that they were crossing some line. Nevertheless, since the elderly women are themselves respected by the younger generations, even the *piluung* did not openly oppose them. Furthermore, it would “look bad” if the *piluung* publicly lost their temper.

On the contrary, while there were men coming to the front stage and disagreeing with the *piluung*'s decision, especially concerning ETG's investment, their credibility was soon demolished by the *piluung* themselves. The techniques are multiple: meeting manipulation, authority exertion, history disputation, etc. (see Chapter Five, the annihilation of *Dalip pi Nguchol*). Therefore, even though the elderly women seemed to be peripheral in the public decision-making process, or the Yapese domain of politics, their very marginality protected them from being too vulnerable to the realm of “politics.”

<sup>2</sup> In most of the villages, there are separate meeting houses in the center of the community—one for men, and the other for women. Although the meeting houses might be next to each other, if men and women happen to have the meetings at the same time, they would have the meetings separately in different houses. In a social gathering, for example, while watching a public performance of Yapese dance, adult men and women sit in different areas. Usually children are with the women, and sometimes elderly men accompany their wives. But young men would rather sit together at a distance, instead of sitting with their wives and children.

group—village community and *tabinaw*. Nevertheless, beyond the village level, there seems to be no arena for women to voice their interests or concerns.<sup>3</sup>

In contemporary Yap, both males and females are employed in the government and work in the town, which is called Colonia. In Yapese, it is called *doonguch*, which means “slightly higher place”.<sup>4</sup> The town is the most “urbanized” area in Yap. Government offices, five hotels, six restaurants, a Catholic high school, post offices, banks, and three shopping centers are all concentrated in the town (see Chapter Five for a more detailed description of Colonia, the “Yap Town.”). It has also created a special zone that is differentiated from the village atmosphere. For example, in the town, people from outer islands are not required to obey their village attire etiquettes. The etiquettes include: both male and female from outer islands need to be topless.<sup>5</sup> Men should only wear the loincloth, and women should only wear the stripped padanus cloth to cover their lower bodies. The “chiefs” (*tamol*) from outer islands still obey this protocol in the town, and described it—half-bitterly—it is an honor, at least, to please Yapese, the residents of this land.<sup>6</sup> However, commoner outer-islanders, especially youngsters, prefer to wear T-shirts and pants—real skirts are strictly reserved for Yapese women.<sup>7</sup> Noticeably, it is only in town that they have such a freedom to choose their attire. In the village, they “must” attire themselves “as the outer-islanders” do.

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<sup>3</sup> Another interesting issue is that the Yapese domain of “politics” consists of inter-*tabinaw* relatedness (*tha’a*), it is a relation “between dayif and dayif,” (house stone foundation). Men are in charge of *tha’a* relation, and assigned to speak for the voice (*luung*) of the land. Sometimes those *tha’a* may not correlate with the village unit. According to a Yapese saying, “in a village, some families are listening to one higher village, some families are listening to another village.” A related idea is *nug* (alliances). Sometimes a village may have two different alliances. Gachpar is the most well-known example—it has two “alliances” *ban piluung* and *ban pagal*. In fact, Yapese sociality probably should be depicted as consisting of relations instead of boundaries and units.

<sup>4</sup> *Doonguch ni lugumathaaw* means “atoll.” *Doonguch* means “some higher place.” *Mathaaw* means “ocean, sea.” The town was a small island in the Japanese colonial era (1918-1945) and before, which is why the town is also called *doonguch*.

<sup>5</sup> To prevent derogatory terminologies, now Yapese would refer to them as “people from the neighboring islands” instead of “outer islands,” especially in government meetings.

<sup>6</sup> One high *tamol* from the outer island used the analogy of a lizard or fish’s head and tail. “In Yap, we are the tail, the *piluung* are the head. But if they come to our places, we are the head, they are the tail.”

<sup>7</sup> I myself have never seen an outer island woman wearing a normal skirt. They all wear lalavala (pandanus clothes). Similarly, most Yapese women refrain from wearing lavalava.

Attire etiquette refers to the complex Yapese hierarchy, which mainly consists of gender, age, and—from outer islanders' point of view—blood relations. In some meetings—mostly government meetings—women are allowed, even assigned, to talk. On those occasions, women usually behaved very humbly. They looked down while standing up or walking to the microphone, and then they made a speech or announcement on request. Women would never look up from the paper at hand.<sup>8</sup> After the announcement is delivered, they walked back to their original seats, looking at the floor all the time. I have only seen one Yapese woman make eye-contact when she was delivering a speech. She is the main officer of Yap Women's Interest Office. She is also the daughter of an in-married American biologist, who married a Yapese high-ranking man in Rull. Aside from that case, I have only witnessed women making eye-contact during their speech in the Seventh Day's Adventist church gatherings. Although female church-goers are much more common than male church-goers, there were only two who had ever made a public speech. One woman is an elder's wife; she herself is from a high-ranking village. Another woman is from Palau. They looked at the audience occasionally.

Apart from meetings and being in the town, in everyday life in the village, Yapese women do talk. When visitors—like me—came, it was usually the husbands who accompanied and hosted me, and the wives were in the nearby kitchen preparing food, checking the fire, or going to nearby taro patches to gather some taro. When they found their husbands had not delivered correct information, usually they would adjust the husband's statements. In fact, husbands often asked their wives for confirmation: "Am I right on this?" In my experience, only one family diverged from this mode of communication. The husband likes to chat with the guest, but the wife also wishes to join the discussion in order to contradict him, so the husband sometimes hushes the wife. But that was a unique case among all the couples I

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<sup>8</sup> Eye contact is another intriguing phenomenon in Yap. In fact, although Yapese men made speeches, the younger ones would rarely look up from the paper at hand or at the audience. Interestingly, the higher one's ranking is, the elder one is, the more eye contact he would make during a talk.

interviewed. In most of the cases, when the husband is chatting with the guest, the wife is usually quietly busy nearby—feeding the chickens, preparing the food, or just quietly sitting at the *ta'an* (“cooking hut”), listening to the conversation without intervening.

I did encounter some prominent female figures. It was in late August, 2013, right after Governor Anefal signed the Investment Agreement with the developer, and the first CCG (Concerned Citizens Group) meeting was taking place in the Catholic Church in Town. It was a gloomy afternoon, several really aged, big, white-headed, hunch-backed, women either walked with a stick or with the help of another woman. Those women slowly proceeded to the meeting room. The group’s core organizer, Nick Figir, introduced me to them. They were wives of the late first Governor and second late Governor, one of whom is also the founder of the Yap Women Association. They were humble, walked extremely slowly, and talked when necessary, but did not dominate the meeting. In that meeting, there were more women than men, but men were present too. The officer of the Yap Women’s Association, the daughter of the biologist, also attended and contributed her firm, steady opinion.<sup>9</sup> Even though that meeting was hosted by a man, it was already a female-friendly meeting. However, just like every other meeting, and also because of the complexity of the issue itself, various opinions were raised but no conclusion was reached—except for one: we need to meet again.<sup>10</sup>

In sum: in Yap, females, especially young females, are not expected to speak except in their own *tabinaw* (“estate” or “household”). Elderly women can voice authority in two areas: their own *tabinaw* and in the village women’s meetings (*binaw*). Therefore, it is not difficult to comprehend why any

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<sup>9</sup> Later on, she did not attend CCG’s meetings anymore—because the nature of the meeting is excessively slow. Idea-exchange among the old women did not seem to be a process that could be accelerated.

<sup>10</sup> A capable young man working in Judiciary also attended, but remained quiet. Eventually he uttered some statement, but his suggestion did not seem to be fully discussed. Outside of the room, he complained to me: “we don’t feel it’s our space to talk there!” Nevertheless, young women never complained about this issue, at least to me. Additionally, during each meeting I sat with the youth association, and I had a feeling that young men also refrained from talking publically about controversial issues. They are good at planning and organizing activities, but they would not risk offending different opinion-holders.

public disagreement voiced by elderly Yapese women is considered highly unusual in Yap. To understand the context fully, I will explain on two levels: ideal (cultural norms) and real (what people really do). I will begin with the ideal: some basic cultural configurations of land (*binaw*), gender, body, person (*girdi*).

## Cultural Ideal

In Yap, the relation between person and land is constituted processually—through people’s continuous engagement with the land—most importantly, cultivating the land. The dynamic relation between people and land also epitomizes Yapese historicity—that is, naming, ranking, and marriage routes.

Here, what I mean by “historicity,” mainly comes from Ohnuki-Tierney, as “the culturally patterned way or ways of experiencing and understanding history” (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990: 4). In Yap, especially among the older generation, people know whose mother was from where; sometimes it was a topographical journey over the whole island. A Yap man in his late 40s told me,

“I remember when I was young, my grandmother (on my father’s side) and the neighbor—they were very aged and nearly blind—could only sit close to the door for the whole day. They were listening to who was coming to visit, and who passed by—sometimes no one came to visit for the whole day. But, it was amazing that they knew who the visitor was when they heard the visitor’s name, and where his/her mother came from, and where the mother’s mother came from.....(John G. Mangefel, late 40s, male, from Fanif)

Where a Yapese person comes from indicates the role of land in one's identity. Where a Yapese woman is married implies the future identification of her descendants. Land—to be specific, people's relation with the land—has played a pivotal role in Yapese identity. As Throop suggests,

Indeed, while personal identity, including one's status, rank, caste, and position, is connected to the house foundation that is the source of one's personal name, an individual's identity and responsibilities are always stretched over multiple estates through one's clan affiliation. This represents the historical trajectory of the *ganong* through various estates over numerous generations (Throop 2010: 46).

Genung is often translated as “matriliny” or “matrilineal grouping” (Schneider 1984: 24; Throop 2010).<sup>11</sup> I will discuss the meaning of *ganong* in the following section.

As ethnographers have noted, Yapese hierarchy permeates social life. The symbolic opposition between *tabgul* (“sacred, high, pure, clean”) and *ta'ay* (“profane, low, impure, dirty, polluted”) (Labby 1976a: 69) is manifest in the segregation of village and in *tabinaw* ranking, as well as in gender, space, and food (see Chapter Three on hierarchy). The distinction between *tabgul/ta'ay* exists between almost all semantic categories: sea and land, men and women, spirits and human, elder and younger, *piluung* and *milingai*. Egan, who has examined what motivates the symbolic contrasts and transforms *ta'ay* into *tabgul*, also argues that a long-term investment of labor transforms something low and unclean into something pure and ordered (Egan 1998:135; Throop 2010: 72). Therefore, the separation between *tabugul/ta'ay* is not fixed, but rather potentially transformative contingent on human's labor involvement over generations. Based on that, Throop has further argued that the contrastive opposition between *tabugul* and *ta'ay* could also be viewed as “a distinction between controllable and

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<sup>11</sup> However, interestingly, a man from Rumung told me that “*nik* is from the mother, *genung* is from the father. But now the *nik* is fading, so I take my father's *nik* as my *genung*” (Thomas 2013/August). Rutun said that he heard two different kinds of meaning for *genung*: male line and female line. His father thought they were the same. Rutun thought that male line is more likely, because *Genung* is also a male name. “*Nong*” means swimming. He thought that it makes more sense to refer to a male ancestor—the first person who arrived at the place by swimming. Joana (Rebliyan's daughter) also thought father's line was *genung*.

uncontrollable creative power” (Throop 2010: 71). *Tabugul* implies that those who are “charged with the responsibility to think, reflect, and organize,” while *ta’ay* are those “whose powers were controlled by others,” and “act on the basis of other’s decisions.” Consequently, the symbolic opposition between “spirits/humans, elders/youth, men/women, *piluung/pmilngaay*” all pivot on differences between “those who think, reflect, and decide and those who act, work, and serve” (Throop 2010: 73). Based on that, “birth, death, menstruation, and fertility, all elements of human existence that are understood to be beyond any one individual’s control, are each understood to be *taqay*” (Throop 2010: 73).<sup>12</sup>

Compared with various indicators of Yapese men’s rankings, a Yapese woman is defined by her arduous work on the land, which anchors (*yuluw, yiluuy*) her and her children to an alien landed property that belongs to her husband’s family, entails ownership for her descendants, and—evidently—supplies the food for men’s *yongum* ranking. Therefore, while the ranking of Yapese men is prominently marked by various customs—land ranking, eating grades (*yongum*), attire transition—women’s presence is implied through her work on the land and her attire as well. Furthermore, females are not only substantiating the nested ranking in Yap, they are in fact mobilizing Yap hierarchy—females are esteemed because of their invested labor on the land, also because they have positioned themselves for higher-ranking land via marriage and therefore grant their children a decent social standing in the forthcoming generation. Thus, Yapese have an analogy: Women are like hibiscus trees, they “grow by dropping their roots from the branches; where one takes root in the ground, a new tree grows” (Labby 1976a: 22). Women are also similar to the captain; they direct where the boat should sail.

And normally the mother is the captain, pilot...if she takes you to a low village, I [the children] am [in] a low village. If she takes you to a high village, you go to a high village. If your mother married to a high village...she is like a captain. (Godfrey, in late 60s, To’ruw, Ma’ap, August 2013)

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<sup>12</sup> *Taqay* and *ta’ay* denote to the same Yapese word. Throop has chosen the orthography adopted by Yap State Department of Education (Throop 2010: xv), in which “q” replaces apostrophe to signal a glottal stop. When I am quoting him, I keep his orthography.



Gendered routes of movements have played a significant role in Yapese hierarchy. Throop has argued: men are responsible for the land resources, especially “voice” (*luungun*) and *dayif*, which are “repositories of the past.” Men also hold knowledge about the past generations relating to land. Therefore, men are more past-oriented. Women marry, determine where to adopt a child, and “plant” their children on land, therefore they are more future-oriented (Throop 2005: 170).<sup>13</sup>

To understand the centrality of land in Yap symbolism, as well as how it is related to gender, bodily composition, and personhood, I will explain in the following sections: (1) local classification of land; (2) how the Yapese body is gendered, and how it correlates with land signification; (3) how land connects to individual life cycles; (4) why land epitomizes Yapese historicity. I will begin with the indigenous classification of land—not all land is given the same signification.

## Yapese Categorization of Land

### *binaw*

There are several Yapese terms denoting different subsistence usages of land—*mu'ut* (“taro patch”), *milay* (“yam gardens”), *day* (“fishing lands in sea”), and *ech* (or *qach*, “stone fish wires”) (Mahoney 1958:251). However, they are all distinct from *binaw*. According to Mahoney’s record, *binaw* is the general Yapese word referring to land, and it is also used in land registry (Mahoney 1958: 251). However, even within the general category of “land,” there are still a few Yapese words: *qarow*

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<sup>13</sup> However, directionality in temporalities is never a simple, clear-cut issue. In terms of making decisions in daily life, men have authority in political decisions in inter-*tabinaw* or village affairs, hence they are also future-oriented. *Mafean* (father’s sisters and their descendants), on the contrary, are past-oriented—they need to oversee their brother’s wife and children to make sure their natal *tabinaw* is taken care of properly (Throop 2005: 170).

(pronounced as “aa-row”), which is in contrast with sea (*mathaaw*).<sup>14</sup> *Naam* means “country” or “nation.” *Binaw* commonly refers to “village” or “community,” in contrast with town (*doonguch*, “slightly higher place”). But *binaw* could also mean land (land property) or island.

*Binaw* can mean many things. [Generally, it means] land. If we are traveling through water, *binaw* means land. If we are talking about property, *binaw* means land. So, what is really *binaw*? It is really land, but land can be my land or the island. (Ken, 68-year-old, Ru’mu, Fanif, 2013/7/3)

*Binaw* also means where people live, or a “residential place.” In contrast, *miley* means garden, where the food is produced. One day my landlord in Wanyan village explained to me (when I was asking him to explain a radio program on *yalan*, “traditional culture”):

“There are *binaw*, there are *milay* (they are different). *Milay* strictly means garden. Nowadays, you lay down a couple of gardens—if you like the spot, you can build the house [on the garden]. In the past, they were gardens. *Miley* are smaller.”

“*Binaw*, you can also plant other things: cut down the trees, burn the trees, also plant whatever you want to plant. When we do that, we also call it *miley*. Make *binaw* into garden. That *binaw* is yours, you can still build a house [even though you have converted it into a garden]. There is no law or anything against the culture. But in the past, there are places for garden, and places for residence—to live. We can see the remains today. Remains of house foundation, and *miley*, [the place] they used to garden before.”

“How do you know it’s *miley*?” I asked.

“It’s really obvious to know it’s *miley*. It is a plot of land, higher than normal ground. They are like...a lot of the plots together, separated by a ditch. A ditch is not wide, maybe (as wide as) the oven (pointing to the discarded, rusted electric oven, sitting outside of the house). They put dirt on the *miley* to make it higher.”<sup>15</sup>

“How big is a *miley*?”

“It’s small. Maybe half of this house [gesturing to his house].<sup>16</sup> Some are even smaller. It depends on who was making it. It was hard worker, can be bigger *miley*. Lazy person, smaller *miley*.” (Defngin, about 40s, Wanyan, Gagil, 2013/6/27)

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<sup>14</sup> *Pumathaaw* is a term for people from the neighboring islands, or Ulithians, and literally means “sea people.” A certain part of Colonia—where the Yap State Legislature is now—was higher than the neighboring parcels. Because it was the earliest “capital” in Yap being demarcated during Japanese occupation, people use *Doonguch* to refer to Colonia.

<sup>15</sup> My landlord was talking about the *miley* in Wanyan, known for being cautious in accepting one’s share, also a high-ranking village near the sea at Gagil Municipality. The coastal area is flat and sandy.

<sup>16</sup> Defngin’s house is a two-story concrete building, about one-third of the scholar’s lab.

*Binaw* also means village community. In Yap, one would soon find that a village community is where one gets his/her identity. In daily conversation, we often refer to somebody by mentioning “who is from which village in which municipality.” Sometimes, people would say “going to Gagil,” and the interlocutor needs to ask “where in Gagil” for further details. It is also impolite to ask someone which village he or she comes from on first acquaintance, because one’s village ranking implies which stratification he/she belongs to.

*Binaw* is a culturally loaded word. It is also the word stem for *tabinaw*—the most salient cultural unit in Yap (Schneider 1984:21). Schneider’s re-conceptualization of *tabinaw* features one of the most well-known self-refutation in anthropological studies of kinship.

### What is *tabinaw*?

The Yapese word *tabinaw* has multiple English translations: as “land estate,” “family,” “house,” “household,” “dwelling,” “that which is the land,” “people who are related to the utterer through land relationship,” and “the place where the marriage exists” (Mahoney 1958: 254; Lingenfelter 1975: 25; Schneider 1984: 21; Throop 2010: 299). In daily conversation, Yapese often translate *tabinaw* as “estate.”<sup>17</sup> However, as Schneider points out, neither “family” nor “land estate” captures the multiplicity of *tabinaw*. The central meaning of *tabinaw* revolves around people-land relationship. As Schneider describes, “If there are no people, land alone does not constitute a *tabinau*. And people without a

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<sup>17</sup> While documenting Yapese land tenure patterns, Mahoney also uses *tabinaw* and *estate* interchangeably (Mahoney 1958). When being asked “what does *tabinaw* mean?” a Yapese may answer “estate.” Interestingly, if I asked middle-aged men, the first answer they came up with was usually “estate.” If I pursued “what does *estate* mean?” and then they may supplemented with other definitions, such as “family” and “property.” If I asked women—mostly women above their fifties—their first answer was usually “family.” If I kept on asking “does someone also count as the same *tabinaw*? How about the place? Can I say it is also the *tabinaw*?” And their answer showed that land properties are also included in *tabinaw*.

relationship through land cannot constitute a *tabinaw*” (Schneider 1984: 21). Quite different from the word “family” in English, *tabinaw* consists of people and land property. It seems to be an objectified relation, indicating a group inhabiting a certain piece of land (see Wagner 1974: 111-112).

*Tabinaw* is understood as a fundamental “cultural unit” on Yap. It is the inheritance and property-holding unit, as well as the node of Yapese social-political hierarchy (Mahoney 1958: 255; Schneider 1984: 21; Egan 1998: 85).<sup>18</sup> *Tabinaw* is indicated by a stone foundation (*dayif*, or “house platform”) and a house where people live, attached by garden lands, taro patches, fishing areas, coconut and betel orchards, and other resources, as well as the rights and privileges associated with it (such as fishing rights) (Labby 1976a: 15; Egan 1998: 85).<sup>19</sup> The significance of *dayif* is worth our attention: *Dayif* carries the *tabinaw* name, as well as its traditional rights, authorities and prerogatives. A *tabinaw* must have a *dayif* (sometimes more than one); while a *bang ebinaw* (“side/part of the land”) may or may not contain a *dayif* (Mahoney 1958: 253-254). In case a *tabinaw* has more than one *dayif*, the most important one is *kengin e dayif* (“trunk foundation”), where reside the ancestral spirits (*thagith*) who had lived on the land. Their names are deposited in *kengin e dayif* and given to the newborns. The traditional rights, authorities and prerogatives of a *tabinaw* are vested in *dayif*, rather than the accompanying land parcels or the individuals. Therefore, *dayif* is considered “the seat of all authority and political right” belonging to *tabinaw* (Lingenfelter 1975: 25). Egan also points out that when he was doing fieldwork in early 1990s, *dayif* still “provided a sacred link” between *tabinaw* current and past owners (Egan 1998: 86).

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<sup>18</sup> It does not mean that *tabinaw* cannot be divided, since depopulation has resulted in the amalgamation or concentration of different inheritance (Mahoney 1958: 255).

<sup>19</sup> Egan mentioned that each *tabinaw* has its own burial grounds in the highland savanna (Egan 1998: 85). However, he may refer to the high-ranking *tabinaw*.

In fact, *tabinaw* (represented by *dayif*) is very similar to Lévi-Strauss' discussion of house societies,<sup>20</sup> based on examples from Kwakiutl, medieval Europe, Indonesia and Japan. As the basic socio-cultural unit, *tabinaw* has also undergone the phase of “muddle in the models” in the history of kinship studies, especially at the peak of descent theory (McKinnon 1991: 28-32; 2000).<sup>21</sup> I will quickly summarize this conceptual confusion, and relate it to the discussion on house.

Schneider once described *tabinaw* as “patrilineage,” a land-holding group, whose essence was land ownership or “the claims on land” (Schneider 1962). Yet, later on, Schneider revised his own argument, and stated that *tabinaw* is not a “patrilineage.” His reason was that a patrilineage is defined by two criteria: (1) members are related to each other or recruited by consanguinity (biological connection);<sup>22</sup> (2) members share a common ancestry. However, the Yapese *tabinaw* does not appear to meet these two criteria. If we closely examine who is classified as “belonging to one *tabinaw*,” we would find *tabinaw* members usually include adopted children, as well as the in-married women and her children from the previous marriage. In other words, high frequency of adoption and the recruitment of members through marriage unsettle the ideal of consanguinity (Kirkpatrick and Broder 1976; Schneider 1984). Furthermore, a *tabinaw* member could be “thrown away,” be deprived of membership, if he/she does not behave properly, even though he/she may be born in this *tabinaw*. In his later work, Schneider argues that *tabinaw*, as an “estate to which people are attached,” is not an ancestor-oriented descent group. *Tabinaw*'s members—the in-married women—do not share the same descent with *tabinaw*'s senior members. Moreover, children are members of *tabinaw* because of their mother's work—“her

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<sup>20</sup> At the first glance, people might consider *tabinaw* as *familia* explained in Fustel de Coulange and Marcel Mauss—it also denotes property, for example, “the field, the house, money, and slaves” (Fustel de Coulanges 1916: 87). Mauss explores the etymology of *familia*, which “includes the *res* (“gift” or “property”) and not only people” (Mauss 1990[1950]: 63-65). He insightfully suggests: “the farther one goes back in Antiquity the more the meaning of the word *familia* denotes the *res* that are part of it, even going so far as to include food and the family's means of subsistence. The best etymology of the word *familia* is without doubt that which compares it to the Sanskrit *dhaman*, ‘house’” (Mauss 1990[1950]: 63).

<sup>21</sup> For example, the Nuer *thok dwiel* (“the entrance to the hut”) was once understood by Evans-Prichard as “lineage” (McKinnon 1991: 29; 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Consanguinity means “those persons who are related by biological descent from the same ancestor;” that is, descent. In contrast, affinity is about marriage, “the sexual, reproductive relationship between male and female” (Schneider 1972: 34).

diligence and proper behavior toward her husband's parents, and, as the child grows older, from the child's respect for and obedience to his mother's husband" (Schneider 1984: 85-87); otherwise, mother's husband, or the *mafean* (the mother's husband's sister's children) may disinherit them.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, one's continuous *tabinaw* membership "depends more on doing than on being," which is drastically different from lineage defined in descent theory—"being a member of a descent group is defined in terms of being" (Schneider 1984: 86).

The clarification of whether *tabinaw* is a patrilineage or not, seems to be meager, but it resonates with the well-known ambiguity of Kwakiutl *numaym*—the fundamental unit in Kwakiutl society (Boas 1920; Lévi-Strauss 1979[1975]). Just as *tabinaw* in Yap, *numaym* also underwent several attempted categorizations in social organization, and its "muddles" or confusion eventually leads to a refreshing discussion on house, which, as a prominent indigenous category, articulates several distinct domains—for example, political and economic interests, along with kinship (Boas 1920; Lévi-Strauss 1979[1975]: 186-187).

Unlike the matrilineal northern neighbors, such as Tsimshian, Haida, Tlingit, the Kwakiutl "have a patrilineal orientation" (Boas 1920; Lévi-Strauss 1979[1975]: 163): noble emblems (name and arms) are transmitted through the female line, but the father (rather than mother's brother) is the head of the family, who in turn is succeeded by his son. This ambiguity initially caused Boas to call the Kwakiutl's fundamental social unit "gens," and then term it "clan," and finally he referred it by the indigenous name, *numaym*. A *numaym* contains names, which are transmitted exclusively by primogeniture among the head chiefs of the *numayms*. *Numayms* also hold heirlooms (masks, headdresses, sculptures, ceremonial dishes, etc.) and a landed estate (ibid., 168).

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<sup>23</sup> *Genung* still retains the definition of matrilineal group, for it fulfills the criterion of common ancestry: *genung*'s members are descended from "a founding ancestress, and share certain prohibitions which enjoin its members through activities, foods, origins and myths" (Schneider 1984: 87).

The decoration, architecture, and structural symbolism of Yapese *tabinaw* may not be as elaborate as the Atoni house or Tanimbar house (Cunningham 1973; McKinnon 1991, 2000). *Tabinaw* is closely associated with land. As we have seen before, *tabinaw* can denote “landed estate,” “family,” or “those who live on the land.” But at the core it revolves around land and the people relating to it. Therefore, Throop defines *tabinaw* as “landed estate; including lands, household, and people associated with it” (Throop 2010: 299).

### Relation between people and land

Probably we need to be cautious while trying to understand the Yapese configuration of land, and how land is transmitted. It is better to be careful in using the English words “inheritance” or “transmission”; they are not precise terms to explain Yapese land transference. The Yapese idea of how land is “transacted between hands and hands over generations” involves gendered labor mediation.<sup>24</sup> A more accurate portrayal should be: from the children’s (or “inheritor’s”) point of view, land is “earned” from father’s family by the mother through her labor (*magaer*) and service rendered to the husband’s family, and thereby handed down to the children.<sup>25</sup> That is also the reason why children’s relation to their father’s land is contingent on their mother’s work, and why children should always be respectful (*liyeor*)—to their father, father’s family, land (*tabinaw*) and village (*binaw*). Children should always be careful and respectful because land is not guaranteed for them. If the children (and their mother) are not

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<sup>24</sup> “Transacted between hands and hands over generations” was modeled on a feature of Yap *rai* (large stone disk anchored on the land). Being labeled as “stone money,” *rai* in Yap is not transacted between hands and hands as the normal currency. Instead, it is persons and persons of different generations being transacted between those immovable *rai*.

<sup>25</sup> *Magaer* is translated as “invested labor,” “work,” “effort,” “fatigue,” and basically means “being physically exhausted” (Throop 2005: 187). *Magaer* implies diligence and consequentially advancing oneself in the social ranking. It further involves mutuality in relatedness—one not only works for oneself, but is physically exhausted for others. It “acknowledged the work done on someone’s behalf, the energy that had been expended” (Labby 1976a: 19). *Kam magaer* literally means “you are tired,” and is the Yapese expression of “thank you.” Throop argues, “Thus, *magaer* is imbued with moral value” (Throop 2010: 62).

behaving well according to the expected norms, or if they disgrace the land or father's family, their relation with the land can be severed by their father's family. Those cases of depriving a person of his (or her) land are rarer now, but the valuation of respect or honor (*liyeor*) has become a paradigm: one should always be deferential to the elders. Father's sisters and their descendants (*mafean*) represent the father's group: they have given you the land, and have the right to cut your connection with it, as the biblical language, "Thou giveth and thou taketh away."

I often heard people emphasize the concept of *liyeor*. "Honor and Respect is the Rule and the Law. *Rok'yu Wa'ab*" (Ken, 66-year-old, Fanif, 2008). In a workshop on intangible cultural heritage, hosted by the United Nations, *liyeor* was voiced as a cultural tradition, waiting to be itemized and preserved. When this was said, almost all the workshop participants nodded in agreement.

Being respectful to the elders, especially those who belong to the father's family, is intertwined with another cultural idiom of Yapese sociality: knowledge needs to be earned, knowledge is dispersed, and knowledge is power (Egan 1998: 75). This idiom is tightly interwoven in the Yapese landscape. In the following section, I will briefly explain the topography of *tabinaw*, trying to make this argument comprehensible.

### Topography of *tabinaw*

Topologically, *tabinaw* is dispersed both inwardly and outwardly—except for the dwelling place, its garden plots are scattered behind the bush in the rugged hills; its fishing area might be a small specified section on the jagged coral fringe. Without a *tabinaw* member identifying his land, a *tabinaw*'s "property" is indistinguishable from others. Furthermore, each *tabinaw* is secluded from one another.



Some *tabinaw* are even so distant that people cannot hear its dog barking or roosters crowing.<sup>26</sup> The spatial arrangement of *tabinaw* properties present a natural tendency for secrecy that is one of the most important, and perplexing, characteristics of Yapese relatedness in the eyes of outsiders—not only for foreign researchers, but also for the Yapese who are not “members of the *tabinaw*” (*girdi ko tabinaw*).

Researchers have already noticed that the Foucauldian motto “knowledge is power” applies perfectly in Yap. Knowledge is understood as a highly personalized private possession that has to be kept fragmented and under tight control, can only be obtained through “suffering, hard work, service and care directed toward its possessor” (Egan 1998: 75; Throop 2005: 318). The knowledge is usually dispersed, not concentrated upon one person; therefore everyone might know a part, but never a whole picture of it. This fragmented nature clearly manifested in the tripartite power structure of Yapese politics (see Chapter Three), also exemplify in domestic politics within *tabinaw*.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, from the Yapese perspective, the control of such knowledge is natural, given the characteristics of topography and geography. Within a *tabinaw*, the concrete entities of the land and the stone foundation are associated with various forms of knowledge, such as the knowledge of land parcel boundaries and names. The ownership and control of these forms of knowledge are also essential to the sociology of the *tabinaw*, which is basically constituted between predecessors and newcomers—namely, those who came to the land earlier, and lived and worked there for a longer time, have more profound knowledge about the land than those who came later (see Labby 1976a; Egan 1998, 2004; Throop 2005).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Some *tabinaw* are closer to one another—for instance, across the village main road. However, the territorial domain of each *tabinaw* is clearly demarcated. Trespassing into an unfamiliar *tabinaw* without notifying the people living there is considered an offense.

<sup>27</sup> For example, if a child is disobedient or disrespect to the mother, the mother can refuse to reveal the knowledge pertaining to her husband’s *tabinaw* to that child, which was gradually earned by her suffering and hardship on her husband’s land (Throop 2010: 53).

<sup>28</sup> The relation between the experienced *tabinaw* member and the newcomer seems to be similar to “precedence” in Austronesian-speaking societies (Fox 1994, 1996). Precedence could be considered as a form of hierarchy in these societies. It refers to “a priority in time but also a priority of position, rank or status” (Fox 2006[1996]: 8). In contrast with hierarchy, precedence is “always a matter of social contention,” subject to dispute, revision, and competition among different groups.

The centrality of knowledge relating to land, is just as Throop argues,

The great significance of such knowledge of landholdings is tied to the fact that an individual would never think to ask another family about what the boundaries of a particular parcel of land might be. Not knowing the boundaries to one's own land is akin to admitting that you have not effectively endured through suffering on behalf of your estate in order to obtain such knowledge. Not having access to this knowledge is both a moral indictment and tantamount to not having access to the property. Knowledge, land, personhood, and morality are inextricably interrelated. (Throop 2010: 54)

Why is knowledge an essential part of having rights over the land? First, it relates to the topography of *tabinaw* and *binaw*. We have already learned that the land parcels belonging to a *tabinaw* can be quite dispersed in the village territory. As Throop pointed out, “given the way that Yapese villages are organized, the boundaries are never clearly demarcated. Instead, a given estate's landholdings are distributed like a mosaic throughout the village” (Throop 2010: 53). Second, as various researchers have argued (Throop 2005, 2010; Egan 1998), the complexity of Yapese relations to the land have made it difficult to use any clear-cut words, such as “landownership,” to describe people's relatedness with the land—it involves rights, privileges, and certain activities that can be performed on particular pieces of land. Those activities, as Troop argued, belong to the category of “knowledge,” and relate back to the previously-dwelling matrilineal grouping's “residual rights to land.” The aforementioned “knowledge,” specifically relating to *tabinaw*, was largely obtained via working, suffering, hardship, and nurturance spent within the *tabinaw* domain (Throop 2010: 53-54).

There is also the problem of the historical distribution of residual rights to land that the clan still lays claim to. That is, individuals need such knowledge in order to recognize rights to accessing land tied to previous generations' landholdings in other villages through ties to their clan. Lacking knowledge of the location of land thus makes that land effectively useless. (Throop 2010: 54)

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(Fox 1994: 98; Fox 2006[1996]: 9). Since more senior *genung* members within the *tabinaw* have acquired more knowledge than newer *genung* members, the relation between different *genung* members seems like “precedence.” But such relation is not contested. “Respect” is the norm for people residing in a *tabinaw* and also the expected norm for knowledge transmission.

The following quote is about the authority, or authenticity, of knowledge—related to one significant construction within a *tabinaw*: *dayif* (stone house foundation).<sup>29</sup> *Dayif* articulates knowledge (mostly history relating to the land), house (*tabinaw*), and person.<sup>30</sup>

In] our belief...*dayif*, means, your ancestors know the policy and everything, because you were born into that, and your parents. If you are not from there [that *dayif*], you don't know. Your parents don't know that piece of land, they don't know everything [anything]. How do you know?" (Rebliyan, 58, Rumung Municipality, 2013/8/14)

Based on the above-mentioned premises, knowledge about the land—to be specific, individual land parcels' locations and the relative rights associated with them—is considered as precious property. It needs to be earned with effort—by labor, persuasion, exchange, and sometimes trickery.<sup>31</sup> Gaining the knowledge also operates within the structure of sentiments—mainly, the dialectics of suffering (*gafgow*) and compassion (*runguy*) (see Throop 2005, 2010). Let me use an in-marrying woman's perspective as an example to illustrate this point.

In Yap, marriage is mostly patrilocal or virilocal—a woman moves from her natal *tabinaw* to her husband's *tabinaw*, which usually belongs to her husband's father's grouping. In Yapese understanding, it is “women who live with their husbands.” As an alien outsider, a newly in-married woman needs to contribute to her husband's *tabinaw* according to the cultural protocol—for example, working hard to

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<sup>29</sup> In Yap, it seems that *dayif* is situated in a symbolic homology between the following categories.

Male: female  
*Tafen*: *mafean*  
Voice: body  
*tha'a*: *dayif*  
*Piluung*: *mafean*  
Enduring: fading over time  
Land: people  
Patriliney: matriliney  
State: [empty]

<sup>30</sup> James Leach has emphasized that knowledge creates kinship connections. Knowledge is an essential connection among people on the Rai Coast of PNG (Leach 2009: 176). Here, the role of the father is not to pass on some component of substance to the son, but rather to establish the conditions for the latter's growth on the land (Leach 2009: 188).

<sup>31</sup> “Trickery” is my word.

make others feel *runguy* (compassion) for her and her children. Gradually, through continuous labor investment on her husband's land, she would advance herself, acquire the knowledge of the *tabinaw*, and “anchor” (*yuluw, yiluuy*) her children to her husband's land. When she passes away, she would become a part of her husband's *tabinaw*. By then, her children would have already become a part of their father's *binaw*—this is, a member of her husband's village community.<sup>32</sup>

However, not every marriage follows this protocol and not all microscopic intra-*tabinaw* dynamics fit in this picture. The relation between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law has always been a popular TV theme in South Asia and East Asia and also among the Yapese. In Yap, a husband's mother can “refuse to tell a disobedient child, or perhaps more likely a child's disobedient spouse, about a certain parcel of land” (Throop 2010: 53). As Throop noted,

The precariousness entailed in the position that a woman entered into through [*sic*] marriage is made all the more difficult given the fact that she has very little means for support or protection from her natal family without running away from her husband. Such an act of abandonment could very well lead to divorce, which could have dire consequence for her children's access to land. This is made worse because of the restrictions associated with brother-sister avoidance. (Throop 2010: 53)

A woman's precarious position in life is attested to in the following quote, which emphasizes how brother/sister avoidance has worsened an out-married woman's security.

A man, if his sister is abused, he is not supposed to say anything, or they will say why you don't marry your sister—something like that. [...]

A woman [was] abused by the husband, the brother was there, but the brother just stood up and walked in other direction. I explained it [to others]. I said, this brother cannot interfere between husband and wife. That's maybe why so much abuse is being done. I remember growing up, I hear the older folks saying, a wife should stay home and take care of her children, so you can see it is common for a husband to have affairs with other women, but here is an excuse, “these are just women of the road (*gathar*), you are the one at the house,” but it's all wrong. (Carmen, 71-year-old, Dabouch, Tomil)

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<sup>32</sup> For an in-marrying woman, her relation to *tabinaw* is constituted through acquiring knowledge (by working) and by being buried in this *tabinaw* land. In this section I only emphasize the former part.

A Yapese woman's life can be miserable if the husband does not care about the household—which, unfortunately, is not rare in Yap now.<sup>33</sup> As we have seen from the previous argument, it is largely women who are suffering for her children—to nail them down to her husband's land, and to grant them the right associated with the land in the future. And then we may wonder: if the dynamics of suffering/compassion is essential in land transference, why do Yapese women need to suffer in this structure—or why do they seem to be suffering more than men in the *tabinaw*? Why does a woman voluntarily marry herself to her husband's *tabinaw*, and henceforth enslave herself for her children?

The problem arises when one considers the *tabinaw* as the pivotal arena for land transference, without recognizing that the *tabinaw* is nested within a more complex system—*binaw* (village community), *tha'a* (“connections”) and *nug* (“alliances”)—albeit *tabinaw* is definitely a fundamental “cultural unit” (Schneider 1984: 21). Gendered subjectivities and the local configuration of land transference (as well as other property transference) might become altered in a larger framework.

I will discuss *tha'a* and *nug* in Chapter Four, which focuses on power. Before we proceed, let me delineate another key component in intra-*tabinaw* land transference: *genung* (“matri-clan” or “matrilineal grouping”). Without knowing what *genung* is, we can neither fully grasp how Yapese understand landholding transmission, nor realize what it means: the “historical distribution of residual rights to land that the clan still lays claim to” (Throop 2010: 54). It is precisely because the *tabinaw* land is transferred from one matrilineal grouping to another over generations, whose complexities could never have been comprehended by outsiders of the *tabinaw*; therefore gender politics has been quintessential in landholding alternations.

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<sup>33</sup> I have heard several older women commenting about how the younger generation “do not care about their children,” or “do not love their children anymore.” I have also heard some extreme examples of breaking incest taboos, juvenile pregnancy, and fatherless children. Elderly women commented about it a lot, because they suffer directly from these misdeeds—they take care of the kids because the young mothers need to work.

## *Genung*, secretive “matri-grouping”

*Genung*, once described as a “totemic group” (Müller 1917), is a relation among those who “come from the same woman’s belly,” and those who share a mythical ancestress, *nik*. Some of the *nik* have parasitic characteristics, such as small crabs, rats, fungi.<sup>34</sup> They scavenge rotten things or grow on dead wood. Some of the *nik* have qualities of untamed wildness and extensibility; for example, a species of wild yam which can grow without being taken care of (Labby 1976a: 23). Many origin legends about *nik* or *genung* have a common theme: a woman (or female spirit) who has no land and has been abandoned, drifted to Yap, and was trapped or caught by a land estate. This woman then married and bore children on Yap Island. The well-known story about a porpoise clan (*Gucig*) similarly conveys the theme of woman’s landlessness, fertility, transformativeness (from a spirit to an animal, and then to a woman, then to an animal again), and undomesticated nature (wildness):

A spirit who took the form of a porpoise came to see a dance on Yap from her home on Sipin, a nearby island known to be inhabited by spirits. On landing, she took off her porpoise tail and buried it near a coconut tree. A man discovered the tail and hid it. When the spirit came back after the dance, she could not find her tail and thus could not return home. The man found her crying under the tree and offered to take her back to his home, where she might live, not telling her that he had found her porpoise tail and hidden it. They married and had children. Eventually the spirit woman found the porpoise tail where the man had hidden it and, leaving her children, returned to her own land. Her children and their descendants began the porpoise clan. (Labby 1976a: 24)

This story is believed to be the origin legend of *Gucig genung* (porpoise “clan”), most of whom live in Rumung, a municipality on the north-east side of Yap, close to Sipin, the haunted sunken island. The

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<sup>34</sup> In Yap, some people think *genung* and *nik* are the same. Some people think *genung* is a personal name, and identify *nik* as indexing matrilineal grouping.

variations of this story are widely known in Yap, even printed on the back of a paper card that has a drawing of two mermaids on the front.<sup>35</sup>

In the past, the analytical emphasis of these matrilineal clans was placed on their dual qualities: on the one hand, they are marked by “wildness,” and “naturalness;” on the other, they also have the potential of becoming cultural beings (through “work,” especially live and work on the land) (Labby 1976a: 24). However, *genung*’s unrootedness also needs our attention. *Genung* is not a “group” which can be clearly demarcated; the information about its relatedness is also difficult to elicit. The relationship is traced through “mother’s mother’s...mother” to a woman’s belly, likened to hibiscus trees, which “grow by dropping their roots from their branches; where one takes root in the ground, a new tree grows” (Labby 1976a: 22).

Being glossed as “matri-clan” (Egan 1998, 2004; Throop 2005), *genung* could be compared to the Trobriand *dala*—they are similarly unnamed, ahistorical, formless, and associated with “blood.” The Trobriander’s saying, “Same *dala*, same blood” may seem to be akin to the Yapese “same *genung*, same belly” (Weiner 1976: 39; Schneider 1984: 24). However, “blood” or “belly” does not imply biogenetic connection among the *genung* or *dala* members. When discussing Trobriand *dala* reproduction, Strathern detailed the analogic logic in Trobriand islander’s theory of procreation, in which a child is produced without substance—the child is made through unmediated (or giftless) exchange between brother and sister, which is substituted for the overt exchange between the wife’s brother and the husband. The wife’s brother grows the yams, which is a child in Trobriand islander’s view, and gives the

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<sup>35</sup> On the card sold in Yap, there is a more detailed version about two girls with fins: they came to join the Yap tribesmen’s monthly festival on the full-moon, danced overnight, and then disappeared on the shore at the dawn. One man discovered that they were dolphins, attracted by the festival, so he buried the fins on the shore and transformed into women to join them. He hid one pair of the fins on the other side of island, so one of them could not return to the sea; she became his wife and bore him children. This man set a taboo about the place where he hid her fins; however, she eventually went to this place, found her fins, and disappeared in the sea. The story was printed on a card which I bought in Yap.

yams to his sister's husband. The husband makes the wife like a container by "opening the way" of it, and molds the fetus, gives the fetus his shape (Strathern 1988: 231-240).

A similar example can be found in Bamford's study of the Kamea in Papua New Guinea. Kamean children being born from the same mother are said to be connected with each other as *hinya avaka* ("one blood"). Even though the idiom "one blood" may appear similar to the substance-based model of relatedness, it is significantly different. "One blood" refers to a relation among those who were contained in the same prenatal receptacle—the same womb. Thus, such relation only exists among those in the same generation, and distinguishes them from their previous or subsequent generations. The "lineal transmission of bodily substance" entailed by the substance-based model does not exist in Kamea's "one blood" idiom (Bamford 2004: 291-292).

One obvious dissimilarity between Yapese *genung* and Trobriand *dala* is the locality, or the association to land. Generally speaking, compared to Yapese *genung*, Trobriand *dala* has a much closer relation to property. Any form of properties in Trobriand, such as "decorations, wealth, taboos, knowledge of magic spells, dances, caving techniques," and land, is associated with *dala* (Weiner 1976: 40). In other words, *dala* in Trobriand is more concrete and visible than *genung* in Yap.

Weiner points out the close relation between *dala* and land in the Trobriand context: when a land was founded, *tabu* (founders in origin stories, usually refers to a named kinsperson of the *dala*) "transmitted her or his own *dala* name to it" (Weiner 1977: 64). This transference is further marked by the house foundation (Weiner 1976: 40). A Kiriwina expression of "same land" for "same *dala*" signifies the strong tie between *dala* and land (Weiner 1976: 42).

The image of rooting signaled by the house foundation is remarkably different from the Yapese *genung*, which is analogous to an expanding hibiscus tree, "growing by dropping their roots" (Labby



1976a: 22). Yapese *genung* is more invisible and unrooted in comparison with the Trobriand *dala*.

However, Schneider has mentioned that in the Tomil municipality on Yap, there are several secret land possessed by *genung* (Schneider 1962:8). Lingenfelter also mentions similar cases: Bulwol in Gacpar and Arib in Tamil are *tafen e genung* (“possessions of the matri-clan”) (Lingenfelter 1975: 59). Those are the cases indicating that some *genung* might be rooted in land.

Unrootedness, or temporal rootedness (only lasting for one to several generations) also marks the sheer difference between *genung* and *tabinaw*. While *tabinaw* is still a salient social unit in contemporary Yap, *genung* is less obvious by its nature and it is not easy to obtain its relatedness from the interlocutors (Egan 1998). In fact, it is not polite to ask people’s *genung* in Yap. Frequent adoptions further complicate the knowledge of people’s *genung*—children of the same generation within a *tabinaw* might from different *genung*, resulted from adoptions, re-marriages, or divorces,<sup>36</sup> I have heard stories that two courting youngsters had to separate once they found that they belonged to the same *genung*.

### *Genung and procreation*

The *genung*, or matrilineal grouping, is closely related to bodily substance. *Genung* refers to a relationship “through a common belly” (Schneider 1984: 24) and has a connotation of sharing, “community of blood” (Schneider 1984: 83). As Schneider has pointed out, *genung* features *citiningen-fak* (“mother-child”) relation, which is quite distinctive in Yapese culture. Namely, *genung* denotes “egalitarian relations of sharing and cooperation,” while “all other relations in Yapese culture are hierarchical and are relations of contingent exchange” (Schneider 1984: 33). Noticeably, *genung* lacks

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<sup>36</sup> In case of the adopted children, to my surprise, I have heard people said “they carry two different *genung*”—their natal mother and adoptive mother’s *genungs*. It disrupts our idea that *genung* is a biological connection, inherited from the mother.

two prevalent Yapese cultural idioms: the distinctions between *tabaguy/taay* (“pure/impure” or “sacred/profane”), and *runguy* (“compassion”). A mother nurtures children not out of compassion, but rather “because they are one” (Schneider 1984: 33-34).<sup>37</sup>

It may be worthwhile to clarify that I am not suggesting that Yapese *genung* relation necessarily entails biogenetic connection. Following the example of the Kamea, in the case of procreation in Yap, to discern the relation between matrilineal group (*genung*) and bodily substance, we should closely examine the indigenous theory.

Anthropologists have different opinions concerning the Yapese cultural configuration of procreation. One of the most widely known debates is whether coitus matters in the conception of children (see Schneider 1962, 1984; Schneider and Leach 1968; Helmig 1997). In Schneider’s 1947-48 stay on Yap, he was informed that “the decisive element was that the *tabinau* spirits (*thagith*) of the husband’s *tabinau* interceded with a spirit *marialang*, and this spirit accomplished the pregnancy by assigning a spirit to form the child in the mother’s “stomach” (Schneider 1984: 28-29). When Labby did his fieldwork in Yap twenty years after Schneider, he documented different information about conception, which was quoted in Schneider’s *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (1984):

Coitus was regarded as necessary to conception, through the spirit *marialang* remained important as did the intercession of the *tabinau* spirits (*thagith*).<sup>38</sup> Now the view was that the man planted the seed, the woman being like a garden; the seed had to be nurtured and tended and this took place in the woman, the garden. (Schneider 1984: 28)

Schneider re-explains this idea in further details:

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<sup>37</sup> This brings up the issue of step-mother in Yap. Stepmothers are said to be likely to abuse stepchildren. However, the adoptive child is another issue. In Yap, adoptive parents are supposed to treat the adopted children as well as, if not better, than their own children. The reasons are multiple. The most common one is “they are supposed to do so” [which means the adoptive parents should take very good care of the children]. The other one is: the adoptive parents are afraid that the children might go back to their natal family once they discover that they are adopted.

<sup>38</sup> According to Lingenfelter, *marialang* are male land spirits, in contrast with female sea spirits (*maday*) (Lingenfelter 1977: 332-333). Schneider translates *thagith* as “ancestral spirits,” who usually reside near or at *tabinaw* (Schneider 1984: 13, 15). Schneider suggests that both *thagith* and *marialang* are important in women’s conception (Schneider 1984: 28, 73, 79).

The new conception of conception which had become established by the late 1960s and early 1970s is that the man plants the seed in the woman and the woman is like a garden. The planting of the seed by the man is defined as *magar*, work, and the woman as the garden protects and provides for the seed. The seed grows and becomes a human being. But that is not all. The spirit *marialang* controls this process just as it always did, and the process of conception cannot take place without that spirit's approval and active help. The approval and cooperation is obtained by the intervention of the *thagith*, the spirits of the dead of the husband's *tabinaw*. The *thagith* will only accede to the prayers if the *thagith* feels that the woman deserves to have a child. That is, only if a woman has acted as a good woman, done her work well, and behaved according to the proper standards for a wife will the *thagith* take the necessary steps to intercede with *marialang*. The child is given to the woman as a reward for her goodness. (Schneider 1984: 73)

In my first visit on Yap in 2008, I was told that during the procreation process, women contribute a “case,” “vessel,” or a container,<sup>39</sup> for the delighted ancestral spirit to be reincarnated.<sup>40</sup> In the Yapese naming system, those who have died and been buried on this land, are waiting to be called and “reincarnated”—the name recycled back.<sup>41</sup> A woman leaves her natal *tabinaw*, works and dies on her husband's land. Therefore a woman's spirit “belongs” to her husband's *tabinaw*, and her name henceforth stays in her husband's land.

In the contemporary Yapese understanding of procreation, the spirit of a man's *tabinaw* is still decisive, as Schneider and Labby describe. The basic framework is somehow similar to Schneider's depiction in 1984: women provide the “container” for the ancestral spirits in their husband's *tabinaw*. The newborn infant, who does not yet have a name, is still *gafiran* (“a bit of water”), not yet a *girdi* (“person”). Infants remain known as *segaw* (girl infant) or *ligaw* (boy infant) until the naming ceremony

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<sup>39</sup> When a Yapese man explained how men and women contribute in reproduction, he used the words “case” and “vessel” to describe women's contribution—basically denoting her body. This “container” metaphor is in contrast with men's contribution: spirit. He used another analogy: “men offer water, women offer cement.”

<sup>40</sup> The Yapese reproduction metaphor is analogous to the Turkish procreation theory described by Delanyi: men provide “seed,” which endows a person's spiritual identity and individuality. Women are imagined as “soil,” also receive “seed-child” and nurture it” (Delanyi 1995: 183). This metaphor is salient in the modern nation-state: the mothers are identified with the fertile soil of Anatolia. The union between Father State and Mother Land entails the metaphorical kin-connectedness among the Turkish citizens (*vantandaş*, literally means “fellow of the motherland”)—it nurtures certain feeling of siblingship (Delanyi 1995: 186-187).

<sup>41</sup> I was told the name is recycled around three generations: grandparents name the children after their parents' names. However, when I was in Yap, I heard numerous cases of naming a child after one's father or father's sister (two generations).

(Egan 1998: 139).<sup>42</sup> During the naming ceremony, the spirits of ancestors, who are hovering over the *tabinaw*, are called by the *mafean* (the husband's sister) and conferred to the baby.

As Throop argues, naming signifies being anchored to the land (Throop 2010: 45). *Mafean* (husband's sister) represents the *genung* who currently hold the right to the land, endows the ancestral names to the newly arrived *genung*—namely, “the children and the children's mother” (Throop 2010: 45).

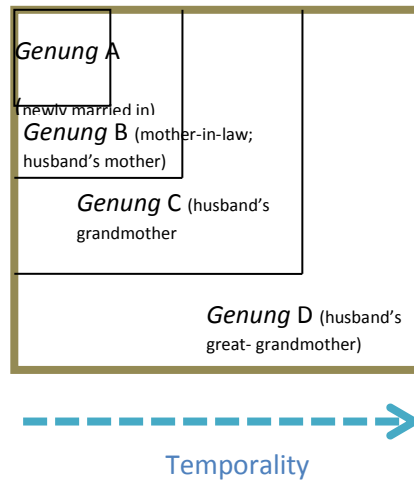
### *Genung and tabinaw*

Basically, the Yapese understanding of landownership transmission can be illustrated in the following figure (Fig. 2-1). Different *genung* (“matriclan” or matrilineal grouping) come to use and possesses the land over time. Women, the carrier of *genung*, are expected to marry into a higher ranking family than her natal one in order to improve her children's and her *genung*'s position (Labby 1976a; Throop 2010: 48). A *tabinaw* is therefore inhabited by several in-marrying *genungs*, or matrilineal groupings. Women's arduous work (*magaer*) in the land anchors (*yuluw*) or attaches her children to her husband's land, and endows her children with her husband's land in the future. Moreover, a woman's marriage route also endows her children with the right over her natal family—the offspring inherit her role as the guardian in her natal *tabinaw*. They will “inherit” the *mafean* status after their mother passes away and need to be consulted or informed about the family affairs as well.<sup>43</sup> Thus, women's marriage and work (*magaer*) have “earned” her children the stewardship and ownership over two families.

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<sup>42</sup> In some cases, people's names are taken away by their *mafean* (father's sister), their connection to land estate is stripped, and they become *segaw* or *legaw* again (Egan 1998: 139).

<sup>43</sup> The strength of *mafean* would fade over generations—from three to seven. I was told that the “weight” depends on the dowry given to her husband's family.



**Figure 2-1: Subdivision of *tabinaw* and *genung***  
(simplified from Labby 1976a:71,116,117)

Rather than the earlier assumption that land is passed from father to son in Yap (Schneider 1962; Lingenfelter 1975), Egan has argued that the cross-sibling dyad is the genuine unit of inheritance of land, from which derives *mafean*'s authority (Egan 2004:28; Throop 2010:45). The duality of land-ownership and land-guardianship, signified by the division between *tafen* and *mafean*, wielded by residing brother and out-marrying sister, is usually explained by people's relating to land: previous labor invested in land (*magaer*), and the development life-cycle of the cross-sibling dyad.

As above-mentioned, *mafean*'s authority includes approving names of her brothers' children and withdrawing their names in case of their behavioral dishonor or disobedience.<sup>44</sup> A prevalent Yapese saying is that father's sisters "own" her brothers' children (Egan 2004: 28-29). One Yapese man explained to me,

The word *mafean* means the owner. *Fanag*, means I own, I own this.<sup>45</sup> *Mafean*, means the owner.

<sup>44</sup> Depriving the name by *mafean* is considered as the utmost powerful sanction in Yap, because it means being stripped of the relation to land (Egan 1998: 114).

<sup>45</sup> The word "fanai" (*fannay*), means "to own, to possess, to use as a possession." *Fean* means one's possessions, belongings, or personal property (Yapese-English Dictionary). *Tafean* means "one's place, one's home."

That owner. That's really the owner." (Godfrey Cho'chol, male, late-50s, Toruw, Maap Municipality, 2013/8/24)

The Yapese word for "own" is *fannay*—*fean* is the stem, and the suffix *nay* is used in the third-person pronoun. *Fean* means "owner" (Labby 1976a: 36) or "ownership" (Throop 2005: 240).<sup>46</sup> *Mafean*, commonly glossed as "father's sister and her descendants," derives from "being born and nurtured from this land, but not entitled to this land," was once translated as "a feeling of ownership" or "trusteeship" (Lingenfelter 1975: 55). It denotes a relationship concerning people's relation to land.

In fact, the Yapese *mafean* is comparable to Tanimbar *dua* ("masters")—one's mother's brother. *Dua* stands for wife-giving group, signifies the source of life. If one fails to let the valuables travel to the proper *dua*, that *dua* has the power to curse. Therefore, one's "life, health, and well-being" depends on the proper flow of valuables to his or her *dua* (McKinnon 1991: 190). In *mafean* relationship, *mafean* will address her brother's children as "my children" (*fakag*). *Mafean* may say she "owns" her brother's children. Yapese are very clear that the English word "own" cannot fully capture Yapese *fannay* in terms of *mafean* relationship, as a 60-year-old Yapese woman said:

"[My brother and his wife's] children are belonging to me. Or I have power, authority over them. My brother's children are mine. His wife's brother's children are hers. But "own" is too strong..."

"It's not the word 'own' describing...or referring to who has all the authority over the land. *Mafean*, and the landowner, are two different...and there is the chief or other connection...full authority of land cannot be one person. [...] *mafean* is the relation between people and people, but *piluung* is the relation between land and land. (Rebliyan, 58, Rumung Municipality, 2013/8/14)

The women's comment, "*mafean* is the relation between people and people, but *piluung* is the relation between land and land" is worth closer consideration in the following chapter. Here, I also want

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<sup>46</sup> Lingenfelter argues that *tafen* means "ownership" (Lingenfelter 1975: 55). Throop argues that *tafean* refers to "one's home" (Throop 2005: 240).

to point out that the statement “full authority of land cannot be one person” is also worth our attention. In fact, it implies the plurality of one’s relation with another, such as *mafean* (understood as “relation between people”) and *piluung* (understood as “relation between lands”). It further implies the principle of “checks and balances” in such relations—no singular person can monopolize a relation, regardless of whether it is the relation between person and person, between person and land, or land and land. As the following quotation indicates:

The word ‘own’ is too much. [It] can mean a lot more... In Yapese, we have so many words of, my basket, mine, I own my land, it’s mine. When it comes to kids, my children I have with my former husbands, I cannot say [they are] my own children, [which] only [emphasizes, singles out] me, because they are from other family. (Rebliyan, 58, Rumung Municipality, 2013/8/14)

To be specific, *mafean* relation is not only between “father’s sister and her descendants” and ego. It is in contrast to and balanced with the mother (*matiin*).

“To me, they [my brother’s children] are my children, because I am the big mother.<sup>47</sup> [...] They are from the father’s village, so ....I have them. My brother’s wife has a brother, who has some kids. That’s her real children. Because her children with my brother is my children, because they are in my family, where I was born. They were born in that family.”

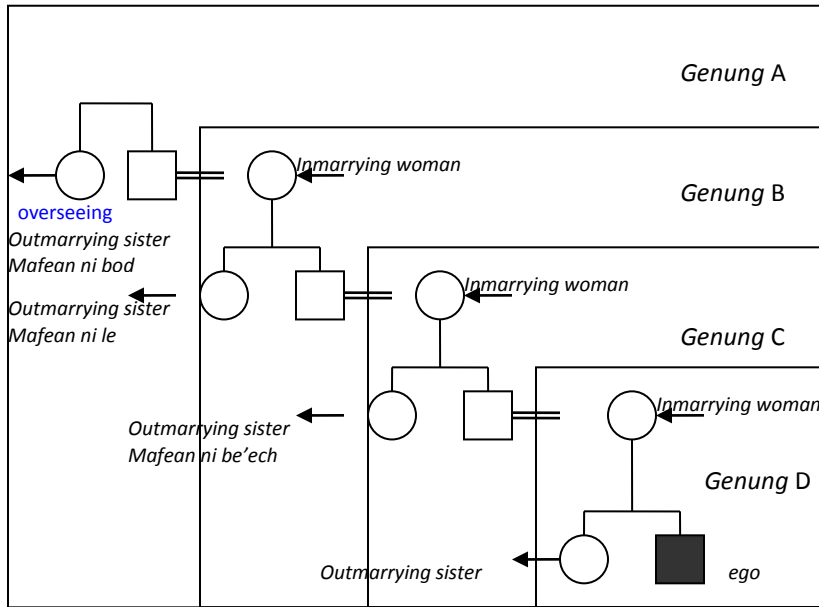
“Can I just claim my brother’s children and say I own them? Until and unless the father [means, my brother] passed away, I replace him, because the father is not there anymore. I am his representative. Because, the mom cannot have all the power over the children, it has to be father’s family. During father’s absence, that’s when” [father’s sisters step in]. (Rebliyan, 58, Rumung Municipality, 2013/8/14)

In contemporary Yap, *mafean* must be consulted in their brother’s children’s major life decisions, such as marriage and migration. It is also believed that *mafean* rights endure from three to seven

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<sup>47</sup> Rebliyan said, the Yapese word for “big mother” or “great mother” is *matiin nigaq, matinnigaa*. *Gang’* or *gaaq* means “big, huge.” But the word *matiin* itself is an honorary term, and refers to “mother” or “position of mother.” Same as *mataam* (father, or the position of father, fatherhood). Schneider seemed to equate all the differentiated terms referring to father and mother in similar categories—only two.

generations.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, usually a *tabinaw* has at least three *genung* “holding trusteeship” of it,<sup>49</sup> as indicated in Figures 2-2 and 2-3.



**Figure 2-2: Subdivision of Tabinaw and Genung**  
(adapted from Labby 1976a: 71,116,117)

<sup>48</sup> Labby mentions that some strong *mafean* could last for seven generations. If an in-marring woman has brought more *gilab* (“personal belongings”), such as stone money or important rights to land or sea with her, it would be a stronger “anchor” (*yuluy*) for her in this land. The *mafean* she has begun would also be stronger by this *gilab* (Labby 1976a: 41-42). In other words, “rootedness” of a *genung* signified by an in-marrying woman could be augmented by the property she has brought in.

<sup>49</sup> They are designated *mafen ni bi'ec* (“new *mafean*”), *mafen ni le'* (coconut shell *mafean*) and *mafen ni bod* (blackbird *mafean*) (see Egan 1998:115; 2004: 31; Labby 1976a: 54). Lingenfelter documented the similar terms, but in different sequence and translation. From the closet *mafean* line to more distant, they are: *mafen ni biec* (“new trustee”), *mafen ni bad* (“retired trustee”), *mafen ni le* (“final trustee”) (Lingenfelter 1975: 55). The *mafean*’s claim on land has become more vague and multiple over generations. If we map all lines of *mafean* on Figure 2-2, the oldest and weakest *mafean* line (*mafen ni bod*) is occupied by *Genung A* in Figure 2-2.



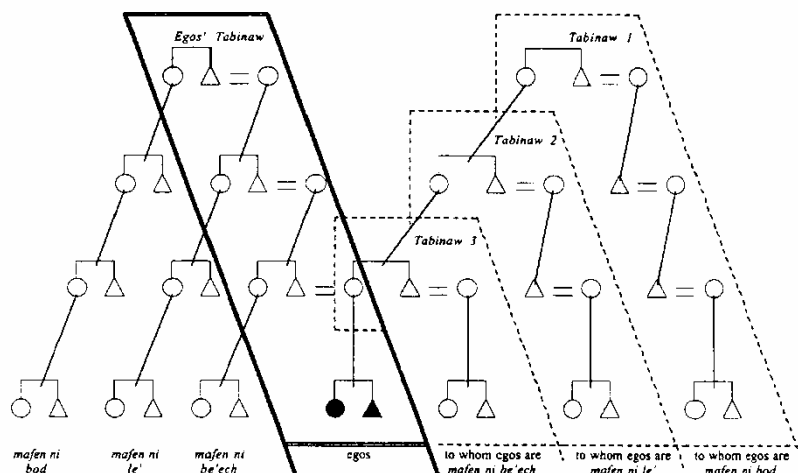


FIGURE 2.2  
Mafen relationships. To the left are the three mafen lines to egos' tabinaw; to the right are three tabinaw to whom the egos are mafen.

Figure 2-3: Different Generations of mafean at the same *tabinaw* land (Egan 2004: 31)<sup>50</sup>

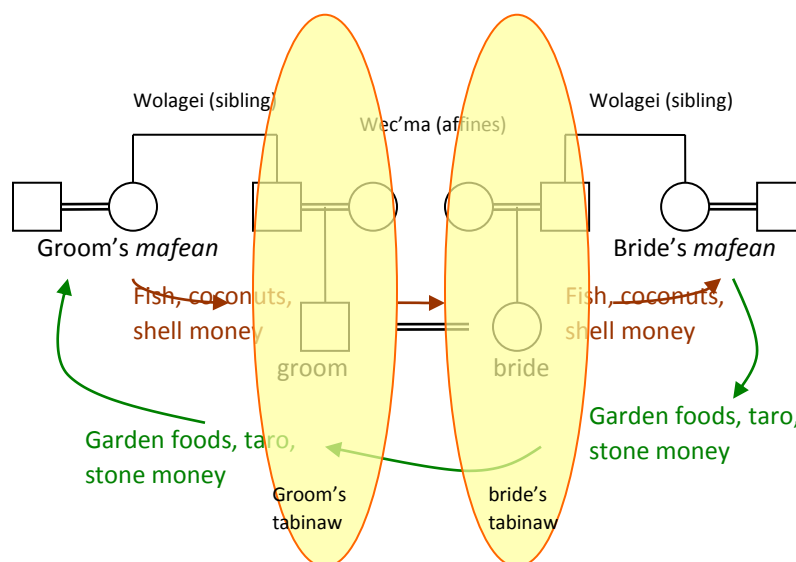


Figure 2-4: *Mafean's Contribution in Marriage Exchange*

(adapted from Labby 1976a: 41)

<sup>50</sup> Susan McKinnon has suggested that the Yap kinship appears to be the inverse of Tanimbar kinship; for example, father's sister's ritual authority in Yap is very similar to mother's brother's ritual authority in Tanimbar. Work on the land in Yap also parallels with the payments of bridewealth exchange in Tanimbar—both establish rights to membership in the land or the house. Land in Yap is similar to the relation between *ura ava* ("sisters and aunts; the descendants of outmarried women; wife-takers along specific female bloodlines") and *lolat* ("row; row of allied houses; traditional wife-taker of a named-house") in Tanimbar (McKinnon 1991). Yapese *fean* ("own") is similar to Tanimbar *duan* ("master, owner, wife-giver"). I am still unable to make a systematic comparison between Yap and Tanimbar, but I believe that such comparison will be profoundly meaningful.

Here, we need to better understand another important kinship term, *mafean* (father's sisters and their descendants)—although we have encountered this word several times. *Mafean*'s authority signifies multiple *genung*'s “residual” rights over the *tabinaw* land.

### *Mafean*

*Mafean* authority itself concerns people's relation to land, such as naming, withdrawing the names, and landownership. The cultural weight given to *mafean* can be discerned from its word-stem, *fean*. As we have seen in the last section, *fean* denotes “owner” (Labby 1976a: 36) or “ownership” (Throop 2005: 240). *Mafean* was once translated as “a feeling of ownership” or “trusteeship” (Lingenfelter 1975: 55). Now it is commonly glossed as “father's sister and its descendants,” and it also denotes a relationship concerning people's relation to land. Furthermore, *mafean* is also a position. In case the father's sister's children do not exist, someone else will take the position as *mafean*.

Why do father's sisters and their descendants enjoy such a privilege? Where does *mafean* authority come from? As we have constantly been reminded, *mafean*'s authority needs to be understood in the context of Yapese kinship, as well as the well-known reframing of the patriliney/matriliny/double descent controversy in Yap ethnography (Egan 1998; Throop 2005, 2010; also see Schneider 1962, 1965, 1984). Rather than the earlier assumption that land is passed from father to son in Yap (Schneider 1962; Lingenfelter 1975), Egan has argued that the cross-sibling dyad is the genuine unit of inheritance of land, from which *mafean*'s authority derives (Egan 2004: 28). Both son and daughter have the right to their natal *tabinaw* because of their mother's *magaer*. As explained before, an in-marrying woman's *magaer* “anchors” (*yuluw, yiluuy*) herself and her children to her husband's land. She comes to her husband's *tabinaw* as a landless woman, as a rootedless *genung* (“matriclan” or matrilineal grouping) comes to

*tabinaw* land; she has to work to attach her children and herself; divorce is considered as “running away” from her children and it renders them weakly associated to their father’s *tabinaw*.<sup>51</sup> The working as “anchoring” (*yuluw*) endows the children with ownership of the land.

The division between *tafen* and *mafean* signifies the duality of land-ownership and land-guardianship,<sup>52</sup> represented separately by a resident brother and an out-marrying sister. In fact, Egan has argued that the cross-sibling dyad is the genuine unit of inheritance of land, from which the *mafean*’s authority derives (Egan 2004: 28). The rationale is: both son and daughter have the right to their natal *tabinaw* because of their mother’s invested labor (*magar*). While a son stays in the natal *tabinaw*, a daughter marries into her husband’s *tabinaw*. The out-marrying daughter (and her descendants) henceforth have the authority to oversee her brother’s wife and children (and their descendants, who continue living in her natal *tabinaw*); she is also charged with the authority of “protecting” her brother’s *tabinaw*—her natal land—such as approving names of her brothers’ children, withdrawing their names in case of their behavioral dishonor or disobedience,<sup>53</sup> distributing taro patches among her brothers’ in-marrying wives, etc.<sup>54</sup> In contemporary Yap, when one is about to travel out of the island—to Guam, Hawaii, the Philippines, or the continental United States—his or her *mafean* has to be consulted or at least informed.

The significance of naming needs explanation here, for it initiates a Yapese relation to land. *Tabinaw* is similar to a naming repertoire for those who have died and are buried in this land—the names will be

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<sup>51</sup> Now, cases of children without a known father are more and more common in contemporary Yap. Women are working for salaries and have no time to take care of the children in her husband’s *tabinaw*. Yapese explain this situation as “because they [the mothers] do not love their children” (field note).

<sup>52</sup> See footnote 46 for the definition of *tafen*.

<sup>53</sup> Having a name revoked by a *mafean* is considered as the utmost powerful sanction in Yap, because it means being stripped of the relation to land (Egan 1998: 114).

<sup>54</sup> In the field, I did not hear of this prerogative. Usually it is the husband’s parents (most commonly the father) who distribute the land. But land distribution could be a collective decision as well, at which point *mafean* (father’s sister) are informed or included in the decision-making process.

recycled after three generations (Müller 1917: 383; fieldnote).<sup>55</sup> In the naming ceremony, a newborn baby or an un-named infant is named after a spirit of the *tabinaw*. Its head needs to touch the *dayif* (house stone foundation); its name has to be chosen from the *tabinaw*'s names, called out by its father's sister (*mafean*) in the naming ceremony (Ujishima 1987: 136; 1989: 126-3; Shimizu 1991: 388), and then it has become a new member of this *tabinaw*. *Mafean*'s role in her brother's children's naming ceremony is like a metaphorical mimesis of their mother's "anchoring" them to the land. The mother is the primary actor who "anchors" her children to their father's *tabinaw*, but the *mafean* (out-marrying sister) facilitates the process of associating her brother's children to the *tabinaw* land—she calls the name loudly for everyone in the village to hear (Müller 1917: 383).

### How is Land Transmitted? Symbolism between Sex and Land Transference

It should be clear now how the gendered landownership/stewardship has been connected to the cross-sex sibling dyad, and the individual/family life cycles. The ownership of land is transferred by a criterion of reciprocity rather than consanguinity. That is, those who are born or adopted into a *tabinaw* are not allowed to inherit the land without showing respect to the *tabinaw* fellows or predecessors, including performing service or work along with the mother. In Yap, a specific authority given to father's sister and their descendants, called *mafean*, is overseeing whether those who "supposedly" have rights to land ownership are fulfilling the expected obligations or not. There are various conditions for one to be deprived of land inheritance and be chased away by one's *mafean*, for example: not taking care of the father or the household, openly defiling their household's reputation, disobeying the commands of the village community, being disrespectful to the elders and the *mafean*, etc. In such a case,

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<sup>55</sup> The name is usually chosen from FMF (the father's mother's father) or FMM (the father's mother's mother). In other words, children's names come from their father's *genung* (Müller 1917: 383. Bashkow notes)

“they can only go to live on mother’s land, not on father’s land.” Even though such an event rarely takes place, all Yapese are aware of *mafean*’s authority.

Here, I will briefly discuss the symbolic association between sexual intercourse and landownership transference. The Yapese people have strong avoidance between brother and sister in bodily contact, in their co-presence in the same place, and in sighting each other.<sup>56</sup> The transgression of avoidance indicates tabooed sexual intercourse (see Schneider and Leach 1968; Labby 1976b; Helmig 1997). Also, for the Yapese people, the implication that a brother and sister have had sexual intercourse is considered as the most serious accusation, “cannibalistic” of a clan’s reproduction (Labby 1976b), which might result in intense fury, and even murder (see Schneider and Leach 1968).<sup>57</sup> One Yapese man in his late 60s commented to me, “Daughters cannot claim their land from brothers, very taboo. It is as if she married the brother. If they use brother’s land, it is as if she married her brother.” Unless the father has allocated the land to the daughter(s),<sup>58</sup> female offspring could not take the initiative in claiming land property from their male siblings. Another Yapese man said it indirectly,

...having sex with the husband, that’s how [the wife] earns the land, if husband’s sister goes to the land, it will be mockery to the husband’s family. If I am a woman, but my husband’s sister goes to that land, [it’s tantamount] to insult my husband and the rest of the family, because the way I earn [the land]. It is not said, but it’s implied. [...] It’s an insult on the family. It’s a curse to the family. Curse is not in a sense of bad luck, but bad reputation. So, in this case, the sister should never go to the land given to her brother’s wife. (male in his late 40s)

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<sup>56</sup> Brother-sister avoidance in Yap can be compared to the Korowai’s avoidance between mother-in-law and son-in-law in Korowai, New Guinea (see Stasch 2003). The Korowai people’s avoidance between mother-in-law/son-in-law also includes uttering each other’s names, using singular number and direct reference term (Stasch 2003).

<sup>57</sup> Schneider has documented a case in which one of his informants was murdered by his wife’s brother, because his informant “had said publicly” that his wife’s first child was “the result of her incestuous relationship with her brother” (Schneider and Leach 1968: 128).

About the horrific vision of husband’s seeing the ancestress of a *genung*, believed as resulting from the incestuous union, also see Bashkow (1991: 213; 233) and Handler (1995: 107-108).

<sup>58</sup> In this case, it is the father who decides property arrangement—simply because the person talking to me was a man, and his wife was nearby, listening. I believe in certain cases, such as widowhood, the mother has a decisive role in property division as well.

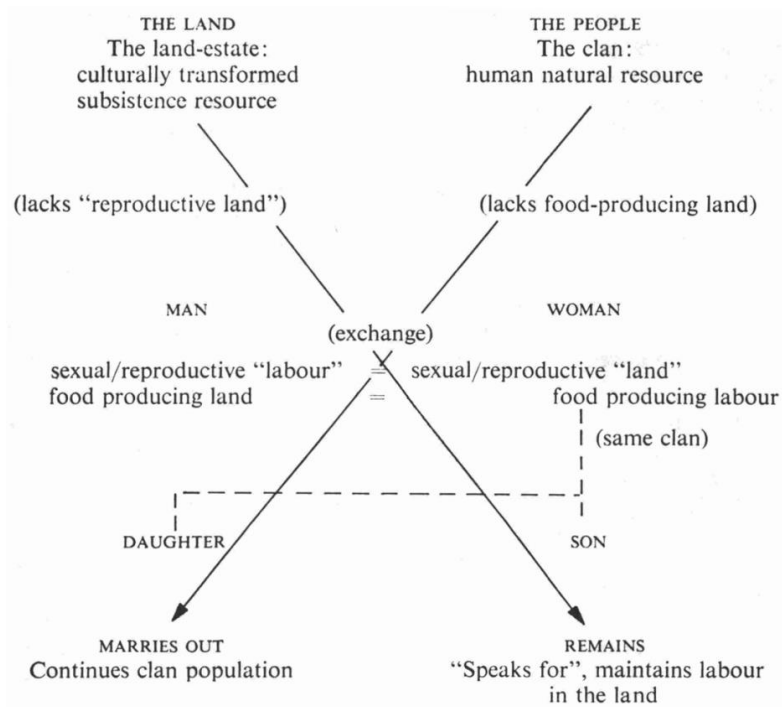
The association between sexual intercourse and land cultivation might relate to indigenous gendered body imagery. In Yap, women are usually analogized as the “garden” or “land,” and men are the “laborers” who work on the land and plant the seeds (Labby 1976a: 25; similar analogy also see Delaney 1995). In another analogy a woman is compared to the “hull of a canoe” (*bulel*), who is “carrying and holding all” (Labby 1976a: 29-30). On the contrary, the man, as the “mast” (*wolyang*) of the canoe, is moving around while taking the “voice” of the land, therefore socially navigating the canoe (Labby 1976a: 29-30). In either image, women are conceptualized as the container. In the Yapese theory about procreation, women are compared to “vessels” which contain the spirit of *tabinaw*, just as a *tabinaw* is a spatial container for the spirits associated with it.

In this context, *mafean*’s authority in protecting her brother’s property, and overseeing his wife and children’s behavior, can be seen as a symbolic substitution of the container. In the cross-sibling dyad, the brother speaks for the “voice” (*luung*) of the land,<sup>59</sup> while the sister is the “overseer” or “guardian” of her natal land property.

Labby mapped out the transaction model in the following diagram (Labby 1976b: 178).

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<sup>59</sup> A resident brother in a *tabinaw* will take over his aged father’s authority and obligations within *tabinaw*: “representing his estate in village councils; being charged with sending, receiving, or following up all directives of *luung* made to his *def*; organizing the presentation of wealth made by his estate people at funerals, village dances, and other public exchange events.” This authority, again, needs to be earned in the errands conducted for the aged father; otherwise his brother might replace him (Egan 2004: 28). Note: *def* or *dayif* means an elevated house stone foundation.



**Figure 2-5: The Ideology of the transaction between land and people** (Labby 1976a: 31; 1976b: 178)

As mentioned before, a woman working on the land is analogized as “symbolically married to the land spirits” (Lingenfelter 1977: 339). In fact, Yapese kinship has been understood as an exchange or a “dialectical process” between people and land (Labby 1976a; Egan 1998, 2004). In the previous ethnographies, it is commonly documented that Yapese land is constantly being transmitted to different *genung* over generations: females of different *genung* marry into the *tabinaw*, and gradually take the land property by their labor (*magaer*).

People’s relation to *tabinaw* is not only processual, but also further mediated by “appropriate” work (Bashkow 2009). Any work relating to *tabinaw*—no matter whether it is reciprocity of feeding between

father and children,<sup>60</sup> or women and children's gardening and nurturing, has to be conducted in an appropriate form of "respect and obedience," which is overseen by the guardian of the *tabinaw* land, *mafean*. For the Yapese, "work" (*magaer*) is the legacy of order (Egan 1998). According to Labby, *magaer* is particularly important in *tabinaw* transmission, because *tabinaw* is in fact transacted from *genung* to *genung*. It is *magaer* that mediates people's relation to land in a dialectical and mutually transformative process (Labby 1976a: 32-33).<sup>61</sup> Additionally, *magaer* transfers women's labor into a specific kind of "ownership"—multiple, partial, with different forms (*tafean* and *mafean*) and paths of transmission,<sup>62</sup> with diverse durations and orientations in temporalities.<sup>63</sup> It further articulates two central idioms in Yapese kinship—*tabinaw* and *genung*.

## Virtue of Work (*Magaer*)

As we have learned from the previous discussion, the interplay of work, hardship, and inter-subjective sensitivities has played a crucial role in land transference in Yap, during which *magaer* ("physical exhaustion") is highly valued and emphasized (Schneider 1984: 29, 76).

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<sup>60</sup> The relationship between father and children is: "a father is said to take care of his children when they are young, and they obey him and pay him respect in return. Later, when he gets old, they reciprocate by providing him with food and care" (Schneider 1962: 5). The emphasis on reciprocity, especially food-giving creating "kinship," could even be seen in the relation between a foreign researcher and a Yapese elder, see Bashkow (1991: 205-215).

<sup>61</sup> This process is that people as cultural beings transform the land, and are also transformed by the "cultural investment" inherent in land; land as a natural object is transformed by people's labor and itself is also a cultural object which transforms people (Labby 1976a: 32-33).

<sup>62</sup> Lingenfelter glosses the dual ideas of "property" as "title" (from father to son) and "ownership" (from *genung* to *genung*).

<sup>63</sup> The issue about orientations in temporalities is complicated. Throop mentions that men are responsible for the land resources, especially *luungun* (voice) and *dayif*, which are "repositories of the past." They also hold the knowledge about the past generations relating to land. Therefore, men are more past-oriented. Women marry, determine where to adopt a child, "plant" their children on land, therefore they are more future-oriented. However, the *mafean* is past-oriented—she needs to oversee her brother's wife and children to make sure her natal *tabinaw* was taken care of properly. Men have authority in political decision in inter-*tabinaw* or village affairs, so they are also future-oriented (Throop 2005: 170).



As I tried to argue before, contrary to a male's pronounced status and ranking, women's work is implicitly inherent in the land. A woman's life story consists of leaving her natal land or *tabinaw*, to "seek out a new estate within which to 'anchor' (*yuluw, yiluuy*) her children," to attach her children to their father through her work (Egan 1998: 106, 108). Two connotations of *magaer*—"being physically exhausted," and "on behalf of others"—is clearly illustrated in woman's work in *tabinaw*. Also, the reason why *magaer* is central for a *genung* to "drop its roots" in a *tabinaw* is also explained in woman's work (see Labby 1976a).<sup>64</sup> The following quote serves to illustrate women's laborious work.

You have to work. And a lot of women, you know, they suffer. All marriages have their ups and downs, and all that stuff. And it's the same for Yapese family: there you have all kinds of problems. But the women will really take all the—you know—whatever is coming to them. Some women will—even though they get beaten up so bad—they still stay, because they're thinking of their kids. Because the way the custom is that, for example, if I leave and then my husband remarries and they have kids...then the kids from the second marriage have more say than the kids from my marriage—because it goes back to that thing that their mother didn't really *nail them down*. 'Cause everything in Yapese like that. (quoted from Egan 1998: 107. Italics are added by myself.)

In the daily life in a *tabinaw*, *magaer* is signified by a concrete metaphor of cooking/working,<sup>65</sup> which articulates hierarchical difference. For example, an in-marrying woman needs to prepare food separately for her husband, his mother, his father, her children and herself—with separate pots, food and even firewood (Throop 2005: 171). The food she needs to prepare is ranked and separated according to the land where it grows. The senior members occupy higher ranked land and grow their own food,

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<sup>64</sup> In Labby's framework (which has influenced the following ethnographers, such as Egan and Throop), *tabinaw* land was transferred between different "matri-clan," *genung*; the rationality for woman's *magaer* in *tabinaw* is to "repay" the previous labor invested in land by different *genung* people (Labby 1976a).

<sup>65</sup> Throop mentions that a Yapese usually utters a question when seeing an unfamiliar person come to use the land, "*Mang fan kam tafeanam ea binaew?*" ("Why did you consider that land part of your estate?") The answer could be, "*Boqor ea th'iib ku liit riy*" ("There were a lot of pots I cooked with.") (Throop 2005: 164). He further explained, "cooking" here also denotes the whole process—fire-making, wood-gathering, coconut-shell-drying, working in garden and gathering food, serving the food to the (appropriate) persons (Throop 2005: 165).

where the newly in-marrying wife cannot even “set a foot on” this land and is forbidden to eat their food.

The working experience congruent with hierarchical land can be seen in the following quotation:

T told me that when she first came to her husband’s estate she had five pots to take care of: hers and her children, her husband’s, his mothers, his grandfather’s, and his father’s. During this period of time many families were still adhering to the strict food preparation rules associated with ideals of sacred/ordered (*tabugul*) and profane/unordered (*taqay*) in which a husband’s food was prepared and consumed separately from that of his wife and children. She recalled that she was not allowed to set a foot in her husband’s father’s taro patch, and was not allowed to eat chestnut from either his father’s or his mother’s chestnut trees. Moreover, she was forbidden to drink or eat coconut, and was only given one betel nut tree to get her betel nut from. She recollected only cutting one small part of a branch of betel nut a day and trying her best to make it last. She vividly remembered that when she had to go to the garden or to the taro patch with her husband’s mother that she was never allowed to eat. Each morning, the two of them would prepare food for the children, for her husband and his father, and then they would leave immediately for the gardens. She told me how her husband’s mother repeatedly told her: *daam abiich fan ra raam abiich raam kireeb naag ea waldug, ma ayuweg ea maqut nge milaey, daam abiich*—“don’t eat because if you eat you will destroy the garden, be sure to help the taro patches and gardens, don’t eat. (Throop 2005: 171)

The quotation clearly suggests the close association between the in-marrying woman’s low status, the hierarchical stratification of land and food, and the significance of women’s work. As I will argue later on, the internal segregation and diversification of work within *tabinaw* land is done in accordance with a woman’s status and the distinctive rankings of the different land parcels from which people should eat. Newcomers to this *tabinaw* (an in-marrying woman and her children) have to work to anchor themselves to the land, and to show their virtuous qualities (such as endurance, patience, self-mastery, respect) through working and suffering (*gaafgow*) (Throop 2005: 172-173)<sup>66</sup> in the face of those who have lived in the *tabinaw* for a longer time (i.e., husband, husband’s parents). When a woman has borne children, raised them, worked on this *tabinaw* over time, become senior, and occupied the higher-ranked land, she will in actuality have acquired knowledge of all the names associated with the *tabinaw*. She will have earned “ownership” of the land for her children, a

<sup>66</sup> Throop’s main argument is that the vicissitudes of emotions—in the dyads of parental-child relation, it is *gaafgow* (“suffering”) and *runguy* (“compassion”)—constitute the basic sociality (Throop 2005).

relationship signaled in the Yapese idiom of “nailing” (firmly attaching) or “anchoring” (*yuluw*) her children to the land (Egan 1998: 106, 108). Her children, as new-comers to the land likewise have to work. Sons help in providing *thumag* (protein foods, such as fish and meat) for the parents; unmarried daughters assist the mother in “cooking, cleaning, and agricultural production in *tabinaw* gardens, common household taro patches” (Egan 2004: 28). Children are also expected to participate in village chores like their parents, such as dancing, cleaning, and weeding village roadsides and village centers (e.g., men’s house and women’s house), to nail themselves to village land (*binaw*) (Egan 2004: 27-28).<sup>67</sup> After the daughter has married out to another *tabinaw* and her husband (as the head of *tabinaw*) has died, her son takes over her husband’s position and holds the *tabinaw* as his *tafean* (property); her out-marrying daughters and daughters’ descendants would become *mafean*.

In fact, work could be considered as the foundation of Yapese ranking. My Yapese landlord in Wanyan village once mentioned the significance of hard work to me—“You need to work hard to improve your status. Those low ranking villages are low now, because their ancestors did not work hard.”

### *Magaer and Sociality*

It is important to keep in mind that, in this framework, women’s physical exhaustion, suffering, hardship and labor have earned the rights for her and her children in her husband’s *tabinaw* (Throop 2010). This is quite different from the previous panoramic structure of Yapese social reproduction

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<sup>67</sup> Even though Egan did not specify who participates in village chores more often (men or women), and Throop indicated that the gender contribution in collective affairs (such as clearing a land for building village house) might be even (Egan 2004: 27-28; Throop 2005: 197-201), in my experience, it was mostly women who participated in village affairs, such as cleaning the public paths and clearing the ground for building a public house (woman’s house). I was told that the labor-intensive collective work (for example, building a man’s house) was mostly conducted by men.

(Labby 1976). In Labby's analysis, Yapese history and land transference could be understood as a continuous transaction between people and land, *genung* and *tabinaw*, signified respectively by female and male relatedness. In Throop's detailed account, women's work, suffering, and hardship reproduces the Yapese hierarchy—although women's contribution has not been openly recognized. However, this theory also implies that runaway women, as well as divorced women, can easily derail this cultural ideal.

During my stay in Yap, I joined *tabinaw* or village work with my Yapese mother when I stayed with her; nevertheless, I did not experience extreme hardship. Probably it was because Makiy, the village I stayed in during the first phase of my fieldwork, has been depopulated, and consequently the cultural norms were not as strict as I just described. It also may be that I worked with my Yapese mother, and she was aged and could not afford too much physical exertion. Perhaps those who worked with me were treating me very nicely because I was a guest; therefore the task assigned to me was usually easier. Or, most likely, because we always worked in a group and we rested often, we did not experience pain or fatigue from work. In fact, compared with the construction work in the cities, the community work in Yap—such as weeding, cleaning the village paths, cleaning the ground for a displayable community house—was never too wearing. In my experience, the emphasis on “we work together” is much stronger than completing the task. I was constantly reminded that if we did not finish the work today, tomorrow we would come again to continue. Even though the work may require a lot of physical strength, such as cleaning the bush from the land to make a garden, we always worked in a group and were called to rest often. We brought food to the garden or taro patch and cooked there. At that time I first saw how Yapese dealt with the so-called “turkey tails”—tails of chickens or turkeys.<sup>68</sup> They ate it raw, dipped in soy sauce, lemon and chili—in a half coconut shell. Both men and women, even 8-year-old children enjoyed this kind of “sashimi.” My amazement amused them a lot. Maybe because my Yapese mother got tired

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<sup>68</sup> The frozen turkey or chicken tails imported from the US, usually dozens in a plastic bag, are very welcome among the Yapese—it is a cheaper kind of poultry meat with a substantial amount of fat and grease.

quicker than the rest of us—she was the eldest in the team—we rested frequently, enjoyed the food, the prepared ice water (in a big plastic container), the chats, the forest breezes and the curious fieldworker who took pictures of everything. Working together seems to have eased the drudgery of the task significantly.

I have to admit that the work pace in the community projects was faster. The atmosphere was not as relaxing as clearing the bush on one's own land—community work was quieter. Several family members working together seemed to have an implicit sense of competition, and we rested less frequently. However, people always contributed food and drink in collective work, and we did rest occasionally. Rather than experiencing fatigue and exhaustion, I would say mutuality and togetherness were more central to our working experience. The nature of the work I participated in was always a collective project—a group did it together, in the scale of a *tabinaw*, relatives, or a village—we did not feel the task was tremendously difficult. Compared with an individual Yapese woman's daily life, collective work is less demanding.

An individual Yapese woman's daily life usually consists of many tasks: taking care of the children, cooking, cleaning the house, working, gathering the food, washing oneself and the children, not to mention working in the government office or a shop from eight in the morning to four thirty in the afternoon. A woman in her 30s to 40s usually needs to wake up about six, and she will go to sleep around ten in the evening, completely exhausted.

To recall the question posed above: if labor (*magaer*), especially female labor, is essential to acquire the landholding rights for a woman's descendants, what motivates a woman to voluntarily marry herself to her husband's *tabinaw*, and enslave herself for her children? I propose some answers in the following section.

## Gender Complementary: Ideal and Reality

In Labby's ethnography, gender complementarity is implied by metaphors and meal composition. However, it is undeniable that males occupy the vocal, marked, highly visible positions—they are the absolute majority of government staff, elected officials, and *piluungs* (“chiefs”). When Yapese talk about land ownership, they usually say “men own the land.” Village decisions are made and voiced by the men. The following quotation, which indicates gender complementarity, balance and exchange, has become an ideal rather than a reality.

All of daily life was seen to resolve around the cooperation and exchange centered on the estate through marriage; it was the result of contributions of both the man and the woman. A man and a woman were said to be like the two halves of a palm frond (*yuw*), fitting together at all points to make a unity. A woman was to provide food from the gardens (*gagan*) and stay at the estate to take care of domestic affairs. A man was to provide fish or seafood (*thumag*), going fishing alone or with other men of the village. No meal was thought complete without both food from the gardens and food from the sea. A man was also responsible for providing a house for his family and for representing his estate in village works and external affairs. While a woman stayed at home, a man moved about in social and political concerns. A woman was thought to be the base and support of the estate; she was compared to the hull of a canoe (*bulel*), carrying and holding all. The man, moving about and taking with him the “voice” of the estate, was thought to be the mast (*wolyang*) on the canoe, providing it with the means to move about in social affairs. (Labby 1976a: 29-30)

Why is the above-quoted description an ideal rather than reality? Probably it derives from the discrepancies in information that I got from Yapese men and women. Numerous times, when I asked a

Yapese man about the role of women in Yap, the answers were always “women are highly respected here”—no matter where the interlocutors were from, and regardless of where the conversations were taking place. The older generation—in their mid-late 60s—in Ma’ap, Fanif, Wanyan, all pointed out: women are respected in Yap. Most of the time, our conversations were taking place in a house. Women might be around, quietly being busy with the chores at the hand—kitchen work, attending the toddlers and young kids, or simply cleaning the surroundings. In one case, with my chatty Yapese language teacher, his wife was just sitting in the *ta’an* (cooking hut) quietly, or passing by informing us she would be going to the garden or taro patches. Yet, the Yapese men would often answer my question with the assertion: Women are respected in Yap. But they did not add one crucial phrase, “ideally,” or “situationally”—depending on contexts and relations (see Barnes et al., eds. 1985).

When going to the village meetings with my Yapese mother, I noticed that women were usually required to clean the ground or weed the grass before the meeting. My Yapese mother would bring young men—her sons, and the neighbor who came to stay with us—but there were more females participating in village work than males.<sup>69</sup> In the village meetings, where men and women both presented, it was always men who presided over the whole procedure. In fact, almost no women spoke unless they were ordered to make some announcements. The only exceptions I know are in the village whose *piluung* is a female—to be specific, the wife of the male *piluung* who “acts like a *piluung*.”<sup>70</sup>

The other noticeable exceptions are at the meetings in town. A local NGO, named the “Concerned Citizens Group,” abbreviated CCG, provides some interesting contrasts. CCG’s members are largely female, especially elderly females. The members are from different villages and

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<sup>69</sup> In another village, far more populated, and whose ranking is far higher than where my Yapese mother stayed, they had a clear division of labor in terms of village chores: women and children clean the grounds, and men cut the high grasses or clear the bushes.

<sup>70</sup> The comment of “acting like a *piluung*” was made by my Yapese mother. In fact, there is no *piluung* in Yap who is female. In my Yapese mother’s village, the *piluung* is passive, so his wife took the role and “acted like a *piluung*.” My Yapese mother made this comment with a disapproving tone.

municipalities in Yap, also from different walks of life; therefore, when CCG needs to have meetings, they usually borrow a classroom (or meeting room) next to the Catholic Church in town. In fact, the meeting room, along with the church, is in St. Mary Catholic High School, whose president is also CCG's core member.<sup>71</sup> Although most of the members are elderly females, when the meetings were taking place, it was still men who administered the whole meeting procedure. When we had meetings in St. Mary High School, men were usually sitting on the folding chairs, and women were using the thick paperboards as mats, sitting on the floor. If an ignorant outsider—me, for example—offered the elderly women chairs to sit on, they always shook their heads and softly declined. As time went by, I have gradually realized that when men and women are presenting in the same place, women are not supposed to be physically higher than men—that is the reason why women usually sit lower on the floor. Nevertheless, during CCG's meetings, women were encouraged to express their opinions more fully—compared with a lot of other meetings in Yap, both in villages and towns.

In fact, Yapese women were not very accustomed to talking in public. Those who are from higher-ranking villages tended to be more vocal in the meetings, while young women never talked in the meetings, despite the fact that they are very capable—in taking meeting notes, in computer work, in documentation, even in making sound judgments based on the information provided. I once had a chance to chat with one young woman, also a CCG member. She is in her twenties and was assigned to take notes at the meetings. When we were talking about the elder members' interpretations of the Chinese tourism development (which we will discuss later on), her sharp and clear understandings always amazed me. I wondered why she never talked in the public meetings so people would appreciate her brilliant comments, and she answered, "We are young, not supposed to talk in this kind of meeting."

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<sup>71</sup> His name is Tim Mo'on. He is a calm, senior, and steady person, who earned his bachelor degree at the University of Hawaii. He was soon elected as the president of CCG.



Her concern was not unique. Yapese women usually worry much more than men about the consequences of what they say, especially in public settings. An elderly Yapese woman, in her early 70s, once revealed her experience when making a comment on a radio program. At that time, she was still an employee in the Department of Agriculture in the state government. She was participating in a workshop about nutrition, and was paired with a partner to talk about nutrition issues that people should be aware of. During the conversation, she briefly mentioned a common issue in ordinary daily life concerning children's food and clothing: what can a woman do when her husband is not helping with the household. In fact, the experience of children lacking money for clothes and food, while the husband neglects the household, is prevalent in Yap; it is painful experience shared by a significant proportion of Yapese women. However, Yapese men's response to that "reality" was quite intriguing. Her boss was clearly irritated, and commanded her to withdraw the broadcast (which was far beyond her control). The village men—who were related to her—accused her of "putting the men down,"<sup>72</sup> and challenged her by saying, "Who you think you are to put the men down?" She was completely frustrated. When recollecting this unpleasant memory, she said she was unaware that their workshop dialogues were recorded and broadcasted. If she had known that, she would not have brought up that sensitive issue.

In my own experience, for example, when I brought up the issues of domestic violence to Yapese men, they usually attributed the reason to alcoholism—as if men themselves should not be responsible for their own behavior. One elderly man close to me—my Yapese language teacher—was even offended because I constantly brought up this unpleasant issue, which he could not fathom.<sup>73</sup> Gradually I found

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<sup>72</sup> It is quite important to know that it was someone "related to her" who brought up the issue to her in person. If that person was not related to her via some kinship connection, he would not have said it to her face.

<sup>73</sup> In fall 2012, when I talked about the contemporary issues with my Yapese language teacher, he usually commented that it was not his specialty. He also said that my mind was not calm enough—in fact, I was upset—in discussing with him those displeasing topics. One time I asked him again about domestic violence, and he said with frustration and emotion, "I told you I DON'T KNOW." In summer 2013, I was calmer than before, and our conversations were much more peaceful. I still thought he was trying to escape to a surrealistic cultural ideal, where everything is in harmony, the cultural order intact, and

out that, when I was talking with men, most of them would emphasize gender equality and complementarity. When I was talking with women, their interpretations would be completely different. When I had the chance to chat with Yapese women privately, sitting at their houses with no men nearby, they would bring up the issue of men's lack of responsibility (in taking care of the household), alcoholism, and worse, domestic violence.

Given the discrepancies between the male and female depiction of gender relations in Yap, it may seem strange to discuss the subject of gender complementarity. Nevertheless, we have constantly encountered female authority in the ethnographies (Labby 1976; Egan 1998, 2004). I myself have also been reminded in the field (by Yapese men though) that women are highly respected in Yapese culture. According to the cultural ideal, for example, only four categories of people can sever one's relation with the land: father, father's sister(s), and *piluung* ("chiefs") on the village and the municipal levels. It has been argued that elder Yapese women have "a very strong say in the internal affairs of the estate" (Labby 1976a: 77). Rubinstein and Mulalap further emphasize the significance of the elderly women:

In Yapese culture, the request of Yapese women—especially elder Yapese women (*puwelwol*)—carry significant weight and must be respected, particularly when they concern traditional Yapese matters like land. (Rubinstein and Mulalap 2014: 5)

Why are elder Yapese women respected? There are two cultural explanations. One relates to the gendered bodily substance in the individual life cycle. The other is associated with one's *mafean* status.

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the villages as well as the paths are always clean, without any empty cans or plastic waste. However, I feel it is cruel to blame him.

## Elderly Women's Gendered Bodily Composition: Age Matters

In Yap, one particular kind of bodily substance—menstrual blood—is deeply associated with contamination, or *ta'ay* (“profane, low, impure, dirty”) (Labby 1976a: 69, 83). When girls reach puberty, they need to stay at a designated place, the *dapal* (“menstruation hut”), where female knowledge is exchanged—how to keep one's body clean, what cuisines to eat, and court gossip, for example. Menstrual blood was strictly kept out from the domestic realm, which correlates with the separation between brother and sister when they reach puberty (especially when the girl reaches puberty).

A female's subordinate status changes throughout her life cycle and is marked by her phase of fertility. A menopausal woman would gradually become *pin ni pilibithir* (elder woman), closer to a man, and have strong authority in *tabinaw* affairs. Labby describes this stage in two phases: menopause, and being cared for,

Once she reached menopause, she was designated a *puwelwol* and again gained in status, being no longer associated with menstrual blood and thus “almost like a man.” Only then were all the restrictions on her movement in the village removed. The term further denoted a fully productive woman who had established herself on the land and thereby demanded respect... Finally, as a woman became older and her children reached the age when they could work the land to support her and her aging husband, as her son began to participate actively in the affairs of the estate, her position became even stronger. When she herself began to be cared for, she became a *pin ni pilibithir*, and “old woman,” and had a very strong say in the internal affairs of the estate. (Labby 1976a: 76-77)

Here, we realize how a gendered bodily substance plays a significant role in women's authority, and also limited the fertile women's movement in the village. Another dimension of women's authority still relates to *mafean* status, which crosses generations.

## “Female Power”

As we have seen before in Yap, *mafean*, father’s sisters and their descendants, are particularly respected, like the father. They are guardians and overseers of the family. Although father’s sister(s) marry away from their natal house, when the father passes away, they represent the father, and must be respected and consulted with about important family affairs. Therefore, a sister-less man is not as “strong” as those with sisters. Likewise, a childless woman has a very low status in comparison with those women who have children—she is said to be “less secure.” Why is she less secure? It has a two-fold meaning: she is less secure in her husband’s family and in her natal family. In the former, her heirs cannot “colonize,” or come to occupy the new land; in the latter, she does not have descendants to inherit the rights reserved for them—the *mafean* authority, the privilege and higher status compared with her brother’s children. However, if a woman does not have any brothers, she is powerful—regardless of whether or not she is married.

Women are powerful. You [we] have four kinds of women. Strongest: woman is the only child in the family, she is married, and she can inherit her father’s land. She is married, so she is entitled to use her husband’s land. Second to the strongest, a woman, who is not married, who is also the only child, owns land on father’s side. Third, a woman has many brothers, she is married, and she goes with her husband to own her land. Fourth, woman has a lot of brothers, not married, not entitled to anything. She is looked down upon—but her father will help her out, or her mother’s side will take care of her.

Married women, if they have children, they will be more powerful. Because it is more secure by marriage and having a child.

One of these women, married, has sons, her sons and daughters will represent her to have high status to her brother’s children. When her brother dies, her children will take place of their father (means her brother’s children’s father, her brother).

Wife comes from where, children will be important (there). Her children will be back to be father of that land. (Godfrey, To’ruw Village, August 2013)

Godfrey's delineation has revealed a significant phenomenon: the cross-sex sibling dyad is understood as the main reason for a woman to marry and risk her security and wellbeing in her husband's land for generations to come—those offspring who share the same *genung* with her. In this scenario, women become *genung* bearers; the *genung* spreads, expands and colonizes, while individual women suffer.<sup>74</sup>

### Contemporary *Mafean* and Gendered Ownership

Although *mafean* authority is undeniably acknowledged throughout Yap, some *mafean* might not agree. During my stay in Yap, the two most common aspects of *mafean*'s authority were bestowing names on the brother's children and chasing the brother's offspring away if they dishonor the brother's family. Nevertheless, to be more specific, a newly born baby's name is usually decided by the baby's paternal grandparents. The father's sister's role is to call the name in the naming ceremony, not to decide the name solely on her own. When I was in Yap, I did not hear of any instance in which the *mafean* dispossessed someone of land. The following quote, from a woman in her late 50s, illustrates what *mafean*'s authority "really is."<sup>75</sup>

When I...if I remember well, there are certain things I (as a *ma'fean*) have to have the full authority, like: to give the names. When they are ready to dance, I need to decorate them—to put the leis on them, to put turmeric on their skin, all the decorations. That's my job.

I am the great mother, *matiin nigaq, matinnigaa*, I have more authority compared to the real mom, their *nina* ("mom"), but not compared to their father. Their real mom does the

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<sup>74</sup> I believe there must be some deeper cultural significance for this theme, as Valeri hinted (2001)—women's bodily substances are dangerous to men, while men are contingent on women's generative power.

<sup>75</sup> I cannot say *mafean*'s authority is exaggerated now. But I keep wondering why, if *mafean* are as powerful as people claim or as ethnographies document, the disagreeable *mafean* does not chase the ETG-lessors away from the land, for they (in at least three cases) obviously did not consult with *mafean*?

breastfeeding. The mother's responsibility is to make the children. But decision making...it's not her prerogative to make the decision. (Rebliyan, 58, Rumung Municipality, 2013/8/14)

In the following section, I will use some examples to explain *mafean* in daily life.

### 1. *Mafean* in daily life

The way my Yapese mother interacts with her brother's children is filled with intimacy and jokes. It may derive from the fact that they are all female. Augustine, my Yapese mother's brother, has two daughters, Xenia and Janice. Xenia is working at the fast-food franchise in Guam, and Janice is in the US army. They visited Yap occasionally, and sometimes my Yapese mother went to Guam to stay with them—two of her own daughters, Virginia and Lynn, were in Guam too. In Guam, Xenia lives next to her cousin, my Yapese mother's daughter, Virginia. As a mother of six children, Virginia's house is similar to a private kindergarten—just like my Yapese mother's house in the old days. A residential area, enlarged by the relatives renting nearby, has made their houses in Guam very much like an extended *tabinaw*. Relatives visiting Guam will stay at their place. Those who want to find their career in Guam will borrow the corner of the living room for the first few months.

In spring 2012, my Yapese mother stayed at Xenia's place to take care of Lynn's newborn daughter—Lynn was living on other side of Guam, in a cramped room, asking her to help with nourishing the infant. When I was staying in Guam and living at Xenia's house with my Yapese mother and her newborn granddaughter, I saw their interaction as “natural” as mother and daughter. My Yapese mother and Xenia chatted, shared the work of washing and feeding the baby, and helped my Yapese sister's children to do homework. Yet, of course, we were not dealing with property allocation in Guam—they were renting a house; so the bitter story might not possibly happen. Additionally, we were living in the house Xenia rented, which may explain the less bossy and more harmonious relation.

My Yapese mother would also say Xenia and Janice are “my children,” but she would not explain in detail. Often I am suspicious that the “monitoring relation” between *mafean* (father’s sisters and their descendants) and their brothers’ offspring also shows a gender preference—it is largely men who stay on the land and women migrate away (via marriages). It is also mainly men who may break the village community’s rule for quietness, engage in brawls, speeding, or public littering. In other words, men need to be watched more than women. However, this statement may be risky in that it is too individualistic. *Mafean* “watch” those who stay on the land, including the new *genung* and its representative, the newly in-married wife. While *mafean* is concerned about how her brother’s offspring is behaving, they are thinking of the wellbeing of the land and the people living on it, in total.

Probably it would be helpful to read another story, focusing on daily life rather than focus on the definition of “ownership” or *mafean* authority. This case is ambiguous—“*mafean*” is supposed to be “father’s sisters and their descendants,” which includes both males and females—male is called *matam*, and female is called *matiin*.<sup>76</sup> But those honorifics are seldom heard in daily life except at funerals. Young Yapese simply describe their relation with father’s sister’s children as “cousins.” Older Yapese may describe it in a vaguer term, “relatives.”

## 2. John Filgirmed

My days in Yap would be totally different without John Filgirmed. Both he and his wife, Suzanne, are “close relatives” to my Yapese mother.<sup>77</sup> During my first visit to Yap during 2008, our relation became so close that I almost forgot how they were related to us.

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<sup>76</sup> *tam* means man. *tin* means woman. Resource: fieldnote, also from Lingenfelter 1975.

<sup>77</sup> John’s mother is the sister of my Yapese mother’s father. (*Chitaningin e chitmangin ya wolak*, “his mother and my father are sister and brother”). Suzanne’s maternal grandmother is a sister of my Yapese mother. (*Chitngin a Berunguy a wolegain e Fengan*, “mother of Berunguy is the sibling of Fengan.”) Berunguy is Suzanne’s mother’s name. Fengan is my Yapese mother’s father’s name.

John lives in a low ranking village in Tomil, Thol, with abundant breadfruit trees but barren red soil. He manages the house compound: a slightly elevated residential construction (a house) with three rooms, and a front and back door; a yam hut, a crab “pond,” a *ta'an* (cooking hut), and a *koyen* (resting hut), a piece of well-planned garden is beneath the *koyen*, a parking area, and his often-broken-down nine-seat van. He also has a small retail corner for selling coffee, sugar, and salt to the neighbors.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, across the road, on the land that John can dispose of, he set a volleyball net, and invited his daughters' friends/neighbors to come and play and party there.

We visited John's house often: trading cars (they have nine-seat van, although it was more fragile than my Yapese mother's four-seat jeep), asking for help making grass skirts, borrowing the water to wash the car, etc. Sometimes we just visited without my knowing the reason. John and Suzanne also came to our house frequently. Relatives who lived close to John liked to come to his place. Toddlers played with *titu* (grandfather) and *titiau* (grandmother), and offered them flowers and handmade snacks, such as fried breadfruit chips. Approximately every other week, John drove his aged van to town to pick up supplies for his own small grocery store. If it was in the summer, the van would be a children's commune car. John, Suzanne, John's two daughters,<sup>79</sup> his wife's relatives, and sometimes my Yapese mother and I, enjoyed the long cheerful ride—the breezes and the scenery, also shopping at three major grocery stores in town—the same commodities were priced differently in separate stores. We sometimes needed to stop to replenish the water tank to prevent it from overheating or at a mangrove curve to drop off a boy. John was a good care-taker and a responsible father, concerned about his children's education, and sent them to the best private schools in Yap. His older daughter, though from the lowest village in Tomil, got the chance to study in the Seventh Day Adventist University in the Philippines—after

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<sup>78</sup> John does not sell alcohol or tobacco—although he may drink one or two cans, he does not sell them.

<sup>79</sup> John's son is working in Guam.



working in the Yap Seventh Day Adventist High School's office as an assistant secretary for two years. Being humorous, generous, and always willing to help characterizes John's personality.

One episode illustrates my Yapese mother's closeness with John and Suzanne. In 2008, one late afternoon, a drunken man wandered into our hidden house. It was a rare case.<sup>80</sup> On that day, the drunken man seemed to have come from Rumung municipality, wandered probably two or three hours, and cut through the thick bushes to get to our house. He sat at the veranda—the cement-paved space in front of the house—and loudly asked for water. Only my Yapese mother, her husband's sister's granddaughter, and I were home. My Yapese mother gave him water, let him sleep and snore on our veranda, and then quietly packed everything, locked the house door, jumped in the car, and drove us to John and Suzanne's house in Thol village. We stayed at John's house till late night. When we went home, the drunk man had disappeared.

It took me a very long time to figure out how John and Suzanne are related to our family. We worked together, shopped together, peeled taro together,<sup>81</sup> prepared taro boxes for Guam together, sometimes went to clear destitute land together. When I finished the first fieldwork feasibility visit in Yap during 2008, I began to wonder: since John's mother is my Yapese mother's father's sister, and since *mafean* include father's sister and their descendants, can I say John is my Yapese mother's *mafean*?

I have never asked this question. John is younger than my Yapese mother, but looks more like a patron, a good friend, and a supporter. John's house is not far away from my Yapese mother's brother's house—in fact, Augustine (my Yapese mother's brother)'s house in Mavalai village, is on our way to

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<sup>80</sup> My Yapese mother prefers quietness, so our house is not within the village community, but on the other side of the road, about a ten minute walk away from the village, along with three other house compounds. Although we were not living in the village center, close villagers still came to our house and stayed there. We usually walked five minutes to the village bus stop and grocery store, and ten minutes on the shortcut to the village center.

<sup>81</sup> Preparing taro for funerals can be very tiresome. We needed to travel to the taro patch to harvest the taro, carry the heavy root crops back, peel them, and use a huge pot to boil them. Now, when people are traveling to Guam, larger amounts of cooked taro—50 pounds per person—would be carried as a gift. It has increased the workload. Every time we had a relative traveling to Guam, we were busy for two days to preparing the taro, and needed a couple of people.

Thol, John's village. But we see John and Suzanne much more often. My Yapese mother described her relation with her brother Augustine: "in the past, we always fought. Now we are all old, so we fight less." Whenever my Yapese mother feels something is wrong, she first consults with John and Suzanne. She would say, they are relatives, or a little bit precise word, "cousin." Additionally, John is a male, and I had not made the association between male and *mafean* so quickly—although there is a possibility that *mafean* could be male. After drawing the genealogies, I eventually realized that John is *mafean* to my Yapese mother's natal *tabinaw*, which is inherited by Augustine. The *tabinaw* I am living, where my Yapese mother married in, has a *mafean* living in another village, whom I have not met. Since then, I become bewildered about the normative and the reality.

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*Mafean* derives from cross-siblingship, but it also involves seniority and generational division, because I was constantly reminded that "only when the first generation passed away, and then *mafean* stands up." Rebliyan explains it clearly: *mafean* represent the father's authority when the father passed away, to counter-balance the mother's power over the children.

Both Rebliyan and Godfrey interpret *mafean* in terms of "checks and balances"<sup>82</sup>—someone has to represent the father's figure to the descendants living in this *tabinaw*. They need to be venerated, because their very existence reminds us that they are the older members of the *tabinaw*, and the current

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<sup>82</sup> In fact, "checks and balances" is one English phrase commonly used by Yapese, but there is almost no Yapese translation for it. When I asked for translation, the first response was to refer to the role of *Dalipi Nguchol* ("the three paramount chiefs," or "the three pillars"), and also of *Pilibthiren e binaw* ("estate of the elders"). Those two sets of authority keep the balances between *Baan Puluung* (alliance of the chiefs) and *Baan Pagal* (alliance of the young men). One of my language teachers tried hard to find an approximate translation: *Ngu-ur guyed yad gni-i par e gabin nib fel' rogon* ("To keep an eye on one another so things could be in check.") He admitted that is was not precise, but also speculated: if there is a common Yapese phrase for "checks and balances," it might imply the premise of imbalance, dishonesty, and unreliability, which are certainly "not chiefly attributes" and would likely be avoided by the authorities (personal communication). We may see "checks and balances" as the main idiom for describing Yapese political relations—for example, between two major alliances (*ulun and bulce*), also among the three prestigious *tabinaw* (*Dalip pi Nguchol*).

inhabitants are just new arrivals. Therefore, I was told that when lacking cross-siblings, there would be no father's sister as the *mafean*, "family will have a meeting, and someone will take the *mafean* seat."

The case of John intrigues me, largely because I never thought he could be the *mafean* to my Yapese mother's natal *tabinaw*—they belong to the same generation, and would rather call each other cousin. In fact, they call each other by personal name directly.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, my Yapese mother's children's *mafean* are their father's sister and their descendants, those from the same village in which they had grown up. But John's "domain" is not in the village we lived in. He lives in Thol, Tomil, but his mother came from Mavalai, another low ranking village in Tomil, next to Thol, where my Yapese mother's father came from, where Augustine still lives. John is the *mafean* to my Yapese mother's natal *tabinaw*, not her husband's *tabinaw*.<sup>84</sup> Rebliyan's insightful observation needs to be reemphasized with a minor modification: *mafean* is a relation about people and people of certain land.

## Discussion

In this chapter, we discussed *mafean*'s authority—the cultural ideal that the father's sisters "own" her brother's children, and their ritual privilege in calling the children's name in the naming ceremony, their guardianship over the land where they come from, and their power to remove one's personal name in case of misbehavior or disrespect (to the village and to his own *tabinaw*). We can see a Yapese cultural logic: female laborious contribution (*magaer*) to the *tabinaw* she married into "anchors" her offspring to the land, and it also "earns" them the future authority relating to the land—including her sons' title-holding and her daughters' (along with her daughter's descendants) guardianship. Female

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<sup>83</sup> In Yap, honorifics in addressing terms do not seem to be emphasized. I often heard an eight-year-old boy call her grandfather ("titu") by his first name.

<sup>84</sup> Thol and Mavalai are two lowest ranking villages in Tomil. Now there are only three families living in Mavalai, while the households in Thol are still stable. The previous State Governor, Vincent Figir, also lives on the border land of Thol.

work, therefore, entails mutuality in relatedness, and temporality (or futurity) in land-transference.<sup>85</sup>

Land-transfer operates within a deeper, broader cultural framework: *genung*'s relation with the land. In other words, Yapese believe that land actually alters between different matrilineal groupings (*genung*), instead of being transferred patrilineally from father to son.

Here, I have to re-emphasize: the English word "own" may not be a precise translation for father's sisters' authority,<sup>86</sup> as Rebliyan said. Father's sisters are important figures in significant personal life decisions (such as naming, migration, marriage) and family affairs. In fact, they must be consulted for decision-making, while mother (their brother's wife) have less voice. "They are not the one to make decision" (Rebliyan, 58, Rumung Municipality).

The significance of female's *magaer*, which attach an in-married woman and her children to an alien land, has played pivotal role in land-transmission. I use the word "mutuality" because *magaer* carries a moral connotation: one not only works for oneself, but is also physically exhausted for others. *Magaer* literally means "physical exhaustion," while the Yapese word for "to work, to do a job" is *maruweel*. However, *magaer* implies deeper sociality and mutuality. For instance, *kam 'magaer*, often translated as "thank you," literally means "you are exhausted; you are tired" and implies "I feel your exhaustion."

Certain idioms of emotions, such as affection, concern, caring, being attentive to others' needs, are highly emphasized in Yapese parent-children relations, especially between mother and children. Yapese women are expected to talk gently, in a soft tone, even at certain inconvenient situations, such as when a drunk stranger walks into the house compound (*tabinaw*). If men at the house were not home, females are not supposed to chase the intruder away, but should avoid open confrontation. I vividly

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<sup>85</sup> Female's contribution to household production/reproduction entails children's landownership/guardianship in the future.

<sup>86</sup> *fean* means one's possessions, belongings, or personal property. *Fanai (fannay)*, means "to own, to possess, to use as a possession" (Yapese-English Dictionary).

remember that my Yapese mother fled to another village when spotting an unfamiliar man in our house compound. In a similar situation, when a drunk village man walked into our pathway, my Yapese mother knew him and showed kindness to this unanticipated visitor. She gave him a blanket so he would not feel cold while sleeping on the veranda. After he awoke, she spoke with him softly, let him know that he was not behaving appropriately by wandering into other's place. She also brought up a bible and talked with him about the gospels; finally the village man felt embarrassed and went away. Similar episodes occurred periodically. In March 2012, the Seventh Day Adventist Church went to the village to have a small gospel workshop at the village meeting house, open to all villagers. Once a drunk middle-aged man walked in and tried to shake hands with everyone. While the Philippine female missionaries did not know what to do, the elder Yapese women brought the man to the side, gently talked with him, explained what the group was doing there, asked whether he need to take a bath and then join them, or go home and rest. As a person believing everyone has the right to protect oneself, I was always dumbfounded when witnessing how Yapese women dealt with the intoxicated men, and I always had a broom prepared for self-defense in such a situation. However, without elderly Yapese women to swiftly handle the disturbances, I may have risked causing more trouble without being aware of the consequences.<sup>87</sup>

Understanding the cultural logic of Yapese land-transference, and how *mafean* is an indicator of matrilineal groupings' (*genung*) landholding, it is easier to comprehend why elderly women have become the main dissidents in the mass tourism development. As we will see in the following chapters, the development project's scale almost covers the whole land area in Yap Proper, but a significant

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<sup>87</sup> I have never seen how a Yapese young woman would deal with these inconvenient situations. In my understanding, they are supposed to avoid such encounters. My Yapese mother was always worried about her husband's sister's 14-year-old grand-daughter, because there were too many intoxicated men near their house compound. She suggested the girl come to our house (for it was away from the village) or to stay at her mother's office after school, until her parents finished work in town. In 2013, the girl was sent to Guam to continue her high-school education. She lives with relatives—my Yapese sisters and female cousins (MBD).

percentage of the Yapese population was not consulted in the decision-making process. In common Yapese opinion, discussion is necessary for all decision-making processes, during which different voices would be raised, and then the consensus and harmony would be gradually formed. By the end, even though all involved parties may not get precisely what they originally wished, the compromise would reach the maximum of each participant's needs. Lacking such an open social space for collective discussion, a large number of Yapese—mostly elderly women—felt misinformed and betrayed by their government leaders.

Nevertheless, this is just one reason for the complex development controversy. The picture is not complete without knowing two other aspects of Yapese sociality—hierarchy and power. In the development controversy, those two aspects were expressed in two Yapese terms: *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“three supporting stones of a cooking pot,” also refers to the three significant *tabinaw* in Yap), and *piluung*, which will be discussed in the following two chapters respectively.

### Sailing from the beginning

In the beginning of the chapter, we started with a question: how to appropriately understand the role of elderly women during the development controversy in Yap in 2012. Their uniqueness, vocalness, emotionalness, as well as its significant cultural weight, are important to us. Because, as we have already seen, *mafean* is not a simple guardianship or ownership relation, but a complex relatedness among people and land. Similarly, we will see in the following chapter, land in Yap is not a simple “give-and-take,” “possessing and being possessed” relation.

With that understanding, it is time for us to ask: how can the rich symbolism that relates person and land, gender and work, be translated into the state-sanctioned landownership? If there are two modalities

of land-person production, a complex Yapese one and the individualistic/commodified one, and those two conflict—we certainly want to know why and how they conflict with each other.

Before we proceed with this issue, I will lay out the island hierarchy in the next chapter.

## Chapter Three: Substantial Hierarchy

The main purpose of Chapter Three and Chapter Four is to show the contrast between substantial texture of hierarchy (as a code of behavior), and the obsolete *tha'a* (“connections”). While the distinction between ritual purity and impurity (*tabugul* and *ta'ay*) is still prevalent in daily life—as manifested in the domestic and village space arrangement, the different phases of an individual’s life cycle, attires, mannerism, the way of handling things with others—the once significant political connection (*tha'a*, *nug*) has become obsolete. The knowledge of *tha'a* and *nug*, once guarded and unapproachable by those not belonging to the relating *tabinaw*, has now become critical in development affairs. In this context, *Dalip pi Nguchol*—the three most significant *tabinaw* in Yap—was both activated and contested since fall 2012. In contrast, the Council of Piluung, the “fourth branch” of the Yap State Government, in charge of evaluating whether any legislative bills might adversely affect “traditions and customs,”<sup>1</sup> has come to the forefront of the disputed complex of power.

In Chapter Three, I would like to emphasize the hierarchy of Yap in daily life, which is encoded in bodily position, domestic spatial arrangement, village spatial mapping, honorifics, etiquettes, and the manner of handling food for people of different ranks. These are the manifestations of hierarchy in Yapese daily life, vividly encoded as the “Yapese way” (*yalean nu Wa'ab*)—how Yapese should behave, position and situate themselves within the matrix of social relations. Hierarchy was also epitomized in

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<sup>1</sup> In Yap, “traditions and customs,” when being used in the government meetings, is a phrase often translated from *yealan nu Wa'ab* (Yapese ways), but also has a connotation of *kastom*, see Krause (2016) for detailed discussion. *Yealan* means “its custom, method, way, tradition” (Jensen et al. 1977: 75). Krause has discussed the meaning of *yelan*, which is “encoded with ownership that can be passed on.” (Krause 2016: 235). He also referenced Throop’s ethnography, reconfirms that “*yalen* specifically includes as well the knowledge and prescriptions defined in the “traditional relationships” between villages and individuals. Knowing one’s expected obligations, responsibilities and roles as defined by their connections to their *tabinaw* are key elements to being Yapese” (Krause 2016: 236).



*yogum* (eating grade),<sup>2</sup> which embodied the complex of person-land regeneration—people cultivate the ranked lands, harvest ranked food, and consume ranked foods accordingly. Through continuously working, consuming, and cultivating oneself, a person gradually becomes tied to the land—at the very least symbolically.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, there is another dimension of authority, closely related with hierarchy, encoded in *tha'a, nug*, and *Dalip pi Nguchol*. Being referred to as the political alliances or channels, its knowledge is not open to public discussion; instead it should be carefully guided and only passed/circulated within certain *tabinaw*. Intriguingly, even though *tha'a, nug* and *Dalip pi Nguchol* are documented in the ethnographies, the substantial connectivity (which is buttressed by continuous reciprocal visits, gifting, tributes, rendering services, and exchange ceremonies) has been gradually weakened.

The ETG controversy has disrupted every corner of Yap society, including shaking the authority of *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”)—the utmost symbolic authority in Yap Island. Just as “hollowed seat,” the significant *tabinaw* (or Yapese translated as “estates”) remain, but who can speak for it, who has the *suon* (authority) over it, is highly disputed or contested. For ordinary Yapese, they often hear the names of the members of Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”). *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“Three Paramount Chiefs”), just like *yogum* (“eating grades”) or *mitmit* (“large exchange ceremony”), has been recognized and respected, but has not been activated or practiced for a long time,

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<sup>2</sup> The *yogum* practice has been obsolete since the Japanese prohibition of all traditional rituals during the 1920s (Lingenfelter 1979:431).

<sup>3</sup> I was tempted to use the term “physically,” but it is risky, for it implies that persons can become physically different by consuming food of different ranks. Yapese believe that if one continuously consumes the food not belonging to one’s rank (especially of lower ranks), one’s behavior and mind will degrade, he/she will get sick, and some misfortune will happen to the person and his/her family or loved ones, especially if the person consuming erroneous food is a magic performer. I have not collected ample support to argue that Yapese believe food substances will alter a person’s physical composition though.

which has led to the confusion of the “real traditional power” in fall 2012—a subject that will be discussed in Chapter Five.

## Hierarchy in Yap

Numerous travelers and anthropologists have remarked on the dramatic deference Yapese show to hierarchical superiors. Their customs of deference include softness of speech, aversion of direct gaze, stooped walking, tight combing of hair; and an unwillingness to substitute traditional loin cloths for Western garments in earlier records (Hezel 1983: 266; Bashkow 1991: 195), even in their strong reluctance in tourism development (Hanlon 1998: 122-127).<sup>4</sup> Now, while most Yapese are getting used to Western garments, such as the cotton skirts and school uniforms, the hierarchy still manifests in the subtle dress code. Throughout the ethnographies, despite social transitions, the Yapese still display strong traditionalism or resistance to cultural change, which is attributed to the Yapese cultural valuation of careful deliberation, thoughtful action, and a morality that emphasizes mutuality of being—how the individual internalizes community goals as their own desires (Throop 2010: 31; Sahlins 2011a, 2011b; Keating 1998a).

As a first-time visitor in Yap, one would be surprised when one steps out from the custom-declaration area at the airport. At the gate, a Yapese girl wearing a grass skirt and a long lei to cover her topless torso, with orange turmeric on her brown skin, places a greenish lei on one’s neck to show

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<sup>4</sup> Hanlan wrote that “no district of the Trust Territory was more reluctant to engage in tourism development than Yap” (1998: 122). He also documented how a Tokyo-based resort project was rejected by the chief of Maap, “so that our home may not be vulnerable to the casual invasions of those who do not know our hearts or the disloyal speculations of those who do” (Hanlon 1998: 125). The chiefs of Maap struggled against the development project, “to combat the sensible predictions of those who do not love us enough.” The phrase was described as the clearest and most poetic counterhegemonic public statement in English—while the English users then were completely unaware of the dominating connotation of “economic development” (Hanlon 1998: 127; Rubinstein and Mulalap 2014: 9).

welcome. In summer 2012, I, along with foreign tourists, was impressed when receiving the leis.<sup>5</sup> This courtesy, although arranged by a government office, Yap Visitor's Bureau, indicates the prominent attire etiquettes and the importance of traditionalism in Yap. Young Yapese in their late twenties or early thirties often told me that they vividly remember the days of customary attire—women in grass skirts of different colors, men in different layers of loincloth (*thuw*), sometimes with hibiscus fibers added to it, and people from outer islands (euphonized as “the neighboring islands”) had to wear *lava-lava* (striped cloth made of hibiscus and banana leaves).<sup>6</sup> All were topless. Now, Yapese only wear traditional attire in ceremonies, such as dance performances. But outer islanders are still required to obey traditional clothing rules when they go to the Yapese villages—men in loincloth, topless, and women need to wear *lava-lava*. Such regulation is not so strict in town, but is nevertheless emphasized in the villages.

I still vividly recall that during my first visit in Yap in summer 2008, when my Yapese mother stopped at a grocery store by the road to buy something, there was a lady wearing T-shirt and a *lava-lava* wrapped over her wrist and legs.<sup>7</sup> My Yapese mother whispered to me: that lady is from the outer islands. Later on, I began to realize that Yapese women do not wear *lava-lava* (*bagiy* in Yapese). At the traditional dances, they wear grass skirts (*oeng*); in daily life, they wear cotton or nylon long skirts bought from the store. The skirts have to be long enough to reach mid-calf, since exposing the thighs is highly tabooed.<sup>8</sup> Traditional Yapese men's attire includes wearing a striped loin-cloth (*thuw*) and adding hibiscus fibers on it, sometimes a *lava-lava* will be added on to it. But Yapese women do not wear *lava-*

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<sup>5</sup> It was a newly invented ceremony to show hospitality to the foreign tourists while simultaneously emphasizing “tradition” (if not exotics). I certainly felt strange while getting the lei in mid-2012, since I had been to Yap before, but had not seen this mini welcoming ritual before.

<sup>6</sup> The word *lava-lava* comes from Samoa, but has become a common word in English. It is called *teor* in Lamotrek (in the central Carolines), being woven and worn by the outer islanders of Yap, also being used as the object of tributary gift to the Yap Proper (Werle 2014: 21)

<sup>7</sup> In Yap, *lava-lava* is called *bagiy* and is used as a gift—carefully wrapped—in funerals. It can also be given to foreign visitors as a local souvenir, or given to people from Yap when they travel off-island.

<sup>8</sup> At the house (within *tabinaw*), when men were not present, women might wear shorts—I have seen elder and younger women do so. But when men or visitors come, or they need to go out from the *tabinaw* area to where others might see them—including the gardens—they changed into long skirts. Sometimes, an elderly woman might even have a long skirt outside of her shorts for convenience—to make the skirt look puffier.

*lava*. The following picture illustrates the Yapese man wearing a striped loin cloth (*thuw*), and a Yapese girl wearing a grass skirt (*oeng*).



Picture: A Yapese man with *thuw* (striped loin-cloth) taking picture of a Yapese girl in the grass skirts (*oeng*). Picture was taken in March 2013.

Similar to the dress code, in Yap, every movement, gaze, and utterance is monitored, examined and evaluated by others (Throop 2008, 2009, 2010). One should dress properly—a woman for example, should wear a long skirt, tie her hair tight, be humble, talk softly and gently, usually look down, and walk slowly and mindfully. I myself was once pointed out by my language teacher from Rumung for leaving my ponytail untied. He was very surprised—“you go to Colonia with your hair like this?” He shook his head but soon added, “Okay. You are a foreigner.”

I myself have encountered one embarrassing example: one time, I gave a *tamol* (“chief” of the outer islands) in his late 60s/early 70s a ride to Wanyan, where I was staying, because he wanted to visit

where I lived. We stopped by the house of my close Yapese friend, who was like a host and a mediator between me and the village. Having already had alcohol, my friend immediately asked me “not to pick up everything on the way in my car.” Although my friend’s teenage daughter told me that he was drunk, in order to be respectful to him and the village, I apologized and drove the *tamol* back to town. I apologized to the *tamol*, who seemed to be very understanding, said, “That’s okay, he was drunk.”

That unpleasant event was in sheer contrast to another experience. I had given a ride to a senior Japanese JICA volunteer,<sup>9</sup> who was in his mid-60s, working in the Yap Visitor Bureau, and who also expressed his interest to visit my apartment in Wanyan. I stopped by my friend’s house then as well. My friend welcomed him, did not object to his proposal to visit my place, and kindly offered his willingness to help as usual. In fact, my friend joked about his attempt to disappear before I introduced the JICA volunteer, “I thought you would say he is the ambassador from Japan. If that’s the case, I would run away.” Our short visit—or asking for permission to bring a guest to my home—ended in laughter and light jokes.

These two episodes lie on the fine boundary between hierarchy and the local ranking of outsiders. If I assume my friend was equally drunk (or equally sober) in both cases—since he used to drink from the morning—there is obviously a clear distinction between his attitude toward the *tamol* from the outer island and the JICA volunteer. Both of the guests were equally old—one was in his late 60s or early 70s, the other was in his mid-60s. Both of them had grey and even white hairs. However, Wanyan village has a special relation to the outer islands, especially Fais—certain *tabinaw* in Wanyan are the patrons of Fais and its neighboring atolls. Therefore, anyone from Fais or the nearby atolls needs to visit those *tabinaw*

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<sup>9</sup> JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), similar to American Peace Corps, sends volunteers to the developing countries which have diplomatic relations with Japan. There are a few young JICA volunteers in Yap. The young ones teach mathematics or related subjects and also assist in computer education in elementary schools. The senior JICA volunteers assist in the government offices as consultants or advisors. The two senior JICA volunteers I met were working in the Environmental Protection Agency and Yap Visitors Bureau.

in Wanyan when they came to Yap. Those visitors are analogized as “children” (*fak*) of certain *tabinaw* in Wanyan. When they come to visit, they need to prepare gifts, which usually include *lava-lava*. They come to ask for permission to live in Yap, but they are also entitled to request living supplies,<sup>10</sup> just like children’s appeals for help, which should not be denied by the parents. From my landlord’s perspective—he lived on the first floor while I lived on the second floor—“those people from the outer islands usually end up getting more than they give us.”

My experience in Wanyan was just an extreme example illustrating how hierarchy, if not racism, could manifest itself in Yap—between Yapese and the people from the outer island (they call themselves “Rei Metau”, see Petrosian-Husa 2005). Probably because I am an Asian from a foreign country, I myself have not witnessed too many cases of hierarchy among Yapese to such an extreme degree—perhaps all of them were ameliorated when I was present. I heard numerous stories and descriptions about village rankings, and people’s relative behavioral expectations in accordance with those rankings. I also saw how cautious and obedient my relatives were—they are from lower ranking villages—when they drove me to a high-ranking village to interview a Seventh Day Adventist Church elder. Thinking retrospectively, those episodes in my life were embodiments of humiliation and bitterness—perhaps sweetness sometimes, although it was rather rare—which I was not able to fathom at that time.

### The Foreign Origin of Hierarchy in Yap

Bearing the well-known Yapese traditionalism in mind, I visited Yap for the first time in the summer of 2008. When men of different social strata, villages and municipalities told me of the legend of Siippin, I was shocked to realize that hierarchy, a distinctive marker of Yapese culture, had been

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<sup>10</sup> What are those living supplies? The examples I heard were coconuts or food (such as the root crops: taro, yams, etc.). But I also need to double-check this information.

introduced by “the first foreigners.” They were the legendary people from Siippin, a sunken island north of Yap Proper according to the myth (also see Walleser 1913). The oscillation between hierarchy and equality, a familiar theme in anthropological discourse (Leach 1977[1954]; McKinnon 1991), had already been inscribed in Yapese historicity (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990: 4).<sup>11</sup> In Yapese cosmology, the establishment of the current hierarchy is encoded in mythology. The segregation of food, food vessels, firewood, clothing, and living space, the separation of *tabugul* (“pure”) and *ta’ay* (“impure”), as well as hierarchy’s ongoing demise as modernity gradually eclipses the daily practice of hierarchical segregation, often expressed by them as a “mixing-up” of traditions (*yalan*), had all been foreseen. To make this point more clear, I will briefly review the origin myth of Yap hierarchy.

Documents from the German occupation period mention that there are two different origin or foundation myths in Yap (Müller 1917: 503-504; Beauclair 1971[1967]). One is about the creation myth of the world and human beings. It is very similar to the Christian version of creation, with the main creator Yalafaz, Mary, and her son Sus (Yosus) (Walleser 1913[1910]).<sup>12</sup> The other is about a couple who survived a flood: settling in Tomil, they became the founders of contemporary Yap social order (see Walleser 1913[1910]; Lingenfelter 1975: 123, also Labby 1976a: 100). While the former story is prevalent in Micronesia, the flood legend is “previously unknown in Micronesia” (Beauclair 1971[1967]). Discernibly, segregation is the main theme in the introduction of the flood legend.

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<sup>11</sup> The term “historicity” denotes both historical consciousness and historical representation, or simply, “the culturally patterned way(s) of experiencing and understanding history” (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990: 4).

<sup>12</sup> Walleser has documented a Yapese origin myth of the creation of land (earth), with the characters of a woman, Maria, her son, Sus, (also Yosus), and the “chief of heaven,” Yelafaz. The story was about a *gal* tree rooted in the sky with its branches touching the sea. The woman Maria and her son Sus lived in the branches; she forbade her son to approach the trunk, but he disobeyed and did so, and was finally found dead in the sky.

Maria asked Yelafaz to revive her son. Yelafaz gave her sand, earth and cuttings. She strewed the sand and earth in the sea, and then an island arose, where she and her son lived (Walleser 1913[1910]: 5).

The story was not seen in other documentation, and was probably adopted from Manila. Walleser commented that this story “shows how perfectly the Jap [Yap] man knows how to amalgamate new occurrences with his ideas and to make them palatable to him” (Walleser 1913[1910]: 5).

These elements are explained in the myth of the foreign origin of *machmach* (“magic”),<sup>13</sup> introduced to the island by a spirit female, Margigi, who was the mother of seven guarding spirits of *machmach* on the island. Margigi is also the initiator of all the *genung* on Yap, the matrilineal groupings, or “matri-clan.” She is a female spirit (*kan*) hailing from Siippin,<sup>14</sup> who to married a Yapese chief from Tomil and bore seven children, who have become seven sacred *kan* scattered and worshipped over the island. The siblings have set the *doued* (*yogum*) rule for men, *dapal* for women,<sup>15</sup> and the *taliu* belief associated with seven particular sacred sites (*taliu ko kan*) (Walleser 1913[1910]: 30; Maklai 1878: 9).<sup>16</sup> The evolvement from equality to hierarchy in Yap could be epitomized in the following quotation:

“A long time ago, there were only three paramount chiefs. All other Yapese were equal as were the villages. As Yap became more populated, warfare became common, the three chiefs decided that they were no longer able to keep the peace themselves, so they decided to create seven *bulcheq* villages whose leaders would assist them in maintaining the peace.<sup>17</sup> Still, the population increased, warfare was widespread. The three chiefs responded by creating seven *ulun* villages” (Marksbury 1979: 111-113).<sup>18</sup>

When I was in Yap during the summer of 2008, I heard two men of different “ranks” mention legends about Sippin—the sunken island in the north from which the regulations about “keeping things

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<sup>13</sup> *Machmaach*, means “magic, taboo because of magic, holy.” It is phonetically similar to the Paluan *masmas* (magic) (Jensen et al. 1977a: 38).

<sup>14</sup> Sippin has appeared in the documents frequently. In Walleser’s document, Siipin was the homeland of the mother of those seven siblings (the ancestress, Margigi). In prayer, she needs to be appealed to in order to appease Yalefaz, one of the creator-Gods (Walleser 1913[1910]: 34).

<sup>15</sup> *Doued* is the set of regulations about food giving and receiving that is very similar to the village eating grade, *yogum* (Walleser 1913[1910]: 24-5). In Lingenfelter’s analysis of *yogum*, he did not mention *doued* at all. But his way of using Walleser’s literature suggests that *doued* and *yogum* are the same (Lingenfelter 1979). *Dapal* is the menstruation hut. Girls should stay there for a month when they reach puberty. Women should stay there at the time of menses and for a certain number of days after giving birth to a child (Walleser 1913[1910]: 24-5).

<sup>16</sup> These sites are in *Gadpar* (*Gatchpar*), *Maki* (in *Gagil*), *Toru* (in *Ma’b* or *Maap*), *Maloai*, *Onoz* (in *Numigil*), *Tomil*, and *Oloz*. The most important among them is Tomil (Walleser 1913[1910]: 30; Maklai 1878: 9).

<sup>17</sup> *Bulce* means “the main house pillars” (fieldnote, Jensen et al. 1977: 7); Labby mentions that it means “a side house beam that carried the main weight of a building” (Labby 1976a: 104).

<sup>18</sup> *ulun* is “a very tall tree, grown up above the rest, particularly strong. Used in medicines” (Labby 1976a: 104). *ulun* has a connotation of “strong but too high, tended to be blown by the winds.” They are comparatively “younger” than *bulce* (Labby 1976a: 104).



separated,” such as the division between *tabugul/ta’ay* and the *machmaach* custom, were introduced.<sup>19</sup> One man further indicated that the people from Siippin were the “first foreigners,” prior to the Spanish, German, Japanese and Americans. Some Yapese men further mentioned the prophesized oscillation between hierarchy and equality to me: after seven generations of implementing hierarchy imported from Siippin, equality (“Everybody is the same”) would resume its order, as expressed in the following quotation:

“In the past we were equal; then the “machmach” customs were introduced from Siippin, and we have become unequal. Now the Americans come, maybe we will become equal again.” (A, 68-year-old Yapese man)

Another noticeable tangent in this myth is that Margigi (the spirit woman) not only foresaw and advised her Yapese husband how to survive the flood; she also initiated the *genungs* (“matri-clans”) on Yap by nourishing them in a coconut (Walleser 1913[1910]: 24). Intriguingly, the female origin of hierarchy in Yap seems to form a nice contrast with the motif of hierarchy in some parts of Polynesia. Sahlins’ “stranger king” (1985) model is one in which the male chief is an outsider, who has been domesticated by the locals, symbolized by his cannibalism, drinking the kava from the land, and marriage to a local wife-giving lineage. In the stranger king origin myth, hierarchy was also imported from outside.

The ambiguous position of female power has been a captivating topic in the studies of hierarchy in Polynesia (McKinnon 1990; Mosko 1994; Valeri 2000; Eriksen 2009). In fact, many scholars have shown the multiplicity of hierarchical relations in the Austronesian world (Fox 1993,1997 ; Fox and Sather 1996; Jolly 1994a, 1994b). In this light, Jolly (1994a) has criticized Sahlins’ distinction between chief and commoner as a gendered distinction. According to Toren’s work in Fiji, in which the

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<sup>19</sup> During my stay in Yap between 2012 and 2013, the details of the Sippin legend I heard varied in different regions, but the motif remained the same.

generalized, overarching hierarchy between male and female is absent, instead a series of hierarchies between binaries exist, such as wife and husband, older and younger, etc. (Eriksen 2009: 92). Jolly criticizes Sahlins for privileging the transcendental epistemological position for seeing the totality and prioritizing the single structuring principle. Nevertheless, such an epistemological privileged position of a dominating structuring principle might not apply. Instead, “a range of different axes on which hierarchy is developed” may exist (Jolly 1994a; Eriksen 2009: 92). Or, we could use Valeri’s words, “The point is that there are here no equations but significations” (Valeri 2001: 214). Furthermore, in Yap, as in Huaulu of Central Seram in Molucca Islands, Indonesia, gender, power, pollution are all nested signification embodied in the “hierarchy of states, processes, and activities” (Valeri 2001: 216).

### Tripartite Structure of Yap Hierarchy

Hierarchy in Yap displays a distinctive tripartite structure, similar to the semiotic “quadripartition” in Palau (Parmentier 1987), or the quadripartite structure among the Mekeo (Mosko 1985). The tripartite symbolism in Yap is manifested on multiple scales, from household spatial arrangement to the larger scale of island-wide political structure (see Labby 1976a; Lingenfelter 1975; Egan 1998).

The triangulated structure is also manifest in the island-wide politics. It can be seen in the village (*binaw*) ranking, one of the most distinctive and well-known characteristics in the Yap hierarchy (Müller 1917: 392-406). When being asked about traditional village ranking, Yapese would usually come up

with three main categories, each trifurcated into three minor categories—the third one is usually uncertain,<sup>20</sup> but the tripartite form is consistent.

Main categories	<i>Piluung</i> (“chief”)	“freemen”	<i>Milinaï</i> (“bondsmen”)
Sub-categories	<i>Bulce, Ulun yangalab</i> <sup>21</sup>	<i>Tethevan</i> , <sup>22</sup> <i>Matheven</i> <sup>23</sup> <i>Daurtsig</i> <sup>24</sup>	<i>Milinaï-n e arau</i> , <sup>25</sup> <i>Milngay ni kan</i> <i>Milinaï/Yugug</i> <sup>26</sup>

(Resource: Müller 1917; Lingenfelter 1975; Labby 1976a)

**Table 3-1: Village Ranking in Yap**

It is better to keep in mind that the village rankings vary from time to time—mostly contingent on warfare (Lingenfelter 1975: 136; Ushijima 1987: 187). Because inter-village wars have been prohibited since the German colonial period (Egan 1998: 35), mapping exact village ranking usually results in tremendous local confusion. While the top-ranked two categories (*bulce* and *ulun*) are commonly known, people quickly get confused about the rest of the rankings.<sup>27</sup> The reason is obvious: village rankings used to shift frequently, “but no one likes to admit that it was his village that fell” (Lingenfelter 1975: 136).

<sup>20</sup> For example, in the category of *piluung* (“chief”), two main subcategories—*bulce* and *ulun*—are clear, but the third one is unclear and has several terms. A Yapese man told me that those tripartite categories are decreasing—very few people could remember the nine divisions now.

<sup>21</sup> *Yangalab* means “outrigger” (*yanglap*, see Jensen et al. 1977: 75). I was told it means “the central post in *pebai* and *faluw*”—but *tabinaw* does not have *yangalab* (fieldnote). Sometimes *yangalab* is substituted by *Teyugan* or *rodini-n e pilun* (Müller 1917:392). Its exact meaning was unknown then.

*Yangalab* is also the name of one of the seven siblings who had brought all the regulations of separation. He resides in Gacpar, Gagil (Walleiser 1913[1910]: 24).

<sup>22</sup> Müller explained *tethevan* as “Upper middle class” (Müller 1917: 392). Lingenfelter: *thethaban* comes from two words: *tethith* and *ban*. *Ban* means “side.” *Thethaban* means “side which renders badly needed assistance” (Lingenfelter 1975: 137). Noticeably, *tethiin* means “his younger brother” (Jensen et al. 1977: 90).

<sup>23</sup> *Methilin* means “between” (Lingenfelter 1975: 137). There is always a confusion about the distinction between *thethaban* and *methaban*, whether they are two different ranks or two alliances of the same rank (see Lingenfelter 1975: 137; Labby 1976a: 89). *Tethiin*: his younger brother (Jensen et al. 1977: 90).

<sup>24</sup> *Dowarchig* means “not yet small.” It is the lowest rank of the free (Müller 1917: 392).

<sup>25</sup> *Arau* means fertile land just back from the sea, where *piluung* villages were situated (Labby 1976a: 90).

<sup>26</sup> The distinction between those three sub-categories is also not clear (see Müller 1917: 392; Labby 1976a: 89). Marksbury thinks that the *yagug* villages listed by Müller (1917: 194-405) were all located in the northern portion of Yap (Marksbury 1979: 104). Therefore, *yagug* and *milngaay ni kan* villages might be equal in rank with different designations in north and south Yap (Marksbury 1979: 103-104).

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, among each of the three major categories (Table 1), the third sub-division is most easily forgotten. They are: *yangalab* (belonging to *piluung*), *Daurtsig* (belonging to the middle class), *milinaï/yugug* (belonging to *milinaï*).

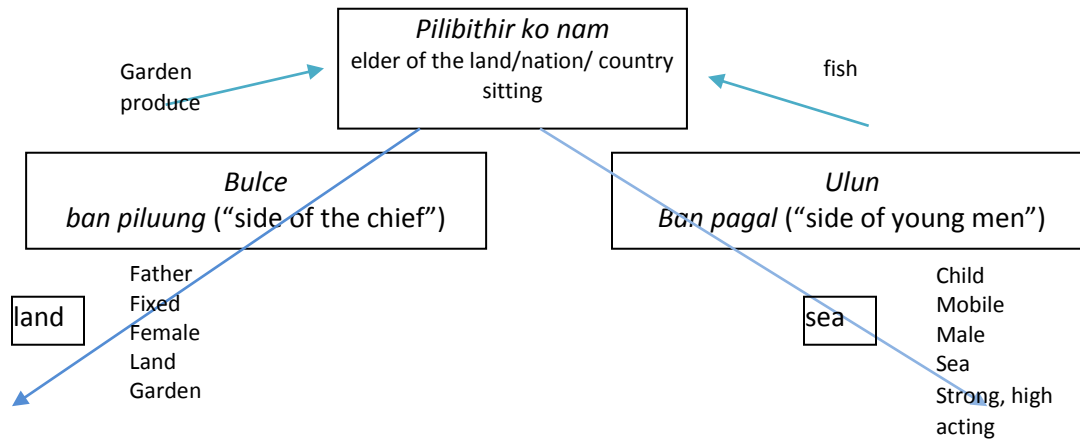
Although people do not agree with one another concerning individual village rankings, intriguingly, the classifications of rankings are held in common. Three major categories in the table: *piluung*, “freemen,” and *milingai* should be explained here. *Piluung* is usually translated as “chief,” but that is not an accurate translation. *Luung* means “voice,” *piluung* literally means “many voices.” Thus, *piluung* is understood as the voicing vehicle for “those individuals in the village” (Throop 2010: 37). *Piluung* are merely “representing,” and speaking for the collectivities, rather than imposing their own volitions on individuals (Throop 2010: 36-37, 43). For the *milingai* (“bondsmen, slaves”), they live in the interior, gloomier villages, or live “off in the bush” (Labby 1976a: 86). Their land belongs to the *piluung*; in return for lending the land, they need to return services such as contributing the first crops. In the ethnographies documented in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, *milingai* have no rights to property—including personal life (Tetens 1873: 18)—and they have less access to marine resources (Maklai 1876: 10; Salesius 1906: 85). They eat the food regarded as *ta’ay* (“impure, dirty”), such as moray eels, shark, stingray, squid and rats; they catch fish with poison (Labby 1976a: 91). The lowest ranked *milngai* (*milngai ni kan/yagug*) need to cover the roof in the *piluung*’s house, set up fences, bury the dead chief’s bodies, and serve as followers in war (Müller 1917: 417). They are like the “children” (*fak*) of the *piluung*’s village.

Throughout the ethnographies, it is commonly assumed that three paramount *tabinaw* are the leading “estates” of the Yap island: Arib in Tamil, Ru’way in Rull, and Buluwol in Gagil; they are *suon* (overlord) of central, southern and northern Yap. They are considered as “elders” of two highest ranking categories of villages, *bulce* and *ulun* (Labby 1976a: 101).<sup>28</sup> *Bulce* and *ulun* denote to two highest ranking categories of villages, also two major chiefly village alliances. *Bulce* is also referred to as *ban piluung* (“side of *piluung*”), and *ulun* is referred to as *ban pagal* (side of the young men). *Bulce* and

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<sup>28</sup> Here, “elders” denote to “grandmother or grandfather,” or sometimes “father and mother” (fieldnote).

*ulun*'s powers derive from *pilibithir ko nam*, the three paramount *tabinaw* in Yap.<sup>29</sup> *Bulce* is the *suon* ("the position of sitting") over the land,<sup>30</sup> having the first claim on the land, conceptualized as relatively immobile, "just sitting" like women. In the ceremonial exchange, they contribute garden food. They are older than *ulun*. *Ulu*n's power emerges later than *bulce*—it is believed that *ulun* was derived and separated from *bulce*. *Ulu*n are more active, mobile, moving about like men. In the ceremonial exchange, they provide fish (Labby 1976a: 104). The differentiated relations of *Ban Piluung* (*bulce*) and *Ban Pagal* (*ulun*), and how they maintain balance between themselves and *pilibithir ko nam*, is mapped in Figure 3-1.



**Figure 3-1: The Symbolic Triangulation in the Yap *piluung*'s Rank**

<sup>29</sup> But now people are confused about it. They are not sure whether the three paramount estates are located in the domain of *ban piluung* ("side of the chief") or *ban pagal* ("side of young men"). Sometimes it is located in *ban piluung*, sometimes in *ban pagal*, for "check and balance." People know the three paramount estates are mediating and transcending *ban piluung* and *ban pagal*—they do not belong to those affiliations—but since the three paramount chiefs rarely speak, they have become obsolete. People are not sure who should speak for the three estates.

<sup>30</sup> *Suwon*, or *suon*, means "the position of sitting." Sitting is the position of authority, because a sitting person directs activity while others get up to move about and work. It also designates "sitting upright"—until the *piluung* spoke, the voice of the group would "sleep" (Labby 1976a: 79).

The analogy that *bulce* alliance (*ban piluung*) is relatively immobile, more elderly than *ulun* (“as father to son”), and “just sitting like women” (Labby 1976a: 104) is worth our attention. *Ulu*n is believed to be more active, vocal, ambitious, traveling around and making connections, “trying to establish themselves in the social world” (Labby 1976a: 104), hence manipulating others for their own gains (fieldnote). Although *ulun*’s power is believed to derive from *bulce*, the dynamics between *ulun* and *bulce* is often compared to siblings (*wolag*)—conflicting and competing (Labby 1976a: 104),<sup>31</sup> rather than father and son. It also entails the motif for Yapese politics, phrased by Yapese as “checks and balances.”

Yapese would bring up the English phrase “checks and balances” to describe a kind of sentiment permeated throughout various relations. For example, *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“the three paramount *tabinaw*/estates”) are supposed to counteract with, as well as mediate between, *bulce* (*ban piluung*) and *ulun* (*ban pagal*). *Dalip pi Nguchol* has the authority to surpass two rivaling alliances to avoid foreseeable detrimental consequences on the larger social scale, particularly “involving the municipality or village” (fieldnote). Likewise, in certain villages, some *tabinaw* are designated as *plibthiren e binaw* (“estate of the elders”); they can mediate the conflicts between *ban piluung* and *ban pagal*, “to bring peace when a village is in a state of turmoil” (fieldnote).

The idea of “checks and balances,” though an English term, is heavily used by Yapese to explain one of the idioms in daily life interactions. People even use it to describe *mafean*—father’s sister and her descendants’ authority. The *mafean* represents the father’s figure when the father has passed away. One Yapese man, after patiently explaining who would be the *mafean* in the case of a sisterless family, who would be *mafean* if one had many sisters, described the significance of *mafean*:

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<sup>31</sup> Labby did not mention that the relation between *bulce* and *ulun* is similar to cross-sex siblings or same-sex siblings. Given the prevalent sentiment between male-siblings—competition—I think he refers to brothers.

If you don't have a super power over you, you can be lost; [for example, being] too greedy, too cruel..... [etc.] Nobody to check your power, you can get lost. You become unfit. No other power to check you. That's the purpose of *mafean*: we have respect to pay to someone. If you do not have somebody to respect, you can get lost. It's a check and balance of power, so people stay respectful in communities and families. (Pasan, Toruw, Maap Municipality, 2013/8/22)

A similar idiom of “checks and balances” also applies in gender relations. A 60-year-old woman from Rumung once explained,

My parents said: we women are inferior to men. We honor them, respect them, but it is like a web, check and balance. Any man can't go to any lady on the road, say you do this do that. He is not in that position. In the family and village, men are higher. In [cases of] brothers' children, women are higher. (Rebliyan, 2013/8/7)

Although the English phrase “checks and balances” seems to apply well in Yap daily interactions, when I asked what the Yapese term for it is, almost no one could give me a definite answer. They may come up with multiple titles which best illustrate the idea, such as *Dalip pi Nguchol*, *pilibthiren e binaw* (“estate of the elders”), *mafean*, but they do not seem to have a precise Yapese translation for this phrase.

If I were to be pressed for a translation of “checks and balances”, I would probably say *Ngu-ur guyed yad gni-i par e gabin nib fel'rogon*, meaning “To keep an eye on one another so things could be in check” but this rendering is so weak, imprecise, and somewhat unbecoming of a description of something with significance and so central to the stabilization process and the integrity of the socio-political structure and processes of the traditional Yapese government/society. It is obvious that my Yapese translation of the phrase lacks what “checks and balances” conveys in the English language, yet I find myself at a loss each time I try to come up with a better one. (Rutun, 62-year-old, 2013/12/19)

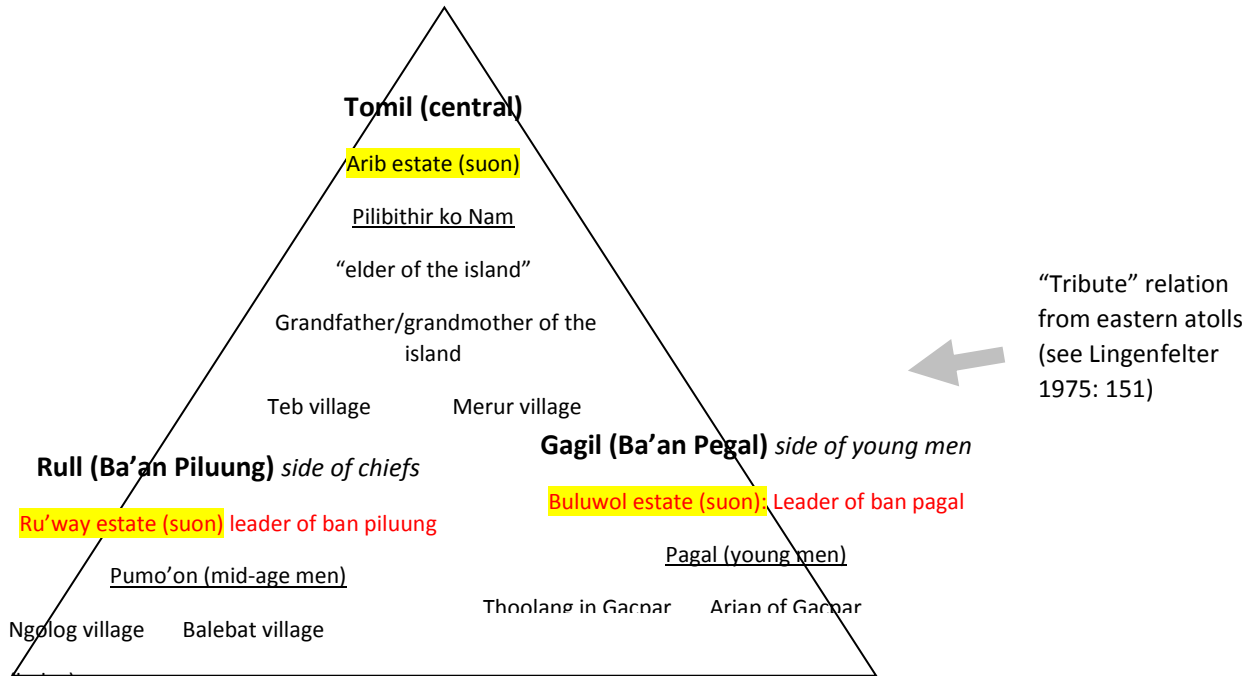
In the following diagram, we can see the balance of power among “elders of the land/nation” (*pilibithir ko nam*), “piluung's side” (*ban piluung*, *bulce*) and “young men's side” (*ban pagal*, *ulun*). *Ban piluung* is analogized as women, sitting, elders (Labby 1976a:104), while *ban pagal* is analogized as younger men, moving around. However, both of them are differentiated from the elder of the country.

The idiom of “checks and balances” exists between the two differentiated affiliations, also permeating the tripartite structures. We will revisit this political idiom in the following chapters. It was one of the fundamental reasons which provoked people’s strong reactions during the development controversy, especially toward the Council of Piluung and Government Executive part. In the decision making process, those two branches dominated, thus the power-balance was disrupted.

In each village in Yap, there are at least two *piluung* (“those with the voice”). One is “chief of the village” and the other is “chief of the young men” (Labby 1976a: 97). They are also analogized as “woman” and “man.” Chief of the village “just sits, like a woman.” Chief of the village gives commands. Chief of the young men is analogized as a man, “going about actively representing the state” (Labby 1976a: 97). Labby also suggests, one “speaking for” the village’s landed authority, “expressing the established power it embodied, and other speaking for the village people, representing their concrete strength” (Labby 1976a: 97). Interestingly, a kinship idiom is also used to describe the political relation.

It was in this sense that the two chiefs were finally said to be like “siblings” (*wolag*) on an estate, working together and against each other, strengthening the land through their competition. (Labby 1976a: 97)





**Figure 3-2: The Ideal Tripartite Power Structure in Yap**  
(Labby 1976a:101; Egan 1998:130)

Similar to the ambiguity of gender in domestic spatial coordination, in the island-wide political mapping (Fig. 3-1 and 3-2) it remains unclear how the gender role is designated. *Pilibithir* (elders) could refer to both men and women (“grandfather and grandmother”).<sup>32</sup> Figure 3-1 reveals that *bulce* (*ban piluung*) is immobile, has seniority, and is sitting over the land (*suon* of land), in contrast with *ulun*’s (*ban pagal*) mobility, youthfulness, traveling around and power over the sea. *Bulce*’s relation with *ulun* is intriguingly analogized as “father to son,” “women to men,” and “siblings”—*ulun*’s power derives from *bulce*, but *ulun* has become a significant threat to *bulce*. The idioms of competitions and rivalries, as well as the presence of an elder as mediator to ensure “checks and balances,” have constituted the fundamental theme of Yapese politics.

<sup>32</sup> In Yapese, *Pu'mon* means “men” or “senior men, elder men.” *Pin* means “women.” *Pagal* means “young men.” *Pagal* are supposed to carry out all the errands in the village. In Yap, women when reaching puberty, they are called *rugod*. *Pilibithir* means “elder.” Interestingly, elder women are *puwelwol*, while there is no specific term for elder men.

“Checks and balances” also contribute to the tripartite power structure in Yap. Tripartition is a prevalent local political idiom. Yapese would say: everything is “three”—for example, in the household, grandfather or grandmother is older than father and mother. The house veranda is portrayed as a long rectangle with two triangulated parts with narrow ends. People sit in front of the house, which may indicate domestic power positioning. In fact, the *Dalip pi Nguchol* acts precisely as mediator. They are attributed as the paramount authority because they have the final judgement in terms of disputes. In Figure 3-2, we can see that Arib estate (*tabinaw*) in Tomil serves as a mediator between Rull (*ban piluung*) and Gagil (*ban pagal*). However, the Yapese configuration of *tha’a* (connections) is much more complex than this clear-cut schema. I will investigate it further in the next chapter.

## Text of Hierarchy in Daily Life: Spatial Idiom of Separation

In Yap, separation is a prominent idiom in etiquette and in people’s mannerism, as well as in hierarchy. Physical separation is motivated by differences in gender and age, and applies in all spaces—no matter whether it is domestic or public space. In the Dumontian paradigm, the separation is based on the axis between *tabugul* (“sacred, high, pure, and clean”) and *ta’ay* (“profane, low, impure, dirty”) (Labby 1976a: 69, 83),<sup>33</sup> especially in *ta’ay*’s subordination to *tabugul*. Separation of *tabugul* and *ta’ay* has permeated throughout Yapese daily life, which usually coordinates with gender and bodily movement in the encoded landscape.

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<sup>33</sup> Labby translated *tabugul* as “sacred, high, pure, clean,” and *taay* as “profane, low, impure, dirty,” which differentiates land and people within *tabinaw* (“house estate”), *binaw* (“village”), and also between villages (Labby 1976a: 69). Throop, following Egan (1998), argues that the distinction between *tabugul* and *ta’ay* as an indicator of “legacy of labor,” for such distinction was made on the basis of the invested labor on the particular object, landscape, location, *tabinaw* or *binaw* (village).

## Gendered Landscape, *ta'ay* and (un)controllability

In Yap, the symbolic association between certain bodily substance—female menstrual blood—and danger or impurity (*ta'ay*) is highly emphasized. Lingenfelter argues that the menstrual blood is considered the semen of the land male spirit (*marilang*), which is “exceedingly dangerous to human males.” Consequently, menstruating women need to isolate themselves in the *dapal* (menstruation huts) outside of the village. They should not work in community taro patches, which is primarily for men. In the landscape symbolism, land is the domain of women. A woman’s cultivation on the land is analogized as “symbolically marrying herself to the land spirits (*marilang*),” which control the land fertility, and are able to “send blight or insects to destroy one’s crops” (Lingenfelter 1977: 332, 339).<sup>34</sup>

In contrast to women’s work on the land, the sea is believed to be the domain of the female spirits (*maday*), which are considered as supremely pure compared to the land spirits (*marilang*) (Lingenfelter 1977: 332-333). The female sea spirits can control winds, waves, currents, “movements of fish and the fortunes of men.” In addition to their extreme purity, they are also sexually jealous (Lingenfelter 1977: 339). In daily life, sea is the domain of men. In order to survive on the sea, men need to please the sea spirits by being ritually separated from women—staying at a men’s house on the sea shore for one night, and abstaining from sexual intercourse before going fishing (Lingenfelter 1977: 339). Lingenfelter also argues that land and sea must be separated, that is, symbolically mediated by *binaw* (“village”)<sup>35</sup>; men who just finished the working on the sea cannot go directly to the garden, the same applies to women who move from garden to the sea. They must stay in the village area for a period of “ritual decompression” (Lingenfelter 1977: 335).

<sup>34</sup> I was told that menstruating women could not step into taro patches because “the taro will be bad.” Also, the taro patches are ranked—the *petiliew* (priests) have their own taro patch, tabooed for women (Labby 1976a: 91-92).

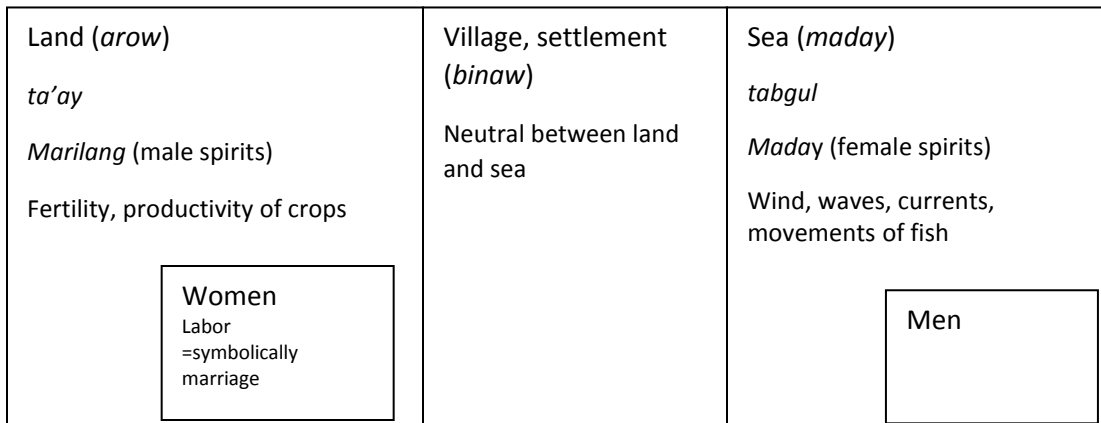
<sup>35</sup> *binaw* can also be translated as “land.”

The following table shows the oppositionary semantic categories in the Yap culture (Lingenfelter 1977: 336). Lingenfelter has argued that the Yap hierarchy is constituted through several oppositional sets of semantic categories (Lingenfelter 1977). Those oppositions are kept separate from, but also related to each other via carefully measured exchange and encompassment. The main contrasting semantic categories are:

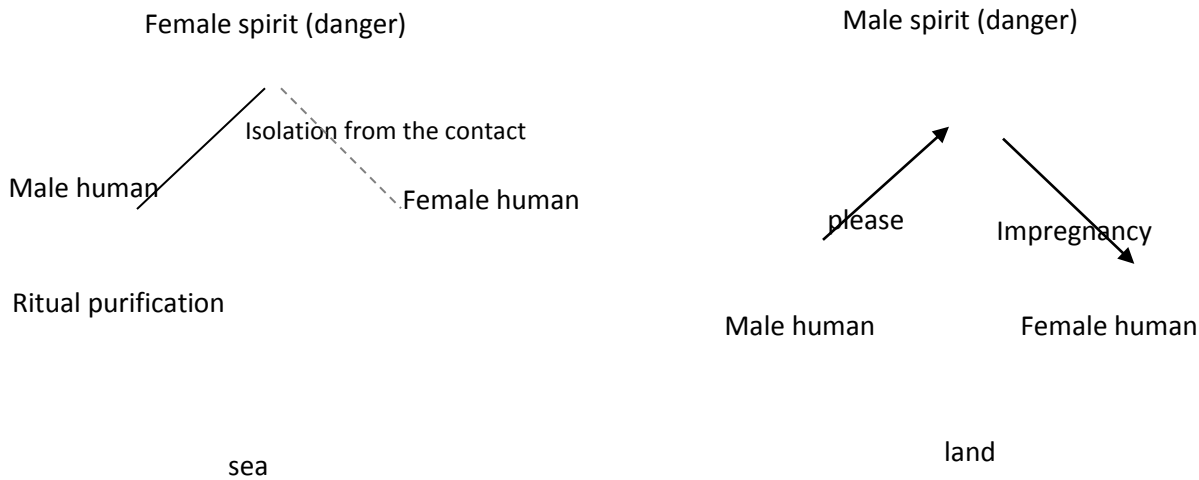
1a arow (land)	1c. binaw (village)	1b maday (sea)
2a tabgul (ritual purity)		2b ta'ay (profane impurity)
3a kan (spirits)		3b girdi (humans)
4a pum'on (male)		4b pin (female)
5a tabinaw (estate)		5b genung (subsib)
6a pilal (elder)		6b bitir (younger)
7a piluung (chief)		7b pimilngay (servant)

**Table 3-2: The Oppositional Semantic Categories in the Yap Culture (Lingenfelter 1977: 338)**

Except for 5a, the categories on the left column are considered as more *ta'ay* (ritually pure) than the right column. The symbolic contrast between land, village and sea could be diagrammed as the following:



**Figure 3-3: Symbolic relation of encompassing/being encompassed of the main semantic categories in Yap (1)**



**Figure 3-4: Symbolic relation of encompassing/being encompassed of the main semantic categories in Yap (2)**

The oppositional semantic categories between land and sea, male and female, gardening and fishing, and the necessity of the third mediation category, characterizes the symbolic tripartition in Yap. However, except for Lingenfelter’s argument in his 1977 paper, gender is always evasive throughout the ethnographical accounts. Sometimes gender is encoded in domestic spatial arrangement, and in overall triangulated island-wide political symbolism (see Fig 3-2, Labby 1976a; Egan 1998), but it is always fluid, or rather encompassed within certain idioms of gender neutrality.

An essential element in constituting this hierarchical system is exchange.<sup>36</sup> Lingenfelter has argued that the relation between the polar categories is mediated by “balanced exchanges”—that is,

<sup>36</sup> I am beginning to feel that this statement is problematic. Exchange has become over-simplified and fetishized in this argument. Who are the two exchanging entities? It must take place in particular *tabinaw*. There were certain ceremonies for massive exchanges within each side—*ban piluung* (*bulce*, side of the chiefs) and *ban pagal* (*ulun*, side of young men). More importantly, do the Yapese understand such give-and-take as “exchange”?

The structure between a sitting elder and two competing sides also indicates the formation of Yap hierarchy—not the legendary “import” from a foreign female spirit-human, but on the level of sources of hierarchy. In Dumont’s paradigm, Brahman are closer to “pureness” than kings; they are therefore superior in the religious and cosmological realm—a diarchy

“when humans perform proper ritual, spirits respond with positive aid to human endeavors. When men contribute land, women contribute fertility. When elders contribute food and care, children contribute respect and obedience” (Lingenfelter 1977: 336). This transactional relation was also employed to explain the relation between father and son—“the son gives respect and obedience and the father reciprocates with bequests of land” (Lingenfelter 1977: 335, also see Schneider 1962: 14-15; Bashkow 1991: 214).<sup>37</sup> The logic of exchange also resonates with Figure 3-1—*bulce* (or *ban piluung*, “side of the chiefs”), the *suon* over the land, contributes garden produce to *pilibithir ko nam* (“elder of the land/nation”), from which *bulce* derives. *Ulu* (or *ban pagal*, “side of the young men”), *suon* over the sea, derived from *bulce*, contribute fish to *pilibithir ko nam* (“elder of the land/nation”).

### Separation in Village Space

As we know, in Yap, female menstrual blood is considered extremely “impure” (*ta’ay*); thus, the fertile female body needs to be separated from the village’s spatial sphere of daily life during certain periods of time.<sup>38</sup> The idiom of separation can be illustrated in the spatial arrangement of a Yap village and house. It has been documented that the village land is also hierarchical—divided between *tabugul* and *ta’ay* (Labby 1976a: 83):

Like the living area space within the estate, the village was divided into areas that were *tabugul* and *ta’ay*. The estate of high status and the taro patches of the top *yogum* were said to usually be near the center of the village. These areas were generally prohibited to young, fertile women and people of the lower village ranks. The top *tabugul* taro patches were definitely off limits to such people, and only men or women who had ceased to menstruate could work them and collect food from them. Lower estate and taro patches were more and more toward the outskirts of the village, near the paths for the *rugoth* women and lower villagers. The taro patches would furthermore be

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picture. Without the Hindu belief in pureness and spiritual cultivation, what is (are) the fundamental source(s) of Yap hierarchy? Potency? Source of life? Reproduction? An androgynous state? (That was the question Susie reminded me of.)

<sup>37</sup> Also see Labby 1976a for his emphasis on the exchange between man and woman, land and labor, estate and clan.

<sup>38</sup> For example, a *dapal* (menstruation hut), which secludes females from the family’s dwelling, is always built outside of the village, or at the periphery of the village domain, sometimes even in distance—in a lower-ranking or subordinate village community.

arranged so that the water flowing through them went into the higher ones first so that it would not pick up contamination. (Labby 1976a: 83)

The following two maps, one from Fal in Rumung municipality (one of the highest villages in Rumung, the other is Riy), and another from Balbat village in Rull municipality, also one of the three highest ranking villages in Rull, may be able to illustrate how the village land is ranked.

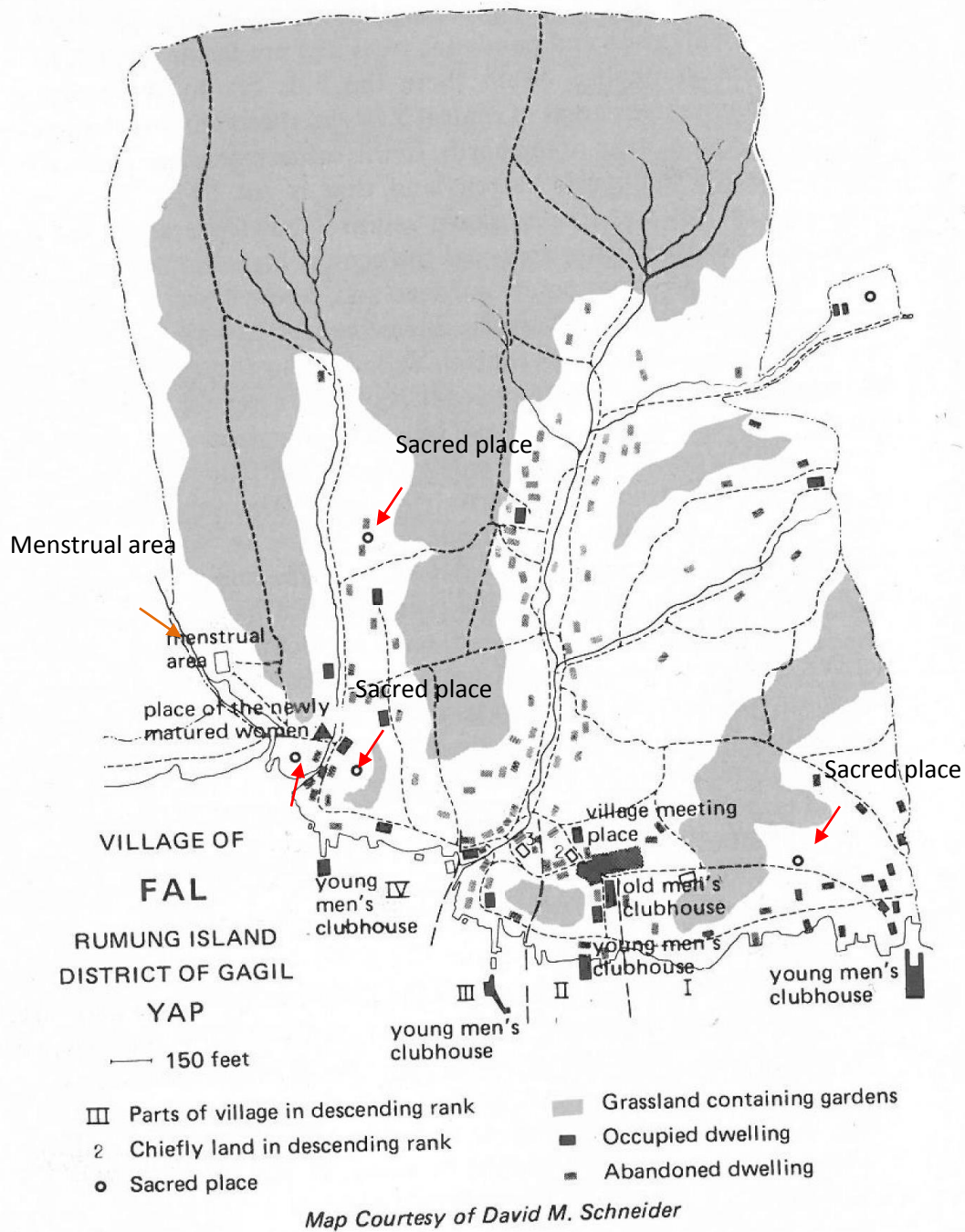
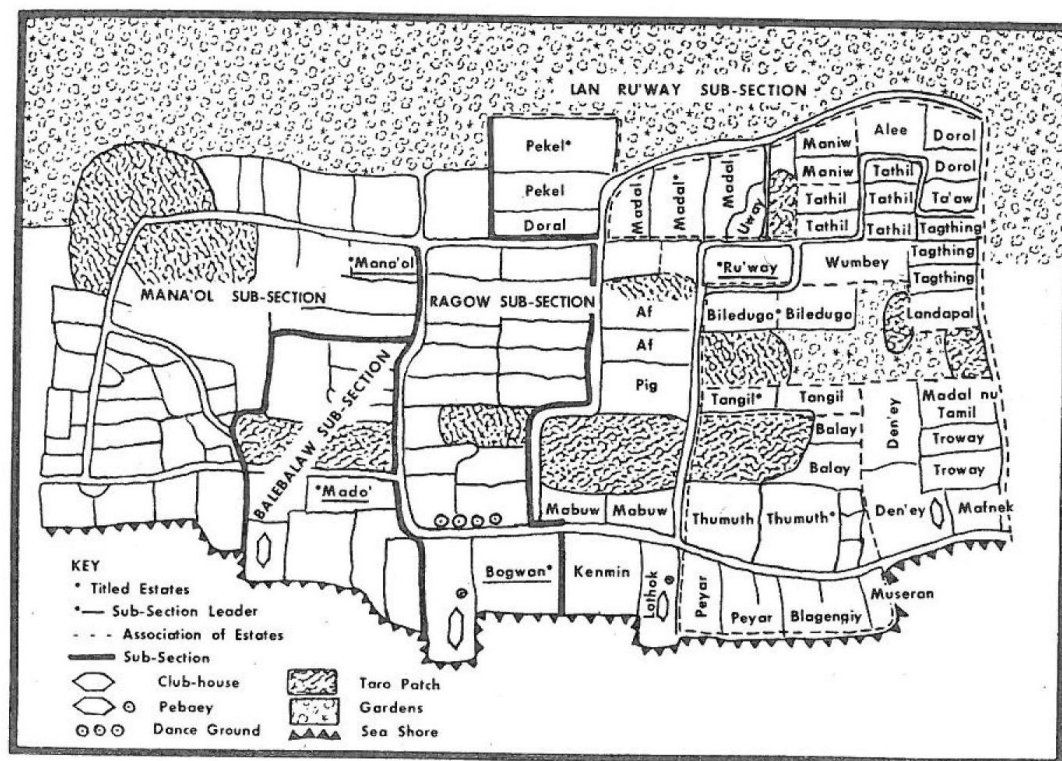


Figure 3-5: Map of Fal Village (showing abandoned house plots) (Labby 1976a: 14)





**Figure 3-6: Balabat Village, Rull, North Section** (Lingenfelter 1975: 92)

From the above two maps, one can easily discern that in Yap, landscape is hierarchically demarcated, which is strongly motivated by certain gendered bodily substances. Young Yapese females are forbidden from walking in front of the village dancing ground (*malal*), particularly the front of the elevated stone platform, where the village meeting house is located. Nevertheless, when a female has reached the age of menopause, her *ta'ay* status ceases, and she becomes “almost like a man” (Labby 1976a: 76). She will become a *pulwelwol* or *pin ni pilibithir* (“elder women”)<sup>39</sup> and have a strong voice in family (*tabinaw*) affairs (Labby 1976a: 77). The restrictions on her movement in the village are removed.

<sup>39</sup> *Pin* means “female.” *Bilibithir* means “elder.”

Walking in a Yap village, one has to look down at the road or path, walking slowly, and carrying a basket—women usually clutch a long basket under their arms, and men bring the basket in hands. Walking slowly and carefully shows one's respect to *binaw* (“village” or “land”)—especially for the visitors outside of the village. Furthermore, except for relatives and people from the same village, Yapese will be cautious of stumbling into other's territory without asking for permission. A woman may bring her children to the taro patch and gardens which they are allowed to enter, but a young woman will not go to the *tabgul* taro patches which are reserved only for the elder in the *tabinaw* (“estate”). If she happens to go into or close to the *tabgul* taro patches, “the taro will be bad,” and the woman would be never pregnant again (Labby 1976a: 83). Labby also documented, if a fertile woman happened to eat the taro growing from the *tabgul* taro patches, she would cease to menstruate. If the woman is still very young and very *ta'ay*, “she might even die.” In contrast, if a *tabgul* man accidentally eats the taro from *ta'ay* patches, they will have sore throats, being unable to eat, “blood would run out of their mouths, and that they could even die” (Labby 1976a: 83-84). We will see this correlation between land, food and person later in this chapter.

Similarly, the division between *tabugul/taay* is also ramified in the house structure. One Yapese man in his late 60s described how Yapese stay in the domestic space according to their relative position in the family, “Grandfather and grandmother live in different ends of the house. Parents were in different sections.” His delineation needs to be understood in the domestic house spatial coordination, which is described below.

## Separation in Domestic Space

The spatial structure of *tabinaw*, or a residential house, is divided into two sides: “side of *tabugul*” (*ban tabugul*) and “side of the front” (*ban to-or*), denoting the back side and the front side respectively. *Ban tabugul* is reserved for the father. It is where he sleeps and stores valuables. Women and children sleep in the front side of the house, the *ban to-or*. The ends of the house are further divided into the *pe’nu’un* (“back of the house”) and the *gethith* (“living area”).<sup>40</sup> The *pe’nu’un* end is considered the most *tabugul* or sacred place in the house, and it is reserved for men’s meetings and for men’s devotion to ancestral spirits. The *gethith* (“living room part of the house”) end is for family gatherings and daily activities, such as chattering, making ropes, baskets and grass skirts (Labby 1976a: 73). When Müller visited Yap in the early 1900s, the men’s fireplace was inside the house.<sup>41</sup> But in the 1970s, the men’s fireplace had been moved out of the house (see Lingenfelter 1975: 22). However, the existence of separate cooking places—including firewood, hearths, and food—for different family members still exists (see Fig 3-7). What is noticeable here is the positionality of the “family” members: women and children stay in the front *to’or* side and the elder men stay in the *tabugul* side. Men, however, stay in the

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<sup>40</sup> Morgan, according to Kobayshi (1978), argues that the *tabinaw* is divided into quadrants by “longitudinal and transverse axes:” east/west and north/south. The western is *ban tabugul* (back side), the eastern is *ban to’or* (front side); the north is *pe’nu’un* (for magical devotion) and the south is *gethith* (for daily gathering and working) (Morgan 1988: 47). He was the only one who argued that there are absolute axes in directionality to divide Yapese houses. Both Labby and Lingenfelter use “front-back” to distinguish *to’or* and *tabugul* side. Lingenfelter argues that the *gethith* end is closer to the road, while *pe’nu’un* is farther away from the road (Labby 1976a: 73; Lingenfelter 1975: 21).

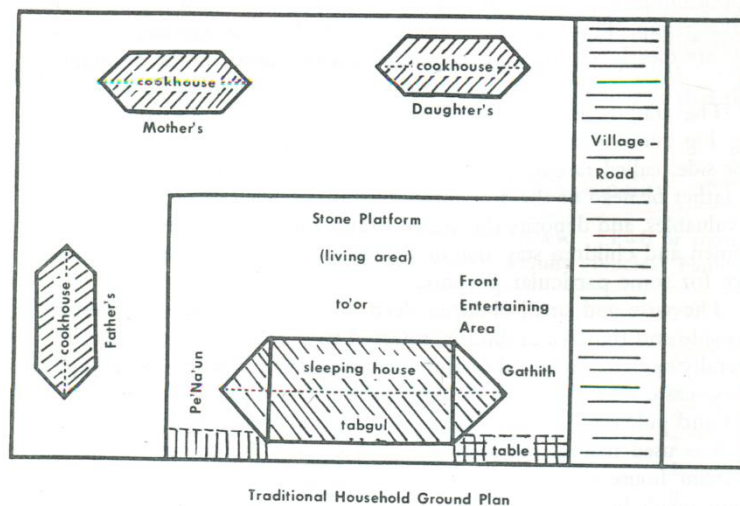
<sup>41</sup> The father’s fire place is near the *ka-naun*, the “trunk of the house,” which is the center of the house and also the sacred place. The *ka-naun* is also “where the heirloom stored and only the ‘master of the house’ can enter (Müller 1917: 251). The father’s fireplace is either located near the *ka-naun*, or “in the compartment connected with it on the veranda” (Müller 1917: 253).

What is noteworthy here is that *ka-naun* does not appear in all areas on Yap. Müller documented that *ka-naun* is absent in Gagil, Map, Rumung and some parts of Tomil. In Gatsapar, “the god Yonalav has forbidden its construction.” Müller thought it was because *matsamats*, or “ritually dangerous” (Müller 1917: 250-251).

Yonalav is one of the seven siblings with the *petiliew* (priests) in Yap. He is the god of travelers, also the protective god against typhoons, epidemics, and the dispenser of abundant food. He resides in Gagil, and had traveled to the island farther east than Ponape (Müller 1917: 530-532).

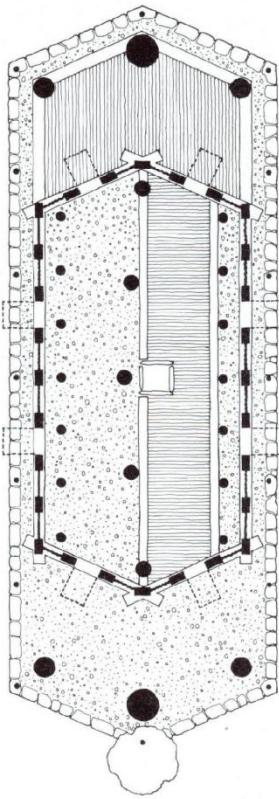
inbetween yet exterior part of the *gethith* side (living room part of the house) (see Figs 3-9 and 3-10).

The ranking position of the family members matches the directionality of the house.<sup>42</sup>



**Fig 3-7: The Separation of Cooking Places (outside of the dwelling house) (Lingenfelter 1975: 22)**

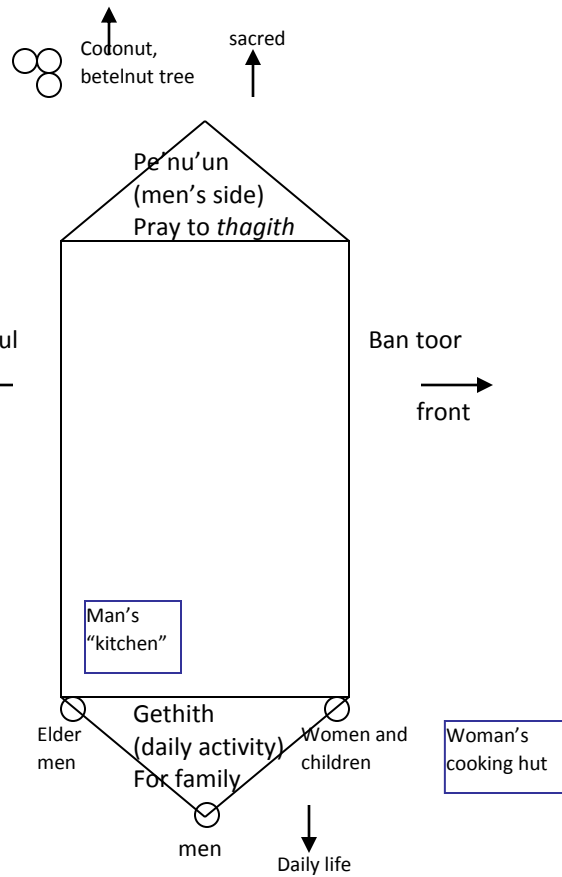
<sup>42</sup> A note: The Yapese house has a hexagonal shape; its floor plan looks like a boat. In fact, a Yapese house could be analogized as a boat. Labby once mentioned that a woman “was thought to be the base and support of the estate” and “compared to the hull of a canoe (*bulel*), carrying and holding all.” (Labby 1976a: 30). In contrast, the man, who is “moving about and taking with him the ‘voice’ of the estate,” was “thought to be the mast (*wolyang*) on the canoe.” Labby further suggests, both of them were considered important, but female was “more fundamental,” for without her, “their canoe had split (*ke pil e m’uwrorad.*)” (Labby 1976a: 30).



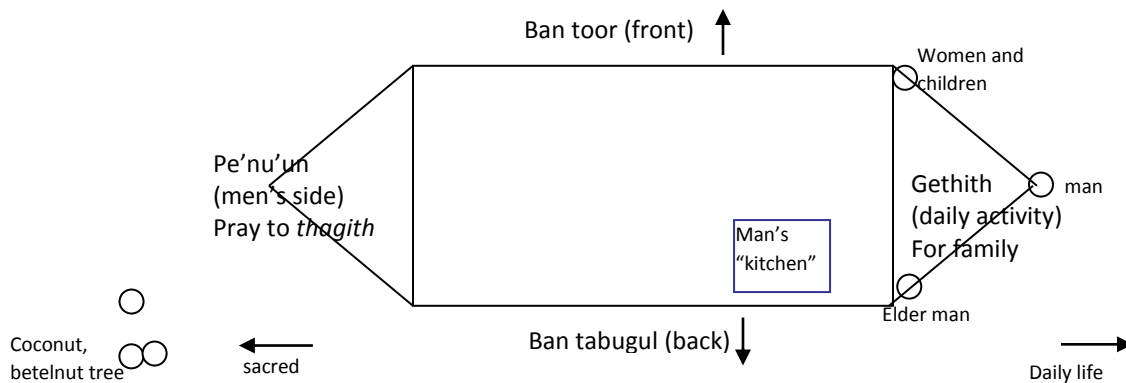
**Fig 3-8: Plan for a Yapese *tabinaw*** (Morgan 1998: 48)



0 FEET 10  
0 METERS 3



**Fig 3-9: Division of *tabinaw* Space** (Labby 1976a: 73)



**Fig 3-10: Division of *tabinaw* Space** (drawn by a Yap Man)<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> This floor plan, drawn by a Yap people, also appeared in Müller (1917: 238), Lingenfelter (1975: 22), and Kobayashi (1978: 25). It better matches the Yap people's own sense of orientation (in terms of when one is standing/sitting in front of the door and facing outward).

How does hierarchy come to be inscribed onto the Yapese person and body? In the following sections, I will provide two examples: people's movement in the signified landscape, and the symbolic segregation of food—which will be ingested by human beings.

### Human-created Landscape as Modalities of Being

Land (*binaw*) in Yap is given a primordial value in every dimension of social interaction, as a repository of Yapese hierarchy (Müller 1917; Schneider 1969; Marksbury 1979; S. Price 1975; Labby 1976a, 1976b; Egan 1998; Lingenfelter 1975, 1977, 1979; Throop 2005, 2010). Land helps to sediment “rank, position, and authority,” the value and power in which successive generations' continuous labor is invested (Throop 2010: 43). It has been emphasized throughout the ethnographic literature that “land is the chief,” and the person is the land's “vehicle or conduit, its ‘voice’” (Labby 1976a: 16; Throop 2010: 43). Furthermore, stone constructions on the land, such as house foundations (*dayif*) and village pathways (*kanaawoq*), index particular modalities of being (see Parmentier 1985, 1987; Throop 2005, 2010). *Kanaawoq* (or *kanawo*) denotes “path, way, road, method” in Yapese-English dictionary. It bears certain semantic meanings, which can be compared with Palauan *rael* (“path”)—“sequential precedence, obligation of repetitions” (Parmentier 1987: 110).

In Parmentier's ethnography on Palau, he discusses four principle diagrammatic icons—paths, sides, cornerposts, and larger/smaller—each signals a particular modality of social relation (Parmentier 1985, 1987). However, how those modalities get inscribed into persons, other than through linguistic forms, remains unexplored (Parmentier 1984, 1985, 2002). Unlike Parmentier, Throop's

phenomenological approach demonstrates how “path is the teacher,” and a person’s movement over land gradually encodes the social values—such as being mindful, vigilant, and respectful—into one’s body (Throop 2005, 2010: 132-134). The design of the path is understood to focus individual minds to the task at hand. When talking on a stone path with attention focused on their footing, individuals are also less likely to be distracted by other people’s gardens, trees, taro patches, and possessions. As one person put it, building the paths in such a way ensures that *Daamu changar, mu saap ngaa buut* (“Don’t you look around, you look to the ground”) (Throop 2005: 295). The path is perceived to be a teacher inasmuch as it is a recurrent reminder to individuals to be respectful, humble, and focused on the task at hand. The act of walking on a path is a meditation of sorts. It ensures that individuals’ minds are clearly focused on where they are going, not distracted (Throop 2010: 133-134), as shown in the following quote:

In many ways, the path (*kanaawoq*) is characterized as a material reflection of the valuation of reflective action. As one elder told me, “The path is a teacher.” The very ways in which the rocks are placed on the path serve as a message from the *piiluung* and community to the people walking along it. The path’s message is that travelers should always demonstrate respect (*liyoer*) when traveling in the village. Practically speaking, walking along a Yapese stone path is no simple matter. The rocks are very smooth, often covered with moss, and are, as a result, quite slippery. This is especially so during or after a rainfall. Without careful attention to where you are placing your feet, it is quite easy to fall. When walking on a path it is often necessary to look down to see where you are stepping. In the process, individuals are restricted by the design of the path itself to walk deliberately and slowly, with their heads down. (Throop 2010: 132-133)

*Kanaawoq* also refers to connections (*tha’a*, strings) (Ushijima 1987: 191). *Tha’a*, literally translated as “a series of things, tied together with string” (Lingenfelter 1975: 131), is the key concept to understand Yapese configuration of politics. Improper channels of communications, or “not following the *tha’a*,” would be disregarded—even if the message is of ultimate significance. Likewise, a correct channel of communication “has the force and power of the highest chiefs.” Furthermore, “to disregard it brings serious consequences” (Lingenfelter 1975: 131). I will explain *tha’a* in the next chapter.

## Land, Food and Person

Walking on the human-created landscape is a way to encode hierarchy and cultural values into one's body, another well-known practice that also encodes hierarchy into bodies is the Yapese eating grade (*yogum*). *Yogum* can be understood as the manifestation of a segregation principle in terms of food and food practices, such as how the food is eaten and the public division of food (Labby 1976a: 81). Men are classified into different groupings according to the *tabinaw* ("house estate") from which they come: those men's age, and their contribution to the community (Labby 1976a: 127-130; Lingenfelter 1979). The idea of *yogum* is that food must be separated according to men's ranks, as well as where the food is taken from, by whom it is handled, and to whom it is given. *Yogum* grades differ in different areas and also cut across the boundary between domestic and public—that is, father and son are positioned in different *yogum* within a household because a father is "superior" to the son (Labby 1976a: 81; Price 1944: 73-74), as manifested in the *tabinaw* spatial arrangements. Before I further explain what *yogum* is, I will shortly discuss how food may articulate land and person in Micronesia.

The significance of food for articulating land and people has already been observed throughout Micronesia (Petersen 2009) and Melanesia (A. Strathern 1973; Schwimmer 1973; Munn 1986: Ch3; Damon 1990: 106; Bashkow 2006: Ch5). The close association between land, food and people in Micronesia can be seen from the following quotation:

That is, the support that individuals draw from their land is perceived to be the product of what they and others have put into it. The land's value is realized via the food that comes from it, and this food in turn has been cultivated by the people who inhabit, inherit, and protect the land. Without the people, the land loses significant aspects of its value; without their land, the people can neither survive nor reproduce. (Petersen 2009: 116)

As mentioned before, the Yapese people not only consider land to be the source of foods that sustain life (Throop 2010: 96), but also consider persons themselves to be the very extension of that land. Throop has specified the relation between land, voice, and breath thus:



Without the sustenance brought by the production and consumption of food, individuals would literally be without their very breath (*faan/pagoofaan*). This has very interesting implications given that breath is the source of an individual's voice (*luungun*). (Throop 2010: 95)

Based on a similar logic, if a person consistently eats the “wrong type of food” which does not accord with his social status, “this would have a direct effect on his or her behavior,” and “change an individual habitual way of thinking and feeling (*taafinay*)” (Throop 2010: 92). However, food is not utilized solely as a vehicle for expressing sentiments, since the preparation, acceptance, and ingestion of food are also held to directly affect an individual's subjective life. To this end, food, its production, preparation, and consumption are all understood to be an integral part of *yalean* (tradition) (Throop 2010: 92).

In the following section, I will use Appadurai's idea of “gastro-politics” to discuss one of the most noticeable facets of Yap hierarchy: men's eating grade (*yogum*), and how this practice might shed light on the gendered dimension of Yapese hierarchy.

## Male Gastro-politics

The term “gastro-politics” was coined by Appadurai in a 1981 paper, in which he discusses food as the medium of conflict given its semiotic virtuosity (Appadurai 1981). Food itself is a “highly condensed social fact” (Appadurai 1981: 494); it embodies social stratification, encodes cosmological propositions, and carries social messages. Furthermore, another aspect of its “semiotic virtuosity” is that food has the capacity to mobilize strong emotions, which is closely connected to the experience of the human life cycle, as with weaning and being nurtured (Appadurai 1981; also see Sutton 2010). The term “gastro-politics,” particularly in how it denotes “conflict or competition over specific cultural or

economic resources as it emerges in social transactions around food” (Appadurai 1981: 495), is pertinent to the articulation of the relationship between hierarchy and person on Yap (Throop 2010: 91).

Given the Yapese understanding of food, Throop argues that Yap could be regarded as an exemplary illustration of “gastro-politics,” epitomized in traditional men’s eating grade (*yogum*) (Throop 2010: 91; also see Lingenfelter 1975, 1976; Labby 1976a; Egan 1998). Unlike the Indian caste system, men can advance themselves in the *yogum* levels with the chief’s permission,<sup>44</sup> and possessing a ranked taro patch usually marks the final point of self-advancement in *yogum*. Therefore, a village of lesser rank could not reach the top *yogum* grade for it does not have access to a higher ranked taro patch (Labby 1976a: 81-82).

Labby has already pointed out that just as *yogum* segregation cuts across household and village, land ranking also cuts across *tabinaw* (“house estate”) and *binaw* (“village” or “land”). High-status *tabinaw* possess higher ranked taro patches, and both the *tabinaw* and their taro-patches are usually near the center of the village, strictly prohibited for young fertile women and lower ranking people (Labby 1976a: 83). The strong relationship between land, food, and person could further be inferred from the following quotation:

A basic assumption underlying Yapese understandings of food is that the nourishment that comes from the land was a means for the rank, status, and authority inscribed therein to penetrate the body. Accordingly, an individual was imbued with the power of the land through the ingestion of the foods that were grown through the efforts (*magaer*) of successive generations working upon it. (Throop 2010: 91)

According to Appadurai (1981), the study of food in South Asia has illustrated that food embodies two diametrically opposed semiotic functions, one indicates social relations “characterized by equality, intimacy, or solidarity,” while the other is “characterized by rank, distance, segmentation”

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<sup>44</sup> Men’s self-advancing deeds in *yogum* grades include: presenting shell and stone valuables to the chiefs and to those in the target level (Labby 1976a: 82), heroic deeds in warfare (fieldnotes), etc.

(Appadurai 1981: 496). Interestingly, these two diametrically opposed semiotic axes, roughly glossed as “hierarchy” and “equality,” “patriliny” and “matriliny,” or “land” and “people,” could also be inferred from the Yapese kinship studies (Schneider 1962, 1969, 1984; Labby 1976a). A parallel case could be observed in Pohnpei of Micronesia, where landscape, house, and space arrangement all signify the axis of segregation and difference. The other axis, equality and communion, is signified by food sharing (see Keating 1998b, 2000). The salient difference between Yap and Pohnpei is that, in Yap, the axis of sharing is strongly associated with, even reserved for, the matrilineal grouping (or female mode of relating), *genung*. Hence, from a foreigner’s point of view, the idiom of sharing is either undermined or hidden in daily life. The following observation in the early part of the twentieth century may illustrate several distinctive facts: within a household, each man has his own pot; the girls share the pot with their mother.

They set up two new fireplaces in the yard. There were already three. Evidently out of matches, they skillfully made fire by friction in one fireplace, and then carried it to the others. A pot was placed on each. Soon five dinners were boiling. The girls were running frantically back and forth across the yard from pot to pot.

I asked Tol, Why five fires instead of one? Why five big pots when one would contain all the stew of taro, yam and pork that was being cooked?

"Taboo," he said. "Each person, one pot. Girl no matter, she can eat from mother's pot. Man cannot eat from woman's pot."

"What would happen if he did?"

"No longer be head of house. Be slave of woman."

So by this odd superstition, the work of the woman is multiplied many times. It is all very well at the king's home where there are slaves. But in the ordinary home there are none. We were later to see in the grounds of one dwelling as many as seven fireplaces, each covered by a thatch roof—seven kitchens to one house—and all tended by one woman! (Price 1944: 73)

In the case of Yapese traditional “ascetics of practices” pertaining to food preparation, the axis of segregation and difference has been highly emphasized throughout the ethnographies, best exemplified by the discussion on “*yogum*” (Müller 1917; Hunt et al. 1949; Schneider 1953, 1957, 1962, 1969, 1984; Labby 1976a, 1976b; Lingenfelter 1975, 1977, 1979; S. Price 1975; Marksbury 1979; Egan 1998, 2004;

Throop 2005, 2010). However, the segregation practice is largely carried out by females, as the above-mentioned quotation and the following example shows.

In reflecting upon the many restrictions tied to food preparation, a woman in her mid- to late-60s recalled that when her grandmother went to prepare food for her grandfather she was required to wash her hands in seven different shell bowls filled with water. She also had to change into a grass skirt (*oeng*) that was designated solely for cooking his food, prior to entering the kitchen. Her grandfather had been ritually inducted into one of the higher-ranked eating classes. Accordingly, there were numerous restrictions that were also placed on her grandmother while planting, caring for, and harvesting the taro and other starchy foodstuffs that were grown in the high-ranking *tabugul* gardens and taro patches that produced his food....Many older women similarly told me of the effort and suffering that was traditionally entailed in abiding by all of the strictures associated with the production and consumption of food, all while preparing multiple meals, in multiple kitchens, with multiple pots (Throop 2010: 95).

In contrast to the documented elaboration of men's eating rank (*yogum*) (Egan 1998; Labby 1976a; Lingenfelter 1975, 1977, 1979; Müller 1917; Tetens and Kubary 1873), documentation of female involvement in food production and processing is gravely absent, even though we have learned that women are mainly responsible for family food preparation, except for certain cases, such as high-ranking men and ritual specialists (*tamarong* or *tamaarong*), who prepare their own food.

In contemporary Yap, *yogum* has not been practiced for several decades. When I was staying in Yap, the ideas of sharing and having a family meal had become more common. The father may occasionally have food with the wife and children—but the father still has a separate plate. Nevertheless, in most of the cases, the father eats earlier with his own plate; the mother and the children eat together later. Adult sons may come to take some cooked food at the pot on the hearth whenever they need—they

rarely join the meal with the mother and children. In Yap, adolescent boys tend to live by themselves in the village,<sup>45</sup> which also results in their absence in meal-sharing.

Unlike the Westerners' routinized meals, which usually take place at certain times, Yapese do not have a set time for meals, which is also one reason why "family meal-sharing" was not prevalent in Yap. People eat before they go to the taro-patches, and before sleep.<sup>46</sup> In fact, my Yapese mother often joked about the lack of mannerism of Yapese meals: "We Yapese eat whenever we are hungry." A friend in Wanyan village also said: "We Yapese are not like Americans. We do not have three meals a day. We eat when it is necessary—when we are hungry. If we are not hungry, no need to have three meals a day."

Probably because of children's schooling and parents' office work, now certain patterns of meal-times are starting to emerge. Upon waking up, the mother begins a fire and heats up the pots on the hearth. Root crops, such as yams, taros, tapiocas, sweet potatoes, etc., are in one pot; while fish, crabs, and meats are in other pots. When the food is cooked, the mother takes the grandparents' share (if the grandparents are living in the same household) and serves the elders. When the children—usually pre-adolescent—wake up, the mother calls them for the morning meal.<sup>47</sup> However, although husband and

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<sup>45</sup> In the past, men gathered at the men's house (*faluw*) for fishing, meeting, canoe-building, guarding the community, etc. Adolescent boys usually stay there. Now, even though the men mostly stay at their houses, young boys still tend to leave the natal house and build their own small huts—typically tiny ones with tin roofs and rugged tin walls, elevated from the ground with four wooden poles. In my Yapese mother Makiy's village, Makiy, her neighbors built a small wooden hut for their 9-year-old boy.

<sup>46</sup> When working with my Yapese mother, we brought food to the gardens or bushes (when clearing the ground). But we rarely brought food to the taro-patches—at least in my memory. When young kids go to the taro-patches with the mother, they may eat something light, such as sugar cane, but the adults seldom eat at the taro patches.

<sup>47</sup> This "schema" varies at each household depending on different family compositions. For example, my Yapese mother is an elder beyond her 60s. The one who got up earliest in our family was a male sojourner—my Yapese MBWB (mother's brother's wife's brother). He chopped wood and made fire to heat up the pots. I was usually the second one—boiling water, baking bread, making coffee or oatmeal for the family. In another house where I stayed, the young mother was the first one who got up and prepared the morning meal. Her husband lives with her family—including herself, her children, and her aged mother. Although both she and her husband woke up early, she prepared the food and served the meal for her mother, and then called her children to eat.

wife may eat together in the house occasionally (not in public though),<sup>48</sup> adult brothers and sisters would never have meals in the same place. Only the pre-adolescent children may eat with the mother.

## Female Body-politics

Gastro-politics is a microscopic level of “politics”—it is embedded in daily life. The distinctions still exist: *rugod* (“adolescent female”) should not touch men’s food and food vessels. They should not go to taro patches. They should not eat with father or male siblings. Any contact with them—even indirectly—is extremely *ta’ay* and inconceivable for Yapese.

While working with my Yapese family for the community project—cleaning up the stone foundation for erecting a new village meeting house (*pe’bay*), I was told by young Yapese girls not to walk in front of the stone foundation—I should go around the foundation, even though the *pebay* was not there yet.<sup>49</sup> While visiting other villages to see the dancing performances, people would park their cars before reaching the *pebay*—where the dances would take place. If they had to pass the *pebay*, the cars usually slowed down.

After reaching puberty, Yapese females wear a black string (*marfaaq*) around their necks at the traditional dance performances. From the following picture of female sitting dance, held at 2013 Yap Day, we can see that the youngest girls were on the sides, while the mature women were in the middle. Each of the mature women wore a black string around the neck that was draped down her back.

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<sup>48</sup> It is discouraged for a couple to be seen having a meal together. Although sometimes I might see a young couple having a meal at the same time, the elders do not consider it as socially admirable. For the most of the time, mother and the children are sharing the meal, and the husband either eats earlier, or he would take the food and have it somewhere around the house with his male relatives or visitors.

<sup>49</sup> However, pre-adolescent children are not subject to that regulation. I saw kids teetering along the village pathway in front of the *pebay*.



Picture: Dancing Performance in 2013 Yap Day (taken on March 3, 2013)

In late March, 2013, a workshop about “intangible cultural heritage” co-sponsored by UNESCO and the Yap State Government was held in Colonia. Most of the participants were *piluung*, *tamol* (chiefs from the outer islands), and government officials. Understandably, most of them were male. Under the instructions of the workshop leader, while the participants were brainstorming a list of the customs—including magic, chanting, songs, prayers, weaving, pottery-making, navigating...etc.—one man raised the custom of women’s black strings as an item of intangible cultural heritage. A mid-aged woman, serving on the government’s election committee, immediately asked him in public, “What does it mean?” The man was a little bit embarrassed for being challenged, and murmured, “You know, it is a respect.” The woman pursued, “Respect of what?” The man seemed to be out of words for a few seconds. But, as a quick-witted person, soon he uttered, “Respect of being a woman. Respect...they are being able to reproduce...reproduce the next generation.” The atmosphere was a little bit strange. All

participants seemed to smile but dared not voice any opinion. His answer seemed to be acceptable at that moment. The woman did not keep questioning him in public.

After the workshop, I came to talk with the woman and introduced myself. She said, “Of course I know what the black string means. Every Yapese knows what it means. We, as the women, have to wear it at the dance performance after reaching puberty. I just wanted to push him to say what it is. Is it really a respect? I don’t think so.”<sup>50</sup>

## Discussion

As Valeri states in his analysis of polluting gendered bodily substance in Huaulu (Valeri 2001), if men (or hunting dogs) come into contact with menstrual blood, they would become “soft,” weak, vulnerable, indecisive, and cold—negative to any value embodied in men. Among the Huaulu, males are associated with heat, light, power, day and sun; while female are related with coolness, darkness, night, and moon (Valeri 2001: 210). Men’s improper contact with women’s blood shed during menstruation or childbirth, which signifies fecundity and uncontrollability, would result in an undesired symbolic disaster—men losing power. This taboo is very similar to what Price documented in Yap: if a man eats from a woman’s pot, he would “no longer be head of house” but “be slave of woman” (Price 1944: 73). The cosmological rationale that motivates Yapese consideration of menstrual blood as a source of sheer pollution or *ta’ay*, might be parallel with the Huaulu: basically, female generative power is extremely powerful but uncontrollable, which constitutes the structural contradiction, as Valeri said.

Normally the superior value is associated with superior power, but this association is contradicted by female generative processes, which are extraordinarily powerful but basically

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<sup>50</sup> The relation between hierarchy and sentiment is also worthy of further exploration.



uncontrollable. A further contradiction is that men, as embodiments of intentional control, are conceived as autonomous; yet they are dependent on women's generative powers for their existence, which is thereby made contingent. (Valeri 2001: 216)

Though not able to draw a delicate symbolic analysis as Valeri did, I would still like to reemphasize the Yapese idea of pollution (*ta'ay*)—which usually relates to the female, especially the menstrual blood—is embedded in a larger cosmological order, as we have seen in the section of gendered landscape and seascape. It is not only encoded via food production and ingestion, but is also encoded through persons' movement in the signified landscape.

In contrast with the spatial separation in daily life—in the village, in the domestic space, in eating, *tha'a* (connections) and *nug* (alliances) are distant, formalistic, kept away from the world of women and children—although it is perceptible—especially when one is about to infringe on the expectations of following the proper channels (*tha'a*). When the development controversy encroached, and the authentic traditional authority (particularly *Dalip pi Nguchol*, “The Three Paramount Chiefs”) was disputed, I was cautioned that people should not talk about *tha'a* openly. It is a *machib*—knowledge handed down solely within the family. Ideally, Yapese are supposed to know about the proper *tha'a*; however, *tha'a* still becomes obsolete, just the case of *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”).

In this chapter, I have discussed the Yapese configuration of hierarchy—the separation of *tabgul* (“pure,” “sacred”) and *ta'ay* (“impure,” “profane”), which permeates Yapese daily life—domestic space, village space, and categorization of land, food and body. It is the foundation of a now-extinct practice, *yogum*. But it is not the quintessential basis of village ranking, for village ranking shifted due to the warfare before the German regime. After pacification in the late nineteenth century, the dynamism of village ranking was halted, and the condition for maintaining *th'a* (connection) was altered as well. Nevertheless, hierarchy in Yap is still strong, imbued with every aspect of daily life, ranging from how

to talk, walk, dress oneself, what to eat, to how to position oneself. In this context, thoughtless action has always been devalued in Yap, while deliberation before taking actions is always valued (Throop 2008, 2010, 2014).

It is worth noting here that, in Yap, hierarchy does not necessarily entail slowness or reluctance in taking up change or modernization (for example, Geertz 1963). Throop has keenly pointed out that Yapese are not merely being “conservative” or reluctant to change (Throop 2010: 31). He argues: Yapese are “quick to adopt new ideas, materials, and technologies” while those innovations are “understood to align with previously established norms and values” (2010: 31). Secondly, hierarchy in Yap allows individual manipulability —“Those individuals who were skillfully able to manipulate the system by aligning putative community goals with their own ambitions and desires were, however, at times highly regarded. Those who were not skilled in this delicate negotiation between personal desires and collective goods or who transparently acted in accordance with their personal ambitions were looked down upon and often socially criticized” (Throop 2010: 31-32). This quote might best catch the political idiom or dialectics of the development controversy—especially when the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) tried to navigate toward *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”), and the contesting power relation between certain high ranking villages in Rull, which will be discussed in the following chapter. Those two themes re-appeared in Yap history at least during the second half of the century, especially when Yapese encounter the issue of economic development during the post-war era.<sup>51</sup>

In the next chapter, I will proceed from hierarchy in daily life to the sphere of power, and review the Yapese configuration of power by illustrating the local idea of *tha’a* (connection), *nug* (political alliance) and *luung* (voice).

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<sup>51</sup> Here, I am referring to the Tokyo-based resort project proposed in Maap in the early 1970s (Hanlan 1998: 120-127), which is discussed in this chapter and Chapter Five.

## Chapter Four: Hollowed Power

In the previous chapter, we encountered several local terms pertaining to affiliations/alliances, such as “side of the chiefs” (*bulce* or *ban piluung*) and “side of the young men” (*ulun* or *ban pagal*). When discussing village “pathways” (*kanaawoq*), we also learned a highly relevant term, “connections” or “strings” (*tha’a*). In fact, *tha’a* (“connections”) and *nug* (“nets”) are probably the most complex concepts involved in understanding a Yapese configuration of politics.<sup>1</sup> Their complexity derives from foreign colonization and local emphasis on withholding knowledge.

In this chapter, I will review the intricacies of Yapese power by investigating one institute: the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”). Interestingly, almost all the ethnographies indicate that “The Three Paramount Chiefs” (*Dalip pi Nguchol*) is the paramount ideological power in Yapese hierarchy. However, not many ethnographies document the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”). The relative scarcity of Council of *Piluung* in ethnographies parallels the Yapese experience: *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) is undoubtedly the highest symbolic authority in Yapese imagination. Its role is not to lead or give opinions on mundane affairs, but rather to mediate serious disputes that are likely to put social harmony at risk. Their *tabinaw* are clearly remembered—and have been documented in ethnographies—but almost no Yapese can trace who has the authority to speak for the *tabinaw*. On the contrary, members of the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) are active and vocal—they have an office at Colonia, and they meet there regularly—every other Wednesday afternoon. As a government institute, it receives bi-weekly payment from the Yap State Government, and the names of its members are printed on the official letterhead—at the left column of the letter, from top to bottom, all ten of them.

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<sup>1</sup> By using the word “politics” here, it may imply that I agree with the classic domain division in anthropology—kinship, politics, religion, economics, etc., but that is not my intention.

The contrast between *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) and Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) mirrors the contrast between different Yapese power imageries: sitting chief and walking/talking chief. *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) are quiet, sedimented, relatively immobile, and difficult to be accessed by the outsiders. Only those who are savvy to the local *tha’a* (“connections”) know who they are. Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) are mobile, running errands, giving commends, and making associations—they are easily to be identified and recognized by the outsiders as well as Yapese. In fact, in middle-lower ranking Yapese villages, they are acquainted with the names of members of Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”), but they are not familiar with *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”). Unless one grows up in the *tabinaw* with the proper *tha’a* (“connections”), it is not easy for one to know who *Dalip pi Nguchol* are. Furthermore, without the appropriate *tha’a*, inquiring about the three paramount chiefs is highly discouraged. Avoiding inquiring who *Dalip pi Nguchol* are is part of the Yapese upbringing training (*machib*).<sup>2</sup>

It has been repeated throughout the ethnographies that, in Yap, “land is the chief” (*Buut ea piiluung*), and not an individual person (Throop 2010: 43; Lingenfelter 1975: 99; Labby 1976: 16; Bashkow 1991: 194). Individuals are thought of as the “vehicle or conduit,” and “voice” of the land (Throop 2010: 43). As Bashkow describes “Indigenous political relationships were not constituted as relationships between people or groups of people but as historically sanctioned relationships between pairs of places, or land estates” (1991: 194).

In Yapese description, “*piluung* is the relation between land and land.” How is the history—the events created by human subjects in given historical conditions—rendered as relatedness of land by Yapese? The answers can be sought in local understandings of authority, power, and body, which are

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<sup>2</sup> *Machib* means “knowledge within the family” or “family teachings.”

embodied in several terms: *luung* (“voices”) and *piluung* (“many voices, chiefs”), *tha’a* (“connections”) and *nug* (“nets, also implies municipalities, the administrative districts”).

## Luung: Embodied Authority

The Yapese configuration of power or authority is expressed through somatic idioms (Throop 2010), embodied in *luung* (“voice”) or *luungun* (“his voice”). The Yapese word for “chiefs” or local leaders is *piluung*—those with voices, or “many voices.”<sup>3</sup> As ethnographers have emphasized, chief’s voice (*luungun*) mobilizes the collective. Ushijima has pointed out that “the people act collectively only when the *piluung* gathers them together and “speaks” to them. The voice of the *piluung* (*luungun*) both represents and directs the collective will....until the *piluung* speaks, the people are asleep and immobile” (Ushijima 1987: 179; also see Labby 1976: 79). However, not everyone born into a chief’s family inherits the seat of chief. As Throop said, one’s authority is expressed through speaking in public, and “determined according to one’s gender, maturity, and position within the *tabinaw*” especially when one speaks in the community meeting house (*p’eebaay*) (Throop 2010: 43).

A related word concerning authority, also expressed through somatic idioms, is *suwon*—meaning “the position of sitting,” “sitting upright, sitting erect.” As Lingenfelter said, “sitting is the posture of authority in Yap. All important affairs and speeches are conducted from a sitting position” (1975: 108). *Suwon*, translated by Lingenfelter as “overseer,” also implies authority over an area—for example, *suwon e ma’ut* (“overseer of taro patches”), *suwon e fita’* (“overseer of fishing rights”), *suwon* of men, *suwon* of women, *suwon* of sacred places in the village (Lingenfelter 1975: 108-109; Labby 1976: 79). Therefore, the idea of *suwon* is proximate to sovereignty. Labby said: “the *piluung*’s authority came from his “ownership” of a certain area as its *suon*” (Labby 1976a: 79).

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<sup>3</sup> *Pi* means “many” or “the (plural).” *Luung* means “voice.”

The authoritative position of sitting can be discerned from the Yapese depiction of the tripartite power structure—the “sitting, walking and talking chiefs” in each village, as I discussed before. Among them, the sitting one is the most elderly and most respected. A 66-year-old Yapese man said to me, “He just sits, does not get up, talk, or move. But he sits and talks with the people—with the elders, women, everybody. So he knows what is going on.”

This Yapese man, because he broke his legs when he fell from the second floor during house construction, could not walk freely. Most of the time, he sat on a rattan chair on the concrete platform of the house—right in front of his room. The telephone was right beside him; several books and dictionaries, pens, papers, packages of instant coffee, a hot water bottle, jars and mugs, one or two hand brooms made of stems from coconut leaves, and the remote controls for a small television and one DVD player were within his arm-span. A can of mosquito coils, along with the lighters, was underneath his rattan chair. As one of his female relatives described, “Ken is in his small world, surrounded by everything he needs.” He would give commands to his wife, who frequently attends the gardens or taro patches, and often stays at the cooking hut with the young relatives. He himself exemplifies a combination of “sitting and talking chief” at the house, and he also joked about himself, “In this house, I am sort of a sitting and talking chief combined together. I sit for most of the day.” His female relatives would come to check on him every now and then. Sometimes they would ask him to walk around the house, stretch and exercise his withered legs a little bit.

Whenever elderly women presented in the meetings held at the State Legislature in Colonia, the meeting room next to the Catholic Church, or the government’s conference rooms, they always sat on the floor at the sides, legs stretched, backs leaning against the wall. The men were usually sitting around the table on the chairs. If the meeting took place in a large classroom while all chairs and desks were put aside, women would sit comfortably on the floor, pounding their betelnut, and spitting the betelnut juice

in their plastic containers. It appears that men sitting around the table were at the center, under the spotlight, and in a higher position; nevertheless, women always watched what was going on on the stage while they humbly lowered themselves and sat on the floor. Things have to be interpreted dynamically in Yap, one cannot take anything at face value—that is one lesson I have learned from them.

## Voices and Voicing in Daily Life

In daily life, Yapese are sensitive to voices. Village life is usually quiet. When a car came along, tires rolling over the pebbles, people heard it from far away, and began to guess who was coming and for what purpose. They were able to identify whose car it was without actually seeing it.<sup>4</sup> People visit others' houses for specific reasons—either they are invited or called to come.<sup>5</sup> Shouting in the village and disturbing the community's quietness would be punished by the community—offenders are required to pay certain compensation in the form of labor or money.<sup>6</sup>

Females usually do not talk in public. For example, my Yapese mother, a pious Seventh Day Adventist, would never talk in front of the crowd, even at a church gathering, though the Palauan priests often encourage people to share their stories, feelings, experiences, and gratitude. The only female who

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<sup>4</sup> I was amazed when learning that my host family could identify who was driving which car without actually seeing it. Very soon I began to learn that they were paying attention to the sounds—how the tires pressed the dirt and grass, if it was moving slow or fast, how the bottom of the car scratched the bumpy road surface, how the cylinder was buzzing...those sounds were distinctive for each car and driver, just like footsteps stood out in a usually quiet village setting. Gradually I realized that most Yapese, not only my host family, associated those sounds with the acquainted experiences; for example, between seven and eight o'clock, in a house close to the road (village pathway), a Yapese man just listened to the road and knew who was driving to Colonia for work without seeing the car.

<sup>5</sup> Probably because my Yapese mother's house was away from the village and only shared the driveway with one other family, we were very sensitive to voices. When I was living in Wanyan, closer to the main road in the village, people were still very aware of whose car was passing at what time, and knew one another's activities.

<sup>6</sup> In Yap, there are places like pubs for social gatherings that are mostly concentrated in Colonia—four restaurants in town. One “pub” with a large open area ready for tents or camps is by the main road and far away from the village communities. There is at least one small grocery store in every village; two or three in some larger villages. In front of each grocery store, there is usually a small area for gathering or resting. Sometimes there is a bench, and the customers—mostly male—would sit there and exchange words. A lot of the grocery stores are located on the inter-village main road, or at the entrance of the village, which highly reduces the possibility for unexpected disturbances in the community.

was courageous enough to talk in public was from Palau. The Sabbath summons was given by the Priest or alternated between two male elders. One elder, Jeff Adalbei, is in his forties, lives at Rull, and has connections with Palau. The other elder, Rikin, lives in Gachpar—the highest-ranking village in Gagil.<sup>7</sup> Among all the church gatherings I attended with my Yapese mother, I never heard her share her feelings or stories in public, in spite of her tireless work attending patients in the village, singing hymns to them, helping organize bible study groups in the village, and providing local food for the church and SDA student missionaries. Once I asked her why she never talked in front of the crowd at the church even though the pastor encouraged her. She simply said she does not like to; she felt bad talking in public. Initially I thought she was just not accustomed to expressing herself in public. Later on, I realized what it actually means to “not be accustomed to.”

Even in the household, I often saw my Yapese mother scold the nine-year-old boys when they made too much noise—playing cheerfully, quarrelling, crying, sometimes self-talking, etc. Sounds also serve as means for her to know where the children were and what she should pay attention to. If the house was exceptionally quiet—without dogs, roosters and hens, children’s noises, men’s wood-chopping or noises from some kind of busywork, she felt uneasy—“Too quiet. Very strange.” When she saw children or men lying idle without any task at hand, she would assign them house chores—sweeping the bamboo leaves on the ground, using an old lawn mower to cut the grass (and cleaning it up afterwards), repairing parts of the house, painting the roof, mending the leaking water tank, cleaning the fridge—the house always needed to be taken care of. She was the one supervising the youngsters and giving commands at the house, but the work was usually carried out in a joyous manner. As a widow and the eldest in the house, my Yapese mother gave commands and final approval of our proposals—borrowing the car, asking for a ride, whether it was good to prepare fruit snacks for the evening church

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<sup>7</sup> Elder Rikin always reaffirmed to me that he was not *piluung*, even though he lived in Gachpar.



programs, etc. But she was humble and docile outside of the house. At community women's meetings, as the second eldest person and the bookkeeper for the women's collective savings account, she might say one or two sentences when required to, but she remained quiet in the meetings. In contrast, when she visited Susanne in Thol village, she was actively engaged in the women's talk at the "cooking huts" (*ta'an*). When she came to Lisa's house in Makiy village compound,<sup>8</sup> she usually sat at the cooking hut or walked around, chatted, and gave commands. She was not a quiet person, just being cautious outside of her familiar domains.

One's choice of public speech acts correlates not with competence (which is often considerable), but rather with social ranking. Jesse, a calm, steady, slow-talking, wise man, is one of my Yapese mother's relatives, living in the lowest-ranking village in Gagil. His family is in charge of burying the chiefs' bodies. Although he worked at the Yap State Government for several decades, being an experienced and capable officer, he could not be promoted to the director of the office. But he never complained about it—at least in front of me. I just heard my Yapese mother comment that even though Jesse was good at work, he could not be appointed the director because of his ranking. Jesse once told me, "I do not like to talk in public. When talking in public, I feel I am hurting myself."

I have seen several young directors of the office—all male—speak in public. When they gave speeches in official government meetings—for example, in the Intangible Culture Workshop co-sponsored by UNESCO and Yap Historic Preservation Office—they looked nervous, inexperienced, shy, and just looked at the paper, as if they were not sure about the content of their talks even though it was usually highly relevant to their jobs. Although their American colleague had helped them with the English draft, they still appeared to lack confidence. I was not sure if it was a strategized performance to avoid provoking jealousy or discontent from the audience—most of them were government officials

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<sup>8</sup> Lisa is her husband's sister's daughter, our only relative in Makiy after her husband passed away.

coming from high-ranking *tabinaw*.<sup>9</sup> The way people speak in public is greatly influenced by their own ranking and that of their audience.

How is *tabinaw* ranking determined? It has to be understood in terms of Yapese ideas of *tha'a* (“connections”) and *nug* (“political alliances”). *Tha'a* and *nug* are relations between *tabinaw*—what we have learned from Chapter Two, said by one wise elder woman, Rebliyan, “*piluung* (“chiefs” or “many voices”) is relation between land and land.” In the following section, I will once again explain *tha'a* and *nug*—they are crucial in understanding the Yapese configuration of power.

### *Tha'a*

*Tha'a* refers to strings, threads, connections, and relationships. A 66-year-old Yapese man described *tha'a* as power lines, and “because of power lines, the electricity is able to be carried through.” Semantically, *tha'a* denotes “a series of things, tied together with string” (Lingenfelter 1975: 131). Therefore, it also signifies “a long line of communication that ties together the various geographical and political units of Yap” (*ibid.*). *Tha'a* can refer to a type of *Pandanus* (screw palm) as well. Furthermore, *tha'a* implies authenticated conduits of communication. Its authenticity is clearly stated by Lingenfelter, “any legitimate request or message must follow the channels of communication,

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<sup>9</sup> In fact, deliberation—thinking before taking any action—is highly valued in Yap. Take me for example: I was warned against being too active in engaging in the UNESCO workshop. Without being assigned any tasks, I was originally a quiet observer. There was a certain phase of the workshop during which every participant was asked to contribute to brainstorming about what intangible cultural heritage means to Yap. Sensing some groups might need assistance in computer skills for final presentation, I volunteered to group with the *tamol* (“chiefs” from outer islands): I typed up what they said, and made a Powerpoint for their workshop presentation. The *tamol* were delighted. However, my active engagement upset some other participants—as if I was showing off my skillfulness in the modern technique. This experience made me reflect on the elicitation strategy of “being humble” in Yap—lowering oneself so others have compassion for you, to be willing to assist you in fulfilling your goal, or to participate in your project.

An American friend working at HPO called me up after the workshop and tried to tell me that some people were suspicious, and wanted to know if I was the one who also helped set up the blog for the anti-development NGO. Although those people were unhappy with me because of my work in the anti-development group, they came to question my participation in the workshop—although I categorized myself as an observer, and only jumped in when the group of *tamol* obviously lacked computer assistance.

This episode made me ponder the Yapese valuation of careful deliberation—it may also reflect on young office directors’ speech performance in public. While I originally thought they were inexperienced, they were likely very experienced in order to follow the political nuances—especially while giving a speech in front of a group of elder government officials and *piluung* of diverse regions.

or *tha'a*. This is a very serious matter to the Yapese, and if word is passed improperly, regardless of its importance, it may be disregarded” (*ibid.*).

*Tha'a* legitimates almost all perceptible traditional authorities in Yap, from *piluung* at all levels to the three paramount seats of power, *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs” or “three supporting stones of a cooking pot”)—the three highest *tabinaw*. Similar to “eating grades” (*yogum*), which is no longer practiced, people may be oblivious to certain *tha'a* these days. Nevertheless, *tha'a* is still a highly sensitive topic in contemporary Yap—it should not be discussed openly.<sup>10</sup> I was forewarned several times that *tha'a* is not supposed to be discussed in public—not to mention in front of foreigners.<sup>11</sup>

An example may illustrate the Yapese valuation of *tha'a*—Lingenfelter’s 1975 book, which details village rankings and political alliances, is highly regarded by Yapese even now. When I visited the Yap State Legislature in 2012, one senator, upon seeing me, mentioned Lingenfelter and his acclaimed ethnographical accounts. A copy of the map about *ban piluung* (“side of the chiefs”) and *ban pagal* (“side of the young men”) over Yap Island (Lingenfelter 1975: 138-139) was placed on the staff desk, under a thick, transparent, greenish plastic pad, in the Historic Preservation Office at Yap. When I visited the Land Resource Office, I asked if there was any publicly available resource concerning land mapping, and they gave me a large map, finely printed and laminated—extremely similar to Lingenfelter’s “Yap Political Subdivisions” on pages 78 and 79 in his 1975 book. In other words,

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<sup>10</sup> The only case I heard where *tha'a* was discussed was at men’s meetings—among the elders of certain *tabinaw* in high-ranking villages, such as Gachpar. Such kinds of meetings usually end up authenticating and repudiating some claims of *tha'a*.

<sup>11</sup> I always admire those predecessors who were able to detail *tha'a*, such as Lingenfelter (1975) and Ushijima (1987). In my experience, *tha'a* is a sensitive issue. People advised me not to investigate *tha'a* too much to protect myself. Otherwise, my research position may have been endangered, and those who associated with me may have been impacted. Therefore, I usually consider the ethnographical accounts on *tha'a* as embodiments of mutual trust between the researchers and the Yapese.

Lingenfelter's ethnography, a detailed and comprehensive documentation of the political connections and alliances in Yap, has itself become a highly valued objectification of "Yapese culture," being recognized as an authoritative source of cultural preservation. *Tha'a* vividly epitomizes the Yapese concept of relations and power. A village community is never a holistic, self-contained social entity. It is penetrated by and constructed through a web of connections. I have been reminded since my first visit that not all *tabinaw* in a village share the same rank or status, and there may be several *piluung* in a village community, each in charge of different spheres of social life. The schematic idea is that there are at least three kinds of *piluung*, analogized as "sitting, talking, walking" respectively.<sup>12</sup> However, the reality is much more complicated, and each village community may have a completely different authority profile. For example, in Makiy, a middle-ranking village (in Gagil Municipality) of approximately twenty families, there is only one *piluung*. In Wanyan, a high-ranking village in Gagil Municipality, the community is divided into two sections; each has at least two *piluung*. But people would say one is the *piluung* for whole Wanyan, and others are his "right hands."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in high-ranking villages (*ulun* and *bulche*), there are always *tabinaw* representing the other affiliation (*baan*) within the village sphere. They are "the ears and eyes of *baan/piluung/baan pagal (til nga owchen e baan piluung/baan pagal)* that serve as "links between the two *baan* and between the *bulche* and *ulun*" (Ushijima 1987: 192). It again shows the common idiom of "checks and balances" in Yapese politics. I have heard that the three paramount *tabinaw*, *Dalip pi Nguchol*, are situated in the *ulun* villages even though their statuses are supposed to transcend *bulche* and *ulun*—they are mediators. The reason for their locations is not because *Dalip pi Nguchol* ("The Three Paramount Chiefs") "belong to"

<sup>12</sup> Labby renders them as "elder of the village, chief of the village, chief of the young men" (see Labby 1976: 95-98).

<sup>13</sup> Wanyan is divided into north and south parts. There are two *piluung* in the north, four in the south. Among the four in the south, one is said to be "the chief for whole Wanyan" while others are assistants. However, it remained unresolved why the *piluung* of the north are not included as "chief of whole Wanyan."

*ulun* (*ban pagal*), but to “keep an eye on the *ulun* villages, so they do not get too uppity and try to topple the *bulce* villages.”<sup>14</sup>

Ushijima has detailed an example in Gilfith village, Fanif Municipality, to explain how *luungun* (“voice”) has to be passed according to appropriate *tha’a* (Ushijima 1987). Briefly, it means only a certain *tabinaw* in the village has the *tha’a* to transmit *luungun*. For example, Gilfith village is *bulce*, while the nearby Rang village is *ulun*. The head *tabinaw* in Gilfith is Walag’ech. However, since Gilfith and Rang belong to different *ban* (“sides”), if the *piluung* of Gilfith village wants to convey a message to Rang village, it has to be passed through another *tabinaw*, Techey, which is the “ears and eyes of the *baan pagal* (“side of the young men”).”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, if the head *tabinaw* in Rang village has any message for the *piluung* in Gilfith village, it has to be passed through Tachey *tabinaw* (Ushijima 1987: 193). In the same way, the head *tabinaw* at Rang village has a direct connection with the head *tabinaw* in another *ulun* village, Okaw. But if Okaw would like to communicate with Gilfith village (which is *bulce*), it has to go through “ears and eyes of the *baan piluung* (“side of the chiefs”)” in Okaw village.

This system seems to be confusing at first glance. It may be easier to comprehend if we imagine it as different telephone companies or PC operating systems in modern city life. Nevertheless, the concepts similar to *tha’a* are not unique in Yap. In the Arapesh-speaking region (but not restricted to it), the idea of pathways or roads has become a significant local framework of identity since wartime, persisting even after the pacification. Roads served as the channels for village-units’ warfare alliances and safe passages when inter-village warfare was intense, and continued to be important in local political maneuvering when the white officials were presenting in the milieu (Dobrin and Bashkow 2006).

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<sup>14</sup> It is a *machib* (“knowledge within the family” or “family teachings”).

<sup>15</sup> *Ban piluung* usually refers to *bulce*, and *ban pagal* usually refers to *ulun*.

Ushijima once described the complexity of *tha'a* as follows:

The particular *tha'* employed depends on the nature of the message to be transmitted. One *tha'* is used for the supply of materials and labor for projects such as building of meeting houses. Another *tha'* is used to secure military assistance and communicate battle plans in times of war. Still another *tha'* is used for invitations to ritual exchange. And, apart from these, there is the *tha' ko wolbuw*. *Wolbuw* is the annual ritual exchange of food which is performed at a predetermined time of year. Different kinds of food, for example, are given at tribute, according to past precedents or in return for assistance received in the past. (Ushijima 1987: 194-195)

I have heard similar descriptions in the field, rendered as “obligations and privileges,” in a simplified version,

“Some family makes ropes for us; some other family replaces the roof for us—now no longer needed because we use tin roofs instead of coconut or napa leaves. But we also provide harvest for other families. So, we work for others while others also work for us.” (Rutun, 60-year-old, Rumung, 2011 summer)

In 2014, a large-scale exchange ceremony—*mitmit* (“stuck stuck” or “stuck again”)—was reactivated in Ngolog, Rull. It was a highly rare event since *mitmit* has not been held for several decades in Yap. In *mitmit*, *tha'a* is publicly manifested, demonstrated and reconfirmed. Even “sending word out”—announcing the completion of the men’s house in the village, which was an event worthy of *mitmit* celebration—had to follow strict protocols with respect to relative traditional political positions. Krause noted,

In Yap’s traditional sociopolitical system, official communications between villages must follow strict protocols that have to do with village rankings and relative positions within the *bulce* and *ulun* political affiliations. As I was told, there are also specific estates that have the roles of messengers for these communications and it is only the specific representatives from those estates who should be carrying the message. And so when word was officially sent out from Ngolog, all of these messengers were called upon to do their duty in notifying the villages. I had learned that *this extremely complex network of communications had not been activated in quite some time*. In conversations with friends and colleagues after work, *much of the discussion around this time was about who was supposed to contact who, and the orders in which the word was supposed to travel as it made its way through all the villages*. (Krause 2016: 314, emphasis added)

In one of his dissertation chapters, Krause has vividly described people's high attention to this "extremely complex network of communications"—namely, *tha'a*—which has not been ritually demonstrated for a long time. During my fieldwork time (2012-2013), the anxiety resulting from the confusion of the legitimate *tha'a* was keenly felt.

*Tha'a* signified Yapese traditional politics, which decided the relative ranking of *tabinaw*—which *tabinaw* is related to which, which would pay respect to the other, which should run errands or do service for the other. Those rankings are the "chart" of hierarchy—Yapese interact with one another according to their respective rankings. However, since inter-village warfare was prohibited in the German regime, the dynamism of village ranking has become obsolete. *Tha'a* still exists, but it is not as crucial as before. The confusion about *tha'a*, in fact, constituted one of the current political crises, manifested in the Chinese development controversy.

In the following section, I will introduce a related concept, *nug*, which is based on *tha'a*, but has a closer affinity with the contemporary governing institution—municipalities.

## *Nug*

*Tha'a* constitutes *nug* ("nets"), which also refer to municipalities, the present-day administrative districts in Yap. However, *tha'a*, *nug*, and territorial demarcations belong to different semantic fields. In Yap, there is a saying, "In the past, we had connections rather than boundaries." Connectivity rather than territorial grouping is highlighted in the Yapese configuration of power (see Bashkow 1991: 193-194).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Similar emphasis on linearity could be seen in Parmentier's semantic analysis of Palauan social relations (1985, 1987). Among the four semantic fields—paths, sides, corner posts, larger/smaller—none of them refers to territorial occupancy. Even though the fourth semantic field, "larger/smaller" implies dominance/subordination, such as a higher-titled chief "both surpasses and encompasses that of a lesser chief with a minor title" (Parmentier 1985: 843; 1987: 112), it highlights

*Nug* means “nets.” It also refers to a municipality—an administrative geographical division in contemporary Yap. However, *nug* and the municipalities are not synonymous. *Tha’a* and *nug* both emphasize connectivity—*tha’a* suggests the image of lines and points/knots being connected, *nug* can be considered as a grouping or bundling of *tha’a*. For example, *ban piluung* (“side of the chiefs”) and *ban pagal* (“side of the young men”) are “sides” or “affiliations,” but they are also described as “nets” (Lingenfelter 1975: 134). The complex nested imagery of *nug* is described as follows:

The alliances of *Banpagael* and *Banpiluung* are described as nets. The spheres of each of the three paramount chiefs are nets, and within these three are other smaller nets with their respective leading villages. The nets have geographical as well as political ties and, as illustrated above, it is frequently the case that nets may be divided along lines of the two major political alliances. (Lingenfelter 1975: 134)

We also need to keep in mind that the pre-colonial village rankings were quite dynamic, contingent on “war, work, service to the paramount chiefs, and subsequent reward for such services” (Lingenfelter 1975: 136). Although the highest-ranked villages were relatively more stable (*ibid.*), it is difficult to portray the rest of the village-rankings clearly. One reason may be as Lingenfelter explained, that “villages rose and fell, but no one likes to admit that it was his village that fell” (Lingenfelter 1975: 136). These days, people may forget about the detailed village rankings since they are not used often in daily life—they have learned the names in school, but are confused about precise distinctions. Nevertheless, people are aware of the relative village rankings. In Yap State High School (near Colonia), students spend time in different areas during class breaks, having lunch at different places based on the ranked villages they come from—in other words, hierarchy manifests when people from divergent ranked places meet each other. When people visit the supposedly higher-ranking villages, they drive their cars slowly, and they do not go there unless they have connections or were invited.

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seriality—“a continuum of elements in a series which are ranked according to the degree or strength of a single feature” (Parmentier 1987: 112). Emphasis on linear connections rather than spatial expanses is noteworthy here.



Village ranks are “frozen” now, because of pacification during the German colonial period—the prohibition of inter-village warfare (Pinsker 1997: 158). Additionally, the influence of the German regime includes the infrastructure of island-wide and inter-village transportation—roads and causeways (Hezel 1995: 106), the invention of a two-tier “district system” (Bashkow 1991: 193), and the creation of a chiefly council consisting of eight chiefs.<sup>17</sup>

The German impact on Yapese politics was tremendous. From the German Colonial Office’s point of view, Yap was the model colony—industrious, hard-working, persistent, docile and peaceful (Hezel 1995: 105). The district officer, Arno Senfft, was able to motivate the Yapese to carry on exceptionally large-scale public works, such as paving roads and building causeways (Hezel 1995: 106). The local Yapese—usually related to the chiefs—efficiently served as supervising policemen, instead of Melanesians brought by the Germans from afar. Local stone money—large, heavy limestone disks of several feet high—was quickly adopted by Germans to levy fines and provide rewards for disciplining the Yapese workers.<sup>18</sup> Hezel recorded: Senfft had people paint the letters BA (Bezirksamt, “district office) on the stone disks to “signify government ownership.” If the local owner did not work for the public projects, the marked stone disks would be confiscated by those who did, and the letter-mark would be erased (Hezel 1995: 107). As a result,

[O]ne hundred kilometers of new road built, half of which was suitable for wheeled vehicles, the construction of several causeways and piers, and the completion of the Tagaren Canal between Tomil and the main island. Senfft’s achievement was that, with only a German police chief and eleven Melanesian policemen, he was able to mobilize the population for exhausting work on all these public projects, while maintaining harmonious relations with the Yapese people and their chiefs. (Hezel 1995: 105)

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<sup>17</sup> According to Hezel, those eight chiefs included “the six highest-ranking villages in Yap,” and chiefs of Rumung and Maap (Hezel 1995: 105). If we compare the records of Senfft (1903) and Müller (1917), we will find that chiefs from Rumung and Maap were not included. On the contrary, four chiefs were from Rull *nug*, two from Gagil *nug*, and two from Tomil *nug*.

<sup>18</sup> Those local policemen would participate in the building projects, “as foremen” (Hezel 1995: 106).

The infrastructure also opened new pathways for Yapese. Previously, Yapese did not travel freely between the villages or municipalities for “fear of being killed.”<sup>19</sup> Road construction, along with the halt of inter-village warfare, enabled the locals to move around more easily. It also undermined the chief’s power to a certain degree, “since if people didn’t like a particular chief they could move elsewhere” (Pinsker 1997: 158). Nevertheless, the Germans set up a collaborative model to work with local authorities. More than a century later, when I visited Yap, Yapese men still talked about the Germans as people who “understood the Yapese.” “The municipalities were set up by the Germans.<sup>20</sup> But they were similar to the Yapese way.” In contrast, when they recalled the days of Japanese colonization, memory was filled with physical torture and mental shock,<sup>21</sup> laborious work, ethnic prejudice,<sup>22</sup> local resentment,<sup>23</sup> and traumatic wartime memories (Throop 2010).<sup>24</sup> Yapese do admire the construction work done by Japanese companies, such as the enduring road near the airport. Compared with the roads built by companies of other nationalities—Americans or Chinese for example—which easily develop cracks, cavities, pit holes, and are often damaged to the degree that people have to be exceptionally careful when driving. Japanese disciplinary rigor is appreciated in this regard. However, Yapese do not consider Japanese colonial authorities as sympathetic or close to the locals.

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<sup>19</sup> Even in these days, Yapese do not usually visit other villages unless they have connections there—mostly relatives.

<sup>20</sup> “Municipality,” the German administrative demarcation of Yap Island, has been adopted since the nineteenth century. It is practiced parallel to *tha’a* and *nug*, also the foundation of the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”). In fact, since it is used more frequently, *tha’a* and *nug* have been significantly weakened. *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) is deeply tied to *tha’a* and *nug*. The weakening of *tha’a/nug* directly leads to the confusion (or obsolescence) of *Dalip pi Nguchol*.

<sup>21</sup> The Japanese relied heavily on public physical punishment, which, according to Yapese, had psychological repercussions. A Yapese man attributed domestic violence to the Japanese physical punishment. Although I was not completely convinced by this explanation, public exertion of force on human bodies (in Colonia) seemed to have some consequences.

<sup>22</sup> A 66-year-old Yapese man told me that the Japanese did not like the Yapese. They treated the Yapese as the bottom of their empire, below Koreans, Taiwanese, Palauans and Chamorros.

<sup>23</sup> Yapese were afraid of and loathed Japan’s strict regulations. I was told stories of how Yapese poured seawater on the Japanese paddy fields at night; thus, all the rice seedlings withered.

<sup>24</sup> Wartime memories include hunger, starvation, houses being bombed, people losing homes and staying in the jungle, trickery and spy stories when the American air-force was trying to target the island. Wartime memories are one motif of today’s choreography of Yapese dance. Dancers stretch their arms to signal airplanes diving, and sing about the hunger and terrors.

The German model was successful—at least for the local authorities. Hezel described German colonialism in Yap as a “mutually advantageous system” (Hezel 1995: 106), which featured separation, harmony, and lack of deep foreign intervention,

Apart from the work requirements for public projects, Germans left the Yapese to themselves; chiefs could wear suit coats and felt hats around town, as they often did, or they could wear nothing at all, for all the Germans cared. Yapese and their German rulers maintained separate systems, each with its own goals that intersected infrequently and superficially. The wonder is that at those points where they did touch one another, they worked harmoniously. (Hezel 1995: 108)

More than one century later, the government officials and Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) were hoping for a “win-win” situation in their attempted cooperation with the Chinese developer. The state leaders foresaw that the development project required a significant amount of land—a means of production, reproduction and subsistence—which no former colonial authorities had demanded, but the concern for economic development was prioritized when making the decision. The state leaders did not anticipate, either, that authorities would be voicing their opinions via unconventional ways. It was unconventional because the voicing subjects and the pathways were not in accordance with any written or customary law at the time. The political configuration has been altered since the German and Japanese regime. Now the Yap State Government operating according to the Constitution has become the main decision-maker, and Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”), as a branch of the Yap State Government, is in charge of “conditions and customs.” However, people might have forgotten that the Council of *Piluung*, as well as numerous institutions and regulations, are subject to historical processes as well. Even though the Council of *Piluung* is assigned tasks that “concern tradition and custom” in the Constitution,<sup>25</sup> while “tradition and custom” appear to be objectified as

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<sup>25</sup> According to the Yap State Constitution, the Council of *Piluung* and Council of *Tamol* (“chiefs” from the outer islands) “shall perform functions which concern tradition and custom” (Yap State Constitutions, Article III, Leaders and Traditions).

*kastom* (see Krause 2016 for detailed arguments), both the Council and the “tradition and custom” are is not outside of history, which always consists of people’s practices, interpretations and reinterpretations.

### Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”)

Today, the Council of *Piluung* in Yap consists of ten *piluung* (“chiefs, those with the voice.”) from ten municipalities, which are the geographical districts for administration established by the German government (see Figure 4-1 and Figure 4-2). Council of *Piluung* not only plays an important role in the development controversy, as an institutionalized government branch, but it also signifies the discrepancies between traditional authority and state power. The contemporary Federated States of Micronesia is essentially built on the American model, and Yap is a state within it. The Yap State Government has three branches: administrative, legislative, and judiciary. What is exceptional about Yap is that it also has a fourth branch: the traditional chiefly councils—the Council of *Piluung* and the Council of *Tamol*. *Piluung* is the traditional political leader of Yap Proper, and *Tamol* comprise the traditional political leaders of the neighboring islands. Both Councils are in charge of “traditions and customs”—they have the power to disapprove a bill if it “adversely affects tradition and custom or the role or function of a traditional leader as recognized by tradition and custom” (Yap State Constitution, Article V, Section 16). Known for its traditionalism, Yapese are also proud of the distinctive Fourth Branch—which is lacking in the other three FSM states.

A certified copy of every bill which shall have passed the Legislature shall be presented to the Council of Pilung [*sic*] and Council of Tamol for consideration. The Councils shall have the power to disapprove a bill which adversely affects tradition and customs or the role or function of a traditional leader as recognized by tradition and customs. The Councils shall be the judge of the effect of such bill. (Section amended by Proposal No. 2004-53, D2)  
The Constitution of the State of Yap, Article V, Section 16<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Resource: <http://fmsupremecourt.org/WebSite/yap/constitution/entire.htm>

As we will see in the following discussion, the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) was created during the period of German occupation. It may appear to be compatible with the traditional politics, but its formation is very recent. Among the Yapese, continuous discussion has been given a higher priority over the fixed, unchanging seats of power. This characteristic can be seen if we closely examine who attends the “chief’s meetings.”

It has been known that the German district officer, Arno Senfft, appointed the eight highest Yapese *piluung* to form the Council of Chiefs (Müller 1917: 407; Salesius 1906: 86; Hezel 1995: 105-106; Egan 1998: 39; Senfft 1903: 22). Senfft met with them in Colonia every month, and then the chiefs held meetings in the villages “to pass on orders and hear complaints from the villages” (Hezel 1995: 105). This strategy has been applauded as an efficient ruling policy, beneficial to both the foreign colonial power and the local authorities. As we have learned from the previous discussion, it “was a mutually advantageous system. The Germans were able to raise a workforce of hundreds of Yapese for their public projects, while the chiefs stood to strengthen their own authority by having the colonial police force at their beck and call” (Hezel 1995: 106).

Although some Yapese may describe the municipalities as “wielding the traditional and modern geographical demarcation well together” (fieldnote), and *nug* in contemporary Yapese-English Dictionary also refers to municipalities, *nug* and municipalities are not of the same nature. Municipalities are the results of strategic design from the German colonial period, but *nug* consists of *tha’a*, and *tha’a* is contingent on the inter-village dynamism such as warfare, services, competition, and alliances. As the local metaphors have already conveyed: *tha’a* means “string which connects objects together” and *nug* means “fish nets,” or regional alliances (Lingenfelter 1975: 134); those signifiers of connectivity are distinct from municipal demarcations. The discrepancies between *nug* and municipalities are expressed in Maps 1 and 2: there are twelve *nug*, but only ten municipalities

(Lingenfelter 1975: Ch.7; Ushijima 1987). The ten municipalities are: Rumung, Maap, Gagil, Tamil, Fanif, Weloy, Dalipebinaw, Rull, Kanifay, Gilman. See Table 4-1 for the twelve *nug*. Notably, Figure 4-1 and Figure 4-2 appear to be very similar, and Lingenfelter also conceptualizes *nug* as “geographical nets” (1975: 135). In fact, *nug* may not be closely associated with territoriality.

**Table 4-1: Geographical *Nug* and Leading Villages**

Rull		Gagil		Tomil	
<i>Nug</i>	Head village	<i>Nug</i>	Head village	<i>Nug</i>	Head village
<b>Rull</b>	Ngolog	<b>Gagil</b>	Gachpar	<b>Tomil</b>	Teb
Malew	Lamaer	<b>Maap</b>	Cho’ol	<b>Fanif</b>	Gilfith
Likaychag	Dulkan	<b>Rumung</b>	Fal		
<b>Delipebinaw</b>	Kanif	<b>Weloy</b>	Okaw		
<b>Kanifay</b>	N’ef				
<b>Gilman</b>	Guror				

(Resource: Lingenfelter 1975: 134; Ujishima 1987: 185)<sup>27</sup>

\*Among all the *nug*, municipalities are bold-faced.

As Bashkow points out, Arno Senfft was well aware of the nature of Yapese village alliances, *tha’a* and *nug*, and their lack of geographical contiguousness (Senfft 1903: 57-59, quoted from Bashkow 1991: 193). The municipal divisions, set by Senfft around 1900-1901, appeared to be similar to *nug*, because this two-tier district system “did take into account one aspect of indigenous Yapese polity” (Bashkow 1991: 193). As Bashkow describes,

Indeed, each of Yap's first four ethnographers, in German, Japanese, and American times, had to rediscover for himself the separate existence of indigenous Yapese political institutions (Müller 1917:132, 242, 254, 330; Yanaihara 1940:223, 263-66; Useem 1946:16; SFN). Whereas the common pathology of colonial administration is that indigenous offices become redefined when their occupants are drafted into the colonial framework, Yap's indigenous institutions were well defended against such subversion by the native cultural logic of chiefly authority. (Bashkow 1991: 193-194)

<sup>27</sup> Some villages are indented to indicate that they were belonging to the un-indented immediate *nug*.

Müller documented in 1917 that there were twelve “districts” in Yap (Müller 1917: 407). Both Lingenfelter and Ujishima stated that there are twelve *nug* (Lingenfelter 1975: 134; Ujishima 1987: 185),<sup>28</sup> listed in the following table. We can infer from the table that among the twelve *nug*, Rull is in charge of six (including itself): Rull, Malew, Likaychag, Delipebinaw, Kanifay and Gilman. Gagil encompasses four: Gagil, Maap, Rumung and Weloy. Tomil includes two: Tomil and Fanif. Two *nug* in Rull (Malew and Likaychag) are not listed as municipalities.

As Baskow noted, Yapese indigenous institutions are well-defended under the administrative portrayal. At the same time, the indigenous institutions also operated in the colonial framework—trying to strike a balance within the Yapese domain, also between the Yapese and outsiders. We have learned that the chiefs in Yap commonly borrowed the foreign authorities as their own backup (Hezel 1995: 106; Bashkow 1991). This tactic should be understood along with the idiom of “checks and balances” in Yapese ideas. For example, Gagil and Rull were two larger *nug*, leading “side of young men” (*ban pagal*) and “side of the chiefs” (*ban piluung*) respectively. Tomil used to be the mediator between those two affiliations, but does not belong to either. However, Tomil has been leaning toward Rull in the late twentieth century—because Gagil’s power has increased from the wealth obtained from *sawai* relation—tributes from the eastern-bound atolls (Lingenfelter 1975: 127-130).<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the tripartite power structure may seem to be imbalanced, but it corresponds well to the Yapese ideal of “checks and balances.” Similarly, the discrepancy often occurred between the colonial administration and Yapese operations.

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<sup>28</sup> Their accounts are the same. I wonder if Ujishima’s data was from Lingenfelter?

<sup>29</sup> Those tributes were coconut ropes, coconut oils, candies, syrup, shells, woven pandanus cloth (*lavalava*) (Lingenfelter 1975: 147; Lutz 1988: 24).

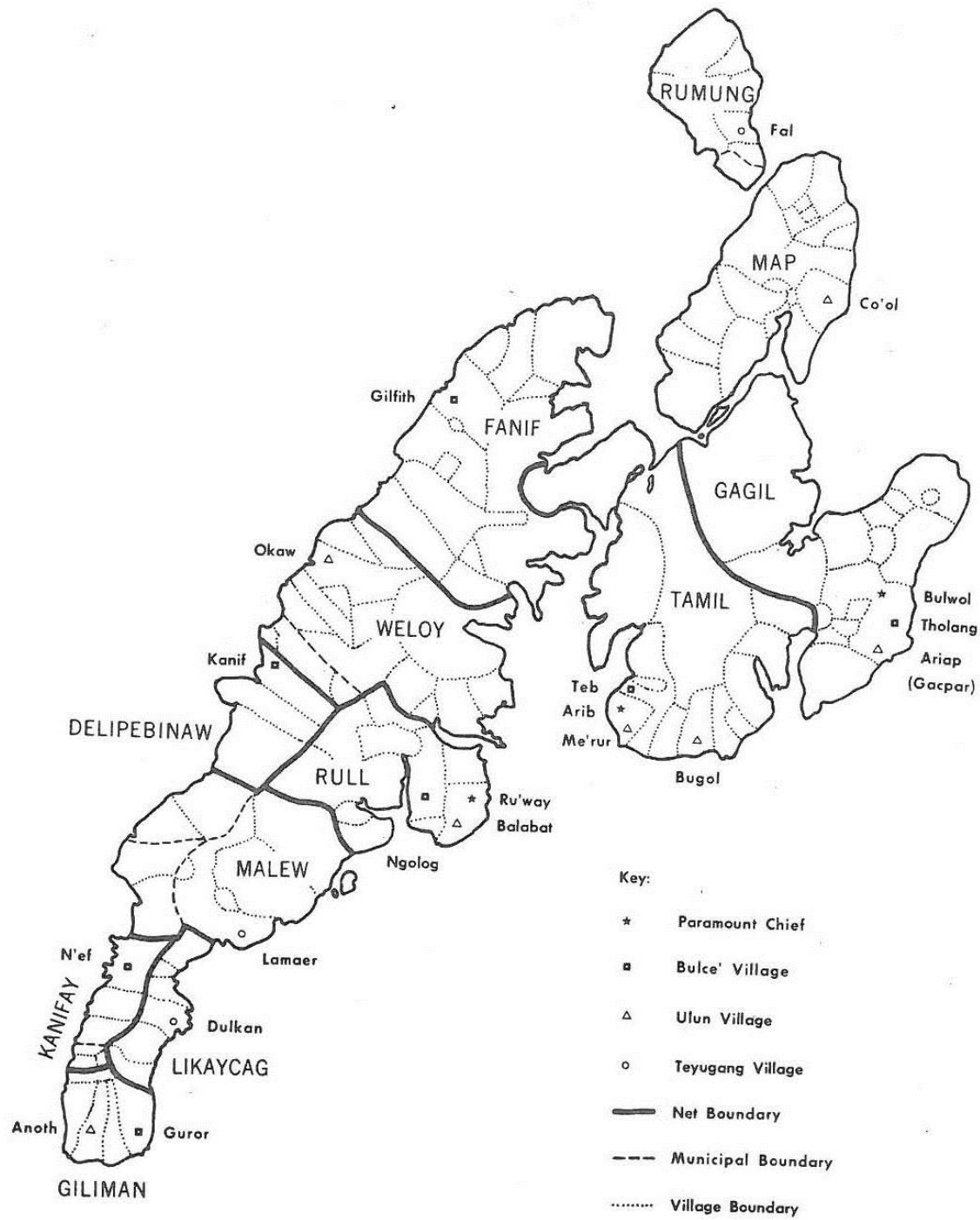


Figure 4-1: Paramount villages and geographical nets (Lingenfelter 1975: 135)



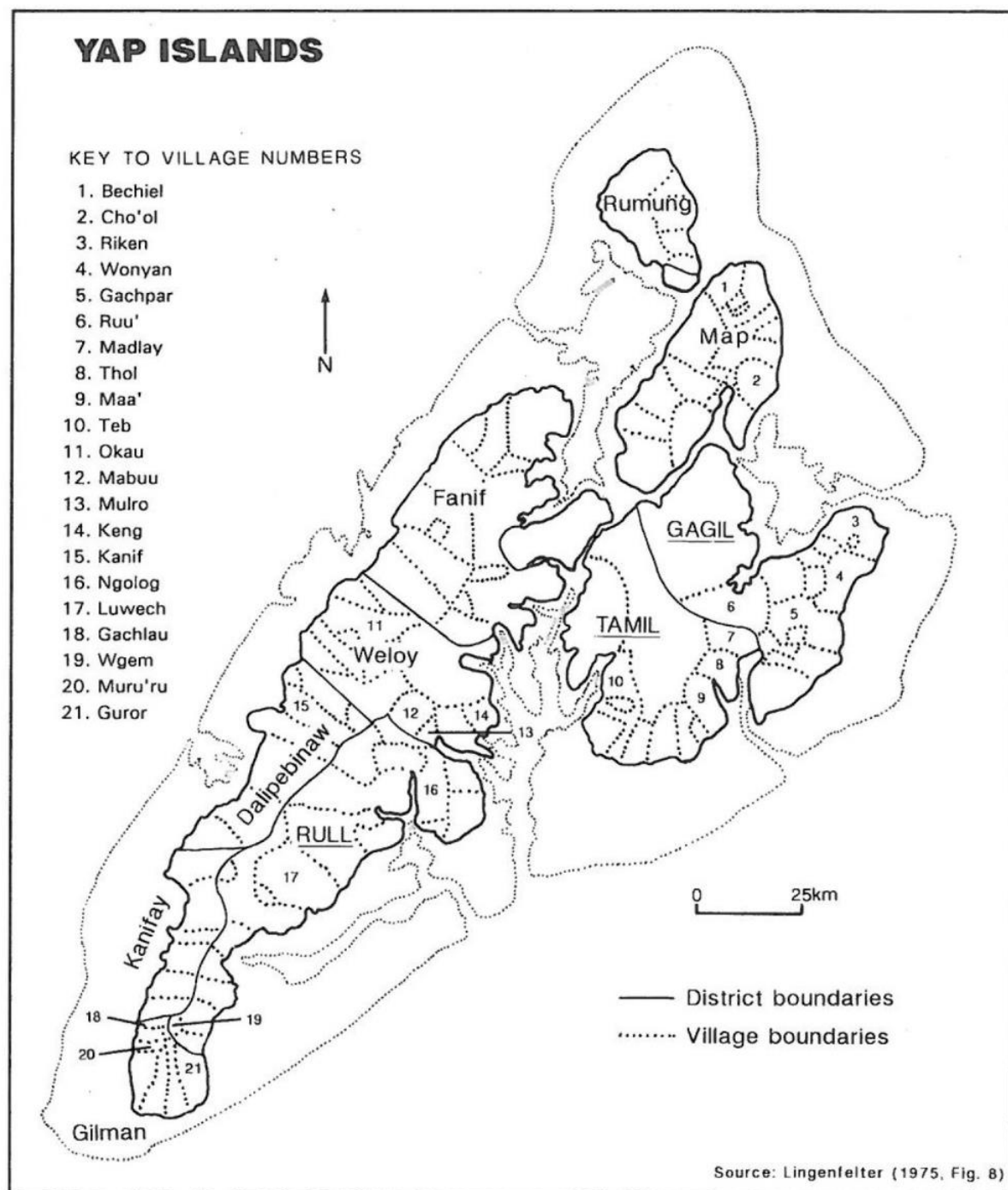


Figure 2. *Traditional districts and villages of Yap; the three paramountcies are underlined and numbers indicate villages referred to in the text.*

Figure 4-2: Yap Islands: Ten municipalities (Hunter-Anderson and Zan 1996: 5)

If we closely compare the two accounts recorded by Senfft and Müller to find out where those eight high chiefs of the Council of Chiefs came from at the time of German occupation, we would find that seven villages were the same in both accounts, while one village from Rull shifted. The following two quotes illustrate this inconsistency:

Yap is administered by eight high chiefs who live in the following places: Tab, Ngollok, Gatschbar, Gillefith, Nif, Kanif, Gorrer, and Okau. These places are ranked in the order given, so that Tab is the most important of all, all the other chiefs having to bow before its chief in matters of peace and war. (Senfft 1903: 22)

The island of Yap is ruled by eight high chiefs, although the number of districts is twelve. They reside in Tav, Gătsăpar, G'il'efiv, Ōkau, Kănif, Vălăvat, 'N'if, and Gūrōr. They are independent of one another—with one exception—and recognize no common supreme chief. (Müller 1917: 407)

Among the list of village names, one was different: one high chief was from Ngollok (Senfft 1903: 22), but another one from Balabat (in Müller 1917: 407). Ngoluk and Balabat are high-ranking villages in Rull. Ngoluk is “side of the chiefs” (*bulce* or *ban piluung*) while Balabat is “side of the young men” (*ulun* or *ban pagal*). If that shift was not due to the incorrect documentation, one possible explanation is that those two villages alternated in the chiefly council. In fact, while Labby was doing fieldwork in the early 1970s, he was told by the people from Rull that Balabat (meaning “trunks of the bat’ trees”) was once a low village that gained high status long after Ngolog (Labby 1976: 101). Even in the twenty-first century, we have witnessed the competition between Ngoluk and Balabat for claiming traditional authority in front of the foreigners, as happened in the development controversy.<sup>30</sup> Similar inconsistencies occurred frequently in the historical records. According to Miklukho-Maklai et al. (1878), the most powerful seven “*pilun*” are residing in “Tomil, Rul, Goror, Rif, Kiliwit, Onet, and

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<sup>30</sup> The details will be discussed in Chapter Five—namely, it is the conflict between the representative of Ruway *tabinaw* (one of the three paramount *tabinaw* in Yap) in Balabat village, and the representative from Tithera (a *tabinaw* in Ngolog village).

Kanif” (1876: 8).<sup>31</sup> As stated by Fr. Salesius, there are eight “districts,” listed according to rank as “Täb, Ngollock, Gatschapar, Gillefith, Nif, Kanif, Gorrer, and Ocaw” (Salesius 1906: 86). If we mark those leading “districts” (which are actually village names in Fr. Salesius’ account) on Table 4-2, we will find again that Ngolog and Balabat alternatively appeared as the most powerful ones in Rull *nug*. It is a competition, as well as “checks and balances,” between Ngolog and Balabat.

**Table 4-2: Geographical Nug and Leading Villages**

Rull		Gagil		Tomil	
<i>Nug</i>	Head village	<i>Nug</i>	Head village	<i>Nug</i>	Head village
<b>Rull</b> 1878	Ngolog <sup>1903, 1906</sup> Balabat <sup>1917</sup>	<b>Gagil</b>	Gachpar <sup>1903, 1906, 1917</sup>	<b>Tomil</b> 1878	Teb <sup>1903, 1906, 1917</sup>
Malew	Lamaer	<b>Maap</b>	Cho’ol	<b>Fanif</b>	Gilfith <sup>1903, 1906, 1917</sup>
Likaychag	Dulkan	<b>Rumung</b>	Fal		
<b>Delipebinaw</b>	Kanif <sup>1878, 1903, 1906, 1917</sup>	<b>Weloy</b>	Okaw <sup>1903, 1906, 1917</sup>		
<b>Kanifay</b>	N’ef <sup>1903, 1906, 1917</sup>				
<b>Gilman</b>	Guror <sup>1878, 1903, 1906, 1917</sup>				

(Adapted from the table in Lingenfelter 1975: 134; Ujishima 1987: 185)

The comparison may appear to be tedious, since the village and district names do not hold much meaning for those unfamiliar with Yap. However, we need to keep in mind the fact that the municipal system is a colonial invention. The Council of Chiefs, although intended to reflect indigenous authority, was formed in the colonial context; therefore we have to take the interwoven foreign influence into account as well. From the above discussion, we have learned that certain villages have always attended the “chiefs’ meetings,” but what is intriguing are those that have shifted. We have also learned that the Yapese power structure was inherently dynamic—villages could rise and fall in the ranking, but the

<sup>31</sup> I am not sure about three villages (Rif, Kiliwit, Onet) in Fr. Salesius’s record in 1906. Rif could be N’ef. Kiliwit could be Gilfith. But I am not sure if Onet means Ngolog.

relative statuses have been fixed since the German regime prohibited inter-village warfare. Consequently, Yap village ranking is now frozen.

As I stated before, today's Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs") consists of *piluung* from ten municipalities. We have seen that the Yapese configuration of power hinges on *tha'a* (connections) and *nug* (nets, political alliances)—to be specific, connections and relations. It is understood as a relation between *tabinaw* and *tabinaw*, rather than a territorial concept of "municipality" or "district." Although municipality has been institutionalized, marked in elementary schools, PO Box mailing addresses, and clinics, the weak infrastructure in Yap did not help in implementing this governing system.<sup>32</sup> Yapese still keenly sense the territorial connotation of the municipal demarcations, which are something new. Secondly, even now, Yapese still prioritize the three paramount *tabinaw* (*Dalip pi Nguchol*) and seven leading villages of each *ban* ("side, affiliation"). Although the Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs") is a government office in charge of "customs and traditions," some Yapese are aware of the difference between the Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs") and *Dalip pi Nguchol* ("The Three Paramount Chiefs")—but not all. In fact, those who are not from the high-ranking villages are usually discouraged from inquiring about such sensitive information when it does not belong to their *tha'a*. Lacking *tha'a* connection means lacking the substantial knowledge pertaining to it—including all the past interactions, and reciprocities or exchange obligations between certain *tabinaws*. They might have heard of *Dalip pi Nguchol*, known as "three paramount chiefs" or "The Three Pillars," but are not sure who they are, and are not inclined to talk about which *tabinaw* they are representing. On the contrary, those who are from higher-ranking villages or *tabinaw*, especially those who grew up in the competitive atmosphere between two high-status villages, are more acquainted with the *tha'a* knowledge.

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<sup>32</sup> For example, not all municipalities have elementary schools. Fanif has two elementary schools ("community schools"), while Rull, Kanifay and Gilman only have one elementary school in Gilman. The reason might be that there are two Catholic schools (one high school in Rull, and one school that covers grades 1-12 in Colonia), as well as one missionary school in the region. Also, there is one elementary school in Colonia, which is close to those three municipalities.

The discrepancy between *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) and Council of *Piluung* (“the Council of Chiefs”) was the heart of the development controversy between 2012 and 2013. The local population considers the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) a government institution, whose seats are not voted upon but assigned according to the traditional authority network. Although local population might not be clear about how the members of the Council of *Piluung* are decided, their names are printed on the letterhead, including the positions of chairman, vice chairman, treasurer, etc. Their names along with the positions also appear in the electronic news briefs issued by the State Government Public Information Service, and they are read in the radio programs—the radio station is owned by the state as well.<sup>33</sup> In contrast with *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”), which has become highly disputed and bewildering, the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) is a real government institution, with clear divisions of work, obligations and duties, voices and acts efficiently. The Council of *Piluung* is active, while *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) is respected but suspended.<sup>34</sup>

The next chapter will be discussing the details about the development controversy, as well as the background of it. The development controversy in Yap has evolved as a lengthy dispute, and almost all involved Yapese have been tormented by it. The anti-developers are worrying about land alienation and its unfathomable consequences, the pro-developers are concerned about the island’s future economic sustainability, but all Yapese have suffered from the deep chasm which split them—anti-development or pro-development? Villages are divided, and even families are divided—parents and children debate the ETG issues. Some Yapese blamed the “concerned bystanders”—those overtly involved foreigners,

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<sup>33</sup> The only news media accessible to every Yapese is the radio station. In Yap, the Department of Youth and Civic Affairs issues an email news brief on weekdays, which is the only news media in Yap, only available to those with internet access. There has been no printed mass media in Yap since 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Another related theme from the above discussion of the Council of *Piluung* is the local idiom of “checks and balances,” which permeates the power structure, and is closely correlated with the Yapese configuration of knowledge—separate, fragmented, guarded and secret. I will discuss this aspect more in Chapter Five, after delineating the development controversy.

including the Chinese investors, American businessmen, and the Taiwanese anthropology student. However, many Yapese are aware of the real stakes—their relation with the land has been challenged, and they need to decide on which kind of life they prefer. Will it be a land-based relationship like their ancestors had, which was maintained for countless generations? Will it be less associated with the land, as with the younger generations, who seem to engage with the land much less frequently than their parents because of schooling and work? Among those deep concerns, the dispute over legitimate authority of the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) and *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) appears to be one theme which draws local attention. However, after delineating the development controversy, it will become clear that such conflict is just the surface manifestation of a deeper anxiety experienced by Yapese these days. The anxiety might be termed as struggling between different modes of beings—land-based or non-land-based.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> I was attempting to describe it as “money-based” or “commodity-oriented,” but none of those terms captures the Yapese reality. Living by a combination of gardening/fishing and wage-earning, or a mixture of subsistence economy and monetary supplement, Yapese life cannot be bifurcated as subsistence/commodity. Yapese are able to maintain this mixture of economic types mainly as a result of their relation with the land—they are not proletariats, have not been deprived of the means of production and forced to become wage-earners.

## Chapter Five: An Uneasy State and A Difficult Development

Since 2011, ETG (Exhibition and Travel Group)—a Chinese tourism/real estate consortium in Chengdu, Sichuan—has been reaching out to overseas countries, such as Maldives, Samoa and Micronesia, with the goal of building island resorts.<sup>1</sup> In 2011, ETG expressed their sympathy and willingness to invest in Yap.<sup>2</sup> Their interest was welcomed enthusiastically by FSM National and the Yap State Government, but soon provoked an intense debate among the population in Yap, which has lasted several years, and is still on-going.

Many causes and conditions contribute to the whole scenario, among which the feeling of economic insecurity appears to be the main factor. Economic insecurity is closely tied with the sense of political uncertainty, relating to the difficulty of making a modern state in Yap, as well as in Micronesia. The first two sections of this chapter will lay the background, which will help us comprehend the complex Yapese sentiments regarding the Chinese tourism investment.

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<sup>1</sup> ETG's negotiation with Maldives began almost the same time as with FSM and Samoa. Probably because of FSM and Yap bureaucratic slow-pace, ETG's diplomatic relation with Maldives unfolded slightly earlier (see the news about Maldives' vice president Mohamed Waheed visit's in China on October 25, 2011 [http://www.maldivesembassy.jp/cat\\_001/7755](http://www.maldivesembassy.jp/cat_001/7755)).

ETG's intended project in Maldives was revealed to me by a Yapese man in March, 2012. He also brought up the following political crisis of Maldives, in which president Mohamed Nasheed was ousted, and vice-president Waheed sworn in as the new president.

<sup>2</sup> It is said ETG and the FSM Delegation in China first met in the 2010 World Exhibition (EXPO) in Shanghai. The FSM Delegation invited ETG to consider investing in Micronesia. (Resource: <http://naturesway.fm/archives/etg.html>) However, this information was not verified by other publicly accessible news media.

## Making a Modern State

In the Introduction, we have already had a glimpse of the past foreign powers that arrived in Yap. The island was “discovered” by the Portuguese and Spanish in the sixteenth century, and then became the target of competition between Spain and Germany in the nineteenth century. It was governed by Germany before the end of the First World War, and then governed by Japan under the League of Nations mandate (Müller 1942[1917]: 1; Hezel 1983: 15; Peattie 1988: 81). After the Second World War, Yap, was first governed by the US Navy, then became a Trust Territory of the United States from 1947 to 1986. In the late 1970s, along with independence trends, Yap and three other islands in Micronesia formed a nation called the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Even though the FSM’s constitutional government was implemented that year (1979), it was still contingent on US and UN authority. The trusteeship relationship with the US was ended and superseded by the Compact of Free Association between the FSM and the US in 1986, the year when FSM attained its sovereign status (Pinsker 1997: 152).

Yapese described this independence process as a time when they were “left behind.” For Yapese, they usually compare themselves to Palau and regard Palauan language and customs as related to those of the Yapese. While Palauans chose to become an independent nation, and all the neighboring nations made the decision to either become independent nations or districts affiliated with other powerful nations, the Yapese did not form a consensus among themselves, and in the end they were grouped together with Chruuk, Pohnpei and Kosrai.

Now, Yapese constantly consider becoming an independent nation, dissociated from the other three islands, since Yapese do not believe they have any commonalities. In the development controversy, these sentiments were brought up continuously. These sentiments



were aggravated because of the gloomy financial situation of FSM. The Yapese are quite proud of their own financial management and self-discipline in budgeting expenses. They usually compare themselves with other island states whose economic self-governing is less successful. However, Yapese do not have enough representatives at the Federated States of Micronesia, and they often feel that they are ill-favored by the FSM national government because a Yapese mainlander has never become the FSM president. Taking into account their reluctance to be part of the FSM, their success in self-governing, their lack of representation in the national government, and their feelings of alienation, it is fair to say that the Yapese are dissatisfied with their political status. While the Yapese celebrate their glorified past—being the center of the “Yap empire,” and having tribute relations with the eastern atolls (Lutz 1988: 23-25; Berg 1992; Hunter-Anderson and Zan 1996)—they cannot foresee a future as an independent country.

In comparing themselves with the Palauans, they lament that while Yap and Palau were “almost the same” thirty years ago, Palau’s economy has skyrocketed while Yap has “remained the same.” They feel proud that Yap does not have the same deficit as Chuuk or Pohnpei, and performs the best in terms of budgeting among all other states, but they still feel uncertain about the future—especially the near future when the Free Compact Association will terminate in 2023. Some Yapese predict that, “it would be the end of the government” (Yap State News Brief, Governor 2013 August).

In terms of economic insecurity, we need to carefully inspect why the Yapese are so worried about their economic future.

## Economic Insecurity

In summer of 2008, I visited Yap for the first time. During that time, I was completely shocked by the low income of the government employees—especially for the young beginners. The hourly wage was less than one US dollar, while the gasoline price is more expensive than on the US continent.<sup>3</sup> In a conversation with a 60-year-old Yapese man in August 2008, he told me his feelings about Yap’s future, the termination of the financial subsidies from the Compact of Free Association in 2023, Yap’s heavy reliance on outside resources and foreign aid, and his contemplation of Yap’s economic life.

If ships and airplanes stop coming, for six months, there will be no fuel, nothing in the store, no electricity.<sup>4</sup> No icebox.<sup>5</sup> No car. What will people do? Some people introduced solar panels. I have some. But they broke.<sup>6</sup>

People might die for no medicine. But we won’t be starving. Outer islands may not be able to survive—or maybe they can rely on fish.

*[pause]*

Maybe people will fight. We older people will be okay—not easy, but fine. We know how to survive on traditional means: gardening, fishing, etc. Young people will suffer, because they don’t know the old way of living.

This man had retired from the Immigration Office in the Yap State Government. A calm, thoughtful man, he talked slowly and contemplated every word he uttered. Coming from the lowest village, he was not promoted to the high official position when he retired, despite his

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<sup>3</sup> In summer 2008, when I was doing a pilot study in Yap, I was told that for the young people just beginning their work at the government, the hourly wage is 75 cents. At that time, the gasoline price was about three to four dollars per gallon. One gallon can afford 1.5 round trip between Makiy (the village where I lived) to Colonia. In other words, more than half of the wage earned from working eight hours a day in town is put into gasoline. Yapese usually carpool or ride the bus to Colonia. But the gasoline price is only an indicator of the cash expenses. Given all the imported goods are slightly more expensive than on the continent, and the extremely low wages in Yap, Yapese have to rely on their own crops and fishing; otherwise it is impossible to completely live on cash.

<sup>4</sup> In Yap, the only power plant is operated on imported fuel.

<sup>5</sup> A lot of Yapese call the refrigerator an “icebox.”

<sup>6</sup> In Yap, mechanic devices—cars, television sets, computers, DVD players, solar panels—are often out of use because of the lack of proper maintenance.

capability and rich experience in public service. However, he did not reveal any resentment—at least to me. He told me his village's duty of burying the chiefs' bodies, and the interrelation between higher-ranked and lower-ranked peoples. He also shared his contemplation of Yap's future with a visitor.<sup>7</sup>

He was not the only one who was concerned about Yap's future. Officials in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) national government and Yap State Government were also worried, as were those in other island countries seeking investment. The predominant form of livelihood in Yap is a traditional subsistence economy—gardening and fishing—supplemented with cash income earned from being employed in the governmental or private sectors.<sup>8</sup> In the fiscal year 2010, 1,329 persons (about 11.65% of the total population) were employed in government sectors, and 1,650 persons (14.47% of the total population) were employed in the private sectors (*ibid.*, 46). Out of 2,979 employees, only 74 persons (near 2.5%) are earning more than 25,000 US dollars per year. For 849 people (28.4%), annual income is less than 1,999 US dollars. The mean income is \$5,881 per year, and the median income is \$3,951 per year (*ibid.*, 49).

The major commoditized crops are copra and betelnuts (2011 Yap Statistical Year book: 27). In fact, when I chatted with Yapese about their envisioned economic future, the first idea they came up with (and conversed about with me) was usually betelnuts. They talked about how much revenue they have earned from exporting betelnuts to Saipan and Guam. They asked me if Taiwanese chew betelnuts, and felt much closer (and relieved) when I said some Taiwanese are also accustomed to chewing betelnut. For those who had visited Taiwan before or who had

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<sup>7</sup> He is related to my Yapese host mother. She told me his background in a regretful tone.

<sup>8</sup> In Yap, as in other Pacific Islands, government and state-owned businesses are the major institutional entities and employers (Yap State Statistics 2011: 37). However, the statistics books show that since Fiscal Year 2007, the employees in the private sectors have outnumbered those hired by the governmental offices (Yap State Statistics 2011: 38). The private sector—profit-seeking corporations—consists of a few wholesale and retail businesses, six hotels, seven restaurants, and the small tin-roofed grocery stores in the villages.

witnessed the Taiwanese betelnut chewing, they would begin to explain to me the different ways Taiwanese and Yapese deal with betelnuts; for example, Taiwanese cut the butt off but Yapese do not. Those details amazed me.<sup>9</sup>

The government's revenue is highly dependent on the funds and grants provided by the United States through the Compact of Free Association. In 2010, Compact funds amounted to 11 million Dollars (USD 11,941,012), approximately 81.6% of the government's revenue (Yap Statistical Yearbook 2011: 103). In the current Compact of Free Association (renewed in 2003), it is clearly written that the US will gradually reduce the amount of aid during the 20-year term, hoping the recipient countries will become economically self-sufficient by 2023 (Compact of Free Associations, Title Two, Article One). Low income and financial dependence on the foreign funds, combined with the fear that United States may not continue the Compact Funds after 2023, have resulted in the government's eagerness to seek foreign investors to improve the local economy.

While the FSM, along with the recipient nations of the Compact funds from the United States, are facing an impending financial predicament, any foreign investment is gravely needed.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, since 2004, China has been reaching out to the Pacific countries, and usually their financial subsidies are heartily appreciated by the recipient governments.<sup>11</sup> Given this larger context, it is not difficult to understand why the FSM Embassy in Beijing is so willing

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<sup>9</sup> Every Yapese, man or woman, has a basket woven from coconut leaves, in which betelnuts and a small bottle of lime are the essential ingredients. The personal baskets are similar to the extension of oneself, and Yapese have several idioms related to the basket, such as "*Biya llowaen' laen ii waay*" ("wisdom in the basket") (Throop 2010: 130). The Yapese relation and identity with betelnuts deserve further notice later on.

<sup>10</sup> The need for sustainable development is documented in the Yap State Constitution. In September 2012, one Yapese man, while being asked for opinions for investment, said "Development is in our constitution. If we do not do it, it is against the constitution."

<sup>11</sup> In a respondent commentary, Crocombe quoted FSM President Emanuel Mori's observation: the Chinese simply ask the Pacific Island countries "what do you need," but the Western states "apply many more conditions and use" (Crocombe 2009:100).

to introduce any prosperous business partner to the FSM for enhancing the local economy, increasing indigenous employment, boosting states' and nations' revenues, continuing the government bureaucratic, educational and medical systems, and improving the transportation infrastructure, etc.

## The ETG Controversy

It is not difficult to understand FSM national government and Yap State Government's worries about the island's future economic sustainability, especially after 2023, the year when the financial support from the Compact of Free Associations is supposed to be over. But it may not be easy to understand how Yapese think of the urgent need for economic improvement. As I stated several times, Yapese have been known for their reluctance to embrace signs of modernity, such as western goods and clothing (Hezel 1983: 266; Bashkow 1991: 195; Throop 2010: 31). It does not mean Yapese are all conservative, but rather signifies their cultural emphasis on careful deliberation before taking action (Throop 2010: 31-32).<sup>12</sup> The "battle of Maap"—the Council of Maap's refusal to approve a Japanese resort project in the early 1970s might exemplify this. After discussing the resort proposal, the local leaders (*piluung* and *langanpagel*) constituted a "Council of Maap" and considered the resort an "unwelcome invasion" which "had taken advantage of the people's hospitality, goodwill, and inexperience to establish itself unlawfully on land belonging to the villagers of Cho'ol and Wachalab in Maap" (Hanlon 1998: 124). But, forty years later, while Yapese still highly emphasize the importance of "ways of Yap" or "traditions

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<sup>12</sup> The actions taken (after deliberations) aim at internalized community benefits, as well as individual interests. In terms of community benefits, we need to keep in mind that the Yapese valuation of maintaining tradition is also "an overt cultural ideology" (Throop 2010: 31-32).

and customs” (*yalean nu Wa’ab*), their opinions of the Chinese investment vary greatly and are mutually irreconcilable, almost splitting the island apart.

Even though the tourism investment has resulted in unprecedented reactions in Yap, very little scholarly research has been dedicated to it—probably because of its highly contentious nature. The only reference I have found so far is a conference report authored by Rubinstein and Mulalap. The report highlighted the contentious points of ETG’s proposed development (2014), which will help in contextualizing ETG’s investment project in terms of the history of tourism and the economic situation in Yap, and the confrontations between different government branches as well as local interest groups, and it also pointed out the unprecedented presence of the grassroots citizens groups (Rubinstein and Mulalap 2014).<sup>13</sup> The report was concise and brief, for the event is ongoing, and its significance and relevance remain to be explored.

Witnessing the events unfolding on the island, and being aware that it is too early to draw conclusions or analyze the meaning of these events fully and deeply, I can only highlight some significant scenes and discuss the implications to the Yapese. In the following sections, I will first describe who the Chinese investor is, how the investor came to Yap, their plan, and the responses it has provoked.

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<sup>13</sup> Those grassroots groups—one mainly consisting of elderly women, the other consisting of middle-aged men—took different positions in terms of tourism development, particularly ETG investment. What makes them exceptional is: these groups are not traditional authorities or government officials whose tasks are making important decisions on behalf of the state citizens, such the Governor and Legislature Speaker. Yet, the decision-making pertaining to ETG events is largely shaped by these grassroots groups (Rubinstein and Mulalap 2014: 9).

## Who is ETG?

ETG (Exhibition and Travel Group, China), founded in 1997, is a large Chinese enterprise group in Chengdu, Sichuan. As its name suggest, ETG specializes in “Exhibition & Convention, Tourism, Tourist Attraction Operator, Hotels, Property Management, Real Estate Developer.”<sup>14</sup> Its famous construction projects include Chengdu International Convention & Exhibition Centre (Shawan), InterContinental Resort Jiuzhai Paradise, Century City New International Convention & Exhibition Centre, and New Century Global Center (pictures below). All of these are grandiose landmarks in Chengdu and prestige tourist destinations.<sup>15</sup> ETG’s New Century Global Center is described as “the world’s biggest standalone complex.”<sup>16</sup> ETG also operates Panda Travel, one of the leading tourist companies in Chengdu and Southwest China,<sup>17</sup> ETG Real Estate Company in southwest and central China, Sunxing catering, and luxurious restaurants in Chengdu, Beijing and Shanghai.

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<sup>14</sup> See ETG’s official website (<http://www.etgcn.com/jtjs/zzjg.html>), also the page of ETG’s interlocking shareholder company, Century City New International Convention & Exhibition Centre (<http://www.at0086.com/cdcec/>).

<sup>15</sup> According to the webpage of Chengdu International Convention & Exhibition Centre (Shawan), ETG group owned two exhibition halls (200,000 m<sup>2</sup>), 50 conference rooms (100,000 m<sup>2</sup>), seven hotel properties (5,000 rooms, all above four stars), and “commercial property area at 1,000,000 m<sup>2</sup>.” Additionally, ETG has been authorized as the only operator of the privileged tourist destinations near the head of the Yellow River. On the webpage, it says the customers were estimated to be 30 million (<http://www.at0086.com/cdcec/>). However, because this statistic lacks a time frame, we do not know the precise number of visitors per day or month.

<sup>16</sup> ETG’s New Century Global center is described as the “World’s biggest standalone complex” (or “the World’s largest building”). References:

[http://www.gochengdoo.com/en/blog/item/1872/chengdu\\_to\\_build\\_worlds\\_biggest\\_standalone\\_complex](http://www.gochengdoo.com/en/blog/item/1872/chengdu_to_build_worlds_biggest_standalone_complex),  
<http://www.gizmag.com/new-century-global-center/28324/>

<sup>17</sup> ETG’s “Panda Travel” and the American tourist agency, “Panda Travel” (headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona, [http://www.pandatravel.com/?page=about\\_us](http://www.pandatravel.com/?page=about_us)), are not the same. In fact, long before ETG was established, there was another international business group, founded by a Chinese family in the 1890s, and registered as a corporation (Energy Transportation Group, Inc.) in the 1970s (<http://www.etgglobal.com/History.htm#1890-1940s>). It is also called ETG. When younger Yapanese tried to find out who ETG was, the similar names created deep confusion. The Chinese ETG’s website does not have an English version, only a Chinese one (indicating its main customers are from the domestic Chinese market), which has resulted in more bewilderment among the English-reading Yapanese.

Yapese did not know much about ETG. In China, ETG's chairperson was reported as a low-profile, "mysterious" billionaire, who has built up the consortium since the mid-1990s and has quickly become extraordinarily rich. His friendship with the topmost state leaders, combined with his artistic design of Jiuzhai Paradise and his paintings, has added to his mystic halo.<sup>18</sup> ETG's renowned buildings are intertwined with the Chengdu city-renovation project, by which Chengdu aims not only to be the new regional center in South West China, but also promote itself to the global stage.<sup>19</sup> The pictures in Appendix 2 might be able to illustrate the scale of its construction.

ETG's impressive constructions were beyond local Yapese imagination. As the residents of a Pacific island of approximately 100 square kilometers, "being small" is common in Yapese self-portrayal and is even inscribed in their political imagination as being impoverished and powerless—a feature pointed out by Hau'ofa (1994) as the consequence of US economic hegemony and intellectual colonization (see Germanis 2012: 23). In fact, In Yapese understanding of ETG, several common themes continuously come up: too big, unfamiliar, do not like Chinese (too aggressive, while Yapese pace are very slow), do not respect local cultures, bribery, government's decision completely lacking of transparency, unable to control. Among all of the concerns, the ability to "control" outsiders is a heated issue. Those who agree with the

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<sup>18</sup> Deng Hong was born in 1963 and served in the military before going to the US in 1993. He returned from the US circa 1994-1995 and then began his tourism/hotel empire. Deng Hong is an artist; he initiates and sponsors the biennial art festival in Chengdu. He paints—his drawings are hung everywhere in his grandiose hotels. It was said that he designed Jiuzhai Paradise himself, which is one of the most acclaimed hotels in China. Deng Hong is described as the "King of Convention and Exhibition." He seems to have really good relations with the highest leadership in PRC—notably Jiang Zemin, the previous General Secretary of the Communist Party (1989-2002) and President of PRC (1993-2003). After Jiang retired from the office of General Secretary in 2002, the first thing he reportedly did was to visit Deng Hong, and sing in Deng Hong's Sha-Wan Convention Center in Chengdu. It was a highly significant indicator of Deng Hong's relation with the topmost state leaders.

<sup>19</sup> ETG is a significant participant in Chengdu city renovation. It has increased both ETG and Chengdu's celebrity outside of China inner land. For instance, ETG's New Century Global Century Center ("the world's largest building") has become a landmark of Chengdu.



investment think they are able to control investors by legislation or similar means. Those who disagree with the investment do not think Yapese have this ability.

The significant gap between ETG's imagination of "Island Paradise" and Yapese common understanding will unfold itself in every interaction between these two worlds. The pictures on the following page illustrate how Colonia looks, and may be able to serve as a contrast between Yapese life-world and ETG's imagination.



Picture: The Courthouse in Yap, Colonia<sup>20</sup>

Resource: <http://zoneeight.blogspot.com/2010/06/sightseeing-in-downtown-colonia-yap.html><sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The picture was probably taken on the weekend, therefore very few people or cars are in the picture. During the week, Colonia is usually crowded with people who come to town to buy groceries, for work, for school, or to wander around.

<sup>21</sup> The pictures were found on the web. During my stay in Yap, I did not take many pictures of Colonia—although I took enough pictures in the villages, in dancing and in ceremonies.



Left: One corner of Colonia (March, 2013).

Right: People gathered in the Living Museum in Colonia for Yap Day Celebration (March, 2013)

Colonia, the capital town in Yap, is a lagoon area dotted with several government offices, one court house, one post-office, three bank branches, and one police station. There are four grocery stores, one souvenir shop, and five restaurants (four belong to hotels)—all small, but bigger than the village grocery stands. Being the “downtown” area in Yap, Colonia displays a sharp difference from the village life. The dress codes are loose in Colonia, the neighboring islanders do not need to be topless, and their women are allowed to wear long skirts instead of wrapping a *lavalava*. Colonia also displays a greater mixture of people from different origins and areas. The chance to spot people of different rankings or from different parts of Yap is far greater—seeing those whom they might never see in the village for “having no connection.” In Colonia, nevertheless, people still obey the rule of deference—being respectful to the higher-ranking ones—but the behavioral protocol in Colonia is less strict than in the village.<sup>22</sup> In addition, it is not only Yapese on the main island and neighboring islanders who come to

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<sup>22</sup> Krause described Colonia as “a liminal space where tradition and modernity converge and the structures and protocols of village life are temporarily set aside” (2016: 30), which I highly agree with.

Colonia, but it is also American expatriates, Philippine workers, and other Micronesians such as Pohnpeians, Palauans, and Chuukese that can be spotted at the offices, grocery stores or restaurants. Given the fact that Yapese do not often travel outside of the villages unless they have *tha'a* in other villages or “good reason to do so” (Krause 2016: 30), such as attending school or church, this heterogeneous “human-scape” in Colonia is exceptional in Yap. Although Colonia is a place of the most heterogeneity in Yap, it also tolerates the most liminality; it is still small and self-contained in comparison with ETG’s proposed huge construction, which is indeed beyond Yapese imagination.

### Reciprocated Visits

Since August 2011, people in Yap began to sense that there were some unusual visitors coming to the island. The Yapese are familiar with tourists from the United States, Europe, Japan, and sometimes Korea and China. Those tourists are mostly young backpackers looking for an opportunity to dive, snorkel and watch the sting-rays near the lagoon. They are also middle-aged couples and small families who come to enjoy the holidays on tropical islands. While the visitors from the United States and Europe might have heard of Yap in *National Geographic*, most of the Asian tourists learned about Yap on their way to Guam or to Palau. The Yapese are also acquainted with Japanese Television reporters, who often come to feature Yapese dancing, house-building, and canoeing about once a year.

However, the Chinese visitors in 2011 were not ordinary ones—they came particularly for Yap rather than merely stopping by to make television programs or for a short visit. They met with the Governor and seemed to be welcomed with particular enthusiasm. They might have had good connections with the FSM National Government and FSM Embassy in China as well,

because the First Secretary in the FSM Embassy's Office accompanied them during their first visit (and the FSM Ambassador to China was with them on one of their following visits). In addition, they paid for the Yapese Governor to visit them in China. People know the Governor has a son studying in China, majoring in Chinese literature; nevertheless, that could not explain the extraordinary friendship between the Governor and those Chinese visitors.

In fact, during 2011, very few Yapese knew about these new Chinese visitors. They did not learn about this consortium until 2012. In ETG's promotion book, which was released in July 2012, it states that ETG first learned about Yap through the FSM Embassy in Beijing in 2011, on an occasion where FSM Embassy was introducing the tourist resources and investment environment to ETG. To "access ETG's experience and investment capability" (original quote), Mr. Akillino Susaia, the FSM Ambassador to China, visited ETG in Chengdu soon afterwards.<sup>23</sup> On March 14th, 2011, ETG's delegation visited the Yap State Governor, Hon. Sebastian Anefal, in his office in Colonia. They were accompanied by Mr. Vince Sivas, First Secretary of the FSM Embassy in Beijing.<sup>24</sup> As part of this friendly exchange, Governor Anefal visited ETG in Chengdu in April, 2011, and signed a "Strategic Framework of Agreement" with ETG on behalf of the Yap State Government. Although Governor Anefal's visit to China was frequently discussed in local conversations, this news was not reported in the Yap State News Brief.<sup>25</sup> The signed document, "Strategic Framework of Agreement" was not disclosed until thirteen months later.

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<sup>23</sup> We do not know which part of ETG's properties Mr. Susaia visited —Sha-wan Convention Center or restaurants. However, any part of ETG's business is impressive enough.

<sup>24</sup> The ETG delegation included: Mr. Haihao Sun, ETG International Marketing Representative and Head of Delegation, Mr. Gang Yang, Advisor. (Yap State News Brief, March 14, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> It was revealed by ETG in its promotional book (ETG 2012). The signed document, "Strategic Framework of Agreement", after Yap State Legislature's several requests, was eventually released to the Legislature on July 2, 2012.

On June 16, 2011, a Thursday, ETG's private airplane landed on Yap on its return trip from Samoa to China, an event that was very rare in Yap. In fact, United Airlines is the operating aircraft company in Micronesia.<sup>26</sup> United Airlines' Boeing 737 airplane landed on Yap twice a week, on Tuesday and Saturday at midnight. Therefore, on Tuesday and Saturday nights, cars would rush to the airport in the south of the islands, and the people—either sending their friends away or taking their relatives home—usually greeted each other in the airport at 12am Tuesday or 3am Saturday, yawning, with sleepy red eyes. The ETG jet plane's unusual landing was heard and noticed by almost all Yapese, regardless of how little they knew about that jet plane and its company.

On August 3, 2011, ETG's chairperson, Deng Hong, visited Yap.<sup>27</sup> According to the News Brief, the ETG delegation was taking a motorboat tour to the northern part of Yap island. They stopped by the Yap Cultural Center at Bechiyal, Maap Municipality, which is very close to the beach in Wacholab—where the Tokyo-based resort project wanted to locate but did not succeed. ETG's technical experts also met with YSPSC (Yap State Public Service Corporation) to discuss if the power plant could accommodate the multi-million development project on the island (Yap State News Brief, August 4, 2011). In the evening, ETG (not the Yap State Government) hosted a dinner reception for the Yap Government at Yap Pacific Dive Resort—a luxurious European-style hotel on the hill in Colonia.<sup>28</sup> After the evening reception, on the following day, ETG planned to visit the Cultural Center in Kaday village, Delipebinaw. They also planned to visit a

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<sup>26</sup> Before October 2010, it was Continental Airlines. United and Continental have merged since early 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Deng Hong's visit to Yap was not reported in the Yap State News Brief on August 4, 2011. It was revealed later in the News Brief on October 5, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Since then, the Resort has become the major proponent for ETG's project in Yap. When ETG's delegates visited Yap, they usually stayed in the Resort. If there was any significant document to be signed between the Yap State Government and ETG, this also took place in the Resort.

tourist site in Weloy municipality, and Kanify Recreation Park. Their sight-seeing spots are highlighted on the map in Appendix 3.

Responding to ETG's generosity, the Yap State Government held a state leadership meeting on August 16,<sup>29</sup> less than two weeks after ETG's visit. During the meeting, the state leaders, including the Legislature and traditional Chief's Councils<sup>30</sup> were informed (or consulted with) that ETG was interested in investing in Yap. Governor Anefal asked the state leaders to form a five-member-taskforce, consisting of one member from the Executive branch, two from the Legislative branch, and two from the traditional councils. About three weeks later, Governor Anefal had not heard anything concrete about the taskforce; he therefore contacted the relevant government officials.<sup>31</sup> In his letter to them, the Governor reemphasized that the mission of the taskforce was to identify "suitable land parcels for development," and he recommended what land parcels should be excluded from the development. The report was due November 30, 2011.

Despite the villager's discussion about a taskforce, no follow-up news of this particular taskforce was ever reported, mostly because of the Legislature's unwillingness to cooperate.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, in 2012, a taskforce was formed. It consisted of members from the Executive Branch of the Yap State Government and from the Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs"), which together visited the targeted and related villages.<sup>33</sup> After Deng Hong's visit to Yap, the

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<sup>29</sup> I am not sure who attended the meeting or where the meeting took place. The meeting was not publicized on the News Brief until September 6, 2011. The readers only knew the conclusion of the meeting without knowing the participants and place. Customarily, "Yap state leadership" consists of the State Governor, Yap State Legislature, and two traditional chiefly councils. The judiciary branch will join if required.

<sup>30</sup> By traditional councils, I refers to the Council of *Piluung*—consiting of traditional leaders from Yap Proper (Yap main island), and the Council of *Tamol*—consisting of traditional leaders from the neighboring islands.

<sup>31</sup> I did not see this communication either, so I do not know who the recipients were.

<sup>32</sup> During a public hearing held on February 5, 2013 at the Yap State Legislature, one senator explained that this proposal was turned down by the Legislature.

<sup>33</sup> In a series of public hearings on the investment agreement between ETG and the Yap State Government that were held by the Legislature during July and August 2012, the Governor brought up the issue of the taskforce again. He

Yapese heard about Chinese interest in the island; however, because of the lack of sufficient information,<sup>34</sup> although people learned that Chinese investors were coming to Yap and touring the island, they still did not know where or what kind of investment they were planning to make. In late August 2011, during a conversation between a government employee and me,<sup>35</sup> I learned more details.

During fall 2011, it is also said that some of the Yapese high officials—from the executive branch and the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”)—visited ETG’s headquarter in Chengdu. However, this news was not reported in the *News Bulletin* either. There were rumors that some people had been flying to China—the Lieutenant Governor (from the neighboring islands), some members of the Council of *Piluung*, the Former State Governor (now Director of the Department of Resources and Development), certain members of the Cabinet (such as the director of the Department of Youth and Civic Affairs), etc.<sup>36</sup>

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urged the state government—meaning, Yap State Legislature—to cooperate in forming a task force in order to facilitate the investment process. At that time, the taskforce had already been organized, without the Legislature’s participation.

<sup>34</sup> The only news media accessible to every Yapese is the radio station, V6AI. (FSM national radio stations include: V6AH in Pohnpei, V6AI in Yap, V6AJ in Kosrae, and V6AK in Chuuk). In Yap, the only public news media is issued by the Department of Youth and Civic Affairs in the form of email-newsletter, released on weekdays, and only accessible to those with internet access.

<sup>35</sup> I visited him simply because I knew him at the church. Before talking with him, I was totally unaware of the Chinese investment project, but unaware of the Yapese understanding of the event, and their perception of me. In fact, some Yapese, even though they were close to me, remained suspicious that I was with the Chinese investors. Their reasons were ample—although I visited Yap for the first time in summer 2008, I did not come back till June 2011, and arrived approximately the same time as the Chinese investors.

<sup>36</sup> Since the visitors were never publicly revealed, people named the potential visitors to me during interviews. What interested me was that, “those who had been treated by ETG” was a key accusation in the beginning of the dialogue: somebody received special treatment, that’s why they support ETG’s investment.

Some government officials were invited to visit China, but they declined. In our communications, the reasons for their refusal were various, including “disliking the Chinese way of doing things” and considering what the branch as a whole might consider.

## ETG's Plan

One distinctive feature of the proposed large-scale tourism development was ambiguity. When “Chinese” surged into the local conversations, many questions were asked: who are they, what are they going to do, where will the plan take place, how large the scale might the development be, what will be the consequences? No one had a clear picture. People just sensed the unusual arrival of airplanes that had landing times not in accord with the schedule of the Continental Airline—now United Airline. People also heard that there were Asian visitors accompanied by State and National government high officials, and they toured around briefly—but it was not directly related to their daily life. The information sometimes travelled along with the hierarchical village rankings, but sometimes not.

Those who are at the end of the channel’s communication—for example, Makiy village where I lived in the first six months during my stay in Yap—did not fully know what was going on. They had heard that the “Chinese are coming,” and suspected that I was one of them. Until the time I chatted with a government employee living in one of the highest villages in Gagil Municipality, I did not realize that there were Chinese investors interested in Yap. My host family thought that I might know these Chinese, or at least be aware of their plan. When they found out that I was completely ignorant of the Chinese investment plan, it was almost two months after I lived with my host family in summer 2011.

I once suspected that people in Makiy did not know about the development events because of traditional hierarchy—Makiy is a middle-lower village and should obey commands from certain *tabinaw* in the higher villages. But I was wrong. One’s access to information hinged on one’s connections—through work, relatives, acquaintances, church, and *tha’a*. One of our



relatives from the lowest village in Gagil Municipality, retired from the government office, had heard of the development, and later attended the village meeting about it. He is a man in his sixties, and calmly shared with me what he learned about the limited information in spring 2012. In contrast with the Makiy fellows' fear, uncertainties, cautions, sometimes indifferent attitude at that time, I personally appreciated his calmness and candidness in sharing with me what he heard.

In the beginning phase, none of the details were known. In fact, nobody knew anything at all. Even the highest state officials did not anticipate how the investment agenda would evolve. For example, Governor Anefal welcomed any benevolent developer coming to Yap, but how the project would proceed would depend on how much land ETG acquired, and no one was certain about the result. All the documents signed between the representatives of Yap State Government and ETG just signified the reciprocal, mutually beneficial relation between the two parties—Yap State Government and ETG. The pivotal question still resided in land—how many land parcels, where are they, would they be suitable for the tourist investment proposal or not, etc. Nevertheless, in the beginning of the ETG investment project, most of the Yapese were still bewildered. They were not acquainted with this new investor; they also did not know the scale of the investment—it appeared to be big, but they were not certain about it. In fact, everything was hearsay.

Although ETG had held several workshops and meetings to express its ideas in Colonia and certain villages, nothing had been finalized. People only knew that ETG would initiate investments in tourism in Yap, which required a significant amount of land, but they did not know where and what kind of tourism infrastructure there would be. At the end of July 2012, ETG eventually released a thick photo book, illustrating its development ideas to the locals.

Although it was an ideal proposal, trying to give the readers an idea of what the investment project look like rather than a finalized version, it was still the first tangible exemplification of the investment project—highly visual, with a few texts (twelve pages) but significant pages of beautifully printed color pictures (more than ninety pages). The photo book was circulated among several government offices and was also brought by the taskforce to the related village communities.

In the promotional photo book, it explains who ETG is, how ETG came to know about Yap via the FSM Ambassador in China, ETG's objective (to build Yap as a global tourist destination), the documents being signed by FSM, Yap State and ETG so far, ETG's minimal investment scale (resorts of 4,000 units), its envisioned investment plan—including gaming, hotels, renovated airports and other infrastructure (including water plants, water reservoirs, sewage systems, power plants), native housing (for those landowners leasing land to ETG), newly built seaports, direct flights between Yap and major Asian cities, anticipated state and national revenues, and expected local employment.<sup>37</sup> After laying out ETG's conceptual design of Yap Island, the book notes that the project is just a blueprint, not yet finalized. The real project will depend on how much land ETG can secure, as well as the location of the land. As I described, ETG's photo book consists of twelve pages of text and more than ninety pages of maps and pictures. The maps include the satellite pictures, as well as analyses of soil, hydrology, vegetation, slope, and an overall composite (construction) analysis, all printed in color. The map of the Composite Analysis shows ETG's (or at least the design company's) efforts in planning the construction, such as oil pipelines, sewage disposal, and aqueducts according to the Yap

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<sup>37</sup> A pictured-copy of ETG's photobook can be found on <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/etgs-plan-in-yap-july-2012/>

landscape.<sup>38</sup> However, there was no map of village locations, which could be found in many ethnographies about Yap.

ETG's promotional photo book vividly epitomizes its vision of a "Yap Island Paradise." It is indeed unusual to have such a nicely designed book in Yap, color-printed in high-quality matte-finished pages. It is also rare to see those detailed maps, which appear somewhat surreal to the Yapese.<sup>39</sup> In one of the village meetings, I saw how this thick, well-printed photo book was carefully handled to the chief, and how the chief was cautiously turning the pages. When the meeting finished, one of the chiefs (working in the Department of Education) attentively carried the book home, as if he was carrying a rare, valuable community heirloom. In Colonia, I saw how the book was held by the ETG representative to the government's offices—in a manner similar to a student turning in a painstakingly written term paper, with a feeling of pride but also excitement in having completed it.

ETG's photobook was the first material exemplification of the proposed tourism development. Before its release, no one was sure what the project might be. It seemed that only certain high officials—the Governor for example—who expressed friendliness to this foreign investor knew the tourism development plan. But this impression was inaccurate, for the Governor was merely trying to introduce a foreign investor to stimulate island economy. The real stake of the development project, the land, is owned by the Yapese themselves. Given the fragile nature of the FSM economy, Governor Anefal just opened the door for any qualified potential foreign investor, hoping Yap State would be able to sustain itself after the US financial aid ends

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<sup>38</sup> What is particularly amazing to me is the locations of commentaries, burial grounds, and grave sites. I do not know how ETG mapped them out or which criteria ETG used to distinguish those three categories.

<sup>39</sup> ETG presented a PowerPoint to the Yap State Legislature and Council of Piluung in January 2012, which was an impressive blueprint of their project, a miniature of ETG's August photo book. One Yapese told me that the PowerPoint "is really beautiful. Yap does not look like Yap at all."

in 2023. This powerful man, who came from the southern part of Yap (Gilman Municipality) and served in the FSM National Government and the Yap State Government for most of his life, did not know that he opened the door of heated dispute among the Yapese.

In the following section, I will discuss the process from a local's point of view—which entails being bewildered and confused, suspecting the concealment of crucial information, and eventually feeling betrayed and angry.<sup>40</sup> I am going to highlight two themes: people's understanding and petitioning, and the contention between Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs") and *Dalip pi Nguchol* ("The Three Paramount Chiefs"). The second theme epitomizes the confusion of the already-obsolete *tha'a*, which I have discussed in the previous chapter. The first theme indicates people's reaction when they began to hear about the Chinese tourism investment. Their reactions led to the formation of local voluntary associations and to the prominence of the anti-development subject, the elderly women (*pulwelwol*).

## People's Understandings and Petitioning

### People's Understanding: I

On March 2, 2012, I arrived in Yap for the third time. A petition was circulating among communities, asking the government to discontinue any deal with Chinese investors until the public was properly informed. This text can be found on a local voluntary association's website.<sup>41</sup> It will be discussed below.

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<sup>40</sup> For a detailed timeline table, please refer to the anti-ETG grassroots group's website (<http://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/timeline/>).

<sup>41</sup> The pdf file of the first petition can be retrieved here: <https://concernedyapcitizens.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/etg-petition.pdf>

At that time, some Yapese had heard that there was a foreign investor—the Chinese. There were several meetings in different villages to announce the investment. One of the friend recalled one meeting in Gachpar he attended.

“They brought maps, pictures, those air pictures, taken from the satellites. I heard they had meetings in Governor’s office. Those pictures were all on the floor. They want to build ports, want to rent the area in Lebinaw, Leng, and some villages in Maap.”

I asked, “How can they get the land?”

He replied: “They said, from the landowner. 90% go to the land owner, 10% go to the community.”

And then he added: “I do not think it is an easy process. I remember, many years ago, the government wanted to get the land to build the new airport. The process took a long time. First they need to survey the land, to mark the boundaries, and then they need to announce it for forty-five days. Anybody who relates to the land can disagree with the survey result. Once a disagreement is raised, they need to have meetings to resolve it: family meetings, village meetings, meetings with the land office. It took a very long time for that piece of land near the airport to get settled, more than three months, only a small piece of land, because so many people are relating to that piece.”

Although this relative might have been the most knowledgeable about the project among the people I knew at that time, a significant number of people, especially women from middle- to lower-ranking villages, were not sure of, or at least unfamiliar, with the investment.<sup>42</sup> Only later

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<sup>42</sup> I vividly remember the occasion when the petition was brought to one 69-year-old female—at that time she was living in a lower-ranking village in Tomil. She read the text closely and astonished, commented, “I cannot believe

on did I realize that the information was concentrated in high-ranking villages and Colonia (where the government offices are). People from lower-ranking villages may have caught some pieces of it—in the village, or at the government office, at the grocery shops, at a relative's house, at informal gatherings, etc. But, unlike the main decision-makers, such as the Governor, the directors of governmental offices, members of the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”), or senators in the Legislature, those from lower-ranking villages could never fathom the whole picture for lack of sufficient information. They could not express their personal opinions publicly either.

The main protesting voices were rising from other higher-ranking villages. In the case of ETG's investment, the opposition mainly originated from the northern part of the island—Gagil and Maap, and also some from Rull.

### People's First Petition, the Council of Chief's Comment, and Special Guests from China

While the Governor's and Legislature's opinions differed in terms of ETG's investment in the beginning of 2012, approximately at the same time, a petition was being circulated in the villages. The petition echoed the Legislature's view, asking the Yap State Government not to proceed with ETG's investment before the people were better informed. The petition was carefully written in English with a respectful tone.<sup>43</sup> It acknowledged Yap's economic situation and the need for foreign investment, while requesting the state leadership to allow communities

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that our Governor really signed the documents! It is like an accusation. I will ask my relative working in the government.” Then she called up her relative, and confirmed that there have been several letters transmitted.

<sup>43</sup> The pdf file of the first petition can be retrieved here:

<https://concernedyapcitizens.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/etg-petition.pdf> . In the Yap State News Brief on April 11, 2012, it implied that there might be a Yapese version of the Petition.

and peoples to be acquainted with the investment issue, and give them an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, since the scale of investment would affect the majority of the Yapese population. The petition, with a thick stack of signature pages (1,500 signatures, 20 per page), was submitted to Yap State Legislature and other relevant government offices on April 2, 2012, and appeared in the Yap State News Brief on April 11, 2012.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the petitioners' appeal, on April 19, 2012, the Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs") chairman, Bruno Tharngan, sent a memo to ETG's chairman Deng Hong, in which the petitioners' voices were described as "rumblings and grumblings." The memo was publicized in the Yap State News Brief (April 9, 2012). After this comment was revealed, many Yapese, including the Legislature Speaker, were indeed outraged.<sup>45</sup>

The Council of *Piluung*'s ("Council of Chiefs") welcoming remark to ETG was not unreasonable. On April 24, 2012, ETG's Chairman, along with the prestigious guests from China, landed in Yap. The group consisted of high-officials of the Export-Import Bank of China (President, several General Managers and staff), Chairman of CRBC (China Road and Bridge Corporation), Vice President of CMEC (China Machinery Engineering Corporation), and Vice General Manager of CHEC (China Harbor Engineering Company, Ltd). These visitors were greeted by Governor Sebastian Anefal, Speaker Henry Falan, Vice Speaker Ted Rutun, Chairman Bruno Tharngan of the Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs"), and Vice Chairman/Treasurer Thomas Falngin of the Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs")—not to mention other state government officials. In addition, the FSM National Government also sent their delegates: Mr. Marion Henry (Secretary of the Department of Resources & Development)

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<sup>44</sup> Between July and August 2012, another 200 signatures were added to the original file; the petitioners amounted to 1,700.

<sup>45</sup> Throughout the whole process, Council of *Piluung*'s ("Council of Chiefs") candid "transparency" has been in sharp contrast with the Executive Branch's cautious control of information.

represented the FSM President; and Mr. Akillino Susaia, the FSM Ambassador in Beijing, came with ETG from Chengdu.

We do not know if any significant promise was made during the “summit” gathering. According to the News Brief, Mr. Li Ruogu, the EXIM Bank President/Chairman, expressed his appreciation of the the Council of *Piluung*’s (“Council of Chiefs”) support of ETG, and also specified that it is important to visit the place in order to consider ETG’s project. He jokingly stated:

“Chairman Deng of the ETG and his proposal in the FSM made it more important for us to consider the project of ETG thus [*sic*] our visit this time to meet and get to know more about the people of the nation especially in Yap State. ‘We’ as people of both of our countries are not only friends through our political ties. Someone long time ago told me that Micronesians came from China.” (Yap State News Brief, April 25, 2012)

Not until mid-August 2012, when Governor Anefal eventually signed the Investment Agreement with ETG, did people begin to fathom the relation between ETG and EXIM Bank.<sup>46</sup> In April, Yap state leaders were delighted that Yap was favored by those large corporations in China. It was considered an unusual chance for an island country—especially rare for Yap, which has been distinct from other FSM states. Yap is an island of different languages, culturally closer to Palau but dissimilar to all other three island-states—Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrai. Yap has outstanding hierarchy, low population (therefore they receive fewer Compact Funds), and stronger financial stability.<sup>47</sup> Yapese often criticize FSM for demanding too much from the national taxes, while Yap receives less from the US Compact Funds for its lower population. They also feel strongly their cultural uniqueness in the FSM, and wish to be a model on Palau’s path to becoming an independent country. ETG’s preference for Yap—regardless of the

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<sup>46</sup> It is said that ETG was under sheer time pressure to get the Investment Agreement signed, so that ETG could get the loan from EXIM Bank in China.

<sup>47</sup> Yapese are proud of their ability to save state revenue by any means—one of which is to keep salaries low.



alternative suggestions, such as Chuuk—boosted some people’s esteem.<sup>48</sup> In August, ETG released its investment objective: to make Yap a world-renowned tourist destination, much more famous than Guam and Palau, so people will no longer ask “why not go to mature places like Palau and Guam, rather than a whole new place without market reputation?”<sup>49</sup> This vision is indeed appealing for an island that usually characterizes itself as “small” and insignificant (see Germanis 2012).

The Governor’s signing indicated the keen need for economic development in contemporary Yap. Intriguingly, this need has been sensed but never truly materialized since the Trust Territory regime. As I noted in Chapter Three, Yap was once known as the most opposed to tourism development in the US Trust Territories (Hanlon 1998: 122; Rubinstein and Mulalap 2014: 9). When a Tokyo-based corporation proposed a resort complex, “Yap Nature Life Garden, Inc.” in Maap Municipality in the early 1970s, the chiefs of Maap formed a council, and replied with a petition with 168 adults (out of 241 adult residents in Maap). The petition was translated into English, which clearly expressed their disagreement, and accused the resort project of “usurping lands, displaying dictatorial manners in the area.” The need of people’s welfare and economic improvement were certainly felt and emphasized, yet the petition argued that economic development proposals have to be “locally controlled and free of foreign exploitation” (Hanlon 1998: 124). While the project’s aims were “intentionally” obscured, it was “causing inevitable and irreversible injury to the pride and customs of the people” (Hanlon 1998: 124).

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<sup>48</sup> This statement probably should be made later on. I am not sure when ETG began to insist on Yap among all FSM’s island states. However, it is evident that in the later part of 2012, when the people in Yap were not as welcoming to ETG as some leaders, and ETG had enormous obstacles in acquiring the land, it was said that FSM national government once asked if ETG would like to shift to other islands. But ETG refused this suggestion and chose to stay in Yap.

<sup>49</sup> See the picture copy of ETG’s photobook (<https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/etgs-plan-in-yap-july-2012/#jp-carousel-74>)

The fundamental reason of local resistance to development was compellingly demonstrated, “to combat the sensible predictions of those who do not love us enough” (Hanlon 1998: 125-127).

The form of Maap *piluung*’s organization is noteworthy: *piluung* and *langanpagel* (Hanlon understood as “high chiefs and elected officers”) banded together, formed the Council of Maap, and defended “the land they had inherited in trust from their fathers.” They drafted a formal Charter to demonstrate their goal, and translated it into English (Hanlon 1998: 125). Forty years later, when similar debates resurfaced in Yap, the chiefs from Maap were also involved. The themes remained similar: economic development is needed, but it has to be controlled by the locals and respect Yapese traditions and customs (*yalean nu Wa’ab*). However, the financial sustainability of the both the FSM national government and Yap State Government have become worrisome to the government employees, and the scale of tourism investment has become much more grandiose—it is not confined to two villages in a municipality,<sup>50</sup> but may affect the whole island. The unity displayed by the Council of Maap to defend land has lamentably gone. For most Yapese, what tormented them most was not accepting or refusing ETG’s development project, but the fact that the island population has been split—each one has different opinions concerning ETG’s investment. They detested the presence of “concerned bystanders”—foreigners who became openly involved as well.<sup>51</sup> Those foreigners, in some Yapese’ perception, split the once-united Yapese population.

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<sup>50</sup> In the case of the Maap resort event, they were Cho’ol and Wachalab. Significantly, while the president of the contemporary Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) is the son of Bernard Gaayan, who was the president of the Council of Maap in the 1970s, the president of the anti-development group, Tim Mo’on, comes from Cho’ol.

<sup>51</sup> The term “concerned bystanders” was used by Henry Norman, an American who stayed in Yap during the 1970s. He actively posted detailed analysis and warnings against ETG’s investment on his Facebook wall, as well as in the Yapese Facebook forums. A lot of Yapese appreciated his concerns, while some remained skeptical of him. For me, as a concerned foreigner, I was once active in the Facebook forum in reposting the Yap State News Brief before mid-September 2012, but soon became quiet and began to form a blog (Wordpress) to post the news about ETG events in Yap, also videotaping the public meetings in Yap Legislature and having sympathetic Yapese upload them

## People's Understanding: II

Compared with the roaming hearsay about the Chinese investment in Colonia, in the village, the life rhythm remained calm as usual, as if the Chinese investors had not come to Yap. What exactly does the investor like to do? Except for some keywords such as “golf courses, hotels, casinos,” my host family had no clear idea—at least when speaking in front of me. Probably because we were living in a village far away from Colonia, or because the information distribution in Yap is always uneven, some people had a fuller picture than others, but nobody claimed to know it all. Proper connections (*tha'a*) certainly determine the flow of information to some degree. Those who work in the government offices have better access to the new developments, and might hear some pieces of it, yet surely no one has the full picture. Moreover, the attention was directed to certain state leaders, such as Governor Anefal and the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”). They hold significant government offices and visited China. Additionally, they signed the agreements with ETG.<sup>52</sup>

In late April, because of a connection with the Yap Women's Interest Office and a youth association, I attended a meeting with ETG and representatives from these groups. During the meeting, a flyer was disseminated. It was our first time seeing ETG's project printed in black and white, on letter-sized paper, two sided, in English, in a very small font. The meeting took place on April 24, a Tuesday afternoon, in a small room near the Community Center. About thirty people attended, including representatives of the Yap Women's Association, members of a semi-

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on mass media. I was also warned for being overly involved in the development affairs, especially concerning the *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) controversy.

<sup>52</sup> Till the town hall meeting held in May 21, 2012, no one—except for the people who signed the document themselves—was sure about how many documents and what kind of documents were signed. On May 22, 2012, in the afternoon, the State Government held the first open forum, and the signed documents were admitted for the first time (Yap State News Brief, May 22, 2012).

governmental youth organization, OurYAP, American pastors, expats, and those who just walked in out of curiosity. On ETG's side, three representatives from China attended: two men and one woman. During the meeting, numerous questions were raised, including how much land ETG was planning to acquire, the length of the land lease, how they would they deal with the building regulations in Yap (the height should be less than three floors), how they would deal with the sewage, how they would estimate the environmental impacts, and how they would conduct the environmental impact assessment. ETG's representative did not provide detailed answers, because ETG had not yet acquired any land, hence a concrete plan could not be finalized.

After the meeting, I spoke with the officer for the Yap Women's Interest Office as well as the officer for the Yap Women's Association. Leona, a smart woman in possession of information from different channels, revealed to me that before ETG met with the youth and women, ETG had already met with the local businessmen in the Chamber of Commerce—a governmental organization for business affairs. "Local businessmen asked if they can collaborate with ETG, but ETG said they only work with international big business. It looks like there is no chance for the local business. They were desperate."

Actually, the Investment Agreement, along with the concepts "MOU," "Strategic Framework of Agreement," and even "ETG," were not totally comprehensible to most of the Yapese. In March 2012, while catching a ride with my Yapese relatives from the town to the village after work, a man (my MHSDH)<sup>53</sup> began to talk with me about ETG's investment. His wife, who works at the Yap State Archives and is closely related to my Yapese mother, asked

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<sup>53</sup> He is my Yapese mother's husband's sister's daughter's husband, coming from Satawal, the most distant neighboring island of the Yap State, close to Chuuk. Satawal is best known for the legendary seafarer, Mau Pialug, who helped the "renaissance" of long-distance seafaring of Hawaiians and Carolinians (see Krause 2016: 274).

“What does ETG stand for?” We explained the company acronym to her. And then she asked, “What does MOU mean?” Neither of us could answer except to say it is a kind of official, formal document, carrying certain quasi-legal authority for the two signing parties. I learned the full name of it (Memorandum of Understanding) in a conversation with a Legislature employee in late April. In late May, my Yapese friend sent the various acronyms of ETG to me:

Here in Yap, some people think that the acronym ETG was probably meant to stand for "Ever Too Greedy" because their business proposal seems to be too one-sided; others—who would want to know who they are actually dealing with before taking chances with a full commitment—refer to the acronym as "Extra Terrestrial Gambling." Still others, who feel complacent with the status quo, regard ETG as "Exception To Greatness." Those who don't know how to spell the famous philosopher's name think it means "Extremely Tumultuous Gonfucianism."

Now, if there is at least a little truth in each of the meaning above, then ETG is really an Extremely Troublesome Group! Or at least, that is how they are perceived by some. (May 28, 2012, email communication)

While making jokes of the various word combinations, the Yapese man also acknowledged

ETG's effort in the follow-up email exchange:

ETG is a group of very powerful, smart, hard-driven and well-to-do people that we all must recon [*sic*] with. They certainly deserve everyone's respect! It's just the acronym that they go by that provokes the human mind to wonder if it could be played out to elicit the humor from a serious situation that some regard to portend gloominess (May 30, 2012, email communication)

A lot of Yapese described ETG representatives as “aggressive” and “persistent.” For the Yapese, “being respectful” (*liyeor*) is the protocol for social interaction, which also implies not imposing one's will on another in decision-making. For example, if the Yapese show some hesitancy in making decisions, it is supposed that they may need time to contemplate the issues at hand, or more commonly, they need to consult with the related people. Others respect the time for contemplation and need for consultation and retain the social space and temporal duration until the decision is eventually made and announced. However, the Chinese—at least ETG

representatives—seemed to grant less time for locals to make a thoughtful decision and expressed strong will when interacting with Yapese. “Being too aggressive” was the common local comment I heard about ETG representatives.

### Town Hall Meeting

Responding to the Legislature’s request to “inform the people,” in May 21, 2012, a town hall meeting was scheduled in Colonia, and every Yapese was invited.<sup>54</sup> At the meeting, representatives of the Executive Branch included: Mr. Jeremiah Luther, the Acting Attorney General of the Yap State Government; Former Governor Vincent Figir, Director of Public Work and Transportation; Mr. Ruotpong Pongliyab, Director of Department of Youth and Civic Affairs; Mr. John Paul Fattamag, Acting Director of EPA; and Mr. Vitus Foneg, Chief of Commerce and Industry. However, only Mr. Luther, the Acting Attorney General,<sup>55</sup> an American expatriate lawyer, answered all the questions. According to the Yap State News Brief, he clarified several misunderstandings. First, there were indeed several documents being signed between the Yap State Government and ETG (see below). However, Mr. Luther emphasized that this did not mean that “ETG will get whatever it wants from the Governor.” It did not mean that “the Governor, Legislature, or Court of Yap are forced to support ETG’s proposed project” either.

The confirmed signed documents include:

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<sup>54</sup> The meeting was originally scheduled for May 12; however, the Governor’s wife passed away before then, and the meeting was rescheduled for May 21. The Governor’s wife’s sudden passing also raised rampant rumors. People expressed their sorrow and regrets over her death. Some people thought it was because of witchcraft; some thought she was dying because of stress; some said she died because of shame.

<sup>55</sup> Mr. Luther is the acting attorney general but not the official one, for the official one had resigned in late February. Despite Mr. Luther’s efforts in negotiating ETG legal documents on behalf of the Yap State Government, until he left Yap in October 2013, he was not appointed as the official attorney general. The new attorney general is a Yapese man, son of the second Governor in Yap, and worked in the government.

- (1) Strategic Framework of Cooperation, signed by Governor Anefal and ETG, on April 21, 2011. In the document, the Yap State Governor “agreed to attempt to help ETG make its project in the State.” On ETG’s side, they promised that the investment project “would not harm the economy, traditions, health or environment of the State of Yap or its people” (Yap State News Brief, May 22, 2012).<sup>56</sup>
- (2) *Memorandum of Understanding between Yap State Government and ETG, signed by the Director of the Department of Youth and Civic Affairs, Mr. Ruotpong Pongliyab, on October 21, 2011.*<sup>57</sup> According to the News Brief, the document “*simply commits both parties to continue to communicate and negotiate in good faith regarding specific needs of the project*” (ibid.).
- (3) *Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Piluung and ETG, signed on January 12, 2011. Mr. Luther said, “The Council pledges its support for ETG’s proposed development and agrees to act as mediator between landowners and ETG regarding Land Lease”* (ibid.).<sup>58</sup>

As stated by those who attended the meeting, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor did not show up. ETG’s representatives were not there. The cabinets remained quiet and left the

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<sup>56</sup> Despite the supposedly harmless content, this document was not revealed to the Yap State Legislature upon their several requests in the beginning of 2012. The document was eventually transmitted to the Legislature on July 2, 2012.

<sup>57</sup> This news was never reported in the Yap State News Brief either. The signing place is likely to have been in ETG’s headquarter, Chengdu, Sichuan, China.

<sup>58</sup> The description relating to the weight of those documents shifted here. In summer 2013, the “adopted son” of the Council of Piluung’s chairman tried to ameliorate his adoptive father’s public image by telling me the chairman is indeed a very nice person, but simply did not know what he was signing. Later on, another Yapese commented: the Council of Piluung has a legal counsel, a Yapese lawyer, who should have explained the implication and significance of the signed document to him.

microphone to Mr. Luther.<sup>59</sup> After the meeting, attendees were grumbling as usual. One Yapese man perceptively pointed out to me: first of all, neither the Governor nor the ETG representatives was present. “So the people in the inner circle of information were not available on hand.” The time of the meeting also aroused suspicion, for the time was not friendly to the commuters and employees.<sup>60</sup> After the long introduction of ETG—how ETG came to Yap, who brought them, and the process they have been through so far, ETG’s goal and administrative obstacles, only one hour was left for questions. The acting Attorney General, an American expatriate, answered most of the participants’ questions, which also dissatisfied some Yapese, for “he sounded as if he was representing the Yapese and their interests.” According to a Yapese man’s observation,<sup>61</sup>

Many people who were in the audience felt that there should be a repeat of the public education effort; otherwise, the whole exercise of the Town Hall meeting will be rendered incomplete and meaningless.[...] However, at the Town Hall meeting, the audience was told and reminded, time and again, that the economic prosperity of the State is hinging on the level of cooperation the Legislature would want to exercise in mobilizing the mass-tourism industry as being proposed by ETG.

Despite people’s dissatisfaction, ETG was still planning the investment. The Yapese were also coming up with more ways to voice their disagreement—there was no longer any hesitation.

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<sup>59</sup> According to a Yapese man who attended the meeting, Vitus Foneg supplemented the answer at once; beside that, it was Mr. Luther who talked all the time.

<sup>60</sup> The meeting was said to be “strategically scheduled” at 2:30 pm. At that time, most of the government employees were at work and unable to attend. A lot of commuting Yapese catch the bus to go to their villages at 4:40pm. In fact, during my stay in Yap, almost all significant government meetings took place in the morning. NGO meetings usually began at 5pm to accommodate participants’ schedules. For those members who do not own cars, they catch rides with others.

<sup>61</sup> The following quote was from an email exchange between me and the author.



## Disagreeing Voices from the Catholic Church and Yap Women's Association

On July 13-15, the Catholic Church initiated a three-day workshop on human rights, specifically human-centered development vs. economic development, and invited everyone in Yap to join. Fr. Gregory Muckenhaupt was invited from Pohnpei to Yap to facilitate the workshop. Ten days later, the Vicariate Office of Yap issued a public letter to its church members (see Appendix 4).<sup>62</sup>

This Vicariate letter details the six documents that had been signed by the Yap State Government and ETG—the most systematic list so far. It further criticizes the Governor's Office's lack of clear information, which resulted in great anxiety. It emphasizes that the Catholic Church does not oppose economic development, but cares more about human-centered development—including “body, mind, spirit and culture.” It cautioned that ETG's intent to build hotels for 10,000 room guest capacity by 2020, along with the golf courses and casinos, would be detrimental to the fragile environment in Yap. It specifically questioned the legal status and social repercussions of building casinos in Yap, such as money laundering, human trafficking and drug trade. It inquired, before ETG's Master plan was reviewed, how the government could make sure that ETG's environmental impacts are tolerable and fully assisting ETG's investment. It also restated that it was not yet documented that ETG was fully committed to improving the infrastructure in Yap. The letter prioritized the Yapese cultural connection to land, and the consequence of land commodification. This paragraph is worthy of quoting here:

The project will also require ETG to lease large parcels of land on Yap, a significant portion of which is collectively owned. This will constitute the largest transfer of land use in the history of Yap over a period of just a couple years. For generations, land has formed the

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<sup>62</sup> Catholic Church's public letter (Vicariate's letter) can also be retrieved on a local voluntary association's website: <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/peoples-petitions-and-public-letters/>

basis of our social systems for the estates, clans and villages. What will the social and cultural effects be of converting our land into a monetary commodity that is no longer tied to our estates or villages? How will our people deal with the very sudden and rapid loss of this cultural heritage? What will this do to the unity of our families? Will some people in positions of traditional authority profit more than others? Will the *pilmingaay* and other members of the lower castes benefit from this project equally in an economically just way? In other words, will the rich get richer and the poor get poorer? (Vicariate's Letter, see Appendix 4)

At the end, the letter asks the church members to exercise the civil rights to fully participate in the decision-making process, which has to be made on the prerequisite of enough transparent information provided. In the last paragraph, it requires the Governor, Council of *Piluung*, and Council of *Tamol* to be faithful public servants, to remember people's trust in them.

This letter was three pages long and contained more than 1,700 words. It was written in English (instead of Yapese) by the Catholic Father, John Hagileiram, who is a Jesuit Priest from Eauripik (the neighboring island of Yap). It was posted on the announcement board of the Catholic Church, widely emailed among those who had internet access, and posted on the discussion forum.<sup>63</sup> Even so, the Yap State News Brief did not say anything about the letter.<sup>64</sup> In fact, I got the letter from an American grant-writer, who worked for State Government to apply grants for various projects carried out in Yap. My Yapese family, who are Seventh Days Adventists, was not aware of the letter.<sup>65</sup>

In late July, the Yap Women's Association also delivered a public letter. The letter states: 1) the women do not consider Yap as "poor" since the relatives are well taken of—compared with the homeless in the rich countries; 2) Yapese kinship is intertwined with land titles; and foreign

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<sup>63</sup> One of which is <http://www.scubaboard.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-398909.html>

<sup>64</sup> So, who actually read the letter? How was the letter publicized (since there is no "public media" mentioned it)? I got it from an American grant writer (hired by the Yap State Government), but how about the Yapese?

<sup>65</sup> The Seventh Day Adventist Church operates a school in Yap, which has become a top choice for the parents who are concerned about children's education. Despite its significance in local education, SDA tried to be outside of the Chinese development controversy.

companies' land-acquisition may sever the traditional kin ties; 3) envisioning a gigantic company will bring a significant number of foreign workers and local people will be forced to drift away because of limited land and global warming—which the neighboring islanders are suffering now; 4) they are worried about the consequence of landownership suspension during the land-leasing period; and 5) the environmental capacity and medical equipment in Yap is not sufficient to host such an large scale investment and such a high number of migrant workers.

The letter was sent to the Yap State Governor, Yap Legislature Speaker, Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”), Council of *Tamol* (“Council of the chiefs from the outer islands”), and two Yapese Congressmen serving at the FSM National Congress (see Appendix 5).<sup>66</sup> It was written in Yapese and English, for Yapese language carries a stronger persuasive power.<sup>67</sup> This letter, similarly, was not reported in the Yap State News Brief.

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<sup>66</sup> Yap Women's Association's public letter can be retrieved on a local voluntary association's website:

<https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/peoples-petitions-and-public-letters/>

<sup>67</sup> When I asked for a copy of the Yapese translation, I was told that the Yapese version is under revision, and I only got the English version. When I discussed the Women's Association's attitude about ETG's plan, Leona, the officer, told me, “Women have already decided. They don't like it [ETG's project]. They do not think it is good for the women.” However, the officer, who is the daughter of an American biologist and a high-ranking Yapese man, also expressed her frustration, “But I am disappointed with the women. They do not like ETG, but they do not like to show up to say we do not like it. You see, at the workshop for ETG to explain their agenda and for us to raise questions, a lot of them did not show up. I know most of the women are occupied with various duties. But I need to make a lot of phone calls to ask them to come to join the meeting, to explain them why they should come. That is very time-consuming.”

## Historical Moment: Governor Anefal Signs Investment Agreement with ETG

Right after the dissemination of ETG's photobook in late July, the Yap State Governor signed the Investment Agreement with ETG on Saturday, August 11, 2012, in spite of people's petitions, the Catholic Church and Women's Association's public letters, as well as the Speaker's letter, and the Legislature's resolution.

The Investment Agreement signified another phase of Yap's relation with ETG. Before then, six draft versions had been exchanged between the Governor's office and ETG. The Governor transmitted the fifth version (Yap's counter-offer to ETG's draft) to the Yap State Legislature for review, and the Legislature held a series of public hearings on each item from late July to early August. Certainly the pace was too slow for ETG in the real business world. Between August 8th and 9th, the Governor transmitted the sixth version to the Legislature, and without waiting for the Legislature's approval or comments, under pressure from the Chinese side, the Governor and ETG's chairperson signed the Investment Agreement on August 11, a Saturday evening, at the Yap Pacific Dive Resort—where the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) had signed the MOU with ETG.

The Yapese were shocked when they learned about this news on Monday, August 13. Some people saw it on the Facebook discussions; some people saw it in the State News Brief that

afternoon.<sup>68</sup> Although people were completely unaware of this event, it was not as “secretive” as most Yapese would describe it. Members of Legislature received phone calls about the signing ceremony and some of the senators also attended.<sup>69</sup>

The ceremony itself must have been a relief for Governor Anefal. At the ceremony, he made a brief remark:

“[T]he year 2023 brings an end in the economic provision of the Compact between the Federated States of Micronesia and the United States, to me that would be the funeral for the Federated States of Micronesia. If you want to prolong and postpone this funeral ceremony then I think we have to take a bold step and this is the right time to do so. During the remaining 10 to 11 years before 2023 I think Yap has to do something.” (Resource: Yap State News Brief, August 13, 2012)<sup>70</sup>

The Governor’s worry was legitimate and shared by a certain number of Yapese. But this reasoning was not wholly accepted by the locals. Right after the signing ceremony, people gathered in Colonia—the Community Center, St. Mary Church, and the Legislature. They were worried, concerned, saddened, and angry. Two sets of petitions, two public letters issued by the Catholic Church and Yap Women Association were completely ineffective. They were willing to do anything to prevent ETG from investing in Yap, which, to them, was synonymous with “getting the land from Yap for an unthinkable amount of time.”

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<sup>68</sup> The State News Brief was issued in the afternoon during the week—usually before 5pm. Most Yapese do not have internet access at home and only checked email at the office that morning. They learned about the signing the next morning.

<sup>69</sup> In the news about the signing ceremony, there were six pictures of those who attended the meetings. They were understood as “endorsing ETG’s investment.” One senator simply attended the meeting out of curiosity. He introduced another resolution to halt ETG’s investment, which also caused confusion on both sides.

<sup>70</sup> The news brief is retrievable at <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/timeline/>

In the last section I have detailed the responses and reactions when Yapese first heard of the tourism investment. They initiated petitions, wrote public letters, and sent those documents to the “state leaders,” including the Governor, members of the Legislature and the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”), and the Yapese Congress Delegates.<sup>71</sup> But all these documents were drafted prior to September 2012, when a new dispute arose that focused on the *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”).

In the long, ongoing waves of disputations, the contentions surrounding *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) is perhaps the most spectacular. One could even say that it precipitated a crisis in the traditional webs of power. The letter issued by *Dalip pi Nguchol*, commanded ETG to leave Yap, provoked a strong reaction from the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”), which eventually publicly detailed the “pathways” (*tha’a*) pertaining to high-ranking *tabinaw*, to which the Council members belong, and openly denied the legitimacy claimed by the “alleged” *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”).

### Command from The Three Paramount Chiefs (*Dalip pi Nguchol*)

On September 20, a man from Rull brought me a letter-sized paper in Colonia and asked me to “post it on the internet.”<sup>72</sup> Similar to the Yap Women’s Association’s public letter, this letter also addressed the state leaders: Governor Anefal, Speaker Henry Falan, and the Chairmen of the two traditional Councils.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, the letter was addressed to ETG’s chairman, Mr. Deng Hong, and sent to ETG’s office in Yap. In contrast to the previous public official and formal

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<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, none of the public letters or petitions were addressed to the judiciary branch.

<sup>72</sup> Why did he ask me to do so? Partially because I would occasionally repost the news from the Yap State News Brief on the Yapese Facebook forum. Another reason was that, although this man had been active in the protesting group, he wanted to be “hands-off” in affairs in an internet forum. It is also highly possible that whoever orchestrated the event wanted to use a foreign anthropology student/researcher to support their claim.

<sup>73</sup> The pdf file of this letter can be retrieved from <https://concernedyapcitizens.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/dalip-pi-nguchol-letter.pdf>

letters, the letter was very short without explaining any reason for agreeing or disagreeing with ETG's investment. Its format was unusual as well. In the top center of the page, a heading "THE THREE PARAMOUNT CHIEFS" was printed in upper-case letters, with a subheading of "Paramount Chiefs." Underneath the two headings was a line, "State of Yap." After marking the date and naming the recipients, this letter had a title similar to emails: "RE: ETG."

The full text of the letter, as well as the format, is included in Appendix 6. Noticeably, instead of placing the personal name in the front of each signatory, the "Estate" (*tabinaw*) names were elevated above.<sup>74</sup> After the Estate name was the personal name, followed by a title, "Paramount Chief," and then the individual signature. Notably, this letter was written in a manner very similar to the petition letter drafted by the chiefs of Maap in response to a Japanese resort project. The Maap petition was released on January 3, 1973. It read, "To Whatever Legal, Governmental and Other Authorities or Persons It May Concern Within and Beyond the District of Yap in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and to All Who Love Justice" (Hanlon 1988: 124).<sup>75</sup>

The italicized *Dalip pi Nguchol* draws reader's attention. *Dalip* means "three." "*Nguchol*" refers to the stones that support the cooking pot. *Dalip pi Nguchol* is commonly translated as "Three Paramount Chiefs." When a Yapese is asked, "What is *Dalip pi Nguchol*?" The first

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<sup>74</sup> Yapese frequently use the English word "estate" when they speak of *tabinaw*. *Dayif* means house stone foundation. Yapese prefer using "estate" when referring to *tabinaw*, probably because the word "estate" connotes a bundle of people, properties, set of titles, privileges and obligations, just as *tabinaw* does.

If I asked them what does *tabinaw* mean, their first answer would be "family." If I asked how to translate "estate" into Yapese, the answer is also "*tabinaw*." In my mind, estate and family are not synonymous, but *tabinaw* connotes a richer meaning, which includes *dayif*, *suwon* (authority), naming repertoire, people, land, affiliated privileges (such as fishing rights, or having certain people doing particular kinds of services) and duties.

<sup>75</sup> In fact, I was completely ignorant of the Maap event till leaving the field for a long time. When I was in Yap, a friend from Maap once told me that there was an initiative to have a hotel on Maap beach many years ago, but the elders decided "We don't want Wakiki Beach." It was the first time I had heard of it.

answer is usually “Paramount Chiefs.” Paramount chiefs, sometimes translated as “The Three Pillars,” are supposed to be the three highest chiefs in Yap, as the supreme traditional authority. In Yapese beliefs, *Dalip pi Nguchol* do not address daily, mundane, worldly affairs. They only voice their authority in critical times, especially in social or natural turmoil or upheavals, such as famines, island-wide warfare, etc. They are believed to be the absolute power in Yap. Once they speak, that is the final command, not disputable (fieldnote).<sup>76</sup>

The letter was released on a Facebook forum on Thursday. On the following Monday, another letter was published in Yap State News Brief.

As noted in Chapter Three, Yapese politics possesses a triangulated power structure, with the *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”), three cooking stones, at the center. However, since this structure of power has not been used for decades, the knowledge about the form of the island-wide traditional power system has been fading from generation to generation. Although the position of the three “estates” might remain unchanged, who can speak for those estates is disputed, and the relative position of the three estates is not absolute.<sup>77</sup> The unfolding controversy began with a letter from *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) from three men representing Arib, Ru’way and Buluwol estates. But, their legitimacy was soon challenged by other powerful *piluung* (“Chiefs”). Eventually, the three paramount estates were skillfully replaced by six, and only one of the three remained in the new powerful seats.

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<sup>76</sup> This common belief bears an unanswered question: who are *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”)? Who can speak for *Dalip pi Nguchol*? They are believed to speak for three estates in Tomil, Gagil and Rull. But who is endowed with the prerogative to speak for those estates? Those questions, as well as the legitimate states, engender unprecedented controversies.

<sup>77</sup> I noticed once that the map of “nug,” documented in Lingenfelter’s book, is placed on the table of Yap Historic Preservation Office. At that time, I began to sense that probably the ethnographies have been used to preserve (if not invent) “culture.”



### Disputing *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”)

On September 21, Yap State New Brief reported, “The Three Pillars, Paramount Chiefs of the State of Yap known as *Dalip pi Nguchol*” jointly signed a letter to the state leadership, responding to the “alleged letter” by the *Dalip pi Nguchol* issued on September 17 (see Appendix 7). The letter openly challenged the legitimacy of the previous letter. It suggested, the real *Dalip pi Nguchol* had never been consulted, although the previous letter was allegedly written by the *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”).

Compared to the previously disclosed letter, the newer one was written in more formal language, and was carefully addressed to the Yapese but not to ETG. It was noted at the end of the letter:

Since the *Dalip pi Nguchol* represents, serves, and protects its entire people of Yap State, it remained within its role by addressing its State Government Leadership only. An official copy to the ETG is per discretion of the Government.

The signatories are also names familiar to the ordinary Yapese. Among the people I have asked in Gagil and Maap, some refrained from commenting on the two letters, but almost everyone admitted that the names on the new letter “sound more likely to be a real *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”).” One man pointed it out to me: the signatories did not claim that they are *Dalip pi Nguchol*, they just said that the real *Dalip pi Nguchol* were not consulted. Although the Yap State News Brief addressed the authors of the new letter as “The Three Paramount Chiefs” or *Dalip pi Nguchol*, those senders did not confirm that. The man said, affirmatively, “The people who wrote this letter dared not to claim they are *Dalip pi Nguchol*, because they know they are not.”

On September 24, in the Yap State News Brief, one of the signatories from Rull voided his signature on the first letter. A letter explained his reason: the first letter was brought to him in haste, and he did not have time to think it through. After signing, he understood that the letter was “clearly inconsistent with the traditional system of authority *ko re Kan Rull ney*.” (See Appendix 8 for the entire text). In addition, the letter also detailed the “pathway” (*tha’a*), which was

*Lungun e Nguchol e boy ko Bulche’. Lungun e Bulche’ e boy u Tithera’. Lungun e Ulun e boy u Man’ol. An nu Ru’way e ba plibthiren e binaw ko re Rull ney.* All the *Ulun*, who have traditional political connections to Balabat, and all the *Bulche’*, who have traditional political connections to Ngolog, know this. (Yap State News Brief, September 24, 2012; Appendix 8)

The text suggested: Nguchol is subordinate to Bulce;<sup>78</sup> Bulce’s authority is subordinate to Tithera (an estate in Ngolog village). Ulun’s authority is subordinate to Man’ol (an estate in Balabat village) Ruway is the “elder of the land” (*plibthiren e binaw*) of the whole Rull Municipality.

The letter was signed by John B. Ranganbay, representing Ru’way Estate, witnessed by Philip Ranganbay,<sup>79</sup> and Xerox copies (xc) were sent to the Governor, Speaker, and the two traditional councils.

This letter, similarly, provoked many discussions. Although the listing of “connections” (*tha’a*) appeared to be very convincing to outsiders (such as me), people who are familiar with

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<sup>78</sup> The word “boy” has the meaning of “servant.” Even though the following sentences are less disputable, the first phrase, “*Lungun e Nguchol e boy ko Bulche’*” is not accepted by most Yapese I have talked to. According to the common Yapese knowledge, ideally, *Nguchol* is supposed to be mediating between *Bulce* and *Ulun*, not subordinate to either side. For some Yapese, this phrase is tantamount to claiming Therath (an estate in *Bulce*) is *Nguchol*, which is unacceptable to the Yapese understanding. However, I myself do not have many connections to Rull, so this man’s statement cannot be further verified.

<sup>79</sup> Philip Rangabay is John B. Rangabay’s son. But his Yapese name is Ramag, not Rangabay. Although Philip “took the name of Rangabay,” it is not taken for granted that he is endowed with the obligation and authority associated with his father’s name. The authority to speak for Ru’way estate is “decided within the family” (fieldnote).

the politics in Rull pointed out the inner political maneuvers to me. However, almost all Yapese refrained from commenting on “who is *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) in public, especially to an outsider. A man from Maap said, it is part of their upbringing (*machib*) that they should not comment on who is *Dalip pi Nguchol*, or the affairs of *Dalip pi Nguchol*. “As a Yapese, we were trained not to talk about those things.”

## Behind the Scenes

I frequently wondered if there were numerous occasions, similar to what I saw between Speaker and Governor, on which something had taken place “behind the scenes.” The public letters, news briefs, Facebook postings, Legislature’s Resolutions, people’s petitions, and the foreigners (for example, the American man who was Acting Attorney General—who advised Governor Anefal throughout ETG’s affairs but eventually did not get promoted as the real Attorney General<sup>80</sup>—and no doubt my participation in the CCG group), might just be the props. When I accidentally glanced at the envelope containing the first disputed *Dalip pi Nguchol*’s (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) letter, which was carefully locked in one of CCG’s core member’s offices and had a Legislature Senator’s name on it, I could not stop wondering: who obtained the signatures on the first *Dalip pi Nguchol*’s (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) letter? Who found those three people who agreed to sign it? It was such a risky endeavor. John B. Rangabay, the elder signed on the first letter, the legitimate one from Rull, withdrew his signature almost immediately—it was said the he was under the pressure of young Victor

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<sup>80</sup> Before late February 2012, an American lawyer was sworn in as Attorney General of the Yap State Government, but quit the job for family concerns. And then, the seat was vacant for almost a year, and three assistant attorneys (two Americans, one Yapese) took turns acting as the Attorney General. Eventually, the Yapese was chosen by Governor Anefal as the official one, despite the fact that one American attorney advised the Governor most often.

Nebeyan to void his own signature.<sup>81</sup> Aloysius Faimau from Tomil, who signed on behalf of the Arib estate, had been residing in Guam for years for kidney dialysis. Although certain people knew he was still fully alert, for some Yapese, he was “paralyzed” or “in a coma.” According to one Tomil man working at the Governor’s office, Aloysius Faimau’s land was confiscated by the village as a punishment for his signing.<sup>82</sup> The man who signed for Bulwol in Gagil, William Yad, who attended Concerned Citizens Group’s public meetings, had to defend himself in a village men’s meeting in Gachpar. He listed his father’s duty and his connections as the reason why he felt he could sign the letter as speaking for the Bulwol estate. After his statement, no objection was raised during the meeting. But when he excused himself and left before the meeting was finished, his statement was completely denied by another high-ranking man—a man working in the government.<sup>83</sup> William Yad has been seriously ill since spring 2013. I occasionally spotted a woman driving him from Gachpar to town, and he was wearing a mask; I felt pain for his illness.<sup>84</sup>

In comparison, the signatories on the second letter were strong, young men whose names circulated more widely. Victor Nebeyan (in Tithera estate, Rull) possesses a private law firm; Francis Fithingmow (in Gachpar, Gagil) is always accompanied whenever he goes out, and people pay him respect by shying away when they see him coming from afar. Steven Mar (in Teb, Tomil) often resides in his house, and people go to visit him. Although who can speak for

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<sup>81</sup> Victor Nebeyan has a brother named Arthur Ruwepong. I was told that they are the sons of the deceased Ruwepong—who tried to usurp the traditional authority after WWII, and was exiled to Guam (sending typhoons back to Yap as his revenge). But this information is only from one person (others remained silent). I may need to verify it with others.

<sup>82</sup> Again, this information is only from one person, and needs to be verified.

<sup>83</sup> I was of course not allowed to attend that meeting. The information was revealed to me by a person from a high-ranking village in Maap, who works in the Legislaure.

<sup>84</sup> My patron in Wanyan, who said he gave Yad the name and also strongly disagreed with ETG’s investment, died this October.

the three highest estates (*Dalip pi Nguchol*) is not settled, Nebeyan, Fithingmow and Mar are seemingly the first candidates for *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”).<sup>85</sup>

In April 2013, a letter, co-signed by Steven Mar (representing Nirnath Estate in Tomil), Francis Fithingmow (Pebnaw Estate in Gagil), Andrew Yinifel (Miryang Estate, Gagil), Victor Nabeyan (Tithera' Estate in Rull), John B. Raganbay (Ruwey Estate in Rull), Thomas Falngin (Man'ol Estate in Rull) was sent to the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”), Governor Anefal, and Speaker Falan (see Appendix 9 for the full text). It says:

1. In the case of Tomil, the village of Teb has not instated a person to the state of their Nguchol for decades now. So the authority of their Nguchol cannot have been legitimately invoked as has been alleged.
2. In the case of Gagil, the person who signed for the estate of Bulwol<sup>86</sup> has admitted to the village of Gachpar that he did not fully understand what he was signing.
3. In the case of Rull, the estate of Ruwey<sup>87</sup> had issued a notice invalidating its Signature on the alleged decree.
4. *Lungun* or the authority of the *Dalip pi Nguchol* is a process of traditional governance that was meant to be employed through consultations or *puruy* between and among certain chiefly estates in Tomil, Gagil, and Rull. Obviously, without consultations with other essential chiefly estates, no single estate can alone effectively dictate over *barba' e nug*, nor can three estates alone effectively exercise traditional authority over the whole State. This is because in order for a directive of the *Dalip pi Nguchol* to pervade all facets of society and be certain to be obeyed, it must be undergirded by the weight and political ties of both the *Bulche'* and *Ulun*. This is the check and balance in our traditional system of governance. The alleged decree of the *Dalip pi Nguchol* was fashioned without the process of consultations among the pertinent estates in Rull, Tomil, and Gagil.

Based on the foregoing, we declare that the *Dalip pi Nguchol* have not decreed that ETG's investment activities in Yap ceases. The responsibility for foreign investment primarily resides in the province of government as a matter of law. And so we ask that officials of government rely upon the application of law and State policy, not an invalid traditional decree, to address whatever issues may still be lingering around the ETG investment project. (Yap State News Brief, April 8, 2013)

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<sup>85</sup> Whether they are *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”) or not is still disputable. Interestingly, they themselves will not admit that they are *Dalip pi Nguchol*, especially when being asked by foreign outsiders.

<sup>86</sup> i.e. William Yad.

<sup>87</sup> It means John B. Rangabay.

The letter reaffirmed that *Dalip pi Nguchol* did not address ETG's investment. In the last paragraph, it stated that the Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs"), being a government institution, has the priority in terms of governmental acts. If the Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs") fails, or when it is necessary, "all the estates in Tomil, Rull, and Gagil" should undertake the decision-making roles of *Dalip pi Nguchol* ("The Three Paramount Chiefs"). According to the signatories, "all the estates in Tomil, Rull and Gagil," means one from Tomil, Nimath Estate (represented by Steven Mar); two from Gagil, Pebnaw Estate (represented by Francis Fithingmow) and Miryang Estate (represented by Andrew Yinifel); and three from Rull, Tithera' Estate (represented by Victor Nabeyan), Ruwey Estate (represented by John B. Raganbay), and Man'ol Estate (represented by Thomas Falngin).

The original text said (also see Appendix 9):

Finally, the Council of *Piluung*, itself an institution of government, is established by the Constitution as the first line of traditional authority to ensure that governmental acts do not adversely affect recognized customs and traditions. If the Council of *Piluung* fails in that mandate, or if out of utmost and absolute necessity, the authority of the *Dalip pi Nguchol* must be brought to bear on an act of government, let that be the decision of all the estates in Tomil, Rull, and Gagil, which have roles in the decision-making process of the *Dalip pi Nguchol*. Kamagar gad. (Yap State News Brief, April 8, 2013)

At this point, *Dalip pi Nguchol* ("The Three Paramount Chiefs"), as well as the letter commanding ETG to leave the island, had been officially rendered "disfranchised"—not only the validity of the letter itself, but also the three signatories. Except for the one who publicly

withdrew and admitted that he made a mistake, one's land properties were confiscated, and one's statement was denied in the village meeting. It was a serious punishment.<sup>88</sup>

Before I conclude this chapter, I would like to review two relating themes from the above-mentioned activities. The first is the idiom of "checks and balances." We have discussed this concept in Chapter Three and Four, and it now reappears in the local complex of power. Another is the meaning of "signing," including people's petition-signing and government officials' agreement-signing.

## Political Idiom: "Checks and Balances" Revisited

In the three previous chapters, I discussed the Yapese idea "checks and balances," which prevails in Yapese social life, ranging from brother/sister relations, *piluung* and father's authority over the child, and the intricate interactions among the three paramount chiefs. Even though it is widely used, there is no Yapese phrase for this idea. When I seized the chance and asked the exact Yapese words for "checks and balances," the response was usually that they did not have those terms in Yapese language,<sup>89</sup> and they tried to find the approximate Yapese words for me. Some of them suggested that the Yapese idea of "three paramount chiefs" exactly conveys the idea of "checks and balances," which implies not only mutual surveillance or monitoring but also the inherent distrust in interpersonal relationships.

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<sup>88</sup> I did not hear too much about the follow-ups of Yad and Faimau. In fact, lacking the infrastructure of public media, the information one got is highly possibly altered according to one's connections. I was cautioned by some Yapese friends that if we try to do "public education" about land rights in the village, we need to be very careful, because "you don't know about Yapese. They will twist what they hear to fit their interests."

<sup>89</sup> I was told by several Yapese friends that "this English phrase catches the Yapese feature of interaction very well, but we do not have an exact Yapese translation for this term." In the Yapese dictionary, there is a word *paeseag* translated as "to settle down something to balance." However, it literally means "to flatten," or to ease the tensions which obstruct the attainment of "peace" (*gapaes*). But neither *paeseag* nor *gapaes* ("peace") allude to "balance".

There are numerous circumstances where “checks and balances” are used to describe relations. It can denote power nuances in the following relations: brother/sister’s interaction over generations;<sup>90</sup> father and village *piluung*’s authority over the son; interaction between male and female; the relation among three *piluung*. All those circumstances suggest one fundamental principle: the power relation is never a one-way monopoly; rather, it is “checks and balances.”

The idea of checks and balances prevails in Yapese thinking. For example, *nguchol*, the figurative metaphor for *The Three Paramount Chiefs*, “the three supporting rocks which hold the cooking pot,” also relates to checks and balances. One key idiom of Yapese sociality is: no absolute authority can monopolize a power relation. No one person, group, fraction can dominate the decision making. The decision making process is a long conversation, each participant has something to contribute, but no one could “take it all.” Yapese have similar rules about gender relations (no men can give commands to women, order them to run errands), at different scales of family, village, municipality, and even the whole island. The intricate interactions between male and female, brother and sister, is expressed in Rebliyan’s explanation, quoted in Chapter Two.<sup>91</sup> This phrase was even used by Yapese as an explanation for bewildering decisions. For example, in the following conversation, I was inquiring after a story about the father and the *piluung*’s (“Chief’s”) conflicting commands over the same boy. The father eventually obeyed the *piluung* (“Chief”), and sent his boy to a deadly task.

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<sup>90</sup> A Yapese would say, “if the brother’s children are not behaving well, the sister can ask them to move to somewhere else. The sister has authority over the brother’s children. It is checks and balances” (Machieng 2013/7/8).

<sup>91</sup> The quote is:

My parents said: we women are inferior to men. We honor them, respect them, but it is like a web, check and balance. Any man can’t go to any lady on the road, say you do this do that. He is not in that position. In the family and village, men are higher. In [cases of] brothers’ children, women are higher. (Rebliyan, 2013/8/7)



[I asked, why his father sent the boy to be killed?]

John: His father could only listen to the chief. That's part of checks and balances. (John Mangefel, 2013/7/13 or 14)

Probably because of intricacy in the interpersonal web of mutual surveillance, the Yapese have an ideology of “everything is three,” for three forms perfect power dynamism: not an over-domination, not a static opposition, but a model that allows balance and generative growth out of the balance.<sup>92</sup> In the development controversy, one set of commentaries suggested that the Governor and the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) did not respect the Legislature—they allied together and became “overpowering” in making a huge decision. The sentiment of being ignored, the request for due respect, were keenly felt by the Speaker of the Eighth Legislature. Parallel to this sentiment was the feeling that such a serious plan, which involved the whole island, should be shared with as many inhabitants on Yap as possible. “People are ill-informed” was one of the main discontents when Yapese began to be aware of the investment plan in summer 2012. It further involves another political idiom: knowledge is power, which entails Yapese valuation of secrecy and concealment (Throop 2010: 36). Secrecy, along with the diffuse distribution of power and knowledge is present at every scale in Yapese society.<sup>93</sup>

“Checks and balances” closely correlates with the Yapese configuration of knowledge—it must be kept separate, fragmented, and guarded from the outsiders. Knowledge cannot be concentrated in a single individual—one person, one family, one village, or “one set of village alliances” (Throop 2010: 36; Egan 1998: 75). The fragmented, guarded, secretive, and land-dependent nature of knowledge is well-captured by Egan in the following delineation:

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<sup>92</sup> “Unity” is another social and political idiom.

<sup>93</sup> As Throop suggested, “[A]t all levels of Yapese social life there are a number of cultural checks and balances in place to ensure that power and knowledge never accumulates solely within the purview of one person, one family, one village, or one set of village alliances” (Throop 2010: 36).

Yapese believed that knowledge had to be fragmented and kept secret to provide bases of power while at the same time curtailing its centralization. Yapese jealously guarded detailed knowledge of histories, of formal political relations and protocols, and of magic and important technical skills. Much of this knowledge was vested in the land of particular Yapese *tabinaw* to be used only by *tabinaw* leaders. Their knowledge often empowered them with some special role in broader political practices, making even the mightiest of Yap paramount chiefs dependent upon them. No one possessed more than a few disconnected pieces of the grand political puzzle of Yapese knowledge, though each piece could only have meaning when joined with other parts. Keeping knowledge secret and segmented prevented the possibility of anyone learning too much and using their accumulated information to press new claims to authority. (Egan 1998: 75-76)

As I briefly mentioned in the Introduction, secrecy and concealment has been a theme in Micronesia (see Petersen 1993; Throop 2010), along with mutual surveillance epitomized in the local idiom of “checks and balances.”

## Document Signing

A final episode worth noting here is the action of signing a document—regardless of whether it is a petition, a formal agreement such as the Investment Agreement signed between the Governor and ETG, or the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) and ETG.<sup>94</sup> When Yapese became aware of the investment, several documents were signed by the Governor and Council of the Chiefs. In Yap, not all information is shared. Some people were still totally ignorant of the investment agenda, scale, and content in spring of 2012, while some already knew about the process (Speaker of Legislature). Some people from Gagil mobilized to form dissenting groups and began to sign petitions, while some people in Tomil only heard the rumors of Chinese investment, without

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<sup>94</sup> The emergence of voluntary associations, such as pro-development and anti-development groups, is also noteworthy. Petitioning and writing public letters have become the protocol for expressing opinions in Yap, which is interesting in itself, especially in comparison with the grassroots groups formed in Papua New Guinea (see West 2006; Golub 2014).

having any knowledge of the investor's interest and government's reaction. For example, a 70-year-old woman who lived in Deboch, Tomil, was completely shocked when she first saw the anti-development petition. She said, "I could not believe that our governor signed those documents!" She called her daughter who worked at one government office, who confirmed that there were several documents being signed.

On November 28, 2012, a group called Y.A.P. presented a petition along with 1,600 signatures to the Legislature.<sup>95</sup> The petition stated: First, they do not want to remove the Governor, but call for the all government branches to work together. They also addressed the economic realities, including national unemployment, outmigration, and dwindling Compact funds, and their dedication to promote awareness and education for a better-informed public. In contrast to the previous petition (requesting the State Government not to cooperate with ETG before people were well-informed), the Legislature planned to have a public hearing on Y.A.P.'s petition. The reason for this, at least as revealed to me by senators I talked to, has resulted from the act of signing the petition. When asked why the Legislature needs to have a public hearing for Y.A.P., several senators said, "We have been getting people's phone calls, wanting to take their signatures off this petition. They said, they do not agree with recalling the Governor, but they also do not agree with ETG."

I myself had never witnessed any occasion of Y.A.P.'s petition-signing. I have seen how the first petition (the one that requested the Government not to proceed with ETG's investment before people were well informed) was signed. Generally, women showed more caution on

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<sup>95</sup> Starting in September 2012, two local voluntary associations began to take shape. One group, which had met several times since summer 2012 during people's petitioning, eventually called themselves the "Concerned Citizens Group." They consisted mostly of the elderly women and they expressed their strong disagreement with the Chinese tourism investment. The other local group called itself the "Yap Awareness Project," formed very quickly in September and announced its establishment on September 20, 2012, in the emailed Yap State News Brief.

petition signing, while men were more active. But the main reason for them to sign the petition was because the person brought it to them. In fact, the act of formal petition-signing, and the locals' reaction to it, may suggest how alien the modern form of protest—for example, a petition—might be to the Yapese living in the village. A Yapese woman in her 60s told me when she encountered with the Y.A.P. petition-signing,

“We three [women] were sitting and chatting in front of a house. A lady came, brought the petition to me. I read it, knew what they were planning, did not want to sign. The woman sitting next to me also did not want to sign. So the lady returned to another elder woman sitting closer to the house. The elder had a hard time reading the text, asked what it is. The lady said, “It means we do not want to remove our Governor.” So the elder lady signed. I did not say a word because I did not want to make her look bad. But I know if she explained the whole thing to the elder woman, she would not sign on it.”

I myself have witnessed some cases of petition-signing in the first anti-development activity in spring 2012. Several male acquaintances signed almost immediately after listening to the person's petition-reading and explanation, even though some were illiterate and just knew how to write their names. Their female relatives were very cautious—some do not speak English and remained suspicious, but some were well-versed in English, just unaware of the reason for petition, and also did not believe that Yap State Government had already signed several documents with a foreign investor. The reluctance and hesitation in signing the petition suggested their unfamiliarity with the petition format, the language it uses (English or printed Yapese), the significance given to signing, also their intuitive consciousness of a world with which they are not acquainted, in which “signing” and the accompanied responsibility is not completely fathomable. In the next chapter, a signing with a severe consequence—signing a land lease, will come to the fore.

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In this chapter, I have reviewed the political uncertainty and economic insecurity experienced by Yapese, and also introduced important participants—the Chinese investor (ETG), people’s understandings, Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”), and the disputed *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”). They are far from exhaustive, for each scene and role in the scenario is significant. The Governor (representing the Executive Branch of the Yap State Government) and Legislature are crucial in this event, as well as the petitioners and the local voluntary associations.<sup>96</sup> I have also explained one feature of Yapese political and interpersonal relations: “checks and balances,” a theme that appeared in the previous chapters, which is correlated with the connotation of mutual surveillance or monitoring, and the idea that knowledge must be kept separate.

As I suggested before, in the development controversy, the strong presence of elder women, *puwelwol*, is phenomenal. They have become the bulk of one grassroots group, the Concerned Citizens Group, held regular meetings, disseminated pamphlets and brochures to caution Yapese landowners about leasing land, met with the Governor, Legislature, FSM National Congressmen, and FSM President. In the next chapter, I will explain the significance of *puwelwol*’s presence, along with the land-leasing issue in the ETG controversy, which is what is really at stake.

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<sup>96</sup> In fact, all those roles were understood by Yapese in terms of their names—Governor Anefal, Speaker Falan, the senators of the eighth Legislature, the persons who spoke for *Dalip pi Nguchol* (“The Three Paramount Chiefs”), members of the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”). The government office positions appeared to be impersonal, while the personal names conveyed rich meanings for the Yapese.

## Chapter Six: Land-leasing and the Presence of *Pulwelwol*

There are two themes in this chapter—land leasing affairs, and the presence of *pulwelwol* (“elderly women”) as the ethical guardians of the values they cherish.<sup>1</sup> One topic in Chapter Two is *mafean* (father’s sisters and their descendants), who are the guardians of the *tabinaw*, and able to wield significant symbolic power in terms of one’s personhood—which is closely tied to the land parcels. *Mafean* denotes a category of persons, not necessarily females (father’s sisters’ descendants include males and females). However, if we take women’s presence as the ethical subject in the regional context, we might be able to have some insight into their hidden authority—they become the ethical subjects when they sense the crisis.

Before I review women’s active presence in the social crisis (at least as locally understood) in Micronesia, I would like to make a brief remark on one hidden dimension of traditional authority in Yap—the relation between *genung* (matrilineal grouping) and *luungun* (“voices”). In Chapter Four, I discussed how Yapese are sensitive to voices in the quiet village life, and how authority sedimented in land is expressed through *luung* or *luungun* (“voices”)—and usually only men are allowed to speak for the land, to express the *luungun*. As I have reiterated throughout this thesis, the Yapese term *Piluung*, roughly translated as “chiefs,” means “many voices.” Furthermore, *luungun*, as well as the ranking or status of certain land, comes from *magaer*, the predecessors’ labor and drudgery continuously vested in the land (see Egan 1998; Throop 2010: 71). The following short remark specifically concerns how the matrilineal

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<sup>1</sup> I was hesitant in using the term “ethical,” for I am not completely familiar with the recent anthropological discussions on ethics—such as Laidlaw (2002, 2013), Robbins (2012), Faubion (2001, 2011), Keane (2015), Lambek et al. (2015), as well as the HAU book symposiums on Laidlaw (2014) and Keane (2016). However, the Yapese elderly women’s strong demonstrations and beliefs are qualified to be termed “ethical”—pursuing ethical projects “to make oneself a certain kind of person,” as “the conscious practice of freedom” (Laidlaw 2002: 322, 324), and fully qualified them as “taking ethical subject positions” (Robbins 2012, in his review of Foubion’s works).

grouping's invested labor in certain high-ranking *tabinaw* plays a significant role in Yapese internal politics.

## Matriliny and Authority

Right after the end of the Second World War, Micronesia was undergoing a regime shift—from Japanese to American hands. Yap Island was suffering from a real social crisis by every definition, including drastic depopulation (Schneider 1955, 1974; Throop 2015). The Office of Naval Research and Peabody Museum at Harvard co-financed an expedition to investigate the depopulation of Yap (Bashkow 1991: 186-187).<sup>2</sup> The expedition team observed:

Indeed, there was no chief of all Yap at all, but a relative equality of the top three. The rightful method, in general, involved...the ownership of a certain sacred tract of land which was passed down in varying fashion, *usually matrilineal*, to the person who would become the next chief. In trying to determine who this person was and the exact method of inheritance, the greatest of confusion and lying was encountered. (Hunt et al. 1949: 183, emphasis added)

The observation is still accurate after sixty years. Right after the Second World War, when the US navy arrived in Yap and raised “an immediate demand to see the chief,” one Yapese claimed he was the chief, and another Yapese confirmed it. The plot was framed by “a couple of the more astute elders,” out of the experience of “having become somewhat accustomed to this sort of request” (Hunt et al. 1949: 183; also see Bashkow 1991: 197-220).

In fact, the complexity of Yapese politics, especially who could speak for the three highest *tabinaw*, has been an issue (see Bashkow 1991: 203). In addition to the well-known saying, “Land is the chief” (*Buut ea piiluung*) (Throop 2010: 43; Lingenfelter 1975: 99; Labby

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<sup>2</sup> The expedition, financed by the Office of Naval Research and Peabody Museum at Harvard, was aiming to investigate the depopulation of Yap. The team consisted of four graduate students: David M. Schneider, William Stevens (cultural anthropologists), Edward Hunt, Jr. (physical anthropologist), and Nathaniel R. Kidder (demographer) (Hunt et al. 1949: 1; see Bashkow 1991).

1976: 16; Bashkow 1991: 194)—while individuals are thought of as the “vehicle or conduit,” and “voice” of the land (Throop 2010: 43)—there are still other concerns about who can speak for the land, among which matrilineal groupings (*genung*) are of crucial significance. Bashkow has already pointed out:

The evidence strongly suggests that before 1860 the custom of reserving ownership of a land estate to the members of one matri-group was unique to the apical land estates in Tomil, Gagil and Rull. In Rull, to judge from recorded genealogies, a putsch displaced the *genung* owners close upon the heels of the arrival of white traders .... In the early stages of Schneider’s fieldwork, he accepted Carroll’s opinion that a transition from matrilineal to patrilineal succession was now imminent, also in Gagil—although in the interests not of Fani’ch’or, but of allowing the competent Fithingmau Tulug to succeed his father .... However, Carroll later decided to uphold the older custom, and he appointed a member of Fithingmau Niga’s matri-group to the colonial district chieftainship. (Bashkow 1991: 203)

This is a kind of “bio-politics”—but not in the Foucauldian definition. In Yap, it simply means that the place of the symbolically paramount *tabinaw* should be inherited by certain a matrilineal group, and, that matrilineal group is defined in terms of “being born from the same belly.” Today, in Yap, the paramount *tabinaw* in Gachpar is still believed to be held by a certain *genung*. However, to discuss who can legitimately speak for which of the highest-ranking *tabinaw* is almost a taboo in Yap. Yapese have been discouraged from talking about this issue since childhood. To inquire about who comes from where is considered highly rude—elder Yapese would immediately know a person’s origin by his/her name without asking. Younger Yapese, or those who are not sufficiently acquainted with the Yapese conversations and stories, are simply not familiar with that kind of information. The meaning of the name, as well as the history encapsulated in the name, remains opaque to them.



## Women's Presence in the Regional Perspective

In the beginning of Chapter Two, I considered the vocal presence of “elder women” (*pulwelwol*) responding to development on Yap as an exceptional phenomenon. The reasons are multiple.

First of all, women usually remain quiet when men are co-presenting in the same place. We have learned that, at the village level, men and women have their own meetings and are in charge of different spheres. Women—especially the older women—do speak in women's meetings. While in the women's meeting, usually the older women talked more, and younger ones remained quiet, and attentively listened. However, beyond the village level, there is almost no publicly-sanctioned position for women to hold, and it seems that men are dominant at the island-wide level.<sup>3</sup>

Also, men hold important positions in the government. Even though women also hold some significant offices—such as clerk in the Legislature, legal counselor in the Legislature, officer in the Women's Interest Office—they are not similar to men. Men can speak in the “public” domain, while women can only talk when they are called upon; for example, representing the Women's Interest Office, or representing the specialist in biology.

Additionally, the capability of speaking in public is also related to ranking. My Yapese host mother, who was from the lowest-ranking village and married to the middle-ranking village, was very reluctant in speaking in the Seventh Day Adventist Church, even though the pastor was encouraging everyone to speak and share their experiences. Another relative, a very wise and

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<sup>3</sup> Beyond the village level, women do talk when they are assigned such a task. For example, at the government meetings, sometimes a female officer is asked to report or make speeches. But the opportunities for men to talk in public are much more common than for women.

experienced man, who lives in the lowest ranking village, once said to me: “If I talk in public, I feel that I am hurting myself.”

Because women rarely speak in public, the fact that the elder women grouped together, took public action, and openly expressed their disagreement with the authority’s decision is itself exceptional. Notably, those older women did not come from lower-ranking places. They met with several significant government officials—even though some of them expressed condescending disagreement to those women—and asked them “not to be irrational, emotional,” but “to be realistic rather than conservative,” to “see the real government’s financial situation.” After those meetings, the elderly women often felt deeply discouraged. But, no matter how frustrated they were, they still held regular meetings and went through all the tedious procedures of forming a local non-governmental group before spring 2013—a group that was constantly labeled as “conservative,” “stubborn,” and “emotional.” But they persisted.<sup>4</sup>

The Yapese elderly women’s activities are not unique in Micronesia. Similar mobilization occurred earlier, such as the Protestant Church’s Chuukese women’s temperance movement (1970s), Palauan women’s antinuclear movement (1980s), and Pohnpeian women’s marching on the streets in 1971 hoping to keep the bars closed (Hezel 2001: 61).<sup>5</sup>

Women in Micronesia, according to Fr. Hezel, held at least four major roles: land guardians, peacekeepers, family and community counselors, and cultural value-producers (Hezel 2001: 57). Female power in community decision making is not as institutionalized and visible as

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<sup>4</sup> This group, even though it consists mainly of elderly women, is still led by men in their fifties. Sometimes older men would join too.

<sup>5</sup> In early summer 1971, an alcohol-related homicide occurred in Pohnpei. In early August, a policeman was killed when trying to separate a drunken brawl. An emergency order was issued, and all the bars in Kolonia were shut down. However, the business community tried to pressure them to reopen the bars. Nearly two hundred women, mostly from Kosrae and Kapingamarangi, marched in the streets on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, aiming to keep the bars closed (Hezel 2001: 57; Marshall and Marshall 1990: 126).

that of the males; nevertheless women's positions similar to "shadow governments" or "kitchen cabinets" existed in Polynesia, especially in Tonga and Samoa (Hezel 2001: 60). Hezel also pointed out that among the four roles, land-guardianship may have been eroded because the land tenure practices have changed—individualized (the power to dispose the land has been concentrated in the father's hand), and patrilinealized (passing from father to son, regardless of women's authority in decision making) (Hezel 2001: 59). This erosion of women's land-guardianship is also intertwined with an ongoing weakening of extended family, and "breakup of the lineage" (Hezel 2001: 61). New forms of women's power are also emerging—for example, the prevalence of a western education and the nuclear family, the emergence of a more "American" mode of domestic labor division among the two-salaried family, and the increase of self-reliant single mothers, along with the migration to new town areas distant from the village, etc. (Hezel 2001: 52-65).

Women's "shadowy" power is also recognized in Yap. One Yapese woman in her forties—working at the Women's Interests' Office—once expressed to me that she attended the regional conference on gender and domestic economics held in Chuuk. She, along with the Chuukese and Palauan representatives, felt quite strange about the "Western" mode of gender equality promoted at the conference. She emphasized affirmatively, "Women have been important in Micronesia." Nevertheless, unlike Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Palau, women's power in Yap has not come to the surface until recently. During development controversy, women—mostly elderly ones—met together across village and local kinship ties. Most of the members of the Concerned Citizens Group are female, and beyond menopause. They are *pulwelwol*.

## The Presence of *Pulwelwol*

*Pulwelwol* is the term denoting elderly women,<sup>6</sup> particularly those who have reached menopause. *Pulwelwol* signifies substantial authority. Yapese would say, *pulwelwol* has the authority to “cancel” a community’s decision—in other words, a community’s decision has to be sanctioned by *pulwelwol*. A Yapese man once described how powerful a *puwelwol*’s decision is:

“The family, *tabinaw*, comes in, *binaw*, there is *pum ’mon*, and eventually comes down to *puwelwol*, especially the old ladies, the *puwelwol*. That’s ultimate power, like the one in Tomil<sup>7</sup>...it seems to say, ‘all right, children, forget it, just leave anything, nothing.’ There is no such problem. You cannot afford it. You can only succeed in destroy yourselves.” (Ken 2013/4/19)

In some oral traditions, *Pulwelwol* is also a “type” of *piluung*. A man from Maap Municipality told me, “In Toruw (village), there are seven types of chief in Yap. First is *Nguchol*, then, *bulce*, then *ulun*, then, *yalungsmol*, fifth *arow*, sixth, *pagal*, voice of the people,<sup>8</sup> last, *puwelwol* (ladies).”

At the higher level of community organization, the village, Yapese express the elder-younger opposition once again, but in slightly different terms. The village leaders are *pum ’on* (senior men), who make decisions; the *pagel* (junior men) who carry out their instructions. A similar dichotomy exists for women: *puwelwol* (post-menopausal women) are the leaders, while *rugod* (fertile women) follow their bidding. (Lingenfelter 1977: 336)

We could say that Yapese politics are gendered. This is true on more than a metaphorical level. *Puwelwol* have the power to “cancel” the community decision.<sup>9</sup> An old Yapese man once told me that, during the village meetings, usually there would be a large number of drinks

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<sup>6</sup> In Yapese-English Dictionary, old woman (past menopause) is spelled as: *paleelwöl*, *paweelwöl*, *pileelwöl*, *piweelwöl*, *puweelwol* (Jensen et al. 1977: 139).

<sup>7</sup> Here, he meant the command from Tomil—specifically from the high-ranking *tabinaw* in Tomil that cannot be refused.

<sup>8</sup> *Pagal* means young men. It is referred as “voice” here, denoting “giving orders and commands.”

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, their voices emerge after menopause.

presented: a pile of canned-beer, a pile of canned-soft drinks, and, occasionally, there would be large glass bottles of alcohol such as vodka (which is prevalent in Yap among heavy drinkers). One time, when seeing a large bottle of drink (compared with other cans), a Yapese man jokingly said, “Oh! *Puwelwol!*” and the surrounding fellows laughed. The old man used this episode to explain to me how *puwelwol* differs from other categories. This joking expression conveys the authority of *puwelwol*—their presence and opinions could not be ignored.

The correlation between the elder women’s menopause and their authority is significant. In the past, women’s menstrual blood was considered absolutely polluting (*ta’ay*), and must be separated from daily life’s living space. A juvenile girl (*rugod*) is in her most “impure” phase of life. She must stay at the menstrual hut (*dapal*) outside of the village, sometimes for months till her menstruation has become regular. She must not be up-wind of her brother, so the smell will not contaminate him. Her low status will change a little when she has become a mother: although she will give birth in the menstrual hut, the blood would not contaminate the *tabinaw*. Even though she may be slightly elevated because of being a mother, her menstrual and delivery blood will irritate the spirits. Only men and older women who have reached menopause are allowed to walk on the path in front of the village meeting house. A woman’s low status changes when she reaches menopause. Before then, she is always polluting.

As we have read in Chapter Two, those who have reached menopause become “almost like a man” (Labby 1976a: 76). An elderly woman’s relation with the land has been established, and she should therefore be respected. As she becomes older, she has “a very strong say in the internal affairs of the estate” (Labby 1976a: 77).

In the issue of the development controversy, elderly women’s public presence is significant—their opinion, though it might be patronized, cannot be neglected. Even those

Yapese who most steadfastly support the development agenda, cannot directly refuse an elderly woman's proposal. The following episode illustrates the condescending comments those elderly women suffered.

### Emergence of Voluntary Associations

In Chapter Five, we have seen waves of petitions and public letters between spring and fall 2012. From August 2012, people who strongly expressed their disagreement with the ETG investment gradually formed a group, and they regularly met in Colonia in a classroom in the St. Mary School, next to the Catholic Church. The group was loosely organized in the beginning, and mainly consisted of elderly women, although a few men in their late 50s took responsibility for calling and chairing each group meeting, listening to the members' opinions, and also being the host of public meetings with the state leaders at Legislature. The group did not have a name until an opponent association formed, at which point, it took the name Concerned Citizens Group (abbreviated as CCG).

The other association is named "Yap Awareness Project" (Y.A.P.). Its establishment was announced in Yap State News Brief on September 20, 2012. After Y.A.P. declared its existence, the elderly women's group began to realize that they might need to take steps in organizing themselves. Several months later, in spring 2013, they finally went through the painstakingly long process of registration as a non-profit corporate group in Yap, and formally titled themselves the "Concerned Citizens Group."

The forming of Y.A.P. is noteworthy, for it shows a sharp contrast with the Concerned Citizens Group. Y.A.P. is quick-reacting, well-versed in English, and has a close relation with the government media offices. The Concerned Citizens Group is slow-acting. During the group meetings, every decision took a significant amount of time.

In October 12, 2012, the Concerned Citizens Group (CCG) scheduled a meeting with two FSM National Congressmen from Yap. At that time, CCG, mainly consisting of elder women, while the core members were still men, was already desperate. They had tried every venue to express their strong will to prevent ETG from coming, but all seemed to be in vain. The two FSM Congressmen expressed their appreciation of the meeting, their sympathy with the group's worries, and their equal concerns for the controversy at hand. Yet, they reaffirmed the reality to the group—particularly the National and the State financial downfall foreseen in 2023. They expressed their frustration in lacking sufficient knowledge of the Legislature's resolutions and public hearings, their deep worries about the State being divided by foreigners,<sup>10</sup> and their hope that the group would rely on reason rather than emotion, relying economic facts rather than gossip and rumors. They expressed their position that, given the facts at hand—Yap and FSM's keen need of foreign investment—ETG was a legal enterprise going through the proper application procedure to do business in Yap, and ETG's project was just a proposal, not yet realized. Therefore, they did not feel there were sufficient grounds to join the group objecting to ETG. Finally, they expressed their distress upon seeing people's distrust in the government and hoped the State could resume its harmony and unity with the people.

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<sup>10</sup> Here, "foreigners" denote not only ETG, but also all foreign people who had ever voiced their concerns over the investment.

The meeting took place in a strange atmosphere. As usual, women sat on the ground, with their backs leaning against the wall and legs stretched forward. Men sat on the chairs at the table. I was standing near the corner, videotaping. In the beginning, people attended with hope. The meeting began with CCG's short introductory remark to debrief the group's intention and the purpose of the meeting. However, as the Congressmen began to talk, people began to feel that their request was not supported by the two Congressmen. One Congressman, as the Speaker of FSM National Congress, Issac Figir from Rumung, reemphasized that he was as informed as the people, but he asked the participants to be rational, not to rely on rumors. The other Congressman, previous FSM President, from a neighboring island, was more soft-spoken. He expressed his sympathy with the group, and his understanding of the group's fear of losing land, but he was convinced that while facing 2023, it was necessary for the group to evaluate ETG's investment carefully, instead of rejecting it altogether. Feeling unsupported, CCG's members (especially the women) did not hide their dissatisfaction after the meeting.

## Elderly Women met with Governor

After Governor Anefal signed the Investment Agreement with ETG, in late August, 2012, the elder women representatives presented "shell money" (*yar*) to Governor Anafel. The governor took the shell money to the office. He later passed it to the Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs"). The Council of *Piluung* returned the shell money to the dissent group. What is really important here is that the Governor did not refuse to take the shell money in the first place. Even though the shell money was returned to its original giver—the dissenters—it had to be returned by the Council of *Piluung*, who are the representatives of "traditions and



customs.”<sup>11</sup> When the representative was handing back the shell money to the representative of the dissenting group, Nicholas Figir, Figir took the shell money, and declared that the relation is ruptured—the group was going to recall the Governor.

Figir’s attempt shocked most of the Yapese—keeping the relation rather than breaking it is always ideal. In fact, the proposal of recalling the Governor did not solicit much support. People did not agree with Governor Anefal, but they also did not want to recall him. It is partially because Anefal was a fairly good Governor, who served in the government for a long time, and stayed at the FSM national government at Pohnpei for a long period of time. He has strong kin connections at the southern part of Yap. Another reason, probably more important, is that Yapese prefer to maintain relationships rather than lose face. One Yapese man described it this way: “in a small island, you better not step on others’ toes. Keeping harmony is important, because you do not know when you will meet each other.”

## Land Registration Process

By March 2012, the news about Chinese interest in Yap—unprecedented in its potential project scale—had been spreading to the villages. People had heard of Chinese interest for a long time, at least since summer 2011, but they did not have an idea of how much land the Chinese needed for the tourism development. In addition, land is a scarce resource in Yap—as it is across the Pacific, more broadly. Any dealing with land, in Yapese understanding, would take a

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<sup>11</sup> We were seemingly witnessing the confrontation between parties representing “traditional” and “non-traditional” regimes. But we should note here: “tradition” is made in this context as *kastom* (see Krause 2016: 29). The Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) could not fully “represent” “tradition.” The Council of *Piluung* is an institutionalized branch, whose formal legitimacy comes from the bureaucracy, but its real legitimacy derives from—ideally—the consent achieved at meetings of each village.

tremendous amount of time. As I quoted from one Yapese man's comment—it may take months to survey a small piece of land, for any related person can disagree with the survey, and the process needs to be restarted after the issue is resolved. The more people related to the piece of land, the longer the process will be.

In Yap, the procedure of how land is sanctioned by the state bureaucracy can be encapsulated in the Land Survey and Registration form (see Appendix 12). The process is summarized as follows: firstly, a Yapese or several Yapese need to file the survey application to the Land Resources Office, specifying which parcel of land they would like to survey. The application form needs to be signed by the applicant(s), the village chief and the municipal chief, and the *mafean* as well. Once the Land Resources Office receives the application form, the survey announcement is broadcasted on the radio—the only publicly accessible mass media in Yap—for forty-five days.<sup>12</sup> During that period of time, anybody who has relation or right to the interested land can complain to the Land Resources Office. After forty-five days, if no objection is raised, the Land Resources Office will visit the land and demarcate it. The Office staff needs to check with the owners (or those who have certain rights and know the history, etc.) of adjacent parcels when they set off to mark up the land boundaries. After the boundaries are set, the Office staff maps it, and then announces it on the radio for another forty-five days. If no objection is raised during this period of time, the land certificate will be issued to the applicant(s).

The process is meticulous. Once an objection is raised, either about the survey announcement, or demarcation announcement, the Office will contact the applicants and the applicants need to get the issue resolved—usually via family, village, or municipal meetings.

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<sup>12</sup> The only news media accessible to every Yapese is the radio station, V6AI. (FSM national radio stations include: V6AH in Pohnpei, V6AI in Yap, V6AJ in Kosrae, and V6AK in Chuuk). In Yap, the Department of Youth and Civic Affairs issues an email news brief during the week days, which is the only news media in Yap. There has been no printed mass media in Yap since 2005.

Once the issue is resolved, the applicants need to resubmit their request. Similarly, if any opposition is raised at the second announcement, the Office will revert to the earlier phase—consulting with those who are related to the neighboring land area to make sure the boundary is not disputable. Only when no objection is raised will the Office proceed with the next step. As a result, land survey and registration usually takes quite a time to process.

The applicant could be an individual or a group of people. If the land registration process goes smoothly, a land certificate is approved for a group of Yapese, and if one of the applicants passes away or needs to transfer his title, the fellow applicants need to agree, and the title-transference request needs to be affirmed by an affidavit at the state court. Furthermore, applicants can be male or female—although male applicants are much more common. An Office staff member wanted to assure me that the traditional female rights are still respected; he pointed out to me that female names often appear as *mafean*.<sup>13</sup> Their agreement is indispensable for the land registration process.

Even though the land registration is carefully designed to honor traditional connectedness to the land, once the land certificate is issued, and the exclusive ownership—individual or group—is legalized, anyone would immediately sense a risk: “landowners” could hand the land certificate to the land dealers without consulting with *mafean* or the chiefs.<sup>14</sup> Those cases were rare in the past, yet they are happening right now in Yap. In fact, I have witnessed a Yapese woman (in her 50s) become outraged when she discussed a land survey application on the Yapese Facebook discussion forum. On that application form, the column reserved for *mafean*

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<sup>13</sup> One Yapese man, while being asked “why are there relatively fewer female landowners being registered?” answered, “Because women would like to give this opportunity to their brothers or kids, or male relatives.”

<sup>14</sup> In Federated States of Micronesia foreigners (those without FSM citizenship) cannot own or purchase the land. However, they can lease the land up to 99 years. In ETG’s lease agreement with the Yapese, ETG will lease the land for 99 years, and the lease will be renewed for another 99 years when the first term expires.

wrote “none,” which is exceptional, if not contradictory, to reality (see Appendix 12). Given the land rights complexity in Yap, it is very rare for land in Yap to be without *mafean*. There are always *genung*’s connections to the land—meaning, there must be *mafean*, or *mafean*’s representatives at some places. In this case, *mafean* does not necessarily need to be female. It is very common for one Yapese to “wear several hats”—being completely embedded in multi-layered webs with obligations, duties, privileges, debts and credits. Therefore, stating that there is no *mafean* on the land appears to be a very rare case in the Yapese context.

As we have seen from the discussions, the issue of “individual landowners” is complicated in Yap. “Landowning,” if not sanctioned by the state with the land title certificate, means a bundle of mutual agreements existing among a group of related persons. Those mutual agreements involve who lives on the land, who has certain rights over the land—for example, collecting betel nuts, claiming the fruit from certain trees, harvesting from a certain taro-patch, or fishing (net fishing or string fishing) in certain areas. Those “rights” were rarely codified, but exist because of multiple meetings (the meetings involving important members). The only codification carried out in Yap right now is land-ownership registration. The registration process is long, involving the land-owner’s, *mafean*’s, village Chief’s and municipality *Chief*’s signature. However, as noted in the section of “Document Signing” in Chapter Five, the act of signing, which signifies an individual’s commitment to the contracted activities, is still unfamiliar to certain Yapese—especially concerning the individual responsibility accompanied with the act of signing, and the connotation of the exclusive “ownership” entailed in the land registration and certification process.

In Yap, the land title certificate can be issued to an individual person or to a group of persons. However, the act of land registration—including land demarcation, codifying, and transforming the flexible, negotiable bundle of rights to the land into a clearly demarcated, henceforth unalterable “ownership”—means that the registered title-carriers can deal with this right according to their own will. Although title-transference (for example, when the title carrier passes away) still needs the agreement of related persons, dealing with this title is relatively freer than asking for these permissions. The codifying system allows those who are better versed with it to navigate for their own interests while excluding the involvement of those who are not familiar with the system.

### ETG’s Land Lease

In spring 2013, some Yapese began to sign the land lease with ETG. The first disclosed land lease deal—concerning land in Makiy—was signed by a man from the south who was married to a woman in Makiy. The deal was revealed on a Facebook forum by a middle-aged Yapese woman living in Guam, whose husband was the person who gave the ultimatum (shell money, *yar*) to the Governor, requesting that the Governor void the Investment Agreement with ETG.<sup>15</sup> In March, a member of the Concerned Citizens Group obtained a blank copy of ETG’s land lease form. He passed the blank land lease form to CCG, and CCG soon sent it to a sympathetic Yapese lawyer to review. The lease provisions include: the lease term is 99 years, and unless both parties agree to terminate it, the contract will renew for another 100 years when the first lease term is over. The rent will increase 10% for every 10 years during the first 99 years, and

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<sup>15</sup> Their daughter is the manager of FSM Development Bank, and the spokesperson for Y.A.P.

will be doubled in the renewed lease term.<sup>16</sup> After signing the lease, if the lessor would like to raise any dispute, the dispute should be submitted to the FSM National Supreme Court instead of the Yap State Court—even though the latter is much more familiar with the land customs in Yap. ETG has the first priority (“right of refusal”) if the Yapese lessor would like to transfer or sell the land during the lease term. Yapese lessors cannot object if ETG introduces a third party to do the construction on the land.<sup>17</sup>

CCG requested that the Legislature hold a public hearing on this lease template. The Legislature invited all government branches and relevant parties (including ETG, Y.A.P., and CCG) to come. The Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) refused to attend because they did not think they should infringe on the negotiation between two private entities—the Yapese landowners and the ETG (see Appendix 10 for their statement). The Governor and Lt. Governor did not attend, but sent the Yapese Attorney General to represent the Executive Branch. ETG’s representatives were absent as well.

During the meeting, almost everyone attending admitted that the lease only benefits the lessee (ETG). The Yapese Attorney General, the son of the second Yap Governor, was the only representative of the Executive Branch. While being asked his opinion at the end of the meeting, he said, “I could not speak for the Governor or Lt. Governor. I can only speak for myself. If you ask me, I would say, if I am drunk, probably I will sign the lease.” The meeting was concluded with friendly laughter. That afternoon, I stopped by the Yapese Attorney General’s house. He

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<sup>16</sup> Note: the “doubled” rent in the renewed lease term (the following 100 years), is doubled from the initial rent. For example, if a Yapese lessor agreed that he will get USD 300 as the initial monthly rent, he will get USD 330 each month between the eleventh and the twentieth year, USD 360 each month during the twenty-first to thirtieth year, and so on. On the 100<sup>th</sup> year, his descendant(s) will get USD 600 every month, which will not be changed for the whole century.

<sup>17</sup> ETG’s land lease form, as well as the Yapese lawyer’s analysis and advices to Yapese landowners (potential lessors), is retrievable here: <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/2013/03/03/1809/>

admitted that, as the only representative of the Executive Branch, he felt like he was the target of all criticism during the meeting.

### The Land Lease Deals in Gagil, Fanif, and Maap

Before ETG's land lease agreement was disclosed to the public, at least three land leases in Makiy (Gagil) and Y'yin (Fanif) were signed in spring 2013. Some villages, especially in Maap, were negotiating "under the table" and only the interested lessors know the exact deals.

Speaker Henry Falan,<sup>18</sup> the president of St. Mary's Catholic School, and I were completely excluded from the land-leasing picture. The rare pieces of valid information about the land lease include those from Micronesian Legal Service. One of its main staff members, Nicholas Figirlaarown, is one of the Concerned Citizens Group's core members. The other information was from a Japanese manager of a local hotel in Maap.

Before the public hearing on the land lease was held in April, a man, probably upon hearing the gossip on how exploitative ETG's land lease was, brought a signed copy of ETG's land lease to the office of Micronesian Legal Service. Nicholas got a signed lease, and soon showed it to me to compare it with the blank form CCG had obtained.<sup>19</sup> The man who had brought it to Nicholas was certainly in a panic when he heard about the detriments of the lease. He asked Nicholas how he could help him with this contract. Nicholas, unfortunately, did not know what to do.

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<sup>18</sup> Speaker Henry Falan had been excluded from his village, Amin, in Maap, since summer 2012. He mentioned it during the public meeting at the Legislature on September 13, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> All the provisions on the signed lease are the same as the blank agreement form. The signed lease is a contract about a land in Y'yin, Fanif Municipality. The rent rate is USD 150 (monthly) for 292 square meters (3,143 square feet).

## Council of Piluung's Response

On April 8, 2013, the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) issued two letters. One stated the legitimate connections (*tha’a*)—who are recognized as the right persons on the right channels. The *tha’a* was listed in Chapter Five. The other letter was a response to the Chairman of the Resources, Education and Development (RED) Committee at Yap State Legislature about an invitation to attend a public hearing on ETG’s land lease agreement. Now I will discuss the second letter, for it exemplifies the Council of Chief’s attitude concerning the land-leasing affairs.<sup>20</sup>

The letter was released through the email bulletin, Yap State News Brief, on April 8, 2013, stating that the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) would not attend the public hearing concerning ETG’s land lease, which was scheduled on April 9, 2013 at Legislature (see Appendix 10). The reason was eloquently stated:

We want to thank you for inviting the Council of Piluung to the public hearing “regarding provisions in the ETG lease template agreement between ETG and the individual landowner in Yap State”, which is scheduled for April 9 at 10:00 a.m. We, the members of the Council of Piluung, will not be attending the public hearing. We feel that this public hearing is going to be an encroachment into a private dealing between private citizens and a private business, and it will be an overreach in the exercise of a government power.

Ensuring that private citizens fully understand the terms of their leases with any business, particularly a foreign investor, is a valid concern. But running their leases, or the lease template that they are negotiating, thru [*sic*] the political process of a public hearing is not the proper way to address that concern. Instead what the citizens need is access to legal services. (Resource: Yap State News Brief, April 8, 2013)

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<sup>20</sup> It is worth noting again that the letter was released through the email news brief—Yap State News Brief on April 8, 2013. In contrast with the complete lack of attention paid by the News Brief to the Concerned Citizens Group’s formal request for a public hearing on ETG’s land lease, the Council of Chief’s and Yap Awareness Group’s communications usually got published by the government media almost immediately (see Yap State News Brief on November 28, 2012, in comparison with Concerned Citizens Group’s public letter to Yap State Legislature to hold a public hearing on the land leasing agreement. The former letter issued by Yap Awareness Group can be searched for on <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/timeline/>. The second public letter delivered to Yap State Legislature can be seen here: <https://concernedyapcitizens.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/ccg-public-letter-to-ysl-20130306-p11.pdf> )



As a person who read the News Brief earlier than others (because of having internet access), and a person who expected the public hearing, I had to admit that I was completely frustrated and aloof while reading those two letters—one listed the legitimate political “connections” (*tha’a*); the other was about the Council of Chief’s refusal to attend the public hearing on ETG’s land-leasing. They seemed to suggest that a legitimate “pathway” is more important than the danger of land-alienation encountered by the Yapese. It also suggested that Yapese should seek legal services (with fees that most Yapese cannot afford) in relation to land-leasing affairs. For me, it was a complete irony to see a government branch in charge of “guarding traditions and customs” trying to apply the individualistic logic in a culture where the definition of “individual” needs to be carefully reexamined. It is even more ironic to see the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) sign the Memorandum of Understanding, and shoulder the responsibility of “coordinating and mediating should any dispute arises between ETG and respective local community” (Appendix 11, Memorandum of Understanding, Item Four). What frustrated me most was, at that time, was that it seemed that no one really understood what “signing” meant at the time when the Memorandum of Understanding was signed and when people who signed the ETG land lease agreements were revealed. Yapese seemed to think that they could control the foreign investors. After signing the legal agreements, no matter whether it was the Memorandum, investment agreement, or land lease agreement, Yapese have been dragged into an unfamiliar world, and are in danger of being severed from their land for almost two hundred years. I felt I was witnessing the whole process of the Polanyian “great transformation” just begins to take place in Yap—how a market society (or market sociality), along with the market mentality, has gradually emerged among the Yapese. I was also witnessing how the invention of “fictitious

commodities”—the real human beings have been slowly transforming into abstract labor once when they are forced to dissociate with the land, and the concrete land relations have become alienable commodities. The process that happened in eighteenth century England, analyzed by Polanyi (1957), which would be followed by the process of proletarianization, was happening right now in front of my eyes.

Upon knowing the Council of *Piluung*’s (“Council of Chiefs”) two responses, I went to print them and gave them to an elder Yapese lady who was an important member of the Concerned Citizens Group. Being occupied with family affairs, she almost had no time to read the letters. Without internet access and having almost no computer skills, she was not aware of the letters until I brought the printed hardcopies to her. Sensing my frustration, she reconfirmed to me, “We are not powerful as them, as the Council of *Piluung*, or as Y.A.P. But we have good intention. We are concerned. We are concerned about others, about our children, and about Yapese. As long as our motivation is good, I trust we will not do too wrong.”

Her calm, steady, assuring words soothed me a lot. At that time, the elderly women’s group had already tried their best to find any possible niche and voice their disagreements with the ETG investment. They had held the public meetings in Yap State Legislature for two times, met with Yap State Governor, met with two Yapese senators served at FSM National Congress, also met with FSM President. Regardless whom they met, their opinions were not well-received. They were characterized as being irrational, emotional, conservative, ignorant of the economic fragility of the Yap State, and inattentive to the Government’s financial situation. The government officials did not conceal their contempt and condescending attitudes toward those elderly women during the meetings. The Eighth Yap State Legislature was the only government

branch showed sympathy to them, but Legislature was not a solid entity—from ten senators, six were sympathetic with the elderly women, while the other four senators were not open in expressing their opinions. In spring 2013, when receiving the ETG land lease, the elderly women's group had a strong feeling that they must try our best to let the general public know how detrimental the lease is to the Yapese landowners, but they also felt isolated and unsupported.

Fortunately, throughout 2012-2013, an excellent Yapese lawyer served in the United Nations then constantly offered professional and in-depth legal analysis of the signed documents between the Yap State Government and ETG. He posted those analysis on the public facebook forums, which are accessible to the Yapese with internet connections. He also shared practical legal advices of ETG's land lease.<sup>21</sup> In the circumstances where most Yapese were waiting and observing, those elderly women, the young Yapese lawyer, and several Yapese senators of the Eighth Yapese Legislature, were the rare courageously outspoken figures who demonstrated their opinions. Being one of the distinctive voice of disagreement among the strangely quiescent populace, suffering from the feeling of frustrations, those elderly women did not realize that while they were trying every niche to voice their opinions, their actions have slowed down the developer's land-leasing process.

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The public hearing on ETG's land lease was held on April 10, which concluded that ETG's land-lease was fundamentally one-sided, favoring ETG but not benefiting the Yapese landowner. At the same time, a piece of printed news about ETG's chairman, Deng Hong, was widely

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<sup>21</sup> His legal analysis of various documens were compiled and available in Concerned Citizen's Group's website: <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/legal-advice-from-facebook-threads/>.

circulated among government offices and local communities. It said that Mr. Deng Hong was reportedly under investigation for being involved in corruption in Mainland China.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the public hearing on the land-lease, the CCG also printed and distributed small pamphlets—based on the succinct summary of the young Yapese lawyer’s legal advice—cautioning Yapese about ETG’s land-leasing, asking those interested landowners to pay close attention to the highlighted provisions, such as lease term, rent, conditions for lease renewal and landownership, and dispute-solving mechanisms, etc. The pamphlets were printed in English and two orthographies of Yapese,<sup>23</sup> and being distributed in the villages. The elderly women were once considering holding workshops in the villages; however, being afraid of upsetting village *piluung* (“chiefs”) by voicing in *piluung*’s domains, they decided to just disseminate the pamphlets—tripled fold, double-sided letter paper.

In May 2, 2013, the Yap State Legislature adopted Resolution No. 8-75, which instructs the Yap State Foreign Investment Board to cancel ETG’s Foreign Investment Permit in Yap in twenty days, or the Legislature will cancel the permit. It is the fourth resolution issued by the Legislature concerning ETG’s investment. Unlike previous ones, the last resolution was openly refuted by the Governor, for it infringes on the Executive Branch’s authority (Yap State News Brief, May 30, 2013).

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<sup>22</sup> The reason why Deng Hong was the subject of a corruption investigation in the PRC mainly resulted from his close connection with Chengdu’s former mayor, Mr. Li Chuncheng, via various city renovation projects. On a larger scale, Deng Hong was also affected by PRC’s leadership transition after the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China in November 2012. It is believed that after the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress, the state power shifted from Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabou’s administration to the hands of the successors, Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang.

<sup>23</sup> The pamphlets are downloadable at the Concerned Citizens Group’s website (<https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/falngin-ngea-yalean-tafeadaed/>). But the elderly women’s group decided to disseminate the hardcopies in the villages for most of the Yapese did not have computers nor internet access.

It was true that ETG's land-leasing enterprise has been going on since spring 2013. ETG representatives have learned to be actively engaged in various Yapese activities on the island, such as sponsoring (along with other businesses) local sports tournaments. Yapese began to talk about which lands had been surveyed, if the boundaries had been demarcated, who authorized such and such surveys, what the prerequisite for land-leasing is, etc. However, after the elderly women's group strived to hold a public hearing on ETG's land lease template in April 2013, although hearsays kept going on, very few cases of land-leasing in Yap were reported till 2016. In the beginning of 2016, two large tracts of land were leased to ETG—they were leased under the control of powerful *piluung* ("chiefs").

## Final Remark: What is Going on Now?

I have restated that, in Yap, only men—of certain ranks and by assignment—are able to speak, to have *luungun* ("voice"). But *luungun*, as well as the ranking or status of certain land, comes from *magaer*, the ancestors' labor and drudgery continuously devoted to the land (see Egan 1998; Throop 2010: 71). As Krause argues, "relations between people, land and clan" is the genuine "web of significance," the core, foundation and aim of Yapese heritage preservation (Krause 2016: 329). Once this complex was challenged and fell into crisis, the government-sanctioned guardians, the Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs"), seemed not to protect it, according to some. The traditional utmost authority, The Three Paramount Chiefs (*Dalip pi Nguchol*), did not seem to be able to voice their authority anymore. In this foreseeable crisis,

elder women (*pulwelwol*) grouped together and demonstrated their opinions strongly. They have been constantly portrayed as stubborn, emotional, conservative, and ignorant of the economic future of the nation and the Yap state,<sup>24</sup> yet they firmly persisted—while, at the same time, they felt frustrated and directionless.

As I suggested before, in the development controversy, the strong presence of elder women (*puwelwol*) was phenomenal. They became the bulk of one grassroots group, the Concerned Citizens Group, held regular meetings, disseminated pamphlets and brochures to caution Yapese landowners about leasing land, met with the government decision makers—the Governor of the Yap State, Legislature, FSM National Congressmen, and FSM President. By spring 2013, the real issue at stake has emerged: it was about land-leasing. According to the Executive Branch of Yap State Government and Council of Piluung, the issue is between the “individual Yapese landowners” and the investor, ETG. After the public hearing on ETG’s land lease was held in early April, 2013, Yapese gradually realized the lop-sidedness of ETG’s land-leasing business, and ETG’s land-acquisition has been severely slowed down. In early 2016, unfortunately, two large-scale land-leasings took place in northern part of Yap—Makiy in Gagil Municipality, and Wacholob in Maap Municipality. Makiy was the place I stayed at the first phase of fieldwork, and Wacholob was the target land of the Japanese resort project in the early 1970s (Hanlan 1998).

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<sup>24</sup> In contrast, YAP, the group aiming for sustainable development, has a clear goal, wants to have a benevolent developer, and is open to negotiating with ETG. They released their announcement quickly and efficiently to Yap Sate News Media, and released to its subscribers. While CCG’s interaction with the government bureaus was usually depressing—for example, initiating a public hearing on ETG’s land lease, but with the broadcast machine coincidentally broken on that morning, YAP’s efficiency in taking actions, clearness in expressing their opinions, doing everything at the right time, forms a sharp contrast.

In early August, 2013, I got to know the land-dealing affairs in Wacholob, Maap Municipality—exactly the same village which was targeted by the Tokyo-based resort.<sup>25</sup> In the early 1970s, the project of “Yap Nature Life Garden, Inc.” was discussed among the groups of *piluung* (“chiefs”) and *pagal* (“young men”) in Maap, and formally turned down—Yapese asked the Trust Territory Government to “remove all evidence of its intrusion” in 1973 (Hanlon 1998: 125). Long after that event, there a resort was built in Wacholob, Maap, named “Village View,” owned by Yapese. Village View has a Japanese manager, who was adopted by the Chief—the chairperson of the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”), who was also the son of the Council of Maap’s chairman.

Village View is a lovely beach resort, hiring one Japanese manager and two or three Philippine workers, and has good relations with the locals. I visited there three times via different acquaintances—Seventh Day Adventist Church’s journey, a canoe launching in Maap, and a wedding ceremony. With a spectacular beach, Village View and the associated land has once again become the object of ETG. But the situation was totally altered from the 1970s. In the 1970s, people in Maap united to form a Council and express their strong dislike of the resort agenda. In 2013, being pressed because of financial difficulty, the Yapese owner was seeking to transfer his land to ETG. In summer 2013, while conversing with acquaintances in Maap, I began to realize that the Council of *Piluung*’s (“Council of Chiefs”) chairman—being a person wholeheartedly in love with canoe and house-building, and also very fond of children—was not interested in cooperating with ETG. But ETG signifies a lucrative opportunity to some people, especially for desperate bank debtors. As the leader of a family, he has close relatives who severely suffered from the financial crisis. In fact, the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”)

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<sup>25</sup> Another village is Cho’ol.

also sensed the danger of long-term land alienation. In spring 2013, right after the disclosing of ETG's land lease, the Council of *Piluung* ("Council of Chiefs") invited three Palauan lawyers for consultation, and also opened the consulting opportunity to ordinary Yapese landowners—if need be.

The complex Yap tenure system helped to prevent complete land alienation. Village View's land is not solely owned by one person. There are a couple of families and American expatriates living on this large piece of land. The multiple ownership and obligations tied to the land indeed slowed down the land-leasing process. But the land deal eventually took place in 2016, and the expatriates living there were forced to move. Wachelob villagers were upset with the ETG land-lease. An online petition was initiated,<sup>26</sup> and the necessary legal steps are being taken.

I know very little about what is going on in Makiy, my host family's village. What I have confirmed and can say here is: being a middle-lower ranking village, directly subordinate to Gachpar, the highest village in Gagil Municipality, Makiy does not have much room for expressing disagreement. It partially explained my move to Wanyan in the second phase of fieldwork—even though I was not completely aware of this reason then, and I kept revisiting them when I was on the island. In the beginning of 2016, Makiy villagers, who were living on the land but not qualified as "landowners," collectively signed the resident agreements with ETG. The agreement conditions are as severe as the lease agreement. My Yapese sisters—born in Makiy but married and residing in Guam—reaffirmed to me that my family members are doing fine in Makiy. This is the only information I have received. According to other connections, all of Makiy was enclosed in an atmosphere of silence, anxiety, and fear. They were ordered to go to

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<sup>26</sup> The online petition can be found here: [https://www.change.org/p/the-leaders-of-yap-save-a-village-in-yap?recruiter=496127063&utm\\_source=share\\_for\\_starters&utm\\_medium=copyLink#petition-letter](https://www.change.org/p/the-leaders-of-yap-save-a-village-in-yap?recruiter=496127063&utm_source=share_for_starters&utm_medium=copyLink#petition-letter)



the Yap Pacific Dive Resort, the beautiful hotel in Colonia where the ETG representative dwells, sign the agreement, and not leak any information to outsiders.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast, the anti-ETG voluntary associations, being loosely organized, still had meetings periodically—much less frequent than when I was on the island. The composition of the group, understandably, is mainly elderly women who are able to present and voice without fear of being alienated from the land of their respective *piluung*—as Aloysius Faimau experienced. For me, their association and activities indicated the rare presence of guardians of the land—now the ethical guardians of land-based relationalities.

Several Yapese in our private conversations pointed out to me that Yap has never before encountered such a dilemma of choice—in favor of economic development or not? What kind of development? How large will the scale be? Can Yapese still maintain their control, or at least relative autonomy, in this foreign development project? It is not the 1970s, and Yapese realized that the island does need economic improvement, but they are not sure how to accommodate it. One male Yapese in his 50s perceptively said to me, “it is about what kind of life we want to choose. Are we able to maintain the life of gardening and fishing? Probably the younger people cannot.”<sup>28</sup> The dilemma of choice soon turned out to be a crisis, epitomized in the shaking of “The Three Paramount Chiefs” (*Dalip pi Nguchol*). But it is becoming a deeper crisis if we take the consequence of land-leasing into consideration.

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<sup>27</sup> I got the information from an acquaintance not living in Makiy, but close to people in Makiy.

<sup>28</sup> The younger generation remained quiet in the development controversy. I attended some meetings with them in Colonia—the meetings were held by a half voluntary, half governmental youth association. The participants were cautious and quiet, for they were not encouraged to daringly contemplate and discuss such issues. I knew their leader, and I was pretty sure their caution was not because of my presence.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

*“ETG has already revealed the true monsters from within many of the Yapese people.”*

(A Yapese man in the early 60s)

*“If it is useful to think of land as simultaneously a tangible and an intangible resource, then clearly these dimensions co-exist. To see land as both means we look at one thing and see another.”* (Strathern 2009: 19-20)

Although the development controversy that has been the subject of this dissertation could and should be analyzed from various different perspectives, I have chosen to highlight one aspect in this paper: the alienability or inalienability of land, and the concealed gendered authority that is tied to the land. I have discussed the symbolism of land, including the gendered bodily politics, women’s invested physical labor—which navigates land transmission over generations—and the sociality established via reciprocating land products (for example, *bulce*’s offering garden products to *pilibithir ko nam* (“elder of the country”), as shown in Fig 3-1). To put it succinctly, the land’s “creativity” and its potential for yielding sociality, is exceedingly profound in Yap culture and history (see Strathern 2009 for her discussion of land as the intellectual property).

In fact, in Yapese understandings, the land “owns” people—people come and go, but the land stays (see Coppet 1985). Land is animated. Land speaks via people, and people (especially men) are understood as the voicing conduits of the land. Therefore, *piluung*, as I have explained in Chapter Three, Four and Six, literally means “many voices.” This idea is illustrated by a Yapese saying, “*Buut ea*

*piiluung!*” (“Land is the chief!”) (Throop 2010: 43). Hence, ETG’s investment controversy should be understood in the context of the exceedingly high valuation of land in Yapese culture.

Throughout ETG’s development controversy, the most difficult part for outsiders to penetrate is ETG’s land-leasing enterprise. Yapese landowners, or lessors, are highly reluctant to disclose the signed land leases. One of the anti-ETG grassroots groups, the Concerned Citizen Group, made tremendous efforts to get the ETG lease template, and then they asked the Yap State Legislature to have a public hearing on the lease template for raising community awareness. Yet, the Council of *Piluung* (“Council of Chiefs”) argued that their involvement in such a public hearing would be “an encroachment into a private dealing between private citizens and a private business,” which they considered to “be an overreach in the exercise of a government power.”<sup>1</sup> In fact, given the local and regional emphasis on secrecy,<sup>2</sup> what is being concealed from the front stage—in this case, the land—is usually believed to be the real stake. Thus, revisiting the land symbolism in Yap, as well as its historicity, has been crucial in unraveling the cultural significance of this development controversy.

Secondly, in terms of Yapese politics, it should be clear that a fissure has been created between certain state and national leaders, specifically between those who show strong support for ETG’s investment project, and the Yap State Legislature.<sup>3</sup> The Council of *Piluung*, the “fourth branch,” the only institutionalized traditional power, openly disputed the traditional authority of “The Three

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Yap State News Brief, April 8, 2013 (<http://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/timeline/>), also see Appendix 10.

From an over-concerned researcher’s point of view, the Council of *Pilung*’s readiness to identify the leasable land parcels in the earlier phase of ETG’s development might also be categorized as the “overreach in the exercise of a government power.”

<sup>2</sup> To better comprehend the controversy, we also need to take Yapese and Micronesian valuation of secrecy into consideration. For example, “unthinking honesty” is considered childish (Throop 2005, 2010: Ch5). With the similar logic, Yapese avoid direct eye contact, since looking into another’s eyes during conversation is considered an intrusion into that person’s inner thoughts (Throop 2005, 2010; also see Petersen 1993 for research on Pohnpei). In ETG’s investment controversy, although both parties voice their opinions proactively, it does not mean their actions are without careful deliberation. State government’s “secretive” dealings with Chinese have become the target of people’s accusation as well.

<sup>3</sup> The Eighth Yap State Legislature is not a homologous whole in terms of ETG’s investment either. Among ten senators in Yap State Legislature, some agree, some disagree.

Paramount Chiefs” (*Dalip pi Nguchol*) which had “never happened in Yap before, ever” (quote from a Yapese man in his 50s). This cleavage is almost unrepairable.<sup>4</sup> Notably, a pattern of bifurcation has emerged between two oppositional sides as the controversy gradually unfolds itself. How does this bifurcation relate to the dynamic tripartition in Yapese political structure? The semiotic tripartition, in contrast with the quadripartition in Palau, has been fascinating not only empirically but also theoretically (see Daniel 1984; Parmentier 1988).<sup>5</sup>

In addition, regarding the elder women’s strong presence and voice concerning ETG’s investment, it is exactly as Rubinstein and Mulalap suggest, “we are witnessing a sea-change in public decision-making in Yap” (2014: 9). The formation of grassroots groups, as well as elder women’s mobilization on an island level, bring to light a new understanding of gender subjectivity in contemporary Yap, and in Micronesia as well. As I have discussed in Chapter Six, women in Micronesia are land guardians, peacekeepers, family and community counselors, and cultural value producers (Hezel 2001: 57). Before the Yapese elderly women presented themselves as the ethical guardians of the land, Chuukese and Pohnpeian women had actively initiated the temperance movements in 1970s, and Palauan women had been significant leaders in the antinuclear movement in the 1980s. If we compare with the case of social movements in Papua New Guinea (West 2006; Golub 2014), the formation of the gendered ethical subjects has become a distinctive feature in Micronesia, which further displays a different form in comparison with Fiji (see Riles 2001). Is there any implicit relation existing between

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<sup>4</sup> I was advised by a long-time resident of Yap, “Be careful about mentioning ETG. Yapese minds are bleeding because the family is torn apart.”

<sup>5</sup> During the mid-1980s, Charles Pierce’s semiotics attracted the attention of some Indian ethnographies (e.g., Daniel 1984). Pierce’s tripartite model of sign was said to “fit” with India’s “own longstanding theories of logic, meaning, and epistemology” (Khare 1992: 19). About the same time, Parmentier also used Pierce’s theory of sign as a theoretical template in Belau. He argues that the “quadripartite ideology” ramifies in every level of Palauan cultural landscape: four powerful villages, four chief houses within a large village, four ranking titles in a council, and four satellite houses surrounding a principle house (Parmentier 1987).

the female ethical subjects and the prevailing matriliney in Micronesia? It will be a meaningful question to ask.

Thirdly, as I have said before, China's influence on global and regional scales has gradually drawn heated attention in development studies and policy-making analysis (Wesley-Smith 2007; Zhang 2007; Yang 2009; Breslin 2009; Wesley-Smith and Porter 2010; Brant 2013). However, China's relation with Oceania has come to the academic discussions fairly recently (see Wesley-Smith and Porter 2010:12). Scholars' analysis and case studies in New Zealand, Solomons, Palau, and Samoa have focused on Beijing-Taipei rivalries, anti-Chinese incidents, the competition between the Chinese and local businesses, and the relative isolation of the Chinese settlements from the nearby indigenous population (McElory and Bai 2008; Zhang 2009; Wesley-Smith and Porter 2010; Brady 2010). Very few in-depth ethnographic studies explore how the Chinese developers are perceived from the local islanders' point of view.

In my dissertation, I have not delved into the elderly women's direct responses to the Chinese developers. In fact, they were highly reluctant in encountering with the Chinese, and they tended to refuse any ETG's proposal about modifying the investment scale. I was once perplexed by their strong reactions to the Chinese. Later on, I began to realize that for Yapese, "land sale"—the complete alienation and severance of rights to the land of land transference—simply does not exist (Mahoney 1958: 266). When the land rights are transferred with payment (*cuway*), a new relation, termed *zaan*, begins to form between the land-rights taker and the land-rights giver. *Zaan* entails mutual obligations, which "symbolizes a kind of fictitious kinship" (Mahoney 1958: 266). The land-right taker needs to assist land-right giver's production tasks and ceremonial preparations, failing to fulfill this obligation may result in the land-loss—the land-right giver has the right to take the land back. It is described as "fictitious kinship" for the land-right taker becomes "like a relative." (Mahoney). In other words, in the

Yapese understanding, transference of land-rights is akin to making kin. And the Yapese elderly women are highly unwilling to make kin with the Chinese.

Finally, as I briefly discussed in the end of Chapter Four, the development controversy reflects a remarkable historic transition experienced by the Yapese in the twenty-first century: their lifestyle has been gradually transforming from land-based to non-land-based. A land-based lifestyle cannot be depicted as “money-based” or “commodity-based,” for the Yapese personhood is closely tied with land symbolism. The Yapese mode of being and relating, as long as the personhood closely associated with land, is gradually shifting as well. In Mahoney’s documentation in 1958, land-sale or a complete severance with one’s connections with land was inconceivable in Yap, but it is almost happening now—precipitated by ETG’s long-term land lease. At this critical moment, Yapese elderly women rose as the ethical guardian of the land-based mode of being and relating, and seriously decelerated the land-leasing process. Their demonstration epitomizes a rare case in the region—in an island where most of the land are still subject to complex land-tenure system and multiple land ownership and guardianship, and where personhood and sociality are still largely tied with land symbolism, rather than commodity symbolism.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Petition Letter (spring 2012)

We, the undersigned:

- As residents of the State of Yap, are aware of the many economic problems facing this State and the country; and
- Are also aware that there are potential economic development and investments being proposed by the Chinese Exhibition and Travel Group (ETG) for the State of Yap; and
- Are concerned as to the full impact of such proposals on our people, traditions, culture, land, ocean, and identity; and
- Are concerned and committed to the welfare of our people, communities and islands and we recognize the importance of all our people being fully informed and provided an opportunity to participate and submit their views in any and all discussions on the investment issue;

Therefore, we the undersigned:

- Are hereby requesting the Government and the Leadership of the State of Yap, to fully inform, educate and disseminate to the general populace relevant information regarding the components, impact, and status of the proposed ETG investment in various mediums and forums;
- That such mediums and forums be conducted thoroughly both in town and in all outlying villages and islands in a regular and frequent manner;
- And that no further agreement and promises, both written and oral, be made by the Government and the Leadership of Yap, on said proposal by ETG until such time that the people of Yap have duly expressed their free will on the said proposal in a plebiscite to be funded by the Government of Yap.”

The petition is addressed to Speaker Henry Falan and according to the communication, copies were also made available to the Office of the Governor, Council of Piliung and the Council of Tamol by the petitioners. (Around January to April, 2012, circa 1,700 signatures)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The text can be found on a local voluntary association’s website: <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/peoples-petitions-and-public-letters/>.

The pdf file is retrievable here: <https://concernedyapcitizens.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/etg-petition.pdf>

## Appendix 2: Samples of ETG's Constructions in China



Part of ETG's Jiuzhai Paradise, "A Fan City" (甲蕃古城)<sup>7</sup>



Part of ETG's Jiuzhai Paradise, Lower: Jiuzhai Paradise<sup>8</sup>

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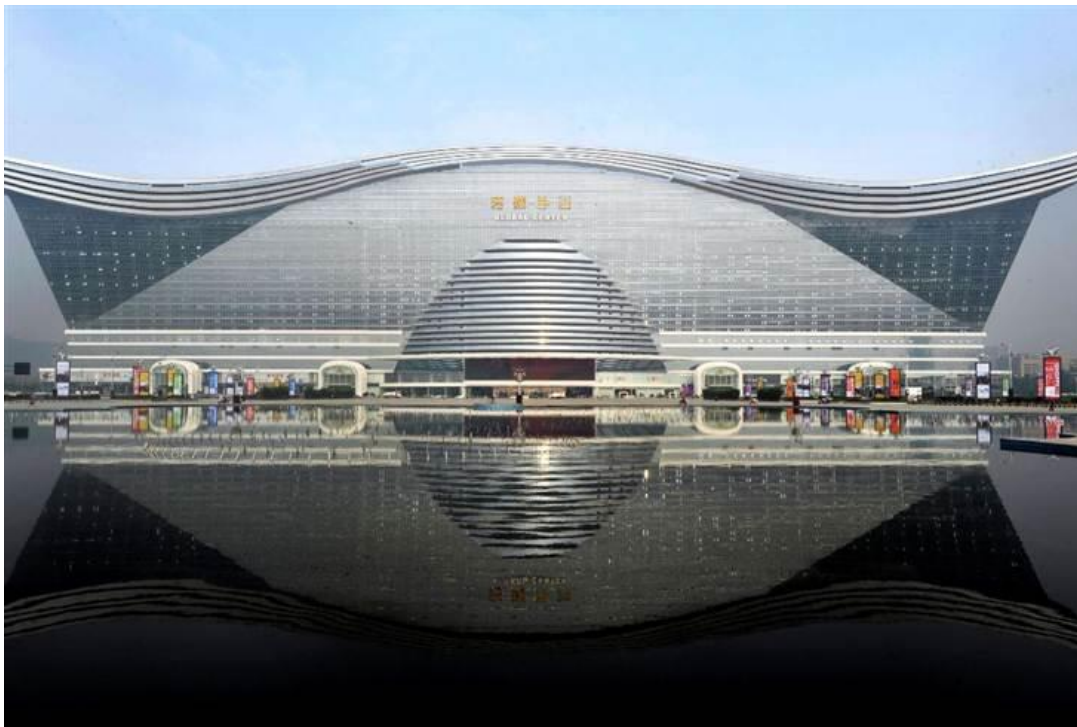
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<sup>7</sup> Resource: ETG's official website: <http://www.etgcn.com/jzt/jgc/jgcjj/jianjie.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Resource: ETG's official website, <http://www.etgcn.com/jzt/jzintro/jianjie.html>.



Part of ETG's Century City, InterContinental Century City, Chengdu<sup>9</sup>



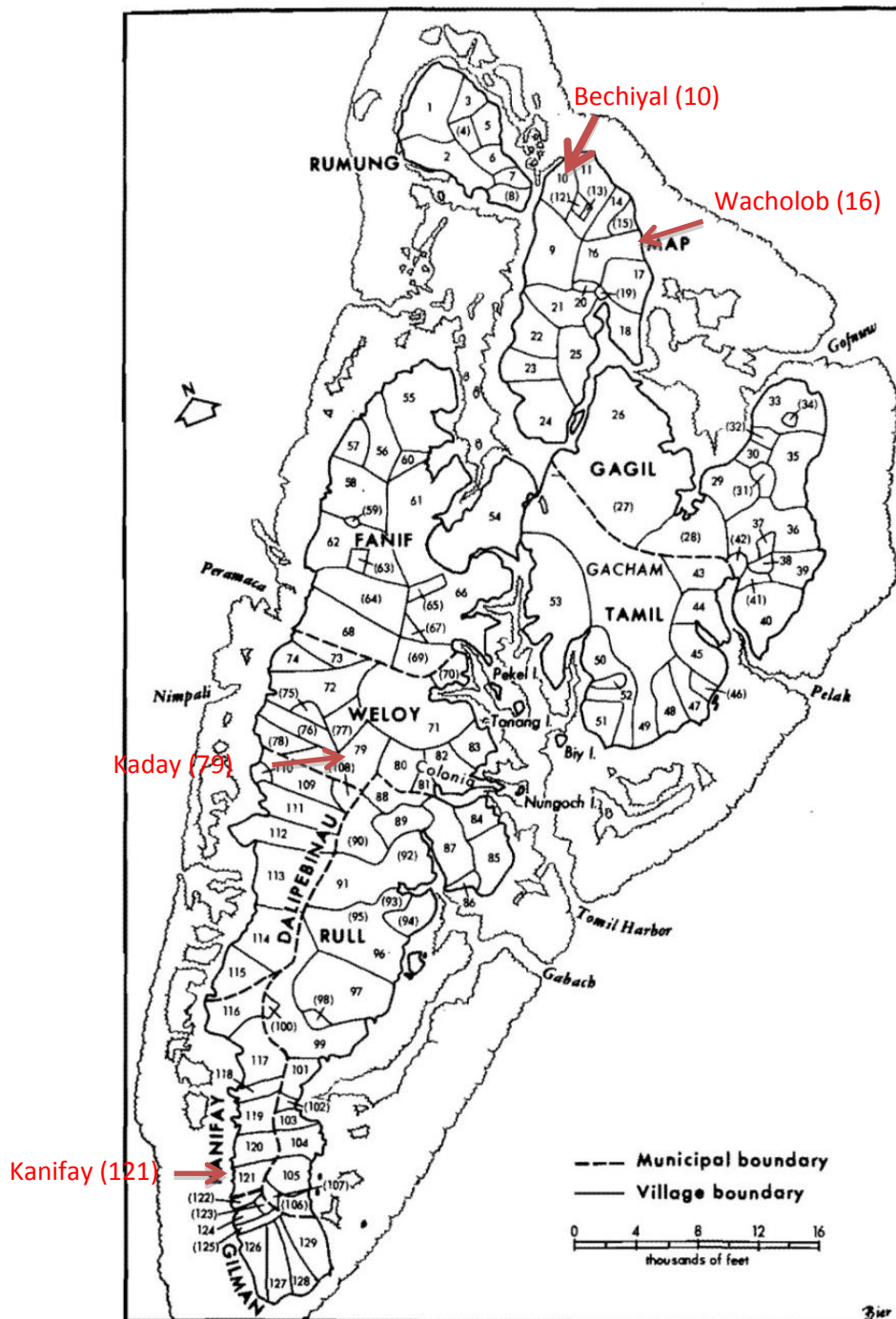
ETG's New Century Global Center, "the world's largest building," opened in early July, 2013<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Resource: ETG's official website, <http://www.etgcn.com/sjc/sjconfer/hyzx.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Resource: <http://www.nbcnews.com/travel/worlds-largest-building-opens-china-6C10578538>



## Appendix 3: ETG's Visit in Yap, 2011 August



ETG's Visit in Yap, 2011 August (the map is based on Lingenfelter 1975: 78)

Note:

1. Wacholob (number 16) is the site of a locally owned hotel "Village View." It was one of the lands ETG targeted. ETG successfully got its land leased in 2016.
2. Sunset Park and Cultural Center are in Kaday (number 79), Weloy Municipality.
3. Kanifay Recreation Park is also called "Ma'lay Park," located in Ma'lay village (number 121).



## *Vicariate of Yap Office*

P.O. Box A, Yap, FM 96943

Telephone: 350-7273

June 24, 2012 (Feast of the Birth of St. John the Baptist)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In recent months the people of Yap have become increasingly concerned about a development project submitted to our State Government by a company of the People's Republic of China called the Exhibition and Travel Group, also known as "ETG". This development company proposes to build eight to ten hotels by 2015, two to three world-class golf courses, casinos, and other related facilities for tourists from Asia. ETG promises to build enough hotels to give Yap a 10,000 room guest capacity by 2020. In addition, ETG is promising to make infrastructure improvements with respect to our roads, medical facilities, airport capacity, and utilities.

Much of the public concern since mid 2011 has come about because of the lack of information provided to the public or their elected representative in the State legislature. It was not until June 13, 2012 that the Governor's office formally transmitted to the State Legislature copies of the documents relating to the development of ETG's project. By then, the following documents had already been signed and issued: (1) a Strategic Framework of Cooperation between Yap State and ETG signed on April 21, 2011; (2) a Memorandum of Understanding between Yap State and ETG signed on October 21, 2011; (3) a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Piliung and ETG signed on January 12, 2012; (4) a Memorandum of Understanding between the FSM Government and ETG signed on April 26, 2012; (5) A Foreign Investment Permit issued to ETG on June 4, 2012; and (6) A Business License issued to ETG also on June 4, 2012. In addition to these agreements, the Governor's office has been negotiating with ETG an Investment Agreement that will determine the conditions, responsibilities and liabilities of Yap State and ETG as the project progresses. The Attorney General's Office is now reviewing the second draft, dated May 8, 2012, of this Investment Agreement.

The State Legislature formally learned of these documents just ten days ago. The lack of detailed

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<sup>11</sup> The text and the word doc file is retrievable on a local voluntary association's website:  
<https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/peoples-petitions-and-public-letters/>

information coming from the Governor's office, even as government and traditional leaders were being flown to China for meetings on the project, has caused concern and anxiety among the citizens of Yap both locally and overseas. The public's concern has resulted in two resolutions by the State Legislature calling ETG to refrain from further action in Yap State until the legislature has sufficient information to insure that their plans are in the best interest of the people of Yap. Two separate petitions from the people of Yap have also requested that more facts about the process be revealed to the public. While these resolutions and petitions have gone unheeded by Governor's office, there was a Town Hall meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup> at which the Acting Attorney General was present to discuss the ETG project. Unfortunately, since the public did not see any details of the project agreements, participants could only ask very general questions and received very vague answers that were not supported by any specific documents.

The Catholic Church raises concern not only for the doubts and anxiety caused by the lack of specific information from the government, but also because this lack of information violates the civil and political rights of the people of Yap to participate in a decision that would change the quality of life and culture on Yap forever. The Church also raises concern over some aspects of the tourism project itself. Let it be known that the Catholic Church is not opposed to the economic development of Yap or the tourism industry. However, when the Church reflects on economic development, it does so in the context human development. In this context, economic development must serve the development of the entire person, body, mind, spirit and culture. People are more important than material goods or money and any development project needs to be judged not only in terms of the dollar sign, but also with respect to the effect on the human person and life in our communities. While ETG's promises that their project will bring fast money and economic prosperity to Yap, the Catholic Church is concerned that certain aspects of ETG's project will harm the quality of life in our communities and lessen our sense of cultural and human dignity.

The Catholic Church has serious concerns about certain aspects of the ETG project:

The most obvious concern is the interest ETG has in bringing casinos into Yap. At present gambling is not legal in our State. Is our executive branch entertaining such a project proposal or providing guarantees to ETG that the law will be changed?

The criminal activity that accompanies the casino industry is well documented from the experience of other nations in the Pacific rim that have permitted gambling. This criminal activity includes illegal drug trade, money laundering, prostitution and human trafficking. The proposed casinos will be operated by foreign businesses that ETG calls "Third Party" participants. These businesses are unknown at this time and so it is not possible to perform any background checks on them. And yet ETG insists in the Investment Agreement that these unknown businesses enjoy the same rights as are given to ETG in the Investment Agreement currently under review.

At present the FSM is on the US State Department's watch list for its inability to legislate or enforce laws that prohibit human trafficking. The Yap public safety department also lacks the manpower or resources to effectively detect or protect against money laundering, illegal drug trade and prostitution. How will our communities and families be protected against these crimes that have repeatedly accompanied the gambling industry even in the most developed nations?

- A second concern is this project's impact on the environment. ETG is not being held accountable to an environmental impact assessment by the Governor at this time. The reason for this is that such an assessment requires a detailed Master and Business plan. ETG has admitted that such a plan cannot be drawn up until it knows how much land it can acquire and where this land will be. Under these circumstances, how can the Governor's office pretend to answer the public's questions about environmental impacts if it is not possible to do an impact assessment at this time? And yet the Governor's office proceeds with agreements that gradually increase Yap State's commitment to ETG's project.

As the largest construction project in the history of Yap and the FSM, the ETG project is certain to have large-scale effects on all sectors of the environment. For example, the golf courses alone, three of which are initially planned by ETG, will have detrimental effects on the lagoon. Golf courses located in tropical ecosystems require massive amounts of fertilizers, which, when washed off into the lagoon, produce nutrient loads that destroy the fragile coral reef ecosystem and related fisheries. What laws and agreements will there be that will hold ETG responsible for not endangering the reef system on Yap?

- The project will also require ETG to lease large parcels of land on Yap, a significant portion of which is collectively owned. This will constitute the largest transfer of land use in the history of Yap over a period of just a couple years. For generations land has formed the basis of our social systems for the estates, clans and villages. What will be the social and cultural effects of converting our land into a monetary commodity that is no longer tied to our estates or villages? How will our people deal with the very sudden and rapid loss of this cultural heritage? What will this do to the unity among our families? Will some people in positions of traditional authority profit more than others? Will the *pilmingaay* and other members of the lower castes benefit from this project equally in an economically just way? In other words, will the rich get richer and the poor get poorer?
- Finally, it should be noted that the current drafts of the Investment Agreement with ETG provide few details that bind ETG to the infrastructure improvements they first promised. The current agreements hold ETG to very few specific requirements and leave the Church wondering whether the negotiations with ETG are receiving careful thought and deliberate review.

My brothers and sisters, I ask the members of the Catholic Church and of the other Churches on Yap to encourage our elected representatives and public servants to slow down their attempts to approve the ETG project. Hold your public servants accountable to a review of the ETG proposal that is thorough and transparent. We are being asked to risk our cultural heritage and ancestral lands on this project. In

light of the considerable and unprecedented scale of this project, the Church maintains that the people of Yap have a right to full and transparent information in all subsequent negotiations with ETG. The people of Yap should not be asked for their approval prior to a complete study on the full social, economic, and environmental impacts of this project. Once appropriate information is provided, I ask each of you to exercise your civil rights to participate fully in this decision that will determine the lives of future generations on Yap – even if this participation requires a plebiscite. Your participation must be based on full, detailed and transparent information, not on vague undocumented assurances or dreams of prosperity decorated with colorful pictures.

In closing, I call on our Governor, our other public servants, and the Councils of Puluung and Tomol to remember the words of our Lord when he said, “Whoever wishes to be the greatest of all must be the servant of all,” because Jesus himself came, “Not to be served, but to serve.” You are chosen to fulfill your duties in the service of our people. The people of Yap have placed their hopes and trust in you. We call upon you today to have the courage to uphold and protect our civil rights to participate fully in this decision, so that as one people we may determine the future of our children and of our State.

Sincerely in Our Lord,

John S. Hagileiram, S.J., Acting Vicar of Yap

## Appendix 5: Yap Women's Association's Public Letter<sup>12</sup>

YAP WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 593

Colonia Yap FSM, 96943

Phone: (691) 350-7504

Date : 7/26/12

Hon. Chairman Bruno Tharngan & Members

Council of Piluung

Yap State-FSM 96943

Hon. Sebastian S. Anefal

Governor, State of Yap

Yap State-FSM 96943

Hon. Henry Falan

Speaker, YSL

Yap State-FSM 96943

Hon. Chairman Ignathio Hapthey & Members

Council of Tamol

Yap State-FSM 96943

Hon. Isaac Figir & Joseph Urusmal

Congress Delegation, Yap State

Yap State-FSM 96943

SUBJECT : Development by the Exhibition and Travel Group

Dear Honorable Leaders,

Siroo! On behalf of the Women of Yap, I am putting forth for your thoughts our utmost concern regarding the Exhibition and Travel Group. So much has been said that it is hard to distinguish facts from rumors, however, there is tremendous concern among our womenfolk in regard to the plan for Yap

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<sup>12</sup> The text and the word doc file is retrievable on a local voluntary association's website:  
<https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/peoples-petitions-and-public-letters/>

State Tourism Development by the Exhibition and Travel Group (ETG) in Yap State. These concerns are being put forth to your office in the hope that they may be considered in your deliberation with the above group. Listed below are a few of our concerns.:

A. As of to date, although we continue to say that we are “poor”, everyone still has a home and our elders are dying in their homes and hospital surrounded by family. One of our kinship ties in Yap is our land title. What would happen when someone comes in and takes over our land for us. We have seen in other richer countries such as the United States of America, that although they are super powers and they have all the money in the world, their people are dying on the streets due to starvation and no place to live. The women of Yap are worried that when our lands are leased out to foreigners, some of our traditional kinship threads will be lost and will result in the breakdown of family and community connections.

B. The ETG are from big countries with big companies. Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect that by them building their businesses on our small Island, their first interest will be the Yapese. Our island is very small. Do we really want to see thousands and thousands of aliens living here in Yap? Now with the global warming, our children, brothers and sisters are migrating here from the Neighboring Islands. We are still adjusting to this new situation.

C. When we start to lease those lands to ETG, ownership will be suspended. What will happen to the future of our children?

D. Lastly but not the least, is there a check and balance in our law that ensures that infrastructures being built is environmentally safe and healthy for our land and the Yapese people? In some instances as seen in bigger countries, when a building is to be built, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) must be made by a qualified body. This environmental assessment must include land mitigation, Air quality, Water and tradition of the people. The process must be transparent so the people can have a say in the changes that effect them and to also be prepared for the Immense change. What about our health services? Are we equipped for this migration of thousands of people to our small island? Does our hospital have the facility and know how to take care of this number of population. For example, with the Avian Influenza that originated in China, are we capable of detecting and ensuring that those who are infected do not come to our Island. If this is not in place, chances are that people are going to be driven away from their sanctuaries not because of their choice but because they have to.

So, in our meeting in June, 2012, there was a request from the women of Yap to write to our leaders, to appeal to your sense of community leadership, brotherhood and caring, for our current generation and the future generations to come. We ask that in your deliberation, please decide on what is best for the people of Yap not only in monetary means but our livelihood as well. In your deliberation and decision

making, we humbly request to please reflect on and select those decisions that ensures the optimum spiritual well being of our women and children. We acknowledge and appreciate your ever present vigilance in careful decisions resulting in “striking a balance” between the old and the new. Because of this, it has enabled a statehood that allows our citizens to continue to thrive in an environment that is spiritually, culturally, socially, economically and physically healthy. This is all that the women of Yap ask for. So in essence, we , the “Bpin nu waab” strongly feel that this investment is not right for the state of Yap. Therefore, we are humbly pleading to your good office to put a stop to this Proposed Development of ETG.

Siroo ma kamagargad!

With All Due Respect,

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Yap Women’s Association

Cc: file

Attachment: Municipality Signatories

## Appendix 6: Letter from *Dalip Pi Nguchol* (“Three Paramount Chiefs”)<sup>13</sup>

**Dalip Pi Nguchol**  
**Paramount Chiefs**  
**States of Yap**

September 17, 2012

The Honorable Sebastian L. Anefal  
Governor  
Yap State Government  
Colonia, Yap FM 96943

The Honorable Henry Falan  
Speaker  
8<sup>th</sup> Yap State Legislature  
Colonia, Yap FM 96943

The Honorable Bruno Tharngan  
Chairman  
Council of Puluung  
Colonia, Yap FM 96943

The Honorable Ignathio Hapthey  
Chairman  
Council of Tamol  
Colonia, Yap FM 96943

Mr. Deng Hong

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<sup>13</sup> The pdf file of this letter can be retrieved from <https://concernedyapcitizens.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/dalip-pi-nguchol-letter.pdf>



Chairman, Exhibition and Travel Group

c/o ETG Office in Yap

Colonia, Yap FM 96943

RE: ETG Project

Gentlemen:

We, the undersigned DALIP PI NGUCHOL, the Paramount Chiefs of all of Yap State, pursuant to our traditional authority which is also recognized by Article III, Section 1, of the Yap State Constitution, do hereby command all of you to prohibit the Exhibition and Travel Group from proceeding with its intended Project for Yap State.

Arib Estate

(\*signature)

Aloysius Faimau

Paramount Chief

Ru'way Estate

(\*signature)

John B. Ranganbay

Paramount Chief

Bulwol Estate

(\*signature)

William Yad

Paramount Chief

## Appendix 7: Paramount Chiefs of Yap Address State Leadership<sup>14</sup>

The Three Pillars, Paramount Chiefs of the State of Yap known as the “Dalip Pi Nguchol”, have jointly signed a letter to which was submitted to the whole State Leadership in response to an alleged letter by the Dalip Pi Nguchol to the whole state government and Mr. Deng Hong-Chairman of the ETG on September 17, 2012.

The alleged letter read as follows:

“We, the undersigned Dalip Pi Nguchol, the Paramount Chiefs of all of Yap State, pursuant to our traditional authority which is also recognized by Article III, Section 1, of the Yap State Constitution, do hereby command all of you to prohibit the Exhibition and Travel Group from proceeding with its intended Project for Yap State.

Signed by Aloysius Faimau-Arib Estate, John B. Ranganbay-Ru’way Estate and William Yad-Bulwol Estate.”

In response to this “alleged Dalip Pi Nguchol” the real Dalip Pi Nguchol has issued the following letter today on September 21, 2012:

“Siro’,

We understand that you may have received a letter allegedly from the Dalip Pi Nguchol. As far as we know, the Dalip Pi Nguchol has neither been consulted nor contacted on any matter whatsoever.

However, we feel that it is now of the utmost importance that, as leaders of the State Government, you come together with a unified voice in addressing the many challenges facing the State and her peoples. No matter the challenges, this Yapese maxim will always hold true: Ra tareb lungdad ngay ma ra fel, ma rawagey lungdad riy ma rawagey.

Recent events have revealed great public concerns on foreign investment. Not all these concerns are the same, nor do they all come from the same points of view. But they all recognize one simple truth – that Yap State needs sustainable foreign investment. And they all share one common underlying goal – that foreign investments must truly suitable for the State in terms of their sizes, types, and impacts.

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<sup>14</sup> The text is copy-pasted from Yap State News Brief (September 21, 2012). The text can be retrieved here: <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/timeline/>

We are, therefore, requesting the State Leadership to unify and ensure that the line agencies of government will always continue to promote foreign investment, but with the underlying goal that the totality of foreign investments be sustainable and suitable for Yap, considering the size of our lands and waters, the limitations of our resources, the fragility of our environment, and the livelihood of our customs and traditions.

This underlying goal must apply to ETG as it must to all others. We ask that you make and keep this as a commitment to the peoples of the State. Thank you.

Respectfully, we will always remain,

Francis Fithingmow

Pebnaw Estate

Tho'lang, Gachpar – Bulche

Steven Mar

Namath Estate

Teb, Tomil– Bulche

Victor Nabeyan

Tithera' Estate

Ngolog, Rull – Bulche”

This letter was signed and submitted to;

The Honorable Sebastian L. Anefal

Governor

The State of Yap

The Honorable Henry Falan

Speaker

The 8th Legislature

The Honorable Bruno Tharngan  
Chairman  
Council of Puluung

The Honorable Ignathio Hapthey  
Chairman  
Council of Puluung.

Since the Dalip Pi Nguchol represents, serves, and protects its entire people of Yap State, it remained within its role by addressing its State Government Leadership only. An official copy to the ETG is per discretion of the Government.

## Appendix 8: Letter Issued By Ru'way Estate<sup>15</sup>

The following is a transcript of the letter issued by John Ranganbay of the Ru'way Estate and addressed to:

“Victor Nabeyan  
Tithera' Estate  
Ngolog, Rull

Thomas Falngin & Michael Gilngor  
Man'ol Estate  
Balabat, Rull

Dear Gentlemen,

Siro'. I want to assure you that the respective roles and sphere of authority of each of our three estates have not changed. They remain to be as they were handed down to us over the ages. It will be blasphemy for me or others to try and re-write them.

The letter, dated September 17, 2012, claiming to be from the *Dalip pi Nguchol* is VOID insofar as my signature is concerned. It was brought to me on short notice and for quick signing, and I felt I did not have time to think it through. But on reflection, I realize that the letter is clearly inconsistent with the traditional system of authority *ko re Kan Rull ney*. To set the record straight, and to undo the confusion that may have been caused by this letter, I want to reiterate the respective roles and authority of our three estates, and their respective traditional relationship to one another.

*Lungun e Nguchol e boy ko Bulche'. Lungun e Bulche' e boy u Tithera'. Lungun e Ulun e boy u Man'ol. An nu Ru'way e ba plibthiren e binaw ko re Rull ney.* All the *Ulun*, who have traditional political connections to Balabat, and all the *Bulche'*, who have traditional political connections to Ngolog, know this.

In addition, the traditional relationship between our three estates function in the following manner: *Ra ngan yan nga lungun e Ulun, ma yima yog a thin nga Ru'way. Ma raniyan, ma yu Man'ol e mitemuw. Ra ngan yan nga lungun e Bulche', ma kuy ma yog e thin nga Ru'way. Ma raniyan, ma yu Tithera' e mitemuw. Dar ma un yu Ru'way ko yan, ya ba par ni ba plibthiren e binew, ni bay 'unog a thin ngak. Arfan ni tha' ko Ulun ko ra nam ney a ba sar nga Man'ol, ma arfan ni tha' ko Bulche' ko ra nam ney a ba sar nga Tithera'. Dariy e tiney e tha' nga Ru'way.*

Due to infrequency of use, what these traditional roles and authorities are, and how and when they can be employed, have been lost on some of us. This is why we must always consult, *ma 'un puruy nga tabang*, before we step into the public domain. Going forward, these three estates must band together even closer to make sure that the exercise of traditional authority is done appropriately under customs and traditions, and is done genuinely for the common good.

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<sup>15</sup> The text is copy-pasted from Yap State News Brief (September 24, 2012). The text can be retrieved from: <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/timeline/>.

Since the September 17 letter was addressed to the State Government, I am sharing a copy of this letter with Government officials. *Kamagar gad, ma puruy rodad e nga i par nga tabang.*

Sincerely,

John B. Ranganbay  
Ru'way Estate

In Witness,  
Philip T. Ranganbay

xc:The Honorable Sebastian L. Anefal, Governor  
The Honorable Henry Falan, Speaker  
The Honorable Bruno Tharngan, Chairman, COP  
The Honorable Ignathio Hapthey, Chairman, COT”

## Appendix 9: Tomil, Gagil and Rull Estates Send Letter to The State Leaders<sup>16</sup>

On Friday, April 05, 2013 estates from Tomil, Gagil and Rull sent a letter to Governor Anefal, Speaker Falan and the Council Of Piluung Chairman, Bruno Tharnagan, regarding the “Dalip Pi Nguchol”. The letter reads as follows:

“Dear Sirs:

Over the course of several months, some government officials have been premising their statements and charting their decisions around a purported decree of the Dalip pi Nguchol that all ETG’s investment activities in Yap State be ceased. This alleged directive of traditional authority may have been engineered by some to serve their socio-political interests or their agenda in opposing ETG’s investment in Yap. However, that directive is not of the Dalip pi Nguchol for the following reasons:

1. In the case of Tomil, the village of Teb has not instated a person to the state of their Nguchol for decades now. So the authority of their Nguchol cannot have been legitimately invoked as has been alleged.
2. In the case of Gagil, the person who signed for the estate of Bulwol have admitted to the village of Gachpar that he did not fully understand what he was signing.
3. In the case of Rull, the estate of Ruwey had issued a notice invalidating its Signature on the alleged decree.
4. Lungun or the authority of the Dalip pi Nguchol is a process of traditional governance that was meant to be employed through consultations or puruy between and among certain chiefly estates in Tomil, Gagil, and Rull. Obviously, without consultations with other essential chiefly estates, no single estate can alone effectively dictate over barba’ e nug, nor can three estates alone effectively exercise traditional authority over the whole State. This is because in order for a directive of the Dalip pi Nguchol to pervade all facets of society and be certain to be obeyed, it must be undergirded by the weight and political ties of both the Bulche’ and Ulun. This is the check and balance in our traditional system of governance. The alleged decree of the Dalip pi Nguchol was fashioned without the process of consultations among the pertinent estates in Rull, Tomil, and Gagil.

Based on the foregoing, we declare that the Dalip pi Nguchol have not decreed that ETG’s investment activities in Yap ceases. The responsibility for foreign investment primarily resides in the province of government as a matter of law. And so we ask that officials of government rely upon the application of law and State policy, not an invalid traditional decree, to address whatever issues may still be lingering around the ETG investment project.

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<sup>16</sup> The text is copy-pasted from Yap State News Brief (April 8, 2013). The text can be retrieved from: <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/timeline/> ]

We are of the opinion that the authority of the Dalip pi Nguchol must not be hastily exerted on a concern of government that ought to be properly addressed through the rule of law and the implementation of government functions. If we continue to be this quick in seeking to deploy traditional authority on a concern of government— a concern for which the law is clearly designed to address — we will come to trivialize our system of laws and deflate confidence in the regime of government.

Finally, the Council of Piluung, itself an institution of government, is established by the Constitution as the first line of traditional authority to ensure that governmental acts do not adversely affect recognized customs and traditions. If the Council of Piluung fails in that mandate, or if out of utmost and absolute necessity, the authority of the Dalip pi Nguchol must be brought to bear on an act of government, let that be the decision of all the estates in Tomil, Rull, and Gagil, which have roles in the decision-making process of the Dalip pi Nguchol. Kamagar gad.

For Tamil,  
Steven Mar, Nirnath Estate

For Gagil,  
Francis Fithingmow, Pebnaw Estate  
Andrew Yinifel, Miryang Estate

For Rull,  
Victor Nabeyan, Tithera' Estate  
John B. Raganbay, Ruwey Estate  
Thomas Falngin, Man'ol Estate"

A signed copy of the letter may be found here: <http://yapstategov.org/downloads/DPN-04-05-13.pdf> <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> This link is no longer retrievable on March 14, 2017



## Appendix 10: The Council of Piluung Issues Letter to Chairman of RED

### Committee<sup>18</sup>

The traditional branch of the Yap State Government, the Council of Piluung, sent a communication to Senator Charles S. Chieng, who is the Chairman of The Resources, Education and Development (RED) Committee, last Thursday, April 04, 2013 expressing their regrets that they will not participate in the upcoming public hearing scheduled on Tuesday, April 09, 2013 at the legislature chamber at 10:00AM. The public hearing notice was issued by the RED Committee on April 02, 2013 regarding a miscellaneous communication (8-225) from the Concern Citizens Group on provisions in the ETG lease template agreement between ETG and individual landowner in Yap State.

The letter reads as follows:

“Dear Mr, Chairman:

We want to thank you for inviting the Council of Piluung to the public hearing “regarding provisions in the ETG lease template agreement between ETG and the individual landowner in Yap State”, which is scheduled for April 9 at 10:00 a.m. We, the members of the Council of Piluung, will not be attending the public hearing. We feel that this public hearing is going to be an encroachment into a private dealing between private citizens and a private business, and it will be an overreach in the exercise of a government power.

Ensuring that private citizens fully understand the terms of their leases with any business, particularly a foreign investor, is a valid concern. But running their leases, or the lease template that they are negotiating, thru the political process of a public hearing is not the proper way to address that concern. Instead what the citizens need is access to legal services.

The State contributes to MLSC’s budget annually so that it can provide free legal services to citizens. But if MLSC cannot help citizens negotiate their leases with ETG for whatever reason, the State can consider appropriating funds to hire a lawyer or a law firm (even from outside of Yap if necessary) to assist citizens in their lease negotiations with ETG during a specific period of time, say a year or two. State funds were once given to the Satawal community to hire a lawyer to represent them in a reef damage case. So there is precedent for this.

There may also be other options to better ensure that our citizens have access to legal services in respect of the ETG project. We ask that your Committee focus on the options by which the State can best ensure accessibility for landowners to legal services, rather than directly reviewing private leases through a political lens.

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<sup>18</sup> The text is copy-pasted from Yap State News Brief (April 8, 2013). The text can be retrieved from: <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/timeline/>

If your Committee is to start reviewing private leases involving ETG, will it stop there? Or will it have to review all other leases between private landowners and other business going forward? Thank you.

Sincerely,

Bruno Tharngan, Chairman  
Thomas Falngin, Vice-Chairman  
Steven Mar, Member  
Francis X. Fithingmow, Member  
James Manguon, Member  
Justin Yilubwag, Member  
James Limar, Member  
James A. Yatman, Member  
Louis LukanGaw, Mamber  
Cyril Yinnifel, Member”

## Appendix 11: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Yap Traditional Council of Piluung (COP) and the Chinese Exhibition and Travel Group (ETG)<sup>19</sup>

[January 18, 2012] COP and ETG Signs MOU

The signing of the Memorandum Of *[sic]* Understanding (MOU) between the Yap Traditional Council of Piluung (COP) and the Chinese Exhibition and Travel Group (ETG) at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 12, 2012 has signified the beginning of a unique tourism project that ETG proposed to invest in the State of Yap.

The MOU was signed by the Honorable **Bruno Tharngan**, Chairman of the Traditional Council of Piluung and Mr. **Dèng Hóng**, Chairman of Chengdu Century City New International Convention & Exhibition Center Company Ltd (ETG).

With the MOU in place, ETG will open an office in Yap where it could deal directly with the Council of Piluung and Chiefs on land issues regarding the investment project.

Following is the MOU signed between the Yap State Government and the Chinese company:

**Memorandum of Understanding**  
**between the Council of Piluung**  
**of the State of Yap, Federated States of Micronesia**  
**(“Council” hereafter)**  
**and**  
**Chengdu Century City New International**  
**Convention and Exhibition Center Company Ltd.**  
**(“ ETG” hereafter)**

**Whereas** the government of the State of Yap and ETG agreed to develop a unique world renowned top grade tourism project in the State of Yap according to a master development plan to be developed, which will include without limitation planning, designing, construction, management, operations for

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<sup>19</sup> The text is copy-pasted from Yap State News Brief (January 18, 2012). The text can be retrieved from: <https://concernedyapcitizens.wordpress.com/timeline/>

tourism development related projects (the “Project” hereafter). The master plan will cover the development of tourism sites and activities on all appropriate Yap islands where feasible and viable.

**Whereas** ETG bears the intention to reconcile the development of the Project with the economic and social development of the local community of the State of Yap and the Council acknowledge the positive effect and benefit that the Project would bring to the local community and the State of Yap as a whole.

ETG and the Council (each as a Party and as Parties collectively) both agree as follows,

1. ETG acknowledges and commits its full respect towards the tradition and customs of the State of Yap and undertakes that the development of the Project shall benefit the development of the local culture. ETG further undertakes to provide assistance and contributions in establishing necessary public facilities which will benefit the welfare of the local community.
2. The Parties acknowledge that the role of ETG as the full scale developer of the tourism resource of the State of Yap. The Council hereby supports ETG regarding the development of the Project to the largest extent. The Council further agrees to give to ETG their full assistance regarding the acquisition of land lease.
3. The Parties agree that the Member of the Council shall witness, in a written form, the execution of the land lease instruments between ETG and the land owners with respect to the lease of land located within the community that said Member is associated with.
4. The Parties agree that the Member of the Council shall coordinate and mediate should any dispute arises between ETG and respective local community.
5. For the purpose of reconciliation of future investment by other investors with the development of this Project and the State of Yap, the Council and ETG shall discuss investment by other future investors regarding potential effect and influence to the development of the Project and the State of Yap, which may be imposed by such investment when such investment is proposed. The Parties agree that they shall put their best efforts to reject and avoid any activities which may harm the environment, local tradition, culture and social development of the State of Yap.
6. The Parties acknowledge that the development of this Project shall be carried out by the ETG in a manner that is consistent with the continuing economic and social viability of the local community. ETG agrees upon the request of the Council or the Chiefs at any time, ETG shall consult with the Council and

the Chiefs to mutually establish plans and programs for the implementation of this objective, and thereafter ETG shall in good faith cooperate with the Council and the Chiefs in long term.

Signed,

For and on behalf of the Council of Piluung, the State of Yap

**Bruno Tharngan** Chairman

For and on behalf of the **Chengdu Century City New International Convention and Exhibition Center Company, Ltd.**

**Dèng Hóng** Authorized Representative

## Appendix 12: Form of Land Survey and Registration Application <sup>20</sup>

**LAND SURVEY AND REGISTRATION APPLICATION**

Application No. \_\_\_\_\_

TO : Chief, Land Resources Division      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I/we, the undersigned owner(s) of the land parcel(s) described herein, do hereby request Land Resources Division, Department of Resources and Development, to do survey and registration work on the following land parcel(s):

Name of land parcel(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Village where land parcel(s) located: \_\_\_\_\_

Municipality where land parcel(s) located: \_\_\_\_\_

<u>APPLICANT'S PRINTED NAME</u>	<u>SIGNATURE</u>	<u>DATE</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

MAILING ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**SURVEY AUTHORIZATION**

Village Chief's Printed Name	Chief's Signature	Date
<u>NONE/NO MORE</u>	_____	_____
M'afen's Printed Name	M'afen's Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Municipal Chief's Printed Name	Chief's Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____

**Important Note:**

If the land parcel(s) to be surveyed is situated in a village over which an estate(s) in another village has traditional authority and the survey cannot proceed without the approval of estate's owner because a survey without such an approval(s) would affect traditional rights and obligations, approval(s) of the estate's

<sup>20</sup> This document was posted by a Yapese woman on an open facebook forum, "Yap's Development" on February 12, 2013. The original link is: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/404462399564440/558859347458077/>. Here, the personal identification data has been deleted, except for one column: in the signatory place of mafean, the applicants wrote "none." The land survey application was accepted at the Yap State Office of Land Resources. A man wrote on behalf of Gachpar village—the highest-ranking village in Gagil Municipality—issued a letter to the Office of Land Resources, tried to accelerate the survey process. The Yapese woman also posted the letter ([https://lookaside.fbsbx.com/file/Alpagal%20ni%20tayid%20-%20Pressure.pdf?token=AWwjLGnV9hwcsZ8PzWidLFI\\_dLy4xowCsZAcAg5Bp5jE5Dobp23vDL0frWQ2GHyFP7wcs\\_zNG705TQwR68bN2JhjVhtxaysCAy2BOn3DMoUEoizovCzPj0Jr6xTR1EE8bNGu9k-B6XtZtvO7Uphmv3Z](https://lookaside.fbsbx.com/file/Alpagal%20ni%20tayid%20-%20Pressure.pdf?token=AWwjLGnV9hwcsZ8PzWidLFI_dLy4xowCsZAcAg5Bp5jE5Dobp23vDL0frWQ2GHyFP7wcs_zNG705TQwR68bN2JhjVhtxaysCAy2BOn3DMoUEoizovCzPj0Jr6xTR1EE8bNGu9k-B6XtZtvO7Uphmv3Z))

owner(s) must be secured along with the information required below by the applicant(s) prior to any survey.

Printed Name of Owner(s)

Owner's Signature

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. Name of estate(s) and the village and municipality where the estate(s) is located: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Give a concise statement of the reciprocal relationships (obligations and rights) of the estate(s) to the parcel and vice versa that would affect the survey:

3. If there is no such estate(s), explain why such is the case.

In support of my/our land survey application, I/we, as accurately as I/we can, provide the following information regarding the land parcel to survey:

1. Main house foundation of land parcel (kenggin e dayif ko binaw ni ngan foleg): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Type of ownership in land parcel (yaley ko binaw fa diin min tafnay):

a. ☐ FEE SIMPLE (tafney nga pa') by way of:

\_\_\_\_\_ Inheritance from father (yuw-tafnay ko chitamngiy)

\_\_\_\_ Inheritance from mother (thuth- tafnay ko chitinngiy)

\_\_\_\_ Inheritance from natural parents upon adoption (bid- tafnay ko gin ni p'of riy)

\_\_\_\_ Inheritance in appreciation for help rendered (y'ille magar- tafnay u pulwon e magar)

\_\_\_\_ Inheritance by daughter in the event of divorce or hardship (g'ili'dugan fa g'ili'ungin- tafen e bpin ni pii e chitamngin fa chitingin ni talpen ni ri chuw ko mobgol fa i gafgow ma dariy tafen mi i yoyowliiy tafen pifak. walagen ni pummoon)

\_\_\_\_ Inheritance by being the only person left to inherit (febinaw- tafnay ya dakuriy bee ni ra tafnay ko fare tabnaw ma goo ire bay yalen ngay ni nge tafnay)

\_\_\_\_ Inheritance by way of purchase (chuway- tafnay ni kan chuwwiiy fa thilyeg binaw/lanbinaw)

\_\_\_\_ Inheritance by other means (tafnay u yug rebe yalen): \_\_\_\_\_

b. [ ] OTHER TYPE OF LAND OWNERSHIP OR INTEREST other than FEE SIMPLE and state the type of interest and its basis (y'ug rebe yalen meyib rogoy ko binaw nib thil ko "tafnay nga pa'" meere mag gog e re yalen nem nge mangfan ni aram rogon ni kan tafnay). \_\_\_\_\_



3. Full name(s) of heir(s) after your death and basis of heirship  
(an fa picha' ni ra yan ko binaw ni gara yim ni ngam yoloy  
fithngan fa fithingrad ni numngin nge yalen fa yalräd ni ngan  
yan ngay): Our children

[OFFICIAL USE ONLY]

APPLICATION RECEIVED BY,

Signature

Date

Printed Name

DECISION REGARDING APPLICATION

After careful review of the survey request application and  
information provided in support of the application, Land Resources  
Division hereby [☒] Approves/[ ☐ ] Disapproves the application.

REMARKS:

By: Chief, Land Resources Division

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Xc: Applicant(s)  
File