Girdiiq nu Waqab ("People of Yap")

Avoiding my gaze, Paer looked out over her garden. She had planted this garden close to the house, she said, to reduce the distance she had to walk to get food when her grandson was visiting. Her leg was hurting a lot these days and it was just not possible for her to get to her favorite taro patches and gardens without some help. Her present pain seemed to be evocative of past suffering, however; at that moment our conversation shifted rather abruptly, I thought, to her memories of gardening for Japanese soldiers during the war. "During that war there was great suffering, suffering that was put upon us," she said. "Very great suffering that the Japanese gave to us. We all stayed and we all worked. And there was work and that is how it went."

The story of pain in Yap cannot be told without first understanding the place of suffering in the island's rich and at times difficult history. Perhaps most famously recognized in anthropological circles as the inspiration for David Schneider's (1984) critique of the concept of kinship, the island of Yap is located in the Western Caroline Islands of Micronesia. Unlike the coral atolls that constitute some of its closest neighbors, Yap is a volcanic high island that is the exposed area of a large submarine ridge. Yap proper actually consists of four main islands—Yap (Marabaaq), Gagil-Tomil, Maap, and Rumung—that are each separated by narrow water passages that have been, with the exception of Rumung, linked together by manmade land bridges, roads, and paths. While it is much larger than the neighboring coral atolls, Yap proper is still a relatively small area with a land mass of

approximately 38.6 square miles and an estimated population of 7,391 inhabitants (Yap State Statistical Bulletin 2000). Having endured four waves of colonial governance (Spanish, German, Japanese, and American), today Yap proper is the administrative capital of Yap State, one of the four states (Yap, Pohnpei, Kosrae, and Chuuk) that comprise the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), an independent nation that holds a compact of free association with the United States.

Economically, most Yapese individuals participate in some combination of wage labor and subsistence farming based primarily upon the cultivation of taro, yams, bananas, breadfruit, and chestnut (Lingenfelter 1991, 392; Egan 1998). In many villages fishing still contributes importantly to daily subsistence. Most salaried workers are employed by the government, the small private sector, and the service industries that have arisen in response to the growing influx of American, European, and Japanese tourists. For many individuals, cultivating and selling betel nut at local stores and to individuals who export to Guam and other islands in Micronesia is an important source of household income.

Languages spoken include Yapese, English, and a number of Outer Island idioms, including Ulithian, Woleaian, and Chuukese (Yap State Census 1994). Yapese, a reported first language for over 95 percent of the island's inhabitants, is a nominative-accusative Austronesian language in which the canonical word order is verb-subject-object (see Ballantyne 2004). Yapese is distinct from the languages of Palau and the other Caroline Islands (Lingenfelter 1991, 391) and has long defied historical linguistic attempts to classify it either as Western Malayo-Polynesian or Oceanic (Kirch 2000, 191; Ross 1996). During the time that I was conducting my fieldwork, many individuals under the age of fifty-five spoke English as a second language, while many individuals under the age of thirty spoke English fluently.

Precolonial History

While there are numerous competing archeological and historical linguistic accounts of the various waves of migration that contributed to the settlement of Micronesia (see Kirch 2000), there is a growing consensus that Yap was inhabited well before Gifford and Gifford's (1959; see also Takayama 1982) original estimation of 1800 B.P. (cf. Dodson and Intoh 1999). As is true of all cultures, precontact Yap was not only the product of local refinements on the cultural forms that

arrived with its first inhabitants. It was also importantly shaped by a long history of interaction and trade with other peoples and traditions spread throughout the Western Pacific and beyond (Egan 1998, 35; Kirch 2000, 191). In fact, Yap proper long held a position at the center of an expansive trade network whose size and complexity led a number of scholars to term it an "empire" (Hage and Harary 1991, 1996; Kirch 2000; Lessa 1950).

Beginning sometime between 300 and 800 A.D., Yap participated in an elaborately interlinked system of mutual-exchange relationships stretching from Palau, located 280 miles to the southwest (the site of aragonite limestone quarries that were essential for the production of Yap's stone money called *raay*), through a total of fourteen islands and atolls extending from Yap's closest eastern neighbors (Ulithi and Fais) to Puluwat and Namonuito, two atolls located over eight hundred miles to the east. While there are a few researchers who have explored the trade relations between Palau and Yap (see Gillilland 1975), it is the link between Yap and the eastern atolls that has garnered the most attention by scholars working in the region (see Alkire 1965, 1980; Descantes 1998; Hage and Harary 1991, 1996; Hunter-Anderson and Zan 1996; Kirch 2000; Lessa 1950; Labby 1975; Lingenfelter 1975).

The system of formal relationships *(sawëy)* between Yap proper and the Outer Islands was arranged as a chain of hierarchically cast linkages between islands.[1] In this system, the links progressed from the lower-ranking atolls in the east to the higher-ranking atolls and islands to the west. The highest-ranking positions were attributed to a number of estates in the villages of Gatchpar and Wanyaan in what is presently the municipality of Gagil on Yap proper (Alkire 1965; Lessa 1950; Egan 1998). A basic form essential for understanding a great many different varieties of social relations in Yap, the transactions between each individual island participating in the *sawëy* were understood in terms of a series of dyadic relations between a higher-status island and a lower-status trading partner. In each case, the relationship between islands was predicated upon an exchange of gifts and tribute. Gifts, such as bamboo, turmeric, and foodstuffs flowed east from a higher-status island to a lower-status island. Tribute, in the form of shell belts, *beagiy* (woven textiles made from banana fiber), and coconut fiber rope, flowed in the opposite direction (see Egan 1998).

As a number of my friends and teachers explained to me, this exchange was understood in terms of an interchange of care *(ayuw)* on the part of the higher-status island and respect *(liyoer)* and the part

of its lower-status trading partner. These two forms of activity represent the outward manifestation of a dynamic of feeling that I will explore in later chapters as founded upon an exchange of suffering *(gaafgow)* and compassion *(runguy)*. As Egan notes, the system was set up "with the westerly island being accorded higher status" and having necessary "obligation to support its eastern subordinate (especially after it had been hit by a devastating storm or typhoon)" (1998, 36).

Colonial History

While interaction with surrounding peoples in the Western Pacific was a reoccurring aspect of everyday life in precolonial times, Yap did not enter into sustained contact with Europeans until the mid- to late 1800s, though there were a number of earlier instances of contact beginning as early as the mid-1500s (Hezel 1983; Labby 1976, 2). While Yap managed to avoid frequent contact with Europeans for much of this period, Yapese communities were not fortunate enough to avoid the devastating epidemics born from exposure to a number of European diseases. Estimates of the precolonial population of the island range anywhere from twenty-eight thousand to fifty thousand inhabitants (Labby 1976; Hunt et al. 1954; Schneider 1955). By the time of the first census conducted by the Catholic mission in 1899, however, the population had shrunk to just under eight thousand. Yap's population reached an all-time low during the American Navy's first census in 1946, with merely 2,478 inhabitants (Egan 1998, 43; Hunt et al. 1949; Useem 1946, 4). As Labby argues, the "process of depopulation had, of course, definite effects on Yapese culture . . . [for even as early as the period when] the German Wilhelm Müller was doing his ethnography in 1908, he found that depopulation had irreparably upset the process of the hereditary transmission of ritual information and priestly position and that the Yapese religious system was in a state of near collapse" (1976, 3). As Egan (1998, 43) argues, this devastating loss of life also dramatically altered local social and political dynamics, since only a very few "people were available to hold the many landed positions, resulting in the concentration of many positions in single hands" (see also Lingenfelter 1975).

It is hard to say how much exposure to such epidemics may have affected local attitudes toward Europeans. As Hezel attests, "Although not entirely hostile to foreigners the Yapese had always been unpredict-

able in their treatment of visitors. . . . They had taken two Spanish vessels that had come to fish for bêche-de-mer in the 1830s, brutally murdering the crews, and had driven out [the British trading captain Andrew] Cheyne on his first trading visit to the island a few years later" (1983, 263). Even after his first failed attempt to establish trading relations with the Yapese in 1843, however, it was Cheyne and his newfound German business associate Alfred Tetens who first managed to establish semiregular trading relations with Yap in the 1860s.

While Spain had maintained its claim to Yap and the Caroline Islands since their "discovery" in the mid-1500s, with the closest Spanish garrisons and missions located in Guam and the Philippines respectively, this claim was nominal at best. Instead of a garrison or a mission, the first significant colonial presence in Yap came in the form of the establishment of a trading post for sea cucumber and copra by the German trading company J. C. Godeffroy and Son in 1869. It was not long after this that the most successful trader to establish residency in Yap, the Irish-born American David O'Keefe, was washed ashore in December 1871 after losing his ship *The Belvedere* in a typhoon (Hezel 1983, 263).

While other traders had difficulty motivating Yapese communities to produce copra and collect bêche-de-mer, O'Keefe discovered that motivation for such work could be quickly garnered within the context of the local system of exchange. O'Keefe's success was tied in particular to his access to steel tools and his newly acquired Chinese junk that he put to use in helping Yapese communities procure much valued large aragonite limestone disks called *raay*. For centuries, Yapese sailors had made the hazardous 280-mile ocean trip to Palau in order to spend years quarrying and crafting this "stone money" with shell tools. As Hezel notes, the "labor and risk involved were enormous, since the disks, often weighing a ton or two and measuring six feet in diameter," had to make the return trip to Yap by raft and canoe. In the process of acquiring stone money, many "lives were lost and men were maimed" (1983, 266). As I learned from talking with many of my Yapese friends and family, the worth of each piece of stone money is tied directly to the hardship and suffering that went into its acquisition. The most valuable pieces of stone money are those that are associated with a loss of life, while the least valuable tend to be those that were acquired through O'Keefe. Again resonating with ideas that will be explored in subsequent chapters, value, like virtue, is thus quite literally calibrated in Yapese cultural logic according to a *metric of suffering*.

At the height of O'Keefe's trading career, Yap was not only a major player in the copra trade in the Caroline Islands, with twenty to thirty ships visiting its shores every year to pick up the average of fifteen hundred tons of copra that were produced annually (Hezel 1975, 9; 1983, 281), but also at the center of a major political conflict between Spain and Germany. Increasingly worried about Germany's expansionism in the Pacific, Spain decided in 1885 that it was time to secure their longstanding claim to the island by establishing an administrative settlement on Yap. Spain, having spent the better part of a week preparing for the official flag-raising ceremony to celebrate their occupation of the island, was beat to the punch by a German ship that "raced in and, amid a din of beating drums and loud cries, immediately hoisted the German flag on Yap, claiming the Carolines for the Kaiser" (Labby 1976, 3). When word of Germany's attempt to annex Yap reached Spain, "thousands of angry demonstrators in Madrid stormed the German embassy and tore down the coat of arms, which they dragged through the streets and burned in the Puerto del Sol" (Hezel 1983, 311). In order to avert the possibility of war, both sides agreed to arbitration through the Vatican. Pope Leo XIII recognized Spain's sovereign right to the Carolines, while giving Germany permission to continue their business and trade operations in the region (Hezel 1983, 312–13).

In 1886 Spain finally established its first garrison and administrative center on Yap. Along with the newly appointed governor of the Western Caroline Islands came six Capuchin missionaries who established the first Catholic mission, located just above a number of small buildings that served as the first government hospital on the island (Hezel 1995, 11). As Hezel notes, this newly founded Spanish administrative and missionary presence on Yap did not, however, have much of an impact on daily life (1991, 1995). According to Hezel, in spite of the goals of the Spanish officials and missionaries, "the Yapese ate, worked, danced, and reveled in their men's houses as before, venturing into the colony only to sell copra, replenish their supply of liquor, and witness one of the occasional religious fiestas. Very few showed any real interest in becoming Catholics, much to the disappointment of the Capuchin missionaries" (1995, 82). As Egan observes, the Spanish government was also quite ineffectual in settling disputes between Yapese communities and intervillage warfare continued as it had for centuries (1998, 39). The Spanish colonial rule of Yap was not long lived, however. The financial destitution at the end of its defeat in the Spanish-American War led Spain to sell its Micronesian possessions to Germany in 1899.

German rule brought a number of significant changes to Yap, including the establishment of a system of municipalities that were imperfectly based on the local system of intervillage alliances and counter-alliances. This restructuring, which included the banning of intervillage warfare, was an attempt to ensure that information concerning German colonial regulations, policies, and work programs could be dispersed through a newly established council of eight chiefs *(piiluung)* from the highest-ranking villages (Egan 1998, 39; Hezel 1995, 105). The German colonial regime conferred with the council to help mobilize a Yapese work force that was used "for exhausting work on all . . . public projects" (Hezel 1995, 105).

With the outbreak of World War I the Yapese witnessed the arrival of yet another colonial power to their shores. Having declared war on Germany in accord with their ongoing alliance with Britain, Japan wasted little time in taking control of Germany's Pacific Island possessions (Egan 1998, 40; Hezel 1995, 146; Labby 1976, 4). Japanese colonial rule began in 1914, although Japan was not granted international recognition of its possession of the island until a League of Nations mandate was negotiated in 1920. It continued its rule until the American Navy took control in 1945.

The Japanese had a more extensive colonial presence than either Spain or Germany. Japan also exerted a much stricter rule over the island's inhabitants, a rule that was, in part, tied to an explicit belief in the "inferiority" of Yapese cultural traditions and Japan's mandate "to 'civilize' the Micronesian people" (Hezel 1995, 169; Labby 1976, 5). Japan's "civilizing" process included mandatory participation for all Yapese children in five years of Japanese schooling, the banning of men from sleeping in the men's houses *(faeluw)*, the prohibition of many traditional exchange practices (such as Yapese intervillage *mitmiit*), and the outlawing of all traditional religious practices (Egan 1998, 40; Labby 1976, 5; Peattie 1988; Poyer 1995, 224). With the coming of the war all able-bodied adults were further required to participate in Japanese work projects that included building a garrison and other fortifications, constructing the island's first airstrip, and providing food for Japanese soldiers (Labby 1976; Poyer 1995).

In response to their concerted efforts to change local lifeways, the Japanese met much resistance. For instance, even though the new colonial regime worked to enact its changes through a council of Yapese "chiefs," the individuals filling these positions were often younger Yapese men who were "appointed and were rarely legitimate

leaders recognized by Yapese" (Egan 1998, 41; Lingenfelter 1975, 189). Filling a role that was very much a part of the Yapese traditional political system, these young men served as the eyes and ears of the legitimate traditional chiefs who were older, did not speak Japanese, and yet still wielded power in the villages where they continued to meet regularly in secret. According to Hezel (1995), the great rise in conversions to Catholicism at this time formed a further means of passive resistance in as much as it helped to put a barrier between the converts and the colonial government.

The number of Japanese living in Yap was comparatively small for much of the duration of their colonial rule, with only 275 individuals in 1931, six hundred in 1935, and approximately fourteen hundred at the beginning of the war (Poyer 1995, 224; Peattie 1988, 180–81). Not long after the first U.S. air attack on Yap on March 31, 1944, however, the number of Japanese in Yap skyrocketed with the arrival of seven thousand military personnel who were to form a new secondary line of defense in the Western Pacific (Poyer 1995, 227). The increased presence of Japanese troops on the island, combined with Japan's use of Yap as a point for "funneling air power to forward bases," resulted in American air strikes becoming a relatively routine occurrence on the island (Poyer 1995, 229). Indeed, many elders I spoke to recalled the last year of the war as a time of great suffering *(gaafgow)* and fear *(rus)*. It was a time when one could never be certain how many days would pass before there would once again be the dreaded sound of approaching planes, inevitably followed by calls to run to caves or the woods for shelter.

During my time in Yap, memories of the war and reflections on the Japanese colonial regime were a common topic of conversation with the elders whom I befriended. However, it was not until my colleague Jennifer Dornan and I set out to conduct an oral history and GPS mapping project at the request of my host village that I got a real sense of the extent that the war and the Japanese occupation had impacted day-to-day life on the island. Every day as we walked through the village with a number of elders who were helping with the project, we saw evidence of destruction to house foundations, paths, and sacred sites. We also heard from the elders of how the Japanese had torn down the women's house *(dopael)* in order to build a kitchen to feed the soldiers. In yet another part of the village we found two empty Japanese gasoline drums buried in the middle of one of the village's highest-ranking and most auspicious foundations. These two gas drums, the elders recalled, served as restrooms for the soldiers. The destruction of

such sacred sites, paths, and community meeting houses *(p'eebaay),* when combined with the scarcity of food and the forced work regimes, left many people who lived through that period with ambivalent feelings toward the Japanese, to say the least.

That said, much like Labby (1976) and Poyer (1995) before me, I discovered that even despite these hurtful memories, most individuals also expressed considerable compassion *(runguy)* for the Japanese soldiers. By the end of the war, they were starving, hiding in the woods, living without shelter, and "reduced to a plight worse than that of the Yapese" during the war (Labby 1976, 5). This, as we will see, fits well with local understandings of morality in which a dynamic of suffering and compassion is central. Moreover, almost everyone I spoke to was careful to distinguish between how comparatively well they were treated by Japanese civilians prior to the beginning of the war and the harshness with which they were treated by the Japanese military.

Like many important events in Yap's history, the indelible marks of the suffering endured in the face of the war have been inscribed in one of the most significant aesthetic forms in Yap, dance. A good example of how these experiences of the war are preserved in collective memory is found in the following dance chant. This chant was composed by one of contemporary Yap's most esteemed dance experts, an elder named Tinag who lives in the district of Rull, and was purchased by the village I lived in. At the time of my fieldwork it was performed regularly in the form of a bamboo dance *(gamaal)* for tourists visiting the village.

I have decided to share this rough translation of the dance, which, despite its obvious shortcomings, still conveys in rather vivid terms the suffering that was endured by many Yapese during the war.

> Humbly, let me tell you a story of suffering that we endured during
>   the war.
> This story that we are singing we have heard passed down from one
>   generation to the next.
> This story is a story of suffering that makes us feel great compassion for
>   those who came before us.
>
> For one full year they were lost running from one valley to another.
> The only reason the soldiers came to Yap to live among us was to take
>   control of us.
> And yet whenever they spoke of Yap, they said that they were going to
>   help our island.
> We left our homes and they lived in our villages while we fled to
>   the valleys.

And now we are finally ready to talk about what happened to us.
When it was morning we started looking for streams.
Coming from the east was a distinctive rumbling sound in the sky.
A group of birds spread all over our island.

We were groping, running, and we could not find our way.
We thought that we would not even reach the door of the hole we had
    dug in the ground like a home of a land crab where we would run
    to hide.

And beyond anything that we could expect or imagine, we were living in
    a hole like crabs. Where it was dark and the kids were crying.
It was killing them, the hunger, and the children were starving.

The sky is closed to us, as is our hope.
They come down in torrents to the ground.
They shoot in the area where we had been forced to work.
The fear is killing us, we hit the ground because the whole island
    is shaking.

Everything was falling in one direction.
When the sun set, we came out from inside the hole up to the
    surface, groping.
We were hungry, but the soldiers controlled our taro patches so you
    could not go look for food there without being seen and punished.
This is the suffering of one year's duration.

Like in the children's game where you are always running, we went from
    one valley to another.
Everything was getting worse, new kinds of sickness came to us, sores
    came to the children, and we had no self-worth, no hope.
We could not even dream that one of us would survive.
All of our minds fell in one direction, frustrated, depressed,
    without hope.

The end of the war heralded the arrival of the fourth and last wave of colonial governance. The American Navy took control of the island in 1945 and assumed rule over Yap for the next six years as part of the new Trust Territory that consisted of the Caroline, Marshall, and Mariana islands (with the exception of Guam). Unlike Japan's concerted attempt to "civilize" the inhabitants of Yap, the early American policy of "minimal interference" (Labby 1976, 6) produced a climate wherein a number of traditional practices were reestablished. While it is hard to say exactly how pervasive the restoration of these traditions was, scholars like Hezel have likened it to "a cultural renaissance" (1995, 276–77). As Labby (1976, 6) and Lingenfelter (1971, 273–82) observe,

this cultural renaissance included restoring some of the traditional religious and ritual practices, rebuilding a number of the traditional men's houses *(faeluw),* and constructing traditional canoes. *Mitmiit* exchanges, funeral ceremonies, and traditional dances were also taken up once again (Hezel 1995, 277).

The rekindling of such traditions was no doubt further aided by the strict control the navy exerted over visitors to the island. Indeed, aside from navy administrators, visitors to Yap were primarily restricted to a number of American researchers and anthropologists—including most famously David Schneider, a participant in George Murdock and Douglas Oliver's Navy and National Research Council–funded Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology team (Bashkow 1991).

During the years of navy rule the professed primary focus of the American colonial administration was to help rebuild damaged facilities, improve health care and sanitation, establish an educational system, and aid with economic development (Hezel 1995, 257–61). To this end, the navy managed to recruit a small labor force by offering wages to Yapese workers who set out to fix many of the island's roads, build a new hospital, and construct a number of elementary schools and dispensaries in Yap's various municipalities. Much like the Germans and Japanese before them, the Americans also attempted to institute a council of elected chiefs to represent each of the districts to help relay information and requests from the Navy administration to the villages. Although, as Labby (1976, 6) maintains, these newly elected "chiefs" were largely ineffectual due to the atrophying of their powers during the war years.

In 1951 the U.S. Department of the Interior took over administration of the island. As a result, a number of salaried positions tied to public services and the local administrative bureaucracy were now available to be filled by Yapese workers (Labby 1976, 6). The continued economic isolation of the island was still readily evident, however, in the fact that the living standards in Yap and the rest of Micronesia had greatly declined since prewar levels (Egan 1998, 44; Useem 1946). So much so that in the early 1960s the United Nations took an active interest in the United States' management of the Trust Territory, ultimately pressing the American government to invest more money in the region and to begin developing plans to establish self-governing communities in Micronesia (Egan 1998, 45). The United States, with an ongoing strategic military interest in the area, responded by funneling money into

the Trust Territory. This money helped to institute a number of government-run service programs, aided with various projects being set up in conjunction with President Kennedy's newly constituted American Peace Corps, and greatly extended the administrative bureaucracies in the various districts.[2]

After well over a decade of negotiations that were punctuated by the fractioning of the various districts comprising the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands into four distinct polities, Yap was established as the administrative capital of Yap State, one of the four states comprising the FSM. Along with the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the FSM signed its Compact of Free Association with the United States in 1986, and as such became recognized as an independent nation that has chosen to "freely associate" with the United States. In return for this free association, the United States agreed to provide the FSM with access to a number of U.S. federal programs, free entry of its citizens into the United States for work or education, the use of American currency, the continuing interlinking of U.S. and FSM postal services, as well as large annual payments for use in further developing the nation's political, educational, economic, and health-based initiatives. The first compact came to an end in 2001, with negotiations for an amended compact beginning well before that time. The amended compact, which offers much less in the way of funding and entails a much greater emphasis on accountability on the part of the FSM national and state governments, was implemented on May 26, 2004.

Postcoloniality, Tradition, and Modernity

It is impossible to examine postcolonial contemporary Yapese society without recognizing the interplay, and at times evident tension, between the rhetorics of tradition and modernity. I became aware of this tension on my very first trip to the island in September 2000. Stepping off the plane from Guam, I vividly recall walking past the immigration checkpoint and being greeted by a young man and woman wearing traditional dress. The young man was wearing a *kafar,* a carefully wrapped combination of cotton, banana fiber, and hibiscus around his waist. The young woman was wearing an *oeng,* a skillfully woven grass skirt. As I approached them, the young woman, all the while avoiding eye contact, smiled and placed a *nuunuw* (flowered lei) on my head. She

then handed me a pamphlet that contained tourist information and a map of Yap, before quietly welcoming me to the island.

After getting my bags and walking through customs I entered the airport's open-air waiting area. Lined with backless benches filled with Yapese families awaiting the departure or return of friends and family, the area also contained a handful of American, Japanese, and European tourists preparing to leave the island en route to Guam. I recall a lot of activity. Yapese men and women working for each of the five major hotels—all but one of which were located in the main port town of Colonia—held up signs, greeted their guests, and helped visitors get their bags aboard the vans that would take them to their respective destinations. All the while, local families said their good-byes to loved ones departing the island or greeted those who had just returned home.

I noticed that unlike my official greeters, everybody in the airport, with the exception of a few individuals who I would later learn were Outer Islanders, was wearing Western clothes. Wardrobes mostly consisted of some combination of shorts, T-shirts, and flip-flops *(zories)*. As I made my way to the van that would take me to my hotel, I recall thinking that the airport parking lot also evidenced a tension between tradition and modernity. In addition to containing various models of cars and trucks, the parking lot had a few local structures built with pandanus-leaf roofs and bamboo benches. Here people sat while talking, laughing, and chewing betel nut. The airport itself was designed to echo the structure of traditional meeting houses *(p'eebaay)* with its open-air waiting area framed by a highly peaked roof.

My destination that day, Colonia, locally called *Donguch* (the Yapese term for "small island"), is the island's main port town. Colonia's layout is itself indexical of the impact of transnational economic, social, and political forces on local ways of being-in-the-world. For instance, Colonia is the location for the island's major businesses, the small tourist industry, the high school, the Yap State Campus of the College of Micronesia, and the government of Yap State. As directly reflected in the makeup of the town, there is absolutely no doubt that postcolonial Yap has been greatly impacted by its history of contact, conflict, exchange, and interaction with the various colonial regimes that claimed control over its shores. This fact has indeed been recognized in all the major published ethnographies of Yap, which have detailed the many ways in which contemporary Yapese society has been importantly transformed through missionization, colonization, and increasing integration into world economic systems.

FIGURE 1. A view of Colonia. Photo by the author.

Life in the villages, while certainly more "traditionally" organized than life in Colonia, has also clearly been greatly transformed by such forces. At the time of my fieldwork, many, but not all, houses had access to electricity, running water, and telephones (and midway through my third field season in 2002, cell phones). Many homes also had refrigerators, radios, television sets, VCRs, and various other household appliances. Depending on the socioeconomic status of the particular village or family, houses ranged from modest traditional homes to structures built out of wood and corrugated steel to Western-style concrete constructions. Many families had access to a car or a truck. Renting Hollywood movies, drinking Budweiser or Coca-Cola, eating rice, ramen noodles, and canned tuna, while talking about Compact negotiations, September 11, Iraq, and American politics, were all often a part of everyday village life. Most schools had computer facilities and access to the Internet. Hip-hop, reggae, and rap music was played on the local radio station and on stereos and CD players across the island. The extent of intergenerational difference in terms of style of dress, fashions of speaking, and general comportment were readily apparent to me even very early in my fieldwork.

That said, it would be a mistake to overlook the fact that there is still a prevalent recognition by many Yapese individuals and students of Yapese culture that there are important continuities to be found between contemporary and "traditional" cultural forms. Yapese cultural logic has certainly been shaped by particular historical trajectories. However, it has also played, and continues to play, an important role in patterning the always selective local incorporation of nonlocal forms of understanding, acting, consuming, and valuing (cf. Robbins 2004, 6–15; Sahlins 1981, 1985, 1995). Outsiders have long commented upon the "conservative" nature of Yapese society. The Spanish, German, Japanese, and American colonial regimes all remarked upon what they perceived to be Yapese "resistance" to change and modernization. These colonial regimes also observed that Yapese individuals and communities seldom adopted foreign goods, practice, or beliefs without careful deliberation.[3]

I believe that one reason for the pervasive perception of the apparent "resistance" and "conservatism" so often attributed to Yapese communities is, at least in part, a result of the fact that local understandings of subjectivity, social action, and morality are enmeshed in a system of cultural virtues predicated on the valuation of deliberate, thoughtful action, a theme that I will explore in much greater detail in later chapters. As I have come to understand it, Yapese "resistance to change" was never simply resistance or conservatism as such. It was more accurately a reflection of the valuation of carefully assessing ideas, goals, values, and technologies, whether introduced from within or outside of Yapese communities. Indeed, while there is an overt cultural ideology that places a great value on maintaining longstanding traditions, Yapese people have always been quick to adopt new ideas, materials, and technologies when such innovations are understood to be of some benefit or can be understood to align with previously established norms and values.[4] The result of this stress on deliberate action is that novel ideas, values, and practices were seldom adopted unthinkingly or simply because they happen to align with a particular individual's personal needs, desires, and wants.

To be clear, some individuals do act without thinking, just as some people are highly skilled at using community goals as a means to achieve their own personal ambitions and advancement. There is as much of a range of variation in the individual internalization of these ideals as in any other community of practice. 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.

Yap at the time of my fieldwork was thus as much about money, computers, TVs, VCRs, video games, movies, and top-forty music as it was about taro patches, gardens, fishing, canoes, rafts, betel-nut chewing, magic, ancestral spirits, and local medicine (cf. Lingenfelter 1993). There were often significant differences in the extent to which specific individuals internalized nonlocal values, and perhaps not surprisingly there was a great difference between the younger generations and their elders in this regard. Like all aspects of Yapese social life, however, there are always multiple levels at which these tensions between tradition and modernity are played out.

As Egan suggests, in thinking about these complex relations between tradition and modernity in contemporary Yapese society, we must always appreciate the fact that "social reproduction . . . has involved negotiation and uncertainty. Outcomes were never predetermined, and, in many cases, 'continuities' resulted from older relations being reproduced for different reasons and through entirely new means. . . . [And accordingly, the] Yapese have tried to make elements of an older cultural order—as they have received it—relevant in post-colonial contexts" (1998, 84).

Yapese culture, like all cultures, is thus "situated and linked within wider cross-cultural histories" (Descantes 2002, 227). And yet, Yapese ways of being-in-the-world have a defined integrity such that local norms, practices, values, and modes of comportment are never simply a pliable refraction of "the pervasive colonial culture" (Descantes 2002, 227; cf. Sahlins 1981, 1985, 1995).

Emplacing Ethnography

> The self-conscious, reserved manner of the Yap people, which Krämer rightly ascribes to them, is indeed a true impediment for the investigator.
>
> Wilhelm Müller, 1917

It is a truism that every ethnographer faces significant challenges in conducting research and that knowledge accrued through such endeav-

ors is always, necessarily, selective and partial. Despite researchers' attempts to ensure some degree of methodological rigor in the hope of asymptotically approaching a nonbiased (i.e., "objective") account of what it is they have experienced, observed, and learned through fieldwork, anthropological knowledge, however carefully enacted, is always mediated through the subjectivities of the researcher and his or her acquaintances, informants, friends, and teachers. The knowledge that is accrued through ethnographic research is thus best understood as an *intersubjective achievement.* It is a reflection of a complex set of interactions between those historical conditions and social trajectories within which a researcher is emplaced and the sedimentation of cultural, educational, and idiosyncratic influences upon the subjectivities of the ethnographer and the specific individuals he or she interacts with in the field.

An excellent case in point is found in Ira Bashkow's (1991) account of the various ways in which the trajectories of colonial history played a crucial role in shaping the course and outcome of David Schneider's research on the island between the years 1947 and 1948. As Bashkow (1991, 170) notes, Schneider came to the field with an early interest in psychoanalytic theory and in exploring the functional dynamics of Yapese culture and personality.[5] Inspired by psychoanalytic theory, Schneider attempted to engage in careful self-examination while in the field, which, as Bashkow observes, can now be considered almost prescient in its anticipation of the reflexive turn in ethnographic writing that occurred some thirty years later.

What is most interesting about Schneider's psychoanalytically inspired reflections, however, is the fact that he provides us with an important glimpse into the dynamics of his negotiations with his Yapese informants—what Schneider called in the context of his notes, "rapport." It is true that Schneider never fully understood the extent to which his research was directly impacted by local interpretations, expectations, and political maneuverings, which where all significantly shaped by Yap's colonial history. And yet, as Bashkow demonstrates, his notes give us considerable insight into the various ways in which Schneider's "own identity was construed by . . . [the Yapese], in relation to their experience of colonial domination, and in the context of his own identification with victims of oppression" (1991, 171). Almost forty years after the completion of Schneider's fieldwork, James Egan asserted that "the overall field context continued to be shaped by historical forces that flowed from the colonial past into contemporary economic and political relations" (1998, 70). Egan also discovered, as

had Catherine Lutz (1988) in Ifaluk, that he was situated within a locally defined nexus of kin and sociopolitical relationships.

Like most fieldworkers, the unique path I took to being socially positioned in Yap was based partially on serendipity, and partially on my own personality and my ability (or inability in many cases) to become a competent member of a Yapese community. It was also partially based on many of the historical conditions and political maneuverings that have been so insightfully examined by Bashkow (1991), Egan (1998), and Lutz (1988). While issues tied to confidentiality prevent me from detailing the exact path I took to find my social placement in Yap, I too was situated within local social, political, and moral landscapes in my being associated with a particular house foundation *(tabinaew),* in a particular village *(binaew),* as a child *(faak)* of particular Yapese parents *(chiitamangin/chiitimangin).*

Like Egan (1998), I too found that this social positioning conferred a number of advantages and challenges for my research. In being positioned as a child—that is, as a landless, needy, suffering, and lower-status person who is reliant upon the compassion of a landholding higher-status caregiver—my adopted Yapese parents were put in the position of having to assume the obligation of ensuring that I was properly socialized, cared for, and safe. By being granted a position within the community as an "insider"—a placement that both Egan (1998) and Lutz (1988) recognize as being an important strategy for gaining control over outsiders living in the community—I was thus granted access to forms of knowledge that are only accessible to active members of Yapese families and communities.

Another implication stemming from this social positioning, however, was that in being associated with a particular family, in a particular landed-estate, village, and municipality I also faced, along with others in my community, the serious restrictions that are placed on social mobility within Yap. This in turn necessarily limited access to forms of knowledge that resided outside of the circle of relations that defined the particular social networks within which I was emplaced (see also Egan 1998). Given the complex hierarchical structure of Yapese society, there are distinctive restrictions placed on where an individual can go, what paths he or she can walk on, what villages he or she can visit, and who it is that he or she can talk to or interact with.

It is important to note in this regard that during my time sitting in on a Peace Corps language training program, I was fortunate to become close friends with my language teacher, Taman, who hailed

from the municipality of Maap. This friendship led, upon my third trip to the island in the fall of 2002, to my being able to place my colleague, Keith Murphy, with my teacher's family for a six-week stay. I made regular trips to Maap to visit my teacher and my colleague and I spent more than a few nights at their house. My friendship with Taman combined with the fact that one of my two research assistants hailed from Maap resulted in my being afforded the possibility of feeling quite comfortable conducting research in two differing municipalities. While it is true that I, like Egan, felt most comfortable in my home municipality of Dalipebinaw (the municipality where my Yapese family lived), I also found myself increasingly at ease when traveling or working in Maap.

In Yap, as is true of many cultures in the Pacific region, there is also great emphasis placed on ensuring that men's and women's activities and obligations, as well as the forms of knowledge associated with them, are carefully separated. There are numerous ways in which activities are distinguished according to gender, including the very basic, and important, fact that it is traditionally the role of men to supply the family with *thum'aeg* ("meat" or "fish") and the role of women to provide the family with *ggaan* ("food," which refers primarily to taro and the various other starch-based vegetables grown in Yapese gardens).

Given such restrictions on interaction between the genders I decided early on that it would be necessary to locate at least one female research assistant who could accompany me whenever I was conducting interviews with women. I was fortunate early in my third field season to have the opportunity to meet Keira Ballantyne, a PhD student from the University of Hawai'i, who was conducting a few months of research on the island in order to gather data for her dissertation in linguistics. While in Yap, Ballantyne had been working closely with two research assistants whom she had trained in transcription. Ballantyne was kind enough to introduce me to the woman who would become the first of my two research assistants, Sheri Manna.

Manna, a woman in her early sixties, also lived in my municipality, Dalipebinaw. With a sharp intellect combined with a great sensitivity to, and interest in, Yapese language and culture, Manna proved to be an invaluable asset to the project, helping not only with interviewing women, but also with the many hours that were devoted to transcribing and translating interviews.[6] She, along with my Yapese mother, also spent countless hours answering what must have seemed to them to

be an endless stream of questions about Yapese language, history, tradition, ethnomedicine, and ethnopsychology.

Given the social limitations placed on traveling to municipalities in which Manna did not have close friends and relatives, I soon found it necessary, however, to seek out a second research assistant who hailed from another part of the island. I was led to look for an assistant from Maap given my familiarity with the municipality combined with the fact that traditionally individuals from Maap often have close social and political ties with individuals in the northeastern (relative to Dalipebinaw) municipalities of Rumung, Gagil, and Tomil. Again, I was lucky to be introduced through another of my language teachers, Francisca Mochen, to Stella Tiningin, a woman in her late thirties who had attended university in both Hawai'i and Guam, and who had previously done interviewing for the Historic Preservation Office. While Manna and I worked together for all of the interviews conducted with women in the western, central, and southern municipalities of the island (Fanif, Rull, Kanifay, Dalipebinaw, and Gilman), Tiningin and I worked together in the northeastern municipalities.

The challenge that had the most profound effect on my research, however, was my having to face the prevalent Yapese valuation of the ideals of privacy, secrecy, and concealment (cf. Petersen 1993; chapter 5). As I will explore in greater detail in later chapters, privacy, secrecy, and concealment were importantly integrated into multiple levels of the social fabric in Yap. This social fabric is one that is kept intact through a diffuse social distribution of power and knowledge. Indeed, at 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.

Traditionally, for instance, this diffuse distribution of knowledge and power was evident at the level of village leadership. In each village, there is not one, but three "chiefs" *(piiluung)*: a chief that represents the voice of the women *(piiluung ko binaew, lunguun paweelwōl),* a chief that represents the voice of the young men *(piiluung ko pagäl, lunguun pagäl),* and a chief that represents the voice of the ancestors *(pilabthir ko binaew).* Each chief speaks for a differing sphere of knowledge, competence, and power in the village. The very word that is used for chief, *piiluung,* is literally translated as "many voices." This highlights the fact that the individual holding one of these three positions is not understood to speak for himself. Instead he is understood to

speak for those individuals in the village whose interests and competencies he represents. Ideally then, it is not personal opinions or prejudices that are to guide a chief's decision-making and expression at the level of village affairs, but those of the individuals his voice is held to represent in the village. It should not be personal but collective goals and desires that are expressed through the chief's voice in the context of village affairs.[7]

One of the reasons given to explain the traditional threefold structure of chiefly authority in Yap—a structure that is replicated on a number of different social levels—is that it ensures that one individual is never able to take control of too much power. With three chiefs sharing the differential spheres of power in the village, there are always two individuals to keep the third chief's influence in line with the concerns of the other members of the village.

At the level of the island, this threefold structure was traditionally replicated in the competencies and responsibilities of the three highest ranking villages and in the two systems of village alliances representing the side of the chiefs *(ban piiluung)* and the side of the young men *(ban pagäl)* whose disputes were resolved through seven foundations that were understood to embody the power of women as mediators *(ulung somol)*. At the level of the family, the same structure held with regard to the spheres of knowledge, competence, and power that were distributed between the mother, the children, and the father. In the context of this system, as Egan (1998, 76) explains, "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." This broad distribution of knowledge and power by means of secrecy and concealment is further rooted in a local epistemology in which the transferring of knowledge from one individual to another is held to necessarily occur within a dynamic exchange of sentiments—suffering and sacrifice on the part of the individual receiving the knowledge and compassion and care on the part of the one giving it.

While I will elaborate upon this dialectic of suffering and compassion in subsequent chapters, it is important to point out that my own abilities to make connections with people, to learn from them, and to gather knowledge about their cares and concerns was often very much mediated through my own experiences of suffering, as well as through

my abilities to demonstrate compassion when witnessing the suffering of others. On this accord, a number of key turning points in my field-work that led to my greater incorporation into my family and community came only after I had engaged in particularly difficult community work projects, and in a couple of cases, not long after I had unintentionally injured myself and had become sick. In one instance, I had to undergo treatment from a local healer who put my shoulder back into place after I had slipped and fallen off a makeshift coconut-tree bridge. In a second instance, I had to be flown for emergency medical treatment in Guam. In both cases, my own pain and my ability to endure in the face of it led to a palpable shift in my relations with my family and other members of my community who expressed compassion for my suffering. In both cases individuals interpreted my decision to stay in Yap to continue my research despite these hardships as evidence of my willingness to endure suffering for the benefit of others, others who were sometimes understood to be my Canadian parents, sometimes to be my teachers in Los Angeles.

Perhaps the most vivid demonstration of this embedding of knowledge within the exchange of sentiment, however, came after I had first witnessed a young girl, whom I call Tinag, have two broken bones in her forearm put back into place by a local healer without anesthesia (see chapter 8). As I sat witnessing the intensity of her pain, as Tinag screamed, cried, struggled, and pleaded with her father and the healer to stop the procedure, I could not help but embody her suffering in the form of quiet tears. At that moment, watching her father bravely try to comfort his suffering daughter, sitting still, with tear-filled eyes, I had a crisis of faith. What was I doing here? Why should I attempt to document such private suffering and pain? Was my presence not just making things worse for everyone involved? What right did I have to witness such hurt and such fear?

Just as these questions were rushing through my mind I noticed the healer, Lani, who also had tears in her eyes, look over at me. Our eyes met for what could not have been longer than a split second, but apparently it was long enough for her to register my response to the situation. At first I was embarrassed, worried that somehow I had overstepped my bounds. From what I knew already of Yapese expectations concerning the expression of emotion I knew that I was failing miserably in living up to the ideals of mental opacity and emotional quietude. At the end of the session, however, Lani came over to talk to me. She said softly, "I saw you crying over there," and smiled, tears

still fresh in her own eyes. I nodded and may have apologized. She put her hand on my shoulder and told me that I could stop by anytime. She wanted to help me with my research. From that moment on I became a regular at Lani's house, meeting many people with her gracious help and introduction, some of whom ended up sharing their experiences of pain and suffering with me.