
2. KINSHIP AND KINSHIP GROUPS

The Concept of Tabinaw

T*abinaw* is the most basic concept in traditional Yapese leadership and sociopolitical organization. As an organizing principle for political and social relationships, it outlines reciprocal rights, obligations, and prestations between individuals of its various units. As defined in land, it assures continuity through time and a solid economic base in the community. As defined in kinship units, it provides for the exercise of authority and political succession.

Defining the nature of *tabinaw*, however, is exceedingly complex. In the Yapese language, the word *tabinaw* is used with different meanings or references. This might be fairly easily resolved were it not that the Yapese also combine these meanings with dual principles of patrilineal and matrilineal descent, and several types of kinship groups. Schneider has discussed *tabinaw* and the nature of its interpersonal relationships (1949, 1953, 1957a, 1962, 1967). The following material attempts to build upon his work in further refining the definition of basic elements and statuses within the *tabinaw* and showing their significance for Yapese leadership and political organization.

The Household or Nuclear Family

Tabinaw most commonly refers to the Yapese household. When a Yapese is asked for the location of his *tabinaw*, he cites his place of residence. When asked who stays at his *tabinaw*, he enumerates all those people who either sleep or eat at his household. The Yapese household, then, forms the elementary unit in the concept of *tabinaw*.

The household is generally composed of one nuclear family. In a complete census of Yap, 689 households were composed of nuclear families alone, while only 127 households could be classified as consisting of extended families. In 82 of the extended households a very old parent or relative, no longer able to care for himself, had children living with him to care for him. In the other cases, particular reasons were given as to why they were residing in such a manner at that particular time. (See [Table 4.](#))

Table 4. Composition of Households by Municipality

Municipality	Nuclear Family	Old Person and Nuclear Family	Two or more Nuclear Families
Rumung	31	2	2
Map	65	7	0
Gagil	76	3	7
Tamil	79	12	6
Fanif	48	9	6
Weloy	32	4	2
Colonia*	99	11	7
Rull	155	18	8
Delipebinaw	27	7	3
Kanfay	44	5	3
Gilman	33	4	1
TOTALS	689	82	45

* Port town crossing two municipal boundaries.

In some cases a relative or close friend of one of the parents of the nuclear family lives within a household. The individual is likely to be in an unfortunate situation and has requested the help of the family for some time. If the arrangement is satisfactory to all involved it could last for a long period. However, if conflict develops, the arrangement is quickly terminated.

The primary referent of the word *tabinaw*, then, is the household, and, more precisely, the nuclear family unit comprising the household. The literal translation of the word *tabinaw* is 'one land', and the nuclear family is defined as 'people of one land', or *girdien e tabinaw*. This definition of the family reflects Yapese thinking with regard to economic resources and

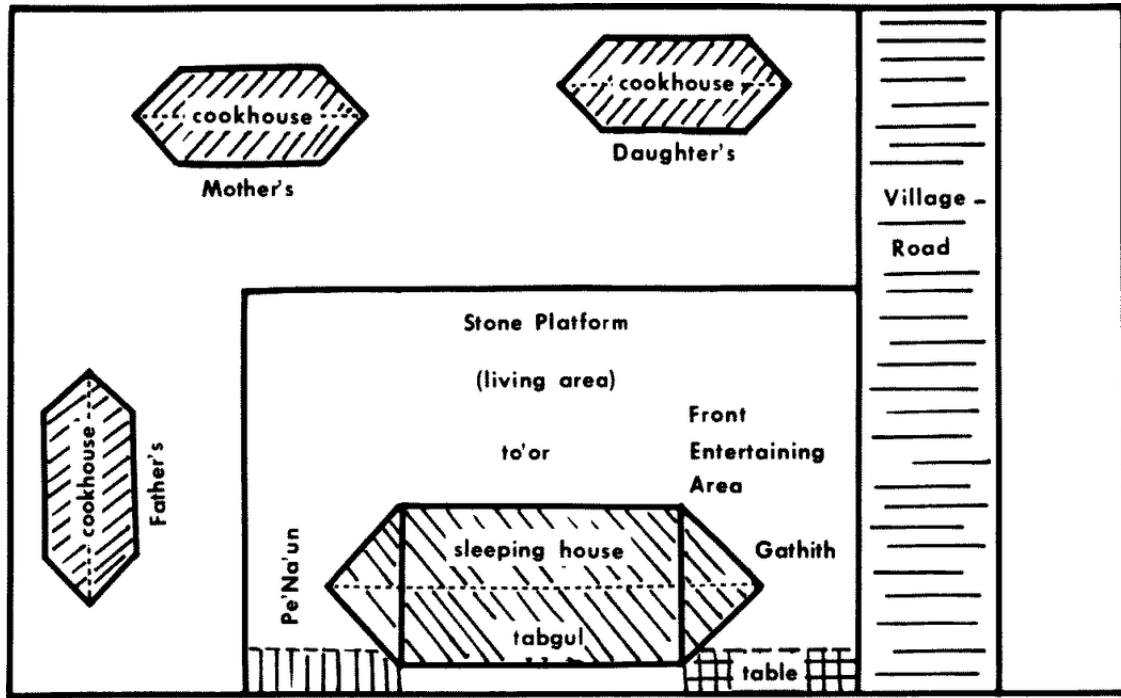
cooperation. Each nuclear family unit should have its own house and land for food production. In the daily routine of life, each household is independent, performing all necessary social and economic functions required for sustaining life and providing for the production, nurture, and socialization of its children. The members of the household view their relationships in terms of differential rights to the land and its produce and differential responsibilities for food production and for the nurture of the members of the group. The primary distinctions are those of age and sex, and they are clearly outlined in the spacial arrangements of the household site.

The traditional Yapese house is divided into two sections by a long log running the full length of the house. (See [Figure 6](#).) The back side, called *tabgul* 'place of origins', is taboo and is reserved for the father or head of the household. In this area the father sleeps, stores his valuables, and deposits the sacred things for prayer to the ancestors. Women and children stay out of this section of the house unless sent there for some particular purpose.

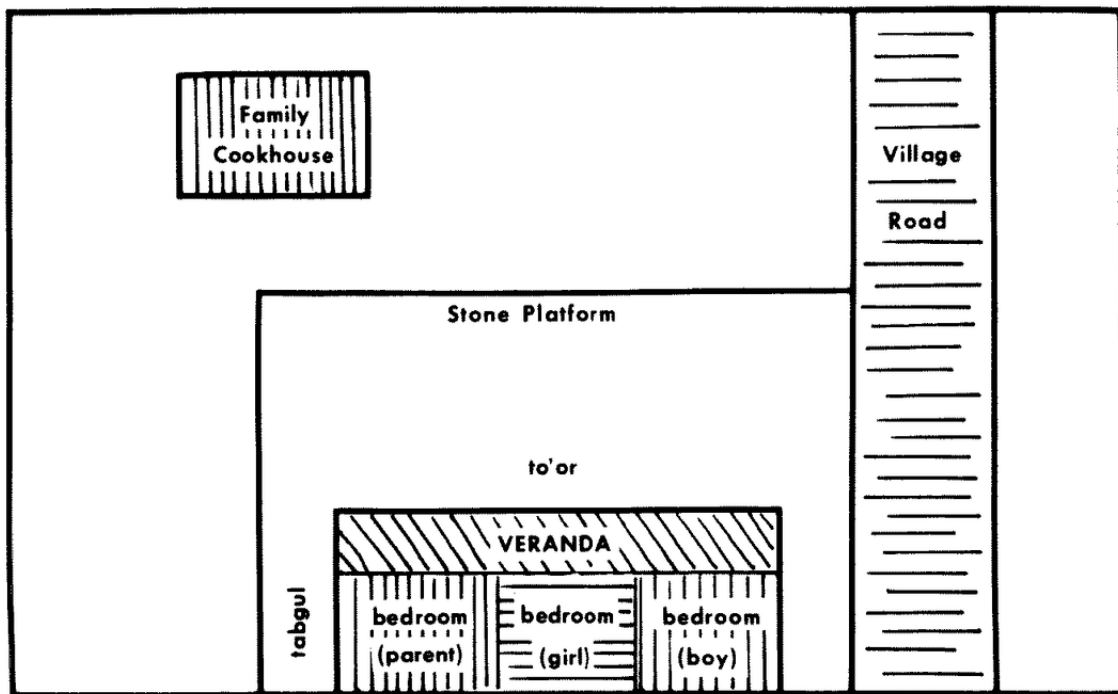
The wife and small children sleep in the front side of the house. This side and the area around it, referred to as *to'or* 'place of many', is generally open to any member of the family. Certain restrictions do apply to low-caste visitors and to young girls who have just begun menstruation and puberty. Outsiders generally are not brought into the house, which is used mainly for sleeping and storage. Children move out of the main house when they are about ten; young boys sleep in the young men's house of the village, while young girls sleep in an adjacent cookhouse or a separate room in the main house.

At each end of the main house, a small veranda opens under the main roof. The veranda at the rear of the house, called *pe'na'un*, is taboo for women and children. This is usually a storage area or cooking place for old men. It is used only when aged men are visiting and have occasion to sit under the roof. The front veranda of the house, known as the *gathith*, is the family sitting area in the evening and in rainy weather. The *gathith* is divided into taboo and public sides, with the taboo side reserved for the man of the house and older male guests. This area is especially taboo for girls of menstruating age and women who have not yet passed menopause. When food is brought to the household for the man of the house, it is placed in this area as a sign of respect for him. On this same side, and in the front, stands a large stone platform, on which fish, food, or betel nut for the men are placed on ceremonial occasions or family celebrations. On the platform of high-ranking households, a smaller table called *rarrow* is used for the distribution of fish and betel nut to high-ranking guests.

Figure 6. Yap Household Ground Plans



Traditional Household Ground Plan



Modern Household

The back end of the house and the taboo side may have an area that is *macmac* 'supernaturally dangerous', used for making magic and growing plants for magic and medicine. These areas should be avoided at all times by all people except the practitioner of magic and medicine. Certain magicians build their houses in the midst of such an area and live alone in

their sacred place.

The front end and the side of the house make up the general living area. A stone platform usually surrounds the house, and stone backrests for the comfort of the guests are placed at intervals around its edge. Again the taboo side of the platform is reserved for older men and often the backrests on this side are of upright Yapese stone money. In the daily routine, women and children of the family confine their activities to the public side of the platform and just off that platform in the cooking areas. Men, if around the house during the day, may move into any of the areas.

Most Yapese today build their houses of lumber, corrugated metal, and even cement block. These new homes are built according to the same ground plan as the traditional houses. The major change has been in the house design, which has been adapted to modern materials. Most new houses are built in a rectangular design with several rooms opening onto a long veranda, which runs the full length of the public side of the house. The various rooms provide separate sleeping quarters for the parents and the older children. The taboo area is redefined to include the section of the veranda and the house to the rear of the household plot. Parents generally take the room at the back end of the house.

Cooking in the traditional household is done in separate cooking houses apart from the main house. The head of the household has his own cookhouse and cooking utensils. His food is prepared apart from that of the other members of the household, and he eats alone or with some other male of his approximate age. The wife and the mother of the family has her separate cookhouse in which she cooks for herself and her young children. A daughter who has reached the age of puberty and has returned after two years of separation at the community menstrual house will have a separate cookhouse in which she sleeps and prepares her own food, apart from her mother and brothers. If for some reason an old man or woman is staying in the household, he has his separate cookhouse and often sleeps there. It will be located in the rear section of the household plot and as far as possible from the young girl.

Food resources also are separated in the same manner as are the cooking areas. The head of the household gets food from gardens and taro patches set aside for his use. He chews betel nut from trees set aside particularly for him. Even scarce items such as breadfruit, chestnuts, bananas, and other fruits are grown separately for him. Fish and other meat resources are divided among the family with first choice going to the male head of the household; the mother then sets aside the portion for herself and her children. Mother and children, with the exception of the menstruating teenager, obtain food resources from the same areas. Certain gardens and trees are set aside for her use and she may not go and take food from her mother's gardens. However, the mother may "throw away" food to her daughter if she so pleases. Betel nut and coconut trees are set aside for her use, if the household has enough. In the case of the

household where an old relative lives with the nuclear family, his food is also obtained from separate plots, cooked in separate pots, and eaten apart from the other members of the household.

Thus, individuals are distinguished according to age, sex, and kinship status in the family and are accordingly given access to food resources and space in the household. Primary food and space resources go first to the oldest males, then to the oldest females, and on down through the hierarchy of the family. The statuses within the household will be more clearly defined and discussed later (Chapters 2 and 3) through an analysis of the kinship structure and the respective authority and responsibilities distributed within it.

It should be noted that today the restrictions on cooking and food sources are followed by less than 30 percent of the households on Yap. Most households that maintain the restrictions have older members who demand their observance. Younger families, particularly those who have commitments to wage work and the new cash economy, find these restrictions cumbersome and quietly disregard them. The effect of these changes on status relationships within the family has not yet become apparent.

The Estate and Patriclan

The household or nuclear family is the primary unit in the Yapese *tabinaw*, but quite often it is not the exclusive unit. Instead, several households may live on lands belonging to a single, named house site. Schneider (1967) has referred to these associated land parcels as an estate.

The Yapese estate may consist of several nonlocalized house and garden plots, parcels of taro patches, sections of lagoon for fishing, and ideally includes all important resources. The Yapese consider these associated land and sea resources as a single unit centered around a stone house foundation on the main house site of the estate. This stone foundation is called *kengin e dayif* 'central foundation'. It is extremely important because within it reside the ancestral spirits who have lived on the land, to whom the members of the group pray, from whom children come, and after whom parents name children. The central foundation is also the seat of all authority and political rights that by definition belong to that estate. This is especially significant in a study of leadership because titles and authority in the village are vested in particular central foundations, and not in individuals. Individual members of the estate are said to stand upon the foundation and speak for its authority. Individuals step down and die and other individuals take their places, but the authority remains in the foundation.

The other lands of an estate are called *binauan e kengin e dayif* 'lands possessed by the central foundation'. Frequently these lands contain

stone foundations used by the junior households in the estate. These stone foundations are without power or authority and are subordinate to the central foundation. Lands without foundations are distributed among members of the estate group for use in food production.

In referring to the estate, Yapese use the same word that described the household, *tabinaw*. All people who live on the estate and hold rights to the land are referred to as *girdien e tabinaw* 'people of one land'. The use of identical terms for the household units and the estate units reflects the fundamental thinking of the Yapese about the nature of these groups. The relationships of individuals are seen in terms of the mutual exploitation of certain valued resources and the reciprocal obligations of cooperation and sharing. The unity of the group is defined in terms of rights to the resource unit.

Membership in the estate group for males is determined through their names, which are selected from a pool of ancestral names. Certain names belong to each estate, and, by merit of possessing a name, one possesses legal title to estate land. These names are passed patrilineally from fathers to sons. Females are also named after ancestors from the estate, but a female name does not belong to the land, nor does it confer title to it. Female membership in an estate group is determined by residence. When she resides in her estate of birth, she is a member there. When she marries, she moves to her husband's estate in patrilocal residence and becomes a member there. Following Murdock (1949), the estate group may be defined as a minimal patriclan.

Distribution of resources among members of the estate varies according to the composition of the group. In the simplest situation only one nuclear family or household comprises the whole estate group. Thus no distribution is necessary, except as noted previously in the discussion of the household.

In the situation of father and married sons, the father resides on the most important land, the central foundation. Sons receive a minor stone foundation for their house, and food resources of all types are set aside for each of them. The ideal is that each nuclear family should have its own land. The reason offered is that the wives work the land, making gardens and taro patches. If they work on the same plots disputes are certain to arise, but if they each have their own, then family harmony will be maintained. In contrast, sea resources are shared among brothers who exploit them together. Harmony among the males of the estate is required and to a certain extent assured because of their consanguineal bonds. Also, Yapese fishing methods require both cooperation and sharing of the catch, which frequently more than one household will consume. Only minor sea resources, such as sites for small fish traps, are divided among households.

When the father of the patriclan dies, his sons inherit the land. The majority of land in Yap is passed on in this fashion. Usually before his

death, the father discusses with his sons the distribution of the land. Generally, the oldest son is given the central foundation, the land with the authority and rank, and other food-resource lands to go with it. He will inherit most of the land used by his father, but must wait a period of one year until a taboo called *liw* is removed from that land. Younger brothers are given fair shares of the estate's resources and land on which to live. In the case of the younger brothers, certain particular authorities may be given by the father to the house foundations on which they reside; for example, rights to serfs, certain fishing rights, or a particular village responsibility. Each son is entitled to a fair share of the estate's resources.

In the case of estates including married brothers and their married sons, the land will again be passed from father to son. Thus, the central foundation of the eldest brother will be passed on to his eldest son. Lands of his household will be divided among his sons only, and his younger brothers will in turn pass on their household lands and authority to their sons, respectively. Thus, with the dividing of the land comes the dividing of the estate, and the forming of new central foundations. What originally was one estate ultimately becomes two, three, or as many as there are brothers with sons to whom they will pass their household's land. The division of estates is gradual, almost unnoticed; unless land is disputed, it occurs without rancor. The division occurs as a result of the development cycle of the family units through time and the nuclear family unit as the ideal for Yapese households. The latter requires a constant division and subdivision of land to provide each new household with separate resources. At the same time, leadership of the group becomes diffused through the death of the father, until the brothers assert themselves as leaders of their own incipient clan units. Upon the death of all the brothers of an estate, their respective sons will be established in distinctive patrilines, breaking land resources into separate estates.

The pattern of leadership as seen in land distribution in the patriline shows the father to son, older brother to younger brother hierarchy. It should not be assumed, however, that this is an immutable rule. A son receives land from his father as a reward for his faithful and obedient service to him. If he shows respect to his father, cares for him in his old age, and obeys him as a proper son, he will receive his entitled land. However, if he is disobedient and disrespectful, and does not provide for his father, regardless of his age and rank among his brothers, he may receive little or no land. On the other hand, a man can give his land to *anyone* who does care for him, show him respect, and generally look out for his welfare. The person need not be a son or even a relative. In this way children from a family that is destitute may go about obtaining more land.

Females do not hold title to estates. Rather, they are said to "own the land under their foot" meaning that in reality they possess the land of their husbands and in bearing children they are able to pass that land on

to their children. Female names, like the women that hold them, pass from one estate to another. A woman becomes a member of an estate at marriage and her name becomes incorporated into the estate names when she bears children. She will be venerated by her children when she dies and her name will be passed on as one from that estate, or *tabinaw*. A marriage that does not produce children, either by birth or adoption, does not bring a new female name into the *tabinaw*. The woman at death does not join the ancestral ghosts of that estate unless she has cared for and nurtured the children of the patriclan. Her ghost would instead remain in the estate of her father.

Daughters, then, do not normally inherit the clan estate. However, the estate is designated *tafen e bitir* 'possession of the children'. The ideal rule is that male children of the patriclan inherit the estate, but should the group have only daughters available for succession, then the oldest girl is said to become like a man, and she may inherit the land. Because of depopulation, large numbers of estates have gone without heirs and the holdings of men and women have increased far out of proportion to aboriginal expectations. The woman without estate brothers receives land from her father and then in turn passes it to her children. This is called *binau ni thuth* 'land in lieu of the mother's breast'. Such a woman would be an excellent mate for a man who wants to increase his landholdings for his children. Most often a son of this woman will be named after her father, bestowing upon him title to the land. When a woman does not inherit the land because she has brothers, she may be given a small piece of land, one taro plot and one garden plot for subsistence in case she divorces her husband. A sister cannot live in the same household with her sexually mature brother after her first menstruation, thus, when she returns to the family, she resides on her own separate plot. This land is *binau ni giliungin* 'a place to put her grass skirt' when she returns to her estate of birth.

During the period of expanding population in Yap's history, land was constantly divided and subdivided among sons, as is made graphic to anyone today who tries to plot land distribution and ownership. Any sizeable plot of land on Yap is divided among many owners, with such boundaries as hedgerows, trees, or a particular bush. Because of this subdivision, many more land estates exist today than there are individual households to fill them. Many of these estates have been inherited by females and subsequently passed on to their children. As a result, one clan or household may hold as many as seven or eight estates, and some even more. In this case land from the estates will be parceled out to the separate sons, with the oldest receiving the highest-ranking estate. The example from the village of Wonyan in [Tables 5 and 6](#) demonstrates this clearly.

The tables also clearly illustrate present-day Yapese preference for filling the extra existing estates held by the clan rather than dividing the

main clan estate. Sons in the patriclan are given names belonging to extinct clan estates and in so doing the estate units are reestablished. This is becoming an increasingly common practice as the population of Yap continues to grow.

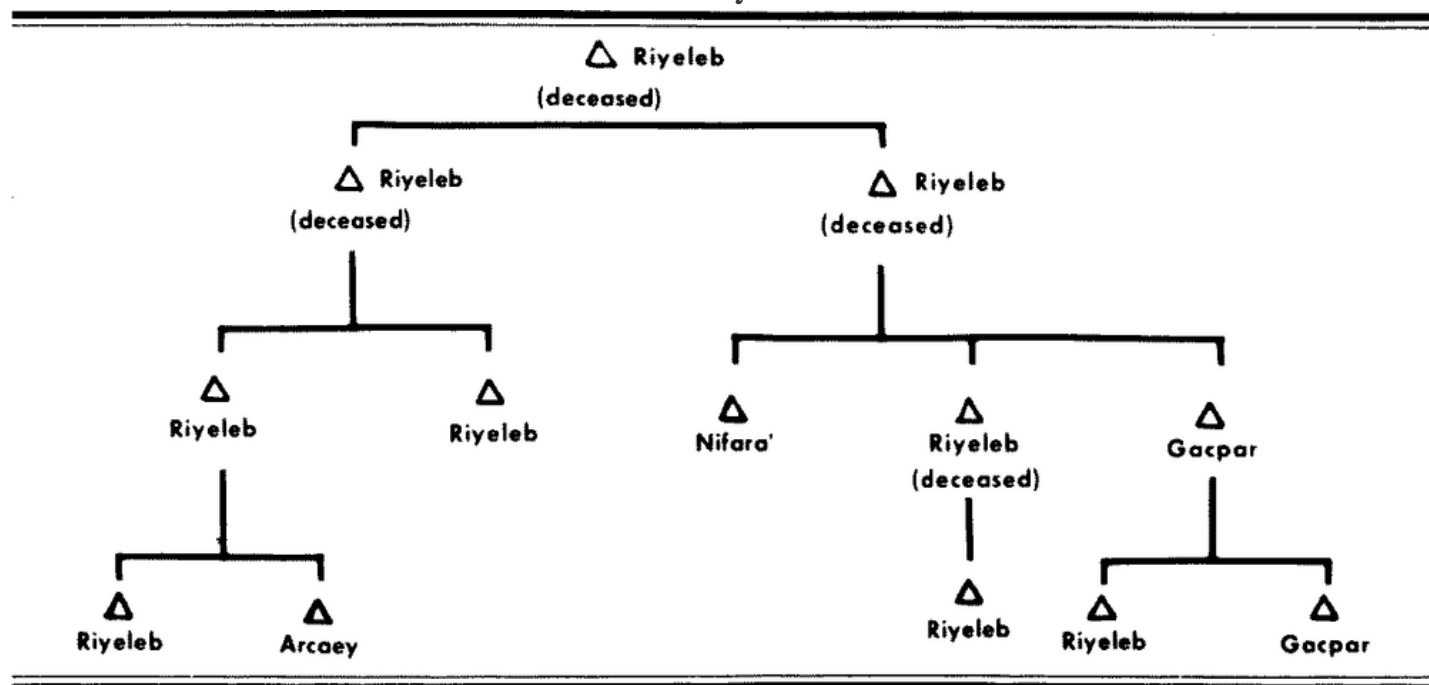
The primary functions of the patriclan are political. Rank, title, and authority assignments in the village and in Yap-wide political structures are conferred on individuals by merit of their membership in an estate group. Each estate is assigned certain responsibilities and must mobilize its economic and social resources in support of the economic, political, and ceremonial activities of the village. The patriclans compete with each other in these village activities and also in interclan activities. Each patriclan is accountable to the village for the behavior of its members.

The internal organization of the estate is more loosely structured than that of the household. The group is mobilized as a unit only when outside demands are made upon it, or when any individual household requires assistance in completing a task. The oldest male member of the estate is recognized as its leader and he coordinates activities that involve all households and members of the patriclan. Such activities would include the observation of certain life crises of clan members and large-scale economic activities such as house-building or the development of new agricultural resources. The clans are exogamous and social control among the members is maintained through social, economic, and ritual sanctions.

The Patrilineage

When a Yapese says *girdien e tabinaw* ‘people of one land’ he frequently includes not only the legal members of his land estate or patriclan, but also other kinsmen to whom he traces relationship by a known common male ancestor. The land estate is referred to as *barba‘macaf* ‘one portion of Yapese money’. Yapese brothers and their sons may hold title to several of these estates individually, but for use rights, they divide the land among themselves as they see fit. The case cited in Tables 5 and 6 of brothers from the village of Wonyan serves as an example.

Figure 7. Title and Genealogical Relationships of Men from Riyeleb Estate, Wonyan



All members of this group (see [Figure 7](#)) are related to two deceased brothers from the land estate called Riyeleb. Three of the five male children of these brothers were named from the estate Riyeleb. One was given a name from his mother's estate of birth, Nifara', which she received because she had no brothers, and the last was adopted into an estate in the next village of Gacpar. Three of these five men had sons, one of which was named from a fourth estate called Arcaey. Thus we find a group of kinsmen, whose names "legally" separate them into four different land estates, who nevertheless recognize themselves as people of one land. Informants stated clearly that those whose names come from land estates other than Riyeleb are not members of the Riyeleb estate group, but all are considered to have succession rights to the political power invested in Riyeleb and all share rights of access to the resources of the group's combined estates, including those obtained through their mothers. They collectively hold seven estates in Wonyan, several estates in Gacpar, and several in the adjacent village of Riken. The resources of these various estates are not held as distinctive units, but are scattered among the whole group as their needs require. Only the rights of the man adopted into the village of Gacpar were limited because his adoption, arranged before his birth, affiliated him with the estate of his adoptive parents, not his biological parents. However, adoption does not sever the relationship with the biological parents as much as it reinforces a distant kin tie between them and the adoptive parents. In this case the adoptive parents died when the child was young and he returned to live with his biological parents. His brothers recognize him as a kinsman and share family resources with him. One of his sons has been named after his biological

father from Riyeleb and the other son after his adoptive father, thus claiming the estate in Gacpar into which he was adopted.

Table 5. Estates Held by Sons of Riyeleb/Godbiyel Clan Estate, Wonyan Village

Sons	Wonyan Village		Riken Village	Gacpar Village	
	Titled Estates	Nontitled Estates	Nontitled Estates	Titled Estates	Nontitled Estates
Oldest	Riyeleb/ Godbiyel	Fiten‘ey	Gilminay Talal Tungthal	Numruy/ Mowal	Utunngal
Second		Arcaey	Anaeth		
Third		Nifara‘ Ool	Falic Bayumuc Tungunuw		
Youngest		Fanorul			Several estates from adopted parents
Son of oldest		Dulkan	Several estates from mother		

Table 6. Land Use of Riyeleb/Godbiyel Estate, Wonyan Village

Type of Land	Plot Distribution				
	Son				
	1	2	3	4	5
Titled Foundations	2	—	—	—	—
Other Foundations	2	1	—	1	1
Taro Lands	13	1	9	—	3
Garden Lands	4	—	1	—	6
Coconut Lands	1	1	1	1	1

NOTE:

Sons are coded as follows: 1 is oldest son; 2 is second son; 3 is third son; 4 is youngest son; 5 is son of oldest son.

It is obvious then that the Yapeese recognize a group of patrilineal kinsmen larger than the limits of the patriclan. This larger group may be defined as a patrilineage. Members of a patrilineage include kinsmen from a number of patriclans who can trace their relationship to a common male ancestor. Because this kinship tie extends beyond the legal boundaries of the land, the members of the lineage hold residual rights in their respective estates and frequently share resources and political power among the group. This is true through second, third, and fourth generations from the founder of the lineage. If serious disputes arise among members of a lineage, individuals may begin to claim all land to which their name entitles them and to evict those who lack legal rights of access to it. This kind of breach in solidarity is considered very serious and occurs very rarely.

Women born into a patrilineage are always members of that group by kinship. This contrasts to the patriclan where a woman's membership is only temporary, depending upon residence and the duration of her marriage. Female membership in the land estate of her birth is suspended at marriage, but her kinship relationship to her brothers and lineage is never suspended. She actively works for the good of the land estate of her husband, and specifically does not work for the good of the land estate of her birth. She may, however, on special occasions be called upon by a brother to render assistance as a member of his lineage.

The patrilineage is a social unit, a group of consanguineal kinsmen, while the patriclan is primarily a political and economic unit. The functions of the patrilineage are to provide support for the estate and the patriclan and to provide for succession to leadership and the exercising of authority assigned to the titles of an estate. The patrilineage plays a role in succession to leadership status primarily because of the age requirements for leadership. A young man is considered irresponsible and incapable of leading a clan. He cannot command respect nor would he desire to do so in a council consisting of older men. If he should fall heir to the leadership of his clan before reaching his old age, another old man in his lineage will act in his stead. The nature of leadership and leadership succession will be discussed in detail in [chapter 4](#).

Finally, patrilineal relationships are extended as far as claims to land and authority can be advantageously remembered. Genealogical claims to titled land held seven or eight generations previous may be remembered by individuals, while claims to minor land may not be remembered beyond four generations. In any case, on the father's side, relatives three

or four generations back are remembered because marriage to them is considered incestuous.

In his analysis of Yapese kinship (1953, 1957a, 1962, 1967), Schneider fails to distinguish between the patrilineage and the patriclan. Part of the difficulty arises from the seemingly contradictory statements by Yapese centering around the word *tabinaw*. In one breath the informant will say that so and so is *girdien e tabinaw* and then in the next he will state that they have different *tabinaw* and name the estate of the individual in question. Only after intensive questioning on the nature of relationships between individuals and their mutual rights and responsibilities do the distinctions emerge. The phrase *girdien e tabinaw* is used interchangeably for people of the household, the estate, the patrilineage, and generally for all relatives. The word *tabinaw* is used interchangeably for the household site and the land estate. When a Yapese uses these words and phrases in context, he has no difficulty determining the reference or meaning. It is the anthropologists who are invariably confused.

Müller's informants (Müller 1917) referred to the patrilineage as *bu'um e girdi*. Translated literally this means a 'group of people', and present-day informants say it may be used for any kind of group. However, it is frequently used in reference to patrilineal kinsmen. Müller failed to recognize the patriclan as an important political unit.

The Genung or Matrisib

The Sib

The second principle of kinship and social organization in Yap is that of the *genung* or the matrilineal sib. The matrisibs are named, exogamous, nonlocalized, totemic kin groups. Each sib has an origin myth and a specific place of origin located in Yap. A child is born into the sib of his mother. He is considered to belong to her *genung* because he came out of her belly. Members of each sib refer to each other as *tab ka girdi*, 'one branchy tree of the people'.

There are many clues that the sibs were once corporate, land-holding groups. Today, however, the sibs lack any formal organization and leadership and play only a minor role in the social organization of Yap. In terms of leadership, the sib is important for two of the highest-ranking titled estates in Yap. These estates are considered *tafen e genung* or land estates owned and passed from one sib member to another. They are unique, however, in the normal configuration of Yapese politics and are not representative of the pattern of ownership and succession. Certain sibs also maintain residual rights to particular land parcels, but this is not

widespread.

Schneider's assertion (1962) that the seven sacred places connected with the origin myth of the Yapese are of clan origin and owned by clans is in error. None of these places are "owned" by people and only one of them (Tamil municipality) is cared for by a *matrisib*. In the latter case, the relationship of the sib to the sacred place is mythologically separate from the origin myth.

The weakness of the sib is seen most clearly in the fact that not all sib members are regarded as "kinsmen." Only those sib mates to whom relationships can be traced are considered as relatives (*girdirom* 'your people'). It is only these members of the sib to whom kinship terms are extended.

The Subsib

The subsib is an unnamed, exogamous, nonlocalized group of matrilineal kinsmen who hold membership in a common sib and who have a known genealogical relationship, ideally through seven generations above ego. Members of a subsib are distinguished from non-members by their mutual extension of kinship terminology to each other, and by the reference of outsiders to them as *bu'um e wolag* 'a group of siblings'.

The subsib is much more important in Yap social organization than is the sib. Schneider states that "the essence of matrilineal kinship on Yap is that of solidarity and loyalty ..." (1962:21). In fact this is much more characteristic of the subsib (which is unspecified in Schneider's analysis) than of the sib. Distant sib relationships without any known kinship tie place little or no obligation on the people involved. Because the name of one's sib is not publicly discussed, nor known outside of one's locality, unknown relationships are not likely to be discovered. Should two individuals discover that they are members of a common sib, they are not obligated to incorporate themselves into one subsib or to accept each other as a relative. If on the other hand a relationship can be traced, the individuals will take steps to reinforce the kinship bond and to reestablish a fading relationship.

While membership in the sib extends without reference to village rank or landed/landless caste distinctions, the membership of the subsib tends to fall into general caste and class boundaries. This is caused by the practice of marrying within caste lines, as in marriages between villages of equal or adjacent rank. Marriages across caste lines are prohibited because they would break down the reciprocal obligations of class and caste observed through the ties of solidarity and support expected of members of the subsib.

Exogamy in the subsib is absolutely required and breaches of this rule are considered equal to incest in the nuclear family. In cases of incest

within the nuclear family, marriage is out of the question and the participants are made to feel great shame. Partners in a marriage between sib members are believed to be punished by ancestral ghosts who will assure that all of the woman's children are boys with the result that her sib line will die out.

The primary function of the subsib is to support its members in the major life crises of marriage and death by providing economic and moral support. On these occasions, a particular old man will be recognized as the leader of the gathered members and in the distribution of goods he will receive a special gift. Leadership is determined by age and genealogical distance from the member of the subsib being honored or supported.

Members of a subsib also are expected to support each other in any need expressed by a fellow member. This support is given without stipulated reciprocity and may include loaning important property, donating valuables, assisting in a work project, or providing refuge for a kinsman in trouble. The essence of the subsib relationship is the provision of mutual support for all its members. Schneider notes that "this relationship is structurally identical with that which is defined as proper for a Yap mother and her child. A child respects and obeys his father because of what the father does for him; a child loves his mother, on Yap, and a mother loves her child and what she does for the child she does without generating the formally defined and explicit obligation to reciprocate." (1962:23)

The Kindred

For Yapese, kinship defines the most important social obligations and interests for the individual. Any prolonged and intensive social relationship is defined in terms of kinship, so that individual friends without a biological relationship may become fictional relatives. General ties of kinship are extended bilaterally through males and females, and include all individuals to whom any relationship can be remembered. It is not necessary that the exact genealogical relationship be traced. Therefore the boundaries of the unit are variable, depending upon the desire of individuals to carry on or forget distant relationships. (Ideally ego should know all collateral relatives up through the third ascending generation.) Individuals who share known relationships are referred to as *girdien e tabinaw*, and form an ego-centered kindred. Friends who are fictional kinsmen are not normally subsumed under this label, but are referred to as *girdirog* 'my people'. This latter term may be used for any individual to whom one wishes to express a real or fictive relationship.

The kindred relationship expresses Yapese interest in reinforcing and

expanding their network of kinsmen. When occasion permits, distant kinship ties, through both males and females, are reinforced by making and responding to demands. Refusal of demands is considered a breach of relationship unless accompanied by a very good reason and such refusals may dissolve a relationship, even between close kinsmen. A politically astute Yapese will use every opportunity to reinforce his existing kin ties and to expand them when possible.

The kindred constitute an ego-centered support group in contrast to the patrilineage and the matrilineal subsib. The only occasion on which all members of an individual's kindred are expected to appear is his funeral. Each member comes to pay his last respects and, perhaps more importantly, to identify himself as a kinsman. An appropriate gift (cigarettes, money, or burial goods) is given to the children or family of the deceased. The gift and the giver are then publicly announced to all present. This is a public declaration of relationship, not only to the deceased, but to his children and siblings. Should a distant relative fail to appear without notifying the children of the deceased, he is signaling the end of their mutual kinship ties. Members of the kindreds of the deceased's patriclan also appear and bring gifts expressing their support.

The kindred is also important in any situation in which an individual and the members of his patriclan need to call upon their most extensive resources. This includes such ceremonial occasions as the marriage exchange, in which all relatives not members of the clan may be invited to contribute to the collection and share in the distribution. Distant relatives who wish at this time to reinforce their relationship give extra large amounts.

Adoption

Yapese informants noted three legitimate ways to have children: through pregnancy and childbirth (*fak e diyen*), by adopting a child from someone else (*fak e tefenay*), and by acquiring a child with one's wife at marriage (*fak e gilab*). The most momentous of these is the decision to ask to adopt someone else's child. Children by pregnancy or marriage just happen, but one must think about and decide to adopt a child. Yapese feel that such a decision entails great responsibility and the child in question should be considered first before any other children in the household.

Two channels exist for adopting children. A couple or person desiring a child may request a yet-to-be-born child from a distantly related or unrelated family. This is called *pof* 'the plucking of a leaf', which signifies the taking of a child from the fringes of one's kinship relations. The second channel is to select for adoption a child of a close relative. This may be done before or after the birth of the child and is accomplished

with less formality. This method of adoption is referred to as *cowiy*, which signifies the taking of a child close to the core of one's kinship relations.

Pof adoption is generally arranged a few months before the birth of the child. The adoptive parents bring Yapese valuables (*macaf*) to the parents of the child and the head of the child's patriclan. The amount and kind of valuables given depend upon the rank of the family and the child. The clan head offers valuables to the clan's ancestral ghosts to ensure that they will not be angry and that the child will have a long life. The clan head then discusses the impending adoption with the senior, matrilineal relative of his deceased father, called *mafen*, who is empowered to approve or disapprove such decisions. If the *mafen* is agreeable, the matter is settled.

After the child has passed the critical postnatal period, the adoptive parents go to the home of the biological parents, at which time they are entertained and the biological father presents the child to the adoptive father. Frequently a piece of land is given by the biological to the adoptive parents to insure that the child will inherit the land of his new patriclan. This land is called *binau ni bid* 'land for wiping' (Defngin 1966), in reference to the fact that the adoptive parents will be troubled with cleaning up the feces of the child and asking their forbearance. The kin relationship between the two families is strengthened by the adoption, so that the parents establish a sibling relationship.

Cowiy adoption between close relatives is less formal. The arrangements may be made after the birth of the child and valuables need not be exchanged. The child may live with his adoptive parents, or he may remain with his biological parents, or he may alternate living with either. This contrasts with the *pof* arrangement in which the child is not told of his adoption until he reaches adulthood. However, adoption of both types is always out of the estate and clan of birth and into new ones.

The primary motive for a childless couple to adopt is to obtain heirs who will care for them in their old age. The adopted child is given a name from the ancestral spirits of the new estate and full status as a child of the adoptive father and mother. He is also considered an equal sibling with any other child born or adopted into that patriclan. Rules of age and rank in the clan follow without regard to adoption. At the same time an adopted child loses rights in his estate of birth. He may not inherit land from that estate unless all other legitimate heirs die. If he should choose to return to his estate of birth, and he may, he must forfeit his rights in his estate of adoption. Any child, born or adopted into an estate, must obey his adoptive father and care for him in his old age or face possible disinheritance.

It is obviously advantageous for a large family to give up some children in adoption, and in fact the advantages, as in the prospect of providing additional land for one's children, form one of the primary incentives for doing so. However, if the initiative for adoption begins with the biological parents, they usually approach close relatives, for to propose the adoption

of one's child to a distant or nonrelative is to *oginag e bitir* 'throw him away', which is not respectable. Another reason for adoption today is to alleviate pressure on a household of too many children. A child may be given to relatives either as an adoptive or foster child. Finally, one may arrange an adoption to reestablish a kinship relationship that has nearly died out. Relationships between patriclans and between parents who have both biological and adoptive children have been reinforced in this way. The gift of a child is considered so valuable that it is not repayable. The recipient incurs a lifetime obligation to the giver; he in fact becomes a sibling of the giver, just as the child becomes a member of his family.

The kinship affiliation of an adopted child is considerably more complex than that of a nonadopted child. In most cases the adopted child lives in the household of his new parents. In all cases he is a member of their patriclan. At the level of lineage and sib, however, the child belongs to the patrilineages of both his adoptive and biological father and to the matrisibs and subsibs of his adoptive and biological mother. When the child reaches young adulthood he is told of his adoption and his affiliation with the groups of his biological parents. He is instructed to observe incest prohibitions for both sets of lineage and sib. If he lives in close proximity he will actively participate in the activities of both patrilineages and subsibs. Should a conflict of interest develop, however, his strongest ties are to his adoptive parents and their kin groups.

In his limited treatment of the *pof* type of adoption, Schneider (1949, 1953, 1962) notes that adopted children inherit the sib affiliation, totem, and eating prohibitions of both their biological and adoptive mothers. The rule of exogamy is also extended for both sibs. Schneider observes correctly that when an adopted female bears children, she will pass on only the sib affiliation of her adoptive mother. However, he fails to note that the child of an adoptive mother will still recognize members of both subsibs as kinsmen and observe subsib exogamy. It should be reemphasized that the effect of adoption is not to cut off relationships, but to reinforce and extend them for both the parents and the children.

Cases of Adoption

This complex affiliation may be illustrated by the example of one household from the village of Okaw. The parents have given four children in adoption, two by *pof* and two by *cowiy*. The oldest adopted (*pof*) child is male and lives with his adoptive parents. He is twenty-four years old and has known his biological parents for about eight years. He was married recently and works at a regular job in the town of Colonia; his biological parents, who live near the town, provide him and his wife with a small house, which they use during the week. On weekends the couple returns to Okaw village, where they stay with his adoptive parents. During my stay

on Yap I was able to observe three major life crises in the clan of his biological parents, and he participated in each as if he were their son. At the same time he carried on his responsibilities to his adoptive parents and kinsmen as if he were their son. When questioned, he stated unequivocally that he belongs to the patriclan of his adoptive father and not to the one of his biological father. His legal rights to land and title come from his clan of adoption, but his kinship obligations and duties, including incest taboos, come from all four parents. This is why he may inherit his biological father's estate should the other heirs die.

The second adopted child is a girl about eighteen years old. She was adopted (*cowiy*) at birth by her biological father's brother, who himself had been adopted into another clan estate. She lived with her biological parents until she was about five years old, and then went to live with her adoptive parents. Several years later the girl was left without a mother when the adoptive parents were divorced, and so she returned to live with her biological mother and father. Later the adoptive father remarried, but the new wife declined to keep the child. She remained with her biological parents and will do so until she marries. At the same time, she considers her adoptive father her legal parent.

The third adopted (*pof*) child is a male about twelve years old. He lives in another village and does not know his biological parents, nor does he know that he is adopted. On one occasion his biological brother and I talked to him and he was unaware of their relationship. He does not visit his biological family, nor do they visit him. The other members of the two families do assist each other informally and in the three major life crises noted above, the adoptive family brought substantial contributions to assist.

The fourth adopted (*cowiy*) child is a daughter about five years old. She was adopted by a close female relative, but until she was two she lived with her biological mother. Now she stays in her adoptive mother's home, but visits in her home of birth for a few days or even a few weeks at a time. She is aware of both sets of parents, who frequently interact socially.

Irregular Adoption and Fosterage

Irregular adoptions do occur. One type is called *gilab*, which is described as a child brought in on the grass skirt of his mother (*ke 'un u bungun e ong*). In this case a child, usually without a legal father, comes with his mother to an estate and patriclan into which she marries. To make this a genuine adoption, the clan must give the child a proper name from its pool of ancestral names; this act bestows upon the child legal membership and rights to inheritance.

This type of adoption, however, is precarious for the child. In many instances other children are born to the marriage and they may challenge

the right to inherit of the adopted child. Where the rights of an adopted child may be open to question, the real parents or parent may move to prevent such a challenge by giving a large piece of stone money called *mo'of* to "anchor" or "nail him down" to his new estate and clan. With the combination of a name and *mo'of*, an individual's rights in an estate cannot be challenged. Some parents who have given children in *pof* adoption also give *mo'of* to ensure their child's security in his new estate.

Informants also cited cases in which a divorced wife and her family stole children from their rightful patriclan. These children were incorporated into the wife's estate of birth and given names by the head of that estate. The act of naming again provides the child legal rights to his adoptive estate, but the child's legal bond with his estate of birth, not having been properly dissolved, is still in force. When such children reach adulthood they face a complex set of alternatives, which inevitably leads to conflict and contested claims to loyalty and land.

Fosterage is also prevalent on Yap. This occurs when a child is placed in a household and estate other than that of his birth without adoption or the legal change of name. The most common incidence of fosterage occurs when women from a patrilineage are called upon by their brothers to care for children left without a mother through the death or divorce of a wife. These women generally are married and hold membership and residence in the patriclans of their husbands. It is thus that a woman and her husband may raise her brother's children, caring for them as would a mother and father, while the children maintain legal rights and obligations to the clan and estate of their father.

Another type of fosterage reported by informants is one arranged for women who marry into distant villages and estates. Marriage, ideally, is consummated between members of the same or adjacent villages. There are a number of practical reasons for this. A woman's parents are concerned that she be well treated in her new household and patriclan, and desire that she be close so that they may observe and assist her in difficult situations. Also, a wife's family and clan have certain duties and obligations with regard to the birth of her children, and the observation of life crises in her new household. Before the present-day road system was built, long distances made these things impossible. A solution to this problem was to create a foster relationship between the daughter and some not-too-distant relatives living near her new home. The foster family would treat her as their own child, care for her needs and on special ceremonial occasions arrange for her parents to be present. This relationship would be maintained for the duration of the daughter's stay in that area.