

# ADOPTION AND PARENTHOOD ON YAP

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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents data on Yapese adoption beliefs and practices, placed in the contexts of Yapese symbols of identity and relationship and of the range of variation in parent-child relationships found on Yap. These contexts are employed to account for certain features of Yapese adoption and to simplify comparison of adoption on Yap with transactions in other Oceanic systems of relationships.

Carroll (1970c), Levy (1970), and Goodenough (1970b) all have isolated important aspects of adoption for study. Carroll treats Nukuoro adoption as an information system that encodes messages about kinship solidarity and the interdependence of kinsmen. Working in a similar vein, Levy stresses that kin relationships may be conditional and that they may require continuous maintenance. Such relationships may lapse if they are not enacted regularly or they may be contingent on other relationships for their quality and existence. Where many relationships are conditional, the creation and rupture of bonds in adoption need not be viewed as exceptional by the observer. Goodenough urges the study of adoption as a transaction in the rights and duties of parenthood. He views change in a child's relationships by adoption as a transaction to be located within a continuum of types of transaction permissible or proper in a society.

Our examination of Yapese adoption is primarily concerned with underlying cultural premises and the conditionality of relationships. We present short case studies and examples of some prevalent types of transaction and negotiation in relationships. These data can be used to discover what might be gained from an ethnography of the range of

transactions in the rights and duties of parenthood on Yap.

## **ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND**

The population of Yap has varied from a maximum estimated at about 40,000 for the early 1800s (Schneider 1955; Mahoney 1958) to a minimum in 1946 of 2,582 (Hunt, Kidder, and Schneider 1954). The June 1972 population was 4,790 (Office of the District Administrator 1972).

Yap is divided into some 120 villages, of which about a tenth are now uninhabited. The modal population per village is about forty persons. Whether or not a village is populated today, the land surrounding it is owned and often worked.

In the traditional Yapese political system, villages were ranked. Villages of different ranks were linked into networks in which the higher-ranking villages received tribute and ordered their subordinates to participate in activities involving many villages, especially warfare. Intervillage contact was infrequent and tense, being largely limited to activities established by relations of dominance and dependence (Schneider 1962: 17-18).

Yapese mingle today in the town of Colonia, and many traditional political duties go unperformed. But Yapese still orient much of their interaction in terms of traditional ranking and alliance patterns. People are known by their village of origin, even though they may never visit it. There are, consequently, 'people of Rumung' municipality who are never to be seen there while there are no 'people of Colonia' even though nearly one-half the population of Yap lives in the town and its environs.

Within the village, plots of land are ordered into *tabinaw* 'estates'. The resources of the estate include taro patches, fishing grounds, house sites, political offices, and personal names. A person's membership in an estate is gained with naming. Elders of the estate confer these names and can take them back. Membership rights are maintained so long as a person bears a name given by the elders of the estate. At marriage, women are said to be members of their husbands' estates, but they do not lose membership in their natal group. A woman is active in her natal estate and is 'over' her brother's wife and children. Her authority becomes stronger after her brother's death, and she has rights over his heirs, whether or not they are genealogically related to her.

A senior male usually speaks for the people of his estate in village affairs and makes decisions as to allocation of the resources of the estate. Should other members of the estate inherit land, the senior male takes responsibility over their land. Vigorous men may be suspected of trying to take full control of land inherited by others in their estate. When land is inherited by siblings, their lands may be said to form one estate or two,

depending on the context. Leadership should pass to the eldest male, but this depends on the personalities involved: a leader has a right to ignore his brother and to give his lands and authority in the estate to his son or anyone else he might choose.<sup>1</sup>

The rights and duties of a leader and other elders of the estate are spelled out in detail only with regard to a few contexts, such as village councils and situations in which disgrace threatens the estate. Many estate matters are discussed by all the people with seniority in the group. Relationships among these elders vary, of course, in different estates. It may be clear in one case that a certain man alone made a decision, while, in another group, decisions are reached through a complex set of compromises among elders.

Yapese live in conjugal family households. Young men live apart from their families to avoid sleeping in the same house with their sisters, although such young men do eat their meals at the family house. Traditionally, Yapese were ranked into eating grades, so that each male of an estate had a rank and did not eat with males of other ranks. Few follow the eating rules today, but the stress placed on seniority through these rules remains important in village and estate affairs.<sup>2</sup>

## **FREQUENCY OF ADOPTION**

Early reports (Müller 1918; Furness 1910) stress that adoption is prevalent on Yap but provide no numerical data. Studies done in 1947 and 1972 are more helpful. They differ in an important respect: in the 1947 census, persons were listed as *pof* 'adopted' or not (Hunt, Kidder, and Schneider 1954). In our 1972 fieldwork, we asked a more open-ended question: "Were you born or adopted or what to this estate?" In the two villages studied, few cases could not be subsumed under the rubrics of 'birth' and 'adoption' in 1972. At an earlier date or in other villages, this might not be the case. Hence the 1947 and 1972 figures are not strictly comparable, and we can only draw tentative conclusions from them.

The 1947 census showed 16.5 percent of the Yapese population to have been adopted. If "not known" responses in this census are excluded, we find an adoption rate of 24.3 percent in a sample of 2,011 persons. This figure includes those whose adopters had died but presumably not those whose adopters had rejected them in the long run. The 1947 data show no preference for either sex among adoptees. Adoption appears to be more frequent among higher-ranking people, but this may be because more complete returns were gathered in high-ranking villages. Table 19 indicates the distribution of adoption in 1947 by age of adoptee.

A survey of people in two villages on Rumung Island in 1972 shows an adoption rate of 15.4 percent in a sample of seventy-eight people (table

20). Only 11.3 percent of those under age thirty are adopted. The change in the adoption rate varies inversely with the population increase, although the sample used in our adoption survey is too small to attempt exact correlation.<sup>3</sup>

## THE SYMBOLIC ORDER

Labby (1971, 1972) has shown that traditional Yapese understandings of identity and relationship form a system of knowledge geared for survival on Yap. In this section we draw selectively from his work.

Yapese ideology stresses the interdependence of land and people for social continuity. The land would be neglected and valueless without people to maintain it; people would starve without the land to support them. The land is organized into estates and the people into matrilineal clans. Survival is assured, in this theory, by the clans' moving to new estates in each generation.

At marriage, a woman gains access to new resources for the people of her clan. She works to earn the land for her children: she must match with her work the value of the land. This value comes from previous work. A man passes land to his children in recognition of their labor and that of his wife. The children profit by their mother's labor since they are of 'the same blood' as her. Clan identity always has connotations of sharing on Yap: within an estate it implies that a woman's children all have claims to land she has earned.

TABLE 19. Adoption Frequencies by Age of Adoptees, 1947

Age	Adopted		Not Adopted		Not Known		Total	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
0-29	201	15.4	946	72.6	155	11.9	1302	100.0
30-49	130	18.7	454	65.2	112	16.1	696	100.0
50-69	87	16.2	322	63.7	96	19.0	505	100.0
70 +	14	17.7	52	65.8	13	16.5	79	100.0
Age not Known	0		3	9.4	29	90.6	32	100.0

SOURCE: Adapted from the 1947 census data in Hunt, Kidder, and Schneider (1954).

TABLE 20. Number of Adoptions in Two Rumung Island Villages

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Age	Adopted		Not Adopted		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
0-14	1	4	20	16	41
15-29	1	0	6	5	12
30-49	4	0	8	1	13
50-69	1	1	2	4	8
70 +	0	0	2	2	4

SOURCE: Authors' survey, 1972.

Authority results from work that has not been matched. When land is transferred, work has been done for the previous landholder, but his sister's share of the labor done to gain the land has not been met. As a result, she and her children have an important voice in the estate. Over two or three generations, their involvement diminishes as their work is matched with gifts and obedience. These *m'fen* 'trustees' should see that the current landholder maintains or increases the value of the land. The sister of an immediately previous landholder and her children—the trustees closest to the current landholder—may exile people from the land for failure to respect them or the dead landholder.

Such understandings of the relation of land and people through work have consequences which are important in the study of parent-child relationships. Most relationships are symbolized with reference to work and land, and these terms form a foundation for additional symbolizations of particular relationships.

Parenthood is understood as a combination of work on the land and a long-term exchange between parents and children. A father holds land or is closer to the landholder than are his children and will pass it on in recognition of labor. A mother is of the same clan as her children and has made a place for them on her husband's lands. Parents and children engage in a long-term balanced exchange—the parents working to support their infants and the children caring for the parents in old age. This exchange distinguishes parenthood from other relational categories. While people aid grandparents and grandchildren, the exchange of care is spoken of as a feature of parent-child relations. This feature alone is not sufficient to define parenthood, if only because care for anyone in need is enjoined on all Yapese. Rather, it is the combination of estate, clan, and exchange ties that defines parenthood within the ideology.

The definition of parenthood in terms of the exchange of work, estate, and clan ties is congruent with the rules informants offer for the use of kin terms on the death or divorce of parents. On a man's death, his brother alone is *citamangin*, 'father' to his children; on a woman's death,

no one becomes *citiningin* 'mother'. Ideally, the father's wife, if anyone, becomes 'mother' in the event of divorce while the father remains 'father'. Frequently, in a case of divorce (which ignores clan ties), the rule for the 'mother' is ignored (Schneider 1953).

A person's social identity<sup>4</sup> is defined in terms of clan membership and progress through relations on the estate. While Yapese may speak of a clan's gaining a higher place in society through marriages or political action, clan membership has little to do with the perceived social worth of a person. Clan membership is secret, while a person's estate affiliations are well known. An estate has rank in the village, and a person takes his rank from his estate and his position within it. Work transforms a person's social identity from child to elder and eventually to estate ghost. A person's initial tie to the estate—through his name or, for women, marriage—is fragile, since names may be taken away by authorities of the estate and marriages often break up. Social identity develops as a person becomes a parent, leader, or 'trustee'. A man who lives on his own land is an adult in his village while one who is much older but who is under a landholder in his estate may still be considered an irresponsible young man.

Political offices and seniority in the eating grades may be gained only through succession to authority in particular estates. Only cumulative work for an estate assures prominence in traditional Yapese society. Estate rank and personal worth are seen as interdependent. Moreover, such characteristics as generosity or slyness may be broadly ascribed to the people of particular estates.

This ideology provides terms in which relationships between people living on different lands may be understood. It allows for a complex system of political offices. The thrust of the ideology, however, is not on these relationships but on the estate as a discrete unit of land and people. The only relations between persons or land units, including villages, that are stressed are hierarchical ones in which authority is explained as deriving from past work. The message of the ideology for an individual is clear: hierarchical relations on the land endure while relations between people of different estates do not. The estate endures partly because work there is done under the authority of elders whose position derives from past work. Clansmen may be called on for aid and friends may be found outside the estate, but ties to these people are, in the end, supplementary to estate ties in assuring a person's identity and survival.

The interdependence of clan and land implies a person's dependence on the elders of the estate. It also implies that the elders' first and last duty is to 'keep the estate together' so that the value of the land and the survival of the people on it are assured.

# UNDERSTANDING OF BIRTH AND ADOPTION

Yapese ideology delineates the way in which a person rises to authority, but it says little about becoming a child in an estate. Birth into an estate is not taken as a precondition for membership; rather people say that a child 'is formed on the estate', stressing residence and activity over recruitment.

There is general agreement about adoption procedures and expectations of adoption outcomes. Since these understandings are widely shared, while there is general uncertainty concerning other modes of recruitment, it is clear that they form a cultural model. In this section, we compare the model of adoption with the traditional explanation of conception. An examination of the distinctions made between natural and adopted children leads us to the conclusion that the contrast between birth and adoption simply is not highly significant for Yapese understandings of relationship. Birth and adoption differ, but the difference does not make one an imitation of the other.

Schneider's (1968b) informants denied coitus any causal role in conception. They said that a woman became pregnant when the ghosts of her marital estate decided that she was worthy of having a child. Promiscuous women were rightly infertile while hardworking women had many children. To clinch the argument, they cited the case of a woman so ugly that no man would think of approaching her. Being a good woman, she had two children. The ghosts of the natal estate granted offspring in her case.

Labby's informants stressed that the roles of husband and wife are complementary: a man works his wife's reproductive 'garden' just as she works his food-producing land (1972: 54-55). Both a woman's work—in bearing a child and making a place for it on her husband's land—and a man's work are bases for relationship to the child.<sup>5</sup>

The ghosts of the estate delegate a spirit to form the child in the womb. Should the parents break certain prohibitions during pregnancy, the ghosts will make sure that the child is stillborn or deformed. The parents present a stone valuable as a prayer to the ghosts. Traditionally, the mother and child went to the village menstrual area immediately after birth and stayed there about five days. Ideally, their return to the estate followed or coincided with the naming of the child (Furness 1910: 154; Mangefel, in Defngin 1958).

Yapese explain that 'adoption' is arranged before the birth of the child. The would-be adopter or adopters—any adult or married couple can 'adopt'—get permission to 'adopt' from the elders of their estate and seek out a woman who has children. They ask for her next child and present a stone valuable to the ghosts of her marital estate. They may request a boy or a girl. While the woman is pregnant, they provide food and, nowadays,

pay her medical expenses. After the birth, more gifts go to the natal mother and child. The child goes to live with its adopters at weaning or, should they be too old to care for an infant, the child will move later. If the child is not of the sex desired, they may take the child anyway or wait for the woman's next child.

An adopted child is named by the elders of the adoptive estate. The child takes the clan affiliation of both natural and adoptive mothers. An adopted girl transmits only the affiliation of her adoptive mother to her children.

In terms of the ideology described above, the relation of parent and child is the same for children born or adopted into an estate. In both cases a claim of relationship is established with a gift to ghosts and the child's name comes from the parents' estate.<sup>6</sup> However, in seeing birth and 'adoption' as equivalent, we ignore the relation to the natal estate of the adopted child and the adopters. This limited view of the situation is the one implicit in the message of the ideology that systematically devalues ties between people not connected by clan identity or shared claims in land. Similarly, Yapese explanations of the term for 'adoption' emphasize separation between adoptive and natal groups. We heard three folk etymologies:

1. 'To slowly take a leaf or branch from a tree. To adopt a child you patiently separate it from others and make it your own through good discussion'.

2. 'To change from warm all the way to cold: the child begins as one thing and ends as another'.

3. 'To relieve another of a burden: so people with too many children do not have to take care of a child adopted from them'.<sup>7</sup>

It is not an easy matter to break ties, even purely symbolic ones. When an adopted child is named, the work done to produce it is recognized as contributing to the continuity of the adopters' estate. Hence the natural parents work for the adoptive estate, and a few Yapese even say that natural parents are 'of the same estate' or 'of the same land' as the adopters. Such a situation is anomalous in terms of the theory, and Yapese stress that the natural parents' claim on the adoptive estate must be extinguished. The adopters accordingly are expected to make gifts to the natural parents but should do so secretly so that the child will not know of any relationship with its natural parents.

The ideology and the model of 'adoption' are similarly phrased. Despite this similarity, they cannot be in agreement in every detail, since the model of 'adoption' deals with a situation that is disregarded in the ideology, and this omission is hardly accidental. The ideology, in presenting estates as discrete and authority in estates as following from work, presupposes that estates are self-sufficient in production and reproduction, that authority is distributed in a simple hierarchy, that all

the lands of the estate are held by the leader, and so on. 'Adoption' is one of a number of situations in which such presuppositions are wrong, and the use of the ideology's terms in this context could lead to contradiction of its message.

The model of 'adoption' is aligned with the ideology through the isolation of difficulties in adoptive relationships. The problems that Yapese expect to occur in 'adoption' arise at exactly those points where the application of the symbols of the ideology contradicts its message. 'Adoption', as Yapese speak of it, serves in part as a cautionary tale of what may happen if the message is not heeded.

Two features of 'adoption', in addition to the work of the parents, are usually seen as problematic: the clan identity of the child and natural mother, and the child as 'thrown away' by the natural parents.

A child is expected to establish relationships with its natural parents as a result of clan identity and their work. A child is not told of its 'adoption' until it reaches puberty but, no matter how well the 'adoption' is concealed, the child eventually will discover his natural parents and establish an ongoing relationship with them.

Yapese note that in order to carry out their agreement with the adopters, natural parents must treat their child as being of little worth, as something that can be given away. This conflicts with the stress on the value of a person. Yapese do not adopt just any child, but rather one of about the same rank as the adopters. Thus the child's value is affirmed by the adopters but denied by the natural parents. Following up on the importance of exchange to parenthood, informants assert that since the natural parents rejected the child, the child will treat them unkindly in return and may steal from them or fight them.

These expectations identify strains arising from 'adoption' while making no assertion that the relation of adopter to child is an imitation of, or less than that of, parent and natural child. It is better, so people say, to have a child born to the estate than to 'adopt' one because of the above-mentioned difficulties. Some people expect children born to an estate to ally against adopted children. They do not say that an adopted child has weaker rights or is not worthy to inherit land or leadership. They point, rather, to the fact that children born to the 'estate' have a common solidarity, which they may call on in order to oppose an adopted child.

The last expectation, that some members of the junior generation of the estate will combine against others, applies to other situations as well. For instance, at a man's death, his children come under his brother's authority. With the transfer of authority goes a change in terminology: for the dead man's children, his brother becomes the only person who is *citamangin* 'father'. All the children under this man should be treated alike and should treat each other as 'siblings'. Yapese do not, however, expect all such 'siblings' to share as they should.

An explicit contrast between natural and adopted children is thus

made at one point in the cultural model of 'adoption', but it occurs in a context where other criteria for alliance within the sibling set could be used to the same effect. In this context, people emphasize that 'siblings' may well unite under some pretext to exclude others when they escape parental guidance. The problem is seen as greed, not as any inadequacy of adoptive parent-child relations.

Various dyads may be the foci of interpersonal tensions in 'adoption', but the possibility of conflict between adopters and children is barely hinted in the expectations discussed here. The assumption that an adopted child will return to his natural parents suggests that the child may well break with its adopters. Different Yapese draw different conclusions: some see 'adoption' as a thankless effort; some expect an adopted child to try to get resources from both sets of parents; others hope that the child will realize that its best chances lie with the adopters.

A recurrent theme is that adopters are exemplary parents. Adopters go to considerable effort to get a child, showing care and love. Other parents have children without forethought.

The cultural model of 'adoption' dovetails neatly with the central message of Yapese social theory. If adopters were seen as less adequate or proper parents than natural parents, the message would be flatly contradicted, since care for the child is emphasized over procreation. Both adopters and natural parents start off as parents in Yapese terms, as both work to bring the child to life and to raise it. Given the Yapese stress on work, which persons remain a child's parents depends on continuing action to maintain the relationship.

## **CASES OF 'ADOPTION' AND 'HELP'**

Cases of adoption may diverge widely from the details of the model. To an extent this is inevitable: no model predicts the exact outcome of the transactions it represents, and, as shown above, the model of adoption serves to warn as well as to predict. Shared expectations cannot encompass the details of particular relationships. The problem goes deeper, however, for the details of many cases contradict the shared understandings. While the breaking of ties between 'estates' is stressed time and again, Lingenfelter notes correctly that "The effect of adoption is not to cut off relationships, but to reinforce and extend them for both the parents and the children" (1971: 60).

There is rarely any disagreement on the question of whether someone was 'adopted' or not. In the following cases—selected to illustrate the range of relationships labeled as adoptive—informants had no trouble deciding that 'adoption' occurred.

Case 1. The adopters had no children and asked a woman in their

village for her next child. She was one of two women in the village who gave birth to more than one child in the period 1930–1940. The child, a boy, lived with his adopters and took over the estate at the death of his adoptive father.

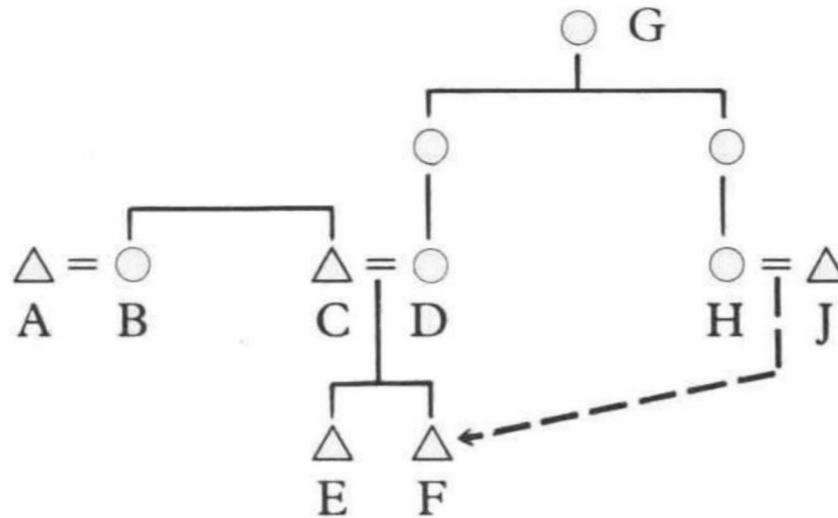
Case 2. A boy born to the woman mentioned above was ‘adopted’ by another couple in the same village. The adoptive father gave the boy two names, J and K, from his estate. He divorced his wife when the child was still young, ‘threw away’ the child at the same time, and took back both names. The child went to live with his natural parents and his natural father gave him a new name, again K. All these names were properly given; those chosen by the adoptive father were those of men who had been in his estate, and the name given by the natural father referred to a different K who had lived on lands held by the natural father. At this point, K was no longer ‘adopted’: his adopter broke their relationship in taking back the names. His adopter’s sister, however, had lands in the village that she could not oversee, as she lived some distance away. Some years later, this sister sent her son with stone valuables to be given to K’s natural father. He accepted the stone valuables, and informants agreed that this meant that K was no longer a member of his natural father’s estate. When asked, people hesitantly said that K had been more or less ‘adopted’ in this transaction. K is seen as having his own estate, although he lives on land lent by his natural father. He has not been given any land by the people who separated him from his natural father’s estate.

Case 3. An old man whose children were grown asked for a girl in ‘adoption’. He said that he wanted a girl because most of his daughters had died. He named the child, and, although she resides with her natural parents, she visits her adopter daily. The adopter is confident that she will take responsibility for his care when she finishes school.

Case 4. An unmarried woman was pregnant. Her lover did not wish to treat her as worthless, but he would not marry her. A friend of his adopted the child. The child lives with her adopters and neither visits nor, we were told, knows her natural mother.

Case 5. A village chief had only one daughter who married a man from another part of Yap. Since political offices cannot be held by women, the chief needed a son and so he ‘adopted’ his daughter’s child. The boy was named by the adopter, but he has lived mainly with his natural parents, far from his adopter’s home. His mother explains that the boy is her ‘sibling in name and child in person’. Now that the adopter has died, the boy is acknowledged as chief in his village although—perhaps because—he is rarely there.

FIGURE 9. Adoption Cases 6 and 9  
Diagrammed.



Case 6. This adoption as well as other data which are discussed later, is shown in figure 9. H and J asked for F before his birth. F was born in a village ranking just below J's village. His name comes from C's estate; he says that this was at A's request. J may not have wanted to give a name from his own lands because his claim to them was irregular. F stayed with both his adoptive and natural parents during his youth. He inherited land from all four of them. He has given a name from his adoptive father's land to his first son and has named his second son for C, his natural father. He currently lives on land in his natal village although he holds political office in his adoptive village.

Case 7. A boy grew up with his natural parents until they separated and his father was killed by his mother's brother. His older brother was taken in by a man related to his father, but he was 'adopted' by a relative of his mother's. His mother has married again elsewhere. He lives with his adopter but visits his mother. Although he stays with his mother's relatives when in his natal village, he considers his natural brother to be his 'brother' and still bears a name from his natal estate.

Case 8. A married woman had no children of her own, although her husband had a child by a former wife. She wanted a child in order to commemorate her father. She asked a distant relative on her father's side—the precise genealogical relation is not certain—for a boy. She has given her adopted son her father's name. The child has lived with his natural parents in town, rarely if ever visiting his adopter. We were told that he would be allowed use of estate lands if he came to live in the area but could not expect to inherit since his adopter's natal estate was held not by his adopter but by another man, her FBSS.

When we pressed a group of informants to explain why the above are cases of 'adoption', they separated cases of 'adoption' from *ayuweg* 'help' and other, unremarkable relationships. They had difficulty, however, in

pointing to features which distinguish the three. They could offer no model of 'help' like that of 'adoption' discussed above. Their 'adoption' model did not hold in its details for all cases of 'adoption': in discriminating between different cases, Yapese do not appear to be treating a gift of stone money, say, or a child's naming as a necessary condition for 'adoption'.<sup>8</sup>

Conceivably, given enough cases, rules might be generated to account for the divergence of particular cases from shared expectations. Our informants discussed the particulars of each case in terms of the personalities involved and their individual relationships to estates. In looking for a syntax of 'adoption' transactions, we would have to posit very similar motivations and understandings on the part of the actors involved if our informants' discussion of cases is relevant. We see no reason to assume that all Yapese are alike in outlook and knowledge and, instead, look for similarities in the cases designated as 'adoption' which are absent in 'help' and other cases.

Our informants explained that adopters are *gafagow* 'destitute', as is the child in cases of 'help'. 'Destitution' cannot be operationally defined. However, two cases of 'help' and one in which neither 'help' nor 'adoption' was found illustrate some of the circumstances in which people may be called 'destitute':

Case 9. In figure 9, E was helped by A and B. People explain that E's mother, D, could not care for E when she was pregnant and so A and B took him in. He grew up in the homes of both his helping and natural parents and inherited from both. Informants explain that A and B cared for E but had a relationship with him above and beyond nurture. Relatives may take care of children without any change in public perception of relationship, but, we were told, B was *cegow* 'greedy' and took advantage of D's situation in order to get the child.

Case 10. A girl went to live with an elderly relative. She took care of the old woman and inherited a plot of land 'in exchange for work'. We were told that the gift of land showed that she, and not the old woman, was 'destitute'.

Case 11. People say that this case, shown in figure 10, is neither 'adoption' nor 'help'. D was unmarried when she bore A2. We do not know whether A1 or C gave stone valuables to ghosts as prayer. The child was given A1's name, but this was not understood to indicate 'adoption': B had access to the name from her husband's estate and gave it as an elder of C's estate. The child lived with all his 'grandparents' as he grew up. It appears that A1 and B decided that A2 should inherit both their estates. Neither had a son, and they preferred to merge their lands rather than to 'adopt' or otherwise find heirs. A2 grew to be a well-liked man and duly inherited from all his 'grandparents'.<sup>9</sup>

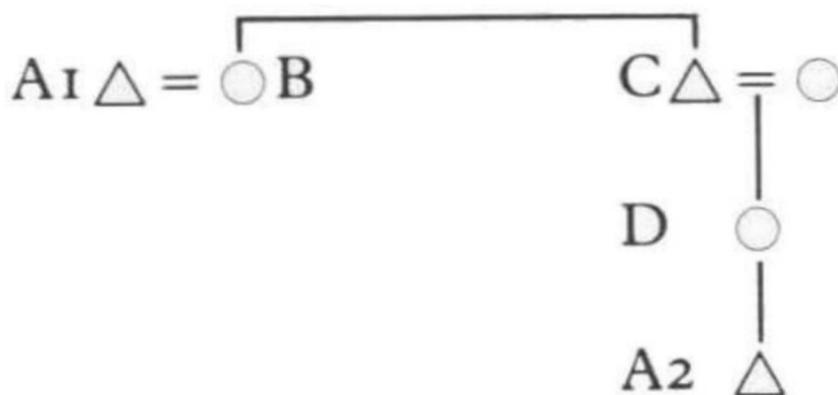
Adopters and helped children thus appear to be 'destitute' by

definition in hindsight, rather than because of facts always visible before 'adoption' or 'help' transactions are negotiated.

We cannot distinguish types of cases in terms of the formality of transaction. In Case 7, a boy was 'adopted' without any gift of stone money. Conversely, a number of cases of 'help' arise when a father seeks out another man to act as *taceyalen* 'guardian' of his estate after his death. The 'guardian' raises the children and watches over the estate until they can work the land. A man is not considered a 'guardian' unless he was chosen by the father and was publicly known to have accepted this duty. In Case 2, the natural father formally 'helped' his child by giving it a new name.

We find that no features in the parent-child relationship neatly separate 'adoption', 'help', and other situations but that they may be distinguished in terms of the status of the estates concerned. The sets of elders interested in the child as potentially or actually a member of their estates and the amount of agreement among the elders vary with the types of transaction.

FIGURE 10. Case 11 Diagrammed.



In 'adoption', two estates are necessarily involved in the transaction. Both estates continue as separate units, the child being affiliated to one yet having ties to the other. In all cases of 'adoption', a possibility remains that the child may be taken in by his natal group. What is most crucial is that the adopters have little or no control over the natal group and vice versa. The adopters have no guarantee that the natural parents will not try to entice the child to stay with them, and the natural parents cannot be certain the adopters will provide for the child.

In cases of 'help', two estates are involved, but only the elders of one estate can enforce decisions about the child's future. In Case 10, the old woman was about to die when she 'helped' the child. She gave the child land but had no power over the girl. The woman who 'helped' the child in Case 9 eventually became 'trustee' over her brother's lands: he could not oppose her in estate matters without risking that she would, later, take the

land from his heir.

Cases 9 and 11 show that 'help' and other parent-child relationships may have great similarity. In both cases, the child's FZ recruited the child. The difference between the two cases rests on the willingness of the women to use authority in the estate. In Case 9, a 'greedy' woman took her brother's son, even though his other son was to be adopted. In Case 11, the two sets of 'grandparents' were friendly and agreed to treat A2 as their mutual child. In this case, as well as others that seemed to us to border on 'help' or 'adoption', we were told that exercise of 'trustee' authority was out of the question.

The labeling of these parent-child relationships rests not on aspects of the parent-child dyad but on the ability of the various elders concerned to agree to cooperate. In 'adoption', two groups of elders have ties to a child, and neither can depend on the other with assurance. In 'help' one set of elders imposes its decisions without any worry about opposition. In situations that go unlabeled, elders show that their interests with regard to the child need not cause conflict, and matters can be settled amicably: 'their word is good'.

These distinctions rest on the negotiation of relationships, not on rights and duties. As a result, they are congruent with the Yapese emphasis on work and worth since they stress the conditional qualities of relationships. Occasional care of a child may be construed as 'help', if relations in the senior generation go sour. An 'adoption' exists so long as all parties involved do not work to disrupt it, and all involved can, if they choose, try to end it. The labels for relationships are applied with regard to the entire complex of relations that center on parent-child ties, and not just the links between the child and any or all parents.

Given the situations of elders in the three types of relationship, a child's opportunities for negotiation differ according to type. Adopted children can try to develop their ties to one or two estates. They can risk the displeasure of their elders since they can activate their ties to the natal estate even if they are rejected by their adopters. Children who are 'helped' may have land that they may use as they wish when grown, but they have less chance of finding support from people outside the group that 'help' them, since those who 'help' in most cases replace the children's original support group. The variety in parent-child relations not coded as 'adoption' or 'help' is great, and we cannot easily generalize about children's opportunities in them. We shall return to this subject below.

## **RANK IN ADOPTION**

We can now deal with a question we have skirted so far: from whom can

people 'adopt'?

Yapese say that a child once had to be of about the same rank as its adopters but that this requirement has been relaxed somewhat. If, in the past, a high-ranking man liked a low ranking child, he could not 'adopt' it; the best he could do would be to get a man of intermediate rank to 'adopt'. He would then oversee the child's growth and give it things. He might take the child into his household on the adopter's death. He could never 'adopt' the child, for the difference in rank was simply too great.

The rank of a child is not, however, the only political consideration involved. Adopters must be able to maintain a relationship with the natural parents. Minimally, they have to hope that the natural parents will abide by the 'adoption' agreement. If only for this reason, there is no point in 'adopting' from people who might become overt enemies.

All of Yap is divided into two *baan* 'sides'. This division has complex political implications, but on Rumung Island it separates villages into two groups with different relations to higher villages elsewhere. Repeated skirmishes—as opposed to wars arranged by the highest chiefs of Yap—occurred between villages of the two sides before the German occupation in 1895, and rivalry remains. Among 'adoptions' initiated from about 1860 to the present, we know of only one case on Rumung—dating from 1940—which was across 'sides'.

The difficulty of negotiation would seem to account for the restriction of most 'adoption' transactions to a small local area. From our Rumung data and fragmentary evidence from elsewhere on Yap, we can estimate that traditionally about 60 percent of 'adoption' transactions were in one village, 15 percent between nearby villages immediately superordinate and subordinate to each other politically—and hence on the same side—and most of the remainder between persons recognizing distant ties but who lived in widely separated villages. Since 1940, these three classes of 'adoptions' seem to have occurred with equal frequency. 'Adoptions' since 1940 have also included situations such as Case 4 in which distant adopter-natural parent relations do not imply that the parties are of about the same rank. As our evidence is from limited informant reports and genealogies, these estimates are only rough approximations.

The interplay of the Yapese stress on worth and the negotiation of 'adoption' can also lead to serial 'adoption'. Yapese term this practice 'new' and 'bad'; it has occurred a few times in the lowest-ranking villages. In the case we know, a child was 'adopted' from a village slightly higher in rank than the adopters' village and then 'adopted' again by covillagers of the adopters. The adopters had children born to them after the 'adoption' and others asked for them. To keep the adopted child while giving away children who are initially less worthy would be 'greedy', but giving away the adopted child would alienate only people with whom the adopters need not interact daily. Informants claimed that whatever gain was involved in having a higher-ranking child was not lost to the initial

adopters when they gave the child away. Instead, rank distinctions within the village were obliterated, and the village as a whole profited.

In serial 'adoption', village solidarity outweighs the responsibilities owed by adopters to natural parents. In this disapproved form, 'adoption' is negotiated in terms of rank and is uncertain because people can neither count on nor enforce a desired turn of events. In this light, it is not an exceptional case but only an extreme one.

## **ESTATE TIES**

Thus far we have concentrated on transactions labeled as 'adoption' or 'help', discussing other situations only to highlight features shared by such transactions. The data that have been presented show that a child's life situation, the exclusivity of the adopter-child tie, and the relations between sets of parents may vary greatly within the classes of 'adoption' and 'help'. The transactions involve continuing activity and are hence open to change. Since the classes of transaction are separable in terms of relations among elders, and not among parents alone, it seems worthwhile to ask whether they are extraordinary in this regard: Is a wider range of relationships than 'adoption' and 'help' contingent in definition on the activities of elders?

The greatest rewards and sanctions that adopters offer to children involve the estate. Children get land and eventual authority or are denied land and names. This is true for all parents, just as the reasons offered for 'adoption' are the reasons given for desiring any child: people want children as workers, heirs, and—a reason rarely mentioned—good company.

Whether or not a child is 'adopted' or 'helped', responsibility for and interest in it may be widely shared. Similarly, other people may replace a child's parents in caring for it. The most striking case occurs when a man becomes 'father' to his dead brother's children. Children may live with any member of their natal estate or with close relatives without much comment being generated. On the other hand, struggle over a child's loyalties, refusals to care for a child, and, on the child's part, attempts to cultivate the favors of people of different estates are noted and discussed. Yapanese seem to be far more concerned in all relationships with the level of conflict and concurrence than with the punctilio of who feeds whom or whether every detail of a relationship is executed properly.

As estate affairs, 'adoption' and 'help' can affect large sets of relationships. Once again, this is not distinctive of 'adoption' and 'help' alone. In recounting Case 2, we mentioned K's questionable second 'adoption'. He was chosen as probable heir to lands in his village. He called on his relation to the old woman who holds these lands in naming

his daughter for her. Matters did not end there, for the old woman seemed to have become dissatisfied with him. She arranged that a child in K's village bear the name of one of her ancestors and gave land to this boy. K can no longer be certain of gaining any of her land.

Since naming and gifts of land may be used to affect the behavior of a number of people at the same time, no relation is absolute and certain during its existence. Elders may search for new dependents, and workers may search for estates with less demanding elders. The large majority of people do not desert their estates, and few elders cut workers off from estates entirely. Nonetheless, such extreme acts occasionally do happen. Workers who desert their elders find others to give them use of land while elders who exile people from their land cannot be overruled by people outside of the estate—the possibility that a relationship may be broken can never be ruled out.

The uncertainty of relationships to estates is indirectly demonstrated by the way people's actual relationships to estates diverge from Yapese ideology. In theory, people have a tie to an estate, are given a name from the estate, work on the estate lands, come to exercise estate authority, and finally become ghosts of the estate. It is possible to measure several features of estate relationships that indicate that succession to roles may be much more complex. In these marked relations, there is public recognition of the possibility of a person's changing estate allegiance or having multiple estate ties or having a less worthy tie to the estate than others.<sup>10</sup>

A person may receive a name given by elders which is not held by his estate. Elders may further distinguish names from the highest-ranking lands, names previously held by people who died there, and names from less worthy lands. Such naming may be cited to account for the choice of an heir or the division of property among heirs. For any person whose name is not from the highest lands of the estate, the name may serve to justify lack of authority or limited access to land.<sup>11</sup>

An individual may have a recognized relationship to persons outside his estate that may or may not result in inheritance or 'help'. As in Case 9, the relation is seen as consisting in more than care, coresidence, or genealogical connection. We also include relations marked by gifts of land in this category.

A survey of two villages was taken in 1972. The sample included only persons for whom evidence on naming and current estate relationships could be obtained. As a result, women from distant villages and village women who had married elsewhere are excluded from the sample.

We found that a substantial part of the population was involved in marked relations: 'adoption', 'help', marked naming, or extra-estate ties. Six people were in two different types of marked relation. The distribution of types of marked relation was as follows:

current 'adoption'	10
current 'help'	1
marked naming	15
extra-'estate' ties	11

Table 21 shows the incidence of all marked relations in the sample. It indicates that not only are 'estate' relations open to change but that such change is publicly recognized in many cases.

In the long term, persons in marked relations seem no more likely than others to change estates or to get land from more than one estate. The data in table 21 do not show which relationships are manipulated so much as they show the extent to which manipulations of estate relations may be visible at one time.

The incidence of marked relations results from the actions taken by elders to maintain the whole set of relationships in an estate in order to 'keep the estate together'. Naming provides the most salient examples of the opportunity of adjusting relationships with the use of a marked relation. When elders meet to choose a name, each may wish a particular name given, and the name may be chosen only after lengthy discussion. Elders may simply want to name a child, but they may also wish to commemorate particular ghosts, to see a name given from particular lands, to honor someone inside or outside the estate, to threaten others with the possibility of disinheritance, or to oppose other elders. Conversely, of course, elders may accede to others' wishes for various reasons. Even unexceptional naming may be the outcome of compromise or attempts to reorder all relationships in the estate (Kirkpatrick 1973: 24, 27-29). Elders may also change a person's name to indicate disapproval of his conduct.

TABLE 21. Incidence of Marked Relations

Age	No. of Persons in Sample Population	No. of Persons in Marked Relations*	Percent of Persons in Marked Relations
0-14	41	18	43.9
15-29	12	3	25.0
30-49	13	8	61.5
50-69	8	2	25.0
70 +	4	0	0
ALL AGES	78	31	39.7

SOURCE: Authors' survey, 1972.

\*Each relation is listed only once, according to the age of the junior party: adoptee, person 'helped', and so on.

Marked relations point to past manipulations and the possibility of future adjustments in estate relations. Even where they are absent, relationships need not be certain; it is perhaps only with the dead that Yapese can be sure that a relationship stays constant.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have reported Yapese 'adoption' beliefs and practices and placed them in the contexts of cultural understandings of relationship and the variety of parent-child relationships found on Yap. A cultural model of the nature, process, and outcome of 'adoption' meshes with general cultural premises. Shared expectations of 'adoption' outcomes allow for tensions in adoptive relations and predict the emergence of these tensions in such a way as to reinforce the central cultural premises.

The continuity of the estate as discrete, the importance of estate rank and personal worth, and a stress on work as overshadowing consanguineal ties are affirmed in the model of 'adoption'. 'Adoption' is seen as less desirable than birth as a mode of recruitment because of the complexity of the relations established. Any hint that birth confers a more rightful claim to parental attention or estate resources than 'adoption' is avoided; on the contrary, adopters are seen as exemplary parents because of their work to obtain and raise a child.

The cultural model of 'adoption' is not of great help in predicting the details of actual relationships. In labeling particular relationships, Yapese distinguish between types of control and cooperation among estate elders. They thereby acknowledge that parent-child relationships are mutable and contingent on wider sets of relations, while stressing the continuity of the estate.

There are important similarities in Yapese understandings of 'adoption' in general and of particular 'adoption' transactions. In both, relationships depend on activity to maintain them. Among people's motivations, the search for land and workers for the estate is given high priority.

Data on parent-child relationships show the Yapese stress on the contingent quality of relationships to be well placed. Transactions are not neatly classifiable in terms of the rights and duties of parenthood. 'Adoption', 'help', and other relationships differ not in the allocation of rights and duties so much as in *the possibilities for reallocating them*. In 'adoption', all parties involved may work to dissolve or develop ties

between the child and his various parents; in 'help' one group of elders can impose its will, but the child usually has its own resources. While young, the child is dependent on those who 'help' him, but later he usually can act independently of their wishes. The prevalence of marked relations demonstrates the frequency with which Yapese act within particular relationships to affect other ones.

Because of the conditional quality of relations, 'adoption' and 'help' should be seen as types of transaction between estates. They cannot be explained without taking into account the interdependent relationships of the various estate members.

We do not mean to imply that an ethnography of transactions in the rights and duties of parenthood on Yap would be impossible or fruitless. Any study concerned *only* with rights and duties would, however, fail to pinpoint the sorts of distinctions being made when Yapese speak of 'adoption' or 'parents'. In a similar vein, it might be difficult to decide whether 'help' establishes jural relationships. For instance, we are far from sure whether any rights and duties were involved in Case 10. The old woman might scold the girl who cared for her, she might threaten not to give the girl land, but neither of them had any definite duty to the other beyond the duty of any person to aid those who are 'destitute'.

Goodenough's (1970b) focus on the transactional component of 'adoption' is to the point, but the Yapese evidence indicates that our concepts of what is transacted need to be broadened or redirected. It may be more useful, for instance, to concentrate on the cultural allocation of freedom of action among the parties to transactions. Such an emphasis would give due regard for both contingency in relationships and factors such as rank that help to shape different possibilities for and outcomes of transactions for people in different positions in the social order.

Goodenough (1970b: 409-410) reproached the authors of chapters in *Adoption in Eastern Oceania* for failing to investigate the entire set of transactions in parenthood in particular societies. Such an investigation would supersede externally derived contrasts between, say, adoption and birth, bringing out the features that distinguish types of relationship in societies. Our criticism is parallel: Goodenough's emphasis on rights and duties obscures the fact that decisions not to exercise rights, the scope of duties imposed on persons due to relationships outside the parent-child link, and other factors may be the basis for important cultural discriminations. Such factors, which might be handled as strategies with regard to rights and duties, cannot be treated as secondary to other distinctive features—rights and duties in the abstract—if a comparative perspective on transactions in parenthood is to be achieved.

In conclusion, an explanation for the separation between Yapese accounts of 'adoption' and of particular transactions may be suggested. Yapese tend to view villages, estates, and persons atomistically, attributing rank and other characteristics to large and small units. For

instance, serial 'adoption' takes its name from a village where, we were assured, other despicable acts are normal. An estate's generosity may be apparent to people in its history of land dealings. The estate that people strive to continue is not simply a group but a unique entity, and a person's own individuality tends to be seen in terms of the way he adapts his estate's qualities.

It seems reasonable that a general explanation of Yapese 'adoption' that would account for most cases would be unsatisfactory in Yapese culture. Such an understanding would ignore the histories of work that distinguish each estate and person. Instead of treating estates and people as reducible to simple formulations, Yapese recognize a general code for conduct that cannot be applied point for point in every case. The symbolic order that is incorporated in shared understandings of 'adoption' is highly flexible and can be accommodated to many contexts without necessarily contradicting its central premises. Yapese do not say one thing and do another in 'adoption' so much as they do the same thing in two different modalities. They perform a complex cultural task while concurrently preserving the estate as a continuing individual unit and the person as an independent actor.

## NOTES

Our fieldwork was conducted in 1972. We concentrated on the higher-ranking villages of Rumung municipality at the north of Yap. Generalization from our data to the situations of people living permanently near the town of Colonia or people low in the traditional ranking system may be hazardous. We also rely on census data collected by Edward Hunt and Nathaniel Kidder as part of the Peabody Museum expedition of 1947-1948 and processed by David M. Schneider with the assistance of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. We would like to acknowledge the financial support of the National Institute of Mental Health through its grant to Schneider as well as support by the Lichtstern Fund of the Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago. Comments on earlier drafts by Ivan Brady, David Labby, Susan Montague, and David M. Schneider have improved this chapter considerably.

1. The term *leader* is used here to refer to the man who inherits the highest-ranking lands of the estate. This does not gloss a Yapese term, although 'landholder', 'elder', and 'chief' may be used to designate such a man. A case illustrates the complexity of relations among elders in an estate: A man told his younger brother to 'speak for the land' in village affairs even though they were on bad terms. The younger brother hence acted as chief while the elder brother was the actual leader in their estate. The elder brother gave all the estate lands except for one outlying plot to his son. The new leader allowed his father's brother to continue to act in village

affairs even though the old man held no land in the village. The old man had no recourse in the matter of inheritance: this is an estate matter and no appeal to norms or village authorities can be used to overrule the decision of a leader.

2. For much greater detail on these matters, see Lingenfelter (1971) and Schneider (1953, 1955, 1957, 1962).
3. The 1972 survey was made to obtain the data shown in Table 21. For more data and analysis on Yapese population problems, see Hunt, Kidder, and Schneider (1954) and Underwood (1973). The contemporary population increase may be partly attributed to improved medical control over disease, especially low-grade infections that the abovementioned authors see as important in explaining depopulation on Yap.
4. We use the phrase *social identity* in a wider sense than Goodenough (1965) does. He defines *social identity* with regard to rights and duties in relationships, while we wish to leave open the possibility that “James of Riy village” may be a social identity, ideally definable in terms of all of James’s relationships to his associates (see also Brady, chapters 1 and 7).
5. Labby (1971, 1972) and Schneider (1968) disagree in evaluating the evidence on whether coitus is a necessary condition for conception in Yapese theory. Our data offer some support for both views. Yapese have been mocked by Germans and Japanese on account of belief in estate ghosts. Most Yapese today are Roman Catholic. We see no way to be certain whether or not Yapese today hold traditional beliefs about conception: Schneider’s informants at first told him “that the Japanese had explained everything, and that they were now quite well informed on the whole subject” (1968b: 127).
6. The giving of stone money to ghosts in ‘prayer’ is not diacritical of parenthood to our knowledge; it is a leader’s task to ‘pray’ to the ghosts, and we suspect that the leader of the child’s estate rather than the child’s father, usually gives the stone money.
7. *Pof* in the second usage differs phonemically from the other cases in northern Yapese dialects. The third etymological explanation ignores the syntactic difference between *pof e bitir* ‘to adopt a child’ and *pof e chaanem* ‘to relieve that person (of a burden)’. Such facts do not detract from the value of the analogies in explaining matters to foreigners and children.
8. The distinction between ‘adoption’ and ‘help’ was taken as categorical by a small group of informants. Others from northern Yap also made this contrast in speaking of actual cases. Very few people recognized ‘help’ as a clearly defined type of relationship although there was wide agreement in the villages we studied as to whether someone had ‘adopted’ or ‘helped’ a child. Many contrasted the two in discussing cases and agreed in the labeling of particular cases. Awareness of this distinction is not great and answers to questions such as “What types of adoption are there?” vary widely. For example, some of Lingenfelter’s informants clearly separated

'adoption' from *cowiy* 'plucking' and discussed cases of 'plucking' (1971). All our informants—and some of his—agreed that 'plucking' no longer exists, and few people understand the distinction. They said that people 'plucked' the children of close relatives and 'adopted' from others or vice versa but disagreed as to precisely who might 'pluck' whose child. Müller (1918) lists *pof* and *cowiy* as distinguishing between 'adoption' of younger and older children. Informants were uncertain or disagreed on the details of 'plucking' or 'raising' children, while they knew the cultural model of 'adoption' well.

9. In Case 11, A2 was in a situation that is often unfortunate: he was the child of an unwed mother. Such a child may be called 'child of a thief' since the mother does not marry and earn lands that the child might inherit. In this particular case, we do not think this factor is of importance. None of A2's 'grandparents' had other heirs. A2 was born at a time of declining population, and we suspect that all children were welcome, however irregular the way in which they came to estates.
10. The phrase *marked relations* is used in analogy to marking theory in linguistics. Informants expected that marked relations needed particular explanations in terms of personalities or histories of interaction. An exemplary contrast is provided by Cases 9 and 11; Case 11 was seen as unexceptionable, needing no comment in particular, while Case 9 occasioned smiles and lengthy explanations. This is congruent with Greenberg's suggestion that an unmarked category is analogous to the Gestalt "ground," with its character of being taken for granted (1966: 94).

We do not claim that what we call "marked relations" are precisely equivalent to examples of marking in phonology, syntax, or semantics. We simply note that "marked relations" give evidence of complex strategies at work—and often in conflict—in the senior generation of an estate. If we take the exercise of strategies for affecting multiple relationships as the property underlying all "marked relations," our usage is in line with Jakobson's definition: "The general meaning of a marked category states the presence of a certain property A; the general meaning of the corresponding unmarked category states nothing about the presence of A and is used chiefly but not exclusively to indicate the absence of A" (1957: 5).
11. We do not count namings as marked if informants were uncertain from which lands a name came. An elder could, however, easily change his mind and decide that a name came from unimportant land; it is unlikely that his statement would be disputed. Elders are the keepers of historical knowledge in their estates, so they can manipulate the provenance of a name. For further data on elders' control and use of information about names and land histories, see Kirkpatrick (1973).

