

Females Bear Men, Land and Etereke : Paternal Nurture and Symbolic Female Roles on Truk

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Females Bear Men, Land and *Eterekes*: Paternal Nurture and Symbolic Female Roles on Truk

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Although the societies on the islands of Truk are matrilineal, the responsibility of nurturing children falls on the fathers. The notion of nurturing by the father cannot, however, be understood as springing simply from the natural love of the parent for his child. It is an integral part of all social processes on Truk, in the wider sense. To begin with, the nurturing of the child by the father contains aspects of what are termed "nurturant" acts directed toward matrilineal groups. These actions are different from those directed toward the father's group. Moreover, they are a part of the affinal exchange between the groups of the father and the mother. Secondly, the concept of the father's obligation toward his child is associated with the fundamental obligations of any ordinary male. Concrete examples of the concept of nurturer may include the behavior of a chief toward his people, or perhaps the actions a matrilineal group leader might direct toward its members under the aegis of the group.

Finally, male responsibilities of this type are easier to understand in contrast with symbolic female roles used to identify and perpetuate the group by symbolically reproducing the people, blood and land (food) of the matrilineal group. On the matter of group to group interchange, conditions of identity and sharing confirmed by symbolic female roles within the group are recreated in relationships with other groups through nurturing male roles. These roles serve, if only temporarily, to confirm conditions of identity and sharing, exactly as might be done between the members of one group and another.

Keywords: affinal nurture, sharing foods, exchange, landownership, Truk Islands.

INTRODUCTION

For many years, anthropologists have viewed research on the symbolic meaning and the consumption, exchange and production of food as a vital area of study. A large number of ethnographies on these themes have been in existence for some time. In past research, I have focused on the symbolic significance of food in those areas of the Truk group where I have been involved in the recording of verbal abuses, folktales, and human relationships [KAWAI 1978, 1979]. In this paper I intend not

only to reopen the matter of recording the human relationships surrounding food on Truk, but also to seek clarification of the ethical foundations supporting them. For this purpose, I begin by comparing of two works that differ from the standpoint of theory.

The first is a comparative study by Rubel and Rosman of various tribes in Papua-New Guinea. The nurturing behavior of parent toward child and the incest taboo were explained as follows:

Goods and services exchanged with affines in this case will be different from goods and services exchanged with exchange partners. Rules may be present which parallel the incest taboo and compel individuals to exchange goods that they are forbidden to consume themselves. Some of the societies which we shall consider forbid individuals from eating the the pigs and yams which they themselves have raised [RUBEL and ROSMAN 1978: 5].

This is to say, they explain that exchange arrangements with other groups for crops and animals occur for the same reasons as it is forbidden to have sexual relationships with the daughters they have raised. That means that just as one must give away one's own daughter he has raised, so a person is forbidden to eat the crops and animals that he has raised. Rather, he must present them to another group. The mental processes undergone to explain exchange arrangements with other groups as having evolved from prohibitions of personal consumption within one's own group lie at the foundation of Lévi-Strauss's theory of structuralism.

Apart from differences in theoretical standpoint, Clay theorizes in a similar fashion on the social significance of exchange and nurturing practices of the Mandak tribe on New Ireland [CLAY 1977]. The Mandak believe it is the obligation of the mother to nurture the young. Nurturing, however, is not always limited to the behavior parents exhibit toward their children within a group. Clay has the following to say in this regard:

Within the world of human relationships, the Mandak person engages in another dialectic of inclusion/exclusion of nurturing interactions. The moral force of nurturing relationships is expanded and contracted to form, maintain and change the social boundaries of political factions, hamlets, villages and language groups [CLAY 1977: 152].

In other words, nurturing exceeds the confines of family among the Mandak people and is a cultural symbol whose purpose is to represent various economic, political and social relationships with other groups.

The contrasting conclusions of Rubel and Rosman, and Clay are interesting because the areas with which they are both concerned are geographically contiguous. For Rubel and Rosman nurturing is in-group behavior in which parent provide children with food and/or care. Exchange/nurturing relationships—*e.g.*, having to renounce the daughters they have brought up or the livestock and foodstuffs they have raised and turn them over to other groups—are areas of association which are separate and distinct depending on whether they are in-group or out-group. For

Clay, nurturing is a cultural symbol that is extended to other groups and exchanged with other separate groups. The domains of exchange and nurturing therefore overlap.

It is impossible to judge with any degree of precision whether the difference between them stems from a simple disparity in theoretical standpoint or from a substantial variance of data.¹⁾ An explication of this would be interesting, but it is more important for present purposes to see how both models can be used to interpret data from Truk.

The social organization of Truk clearly resembles that of the Mandak. The kinship system on Truk, like that of the Mandak, is organized matrilineally and the transfer of "nurture" is an important cultural symbol in all areas of social association (*vide infra*). As Marshall has already convincingly shown, "nurture is the nature of kinship" on Truk [MARSHALL 1977] regardless of whether it is within the group or outside it. At the level of ethnography, then, the Rubel and Rosman's model is somewhat difficult to accept.²⁾

This is not to say that I am convinced of the complete suitability of Clay's Mandak model for the interpretation of data from Truk. It probably goes without saying that the system on Truk varies in several ways from that of the Mandak. For instance, the Truk people think that the duty of caring for children rests with the father (paternal nurture), a matter I will discuss in more detail later. This Trukese belief contrasts with the concept of maternal nurture held by the Mandak; indeed, it is the very opposite.

Bearing this fundamental contrast in mind, let us first examine gift exchanges among affinal groups, which Clay has labeled "affinal nurture", and compare them with affinal exchanges of the Trukese. Following this, I attempt to elucidate the nature of the ethical basis peculiar to the culture on Truk which underlies these affinal exchange relationships by contrasting with symbolic female roles within the group. Analysis of this ethic will also provide us with the meaning of Truk's "flexible" matrilineal system.

"AFFINAL NURTURE"

According to tradition, Moen, presently the economic and political center of all islands, was the cradle of Trukese culture. Many centuries ago, twelve ancestors

- 1) The social importance of the duty to nurture in Oceania has been emphasized time and again. On this point, A. Strathern suggested that in the cultural domain, kinship in the New Guinea Highlands "is a combination of filiative roles and ideas based on upbringing, nurturance, and consumption of food." [STRATHERN 1973: 29]
- 2) I do not suggest that this is universal throughout Micronesia. On Yap [LABBY 1976b] and Ponape [FISCHER, WARD and WARD 1976] islands near Truk, it is reported there is a notion of incest as cannibalism. That concept is used to prohibit incest and the eating of human flesh within the group and is thus related more closely to Rosman and Rubel's chart than to Clay's. This matter is itself quite interesting, but must be left to another occasion.

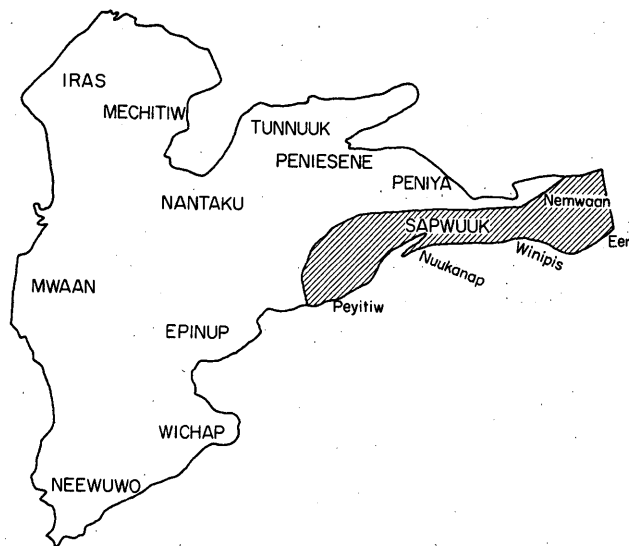


Figure 1. Place Names of Moen Island

of the Trukese crossed from the island of Kusaie to Moen, settling first in the village of Mechitiw. As their numbers increased, their descendants gradually spread through the remainder of the atoll and to the outlying islands. The legend says that the descendants of the peoples who departed from Moen will one day return. This legend is told as a *jitang*, precious knowledge to which only the chief is privy, even today. After World War II, Moen became the political and economic center. Some people view the inflow of job-seekers from the other islands as a fulfillment of the ancient prophecies. Along the coast east of Mechitiw is an area known as Sapwuuk, which is subdivided into the five regions of Nemwaan, Eer, Winipis, Nuukanap and Peyitiw. The last of these is uninhabited (Fig. 1).

Sapwuuk itself, however, is not a unified political unit. Each of its four inhabited districts are political units of comparatively high autonomy controlled by a chief. Eer district, the subject of this study, has a population of about four hundreds. Many adult males work in government or area business. This is not to say, however, that they have forsaken altogether traditional trades or modes of living. On the contrary, established cultural patterns continue to thrive. The descendants of the twelve apical ancestors referred to above have been formed into matri-groups (*eyinang*) whose genealogical connections are not clear. These *eyinang* have branched out into still smaller groups (*eterekes*). Accordingly, in any given district, *eterekes* of different lineages exist side by side. These *eterekes* are the basic unit of Trukese affinal exchange.

Kisekiis, defined as "receiving gifts from an affine", is without a doubt the folk

model for Trukese affinal exchanges. This practice commences within a month after betrothal. When they betroth, *kisan*, gifts, are exchanged between and among the male and female sides. Prepared breadfruit from the male side and fish from the female side are presented as *kisan*.

One type of *kisekiis* is the exchange arrangements between siblings-in-law of the same sex (*kiisey*). The foodstuffs involved in these exchanges are spoken of as *kiis*. Goodenough focuses on *kiis* in his well-known ethnographical description of the island of Romonum, explaining that:

Kiis may be defined as that form of gift in which the giver retains no right to the property given and in which the recipient assumes no obligation [GOODENOUGH 1951: 49].

This fails to distinguish between *kiis* and *kiisey*. Strictly speaking, *kiisey*, the relational concept of exchanges between affines, and *kiis*, objects of value exchanged in the context of *kiisey*, should be differentiated.

Ngeriyy is another variety of *kisekiis*. It means "to give something to a person" and allows for unrestricted mutual access of products of the land within affine groups: a sort of right to plunder. This is the first right that becomes operable between the affines of a married couple after the birth of a child. That is, although certain affine relationships may exist prior to the birth of the first child, it is necessary to obtain the other's permission before taking crops belonging to the other's group. The right of *ngeriyy*, which commences with the child's birth, continues indefinitely even though a couple might divorce. Residents rationalize the reasons for *ngeriyy* between *eterekes* of the wife and matri-group *eterekes* of the husband, as described below.

(1) The rationale supporting *ngeriyy* on the part of the father's *eterekes* (*i.e.*, access to the land of the members of the mother's *eterekes*) is that children are part of the mother's *eterekes* because of the principle of matrilineal descent. Children, therefore, are raised on crops obtained from land of the mother's *eterekes*. However, on various occasions members of the father's *eterekes* as well as the father himself give food to these children. In other words, children are provided with food for their nurturing from both the maternal and paternal sides of their families. Members of the mother's *eterekes* regard food given by members of the father's *eterekes* to children of their own group as a return courtesy for the plunder rights (*ngeriyy*) extended to members of the *eterekes* of the children's father.

(2) The rationale supporting *ngeriyy* on the part of the mother's *eterekes* (*i.e.*, access to the land of the father's *eterekes*) is that fathers are given the public duty of nurturing their own children. Children, however, belong to the mother's group and are nourished with the food of the mother's group. Therefore, members of the father's *eterekes* consider *ngeriyy* to be a right provided by members of the mother's *eterekes* of the children whom they look after in return for their services.

Truk's ideological rule of residence is uxorilocal, but for various reasons virilocal residences are very much in evidence. In such situations the children, although part of the mother's *eterekes*, live with their father. Since they are also quite often

subsisting on the food of the father's *eterekes*, the reasoning set forth in (1) above usually applies.

The right of plunder is intimately connected with the right to visit the homes of affines and be fed by them. The license to visit freely at the homes of affinal relations for the purpose of eating is also conferred on children possessing common blood with *eterekes* of the husband and wife at birth. From the viewpoint of the children, this means that they are permitted to eat freely at the *eterekes* of both the mother and the father. This visiting right is in principle extended to include the *eterekes* of the four grandparents on both the father and mother's side. In practice, however, as the relationships become more distant, both *ngeriyy* and this visiting right fall increasingly into disuse. The sphere of relations which includes the sharing of food at visits for that purpose and the *ngeriyy* network is called *máaráári*.

In summary, *kisekiis* refers to affinal exchanges between the wife's group and the husband's group. However, it is based on consanguineous relationships. This is clear from the fact that it commences with the birth of the first child sharing the blood lines of both groups. From this practice, there develop a network of food exchanges between affinal groups, similar to what Clay calls "affinal nurture" [CLAY 1977]. The father's group and the mother's group provide food to children who share the blood lines of both groups and raise these children through, so to speak, the process of communal upbringing. Accordingly, people in both groups recognize the concept of repayment for food provided to children which the other group is expected to look after. In other words, both *ngeriyy* and the right to visit and eat are mutually recognized by both groups and are conceived of as the paying off nurturing debts.

I wish to make clear that this type of nurturing custom is a basic folk pattern found in the exchange relationships among the Trukese. Thus, given the existence of two groups, A and B, a gift of food from either A to B or B to A is thought of as a kind of nurturant act. In fact it is widely known that such nurturant acts are a characteristic feature of the entire Trukese culture, even though this behavior is as yet incompletely understood. As Marshall put it:

Trukese kinsmen are those who share such things as land, food, labor, residence, support and (not necessarily) genetic substance and who choose mutually to acknowledge each other as kin. In the Trukese view, those who nurture one another through acts of sharing validate their natural kinship or become created kinsmen as a consequence of these nurturant acts. It follows from this that persons who do not continue to nurture each other may cease to recognize each other as kin [MARSHALL 1977: 650-651].

This may also apply to *kisekiis* as between equals in an affinal group. Just as gifts of food for the benefit of close kin are nurturant acts, there are likely to be similar types of nurturant acts performed between affinal groups. Let us examine this point next.

THE EXCHANGE OF NURTURANT ACTS

During the period of this investigation a certain male informant was working as an elementary school teacher, for which he received a salary of \$90 every two weeks. Out of that salary, however, he spent \$60 on community activities, such as Christmas celebrations, weddings and the purchase of food for the congregation of the local Christian church. He paid another \$14 to his siblings, father-in-law and mother-in-law, or used it for presents to siblings of his wife. Had he failed to turn over part of his salary to his wife's kinsmen, he would probably have been socially censured. His behavior was clearly founded on traditional custom. Since food can ordinarily be purchased with cash, money and food are spoken of synonymously. This explains why his action may be thought of as a variant of the traditional custom of giving food to affinal groups.

By chance, one of the children of this informant was born prematurely. Since his wife, however, did not know how to care for a premature infant her husband's mother, *i.e.*, the child's paternal grandmother, who had had experience in such things, brought this baby up as her own, on coconuts and milk. In such a case it should have followed that this child would revert to membership into the *eterekes* of the father's mother (the grandmother). However, at the father's request the child remained in the natural mother's *eterekes*. Nevertheless, the grandmother and the child (grandmother and grandchild) eat and sleep together. The child is close to the grandmother and although he has been asked to come and eat with his true mother, he refuses the invitation with such excuses as "I'd be embarrassed to," or "It wouldn't suit my palate."

One day, the child's mother had a spat with her husband, and went home to her parents. (In virilocal marriages, this happens from time to time since the wife lives in her husband's house.) Following custom, the child's grandmother, that is, the woman's mother-in-law, went to fetch her, but the wife refused to return. The grandmother explained that she felt terribly let down, even betrayed, at this time since she had been "raising the wife's baby." In her reasoning, the child of her son's wife belonged to another *eterekes*. They were, nevertheless, living with her son and furthermore she was raising the grandchild as if it were her own. At the bottom of the grandmother's feeling was the daughter-in-law's failure to show proper gratitude.

It would be difficult to classify this example as a true case of adoption. It does, however, exhibit certain traits in common with adoption. Adoption is called *naawnnawn* and means "dining together", "sleeping together" or "residing together"—in short, "living with one another". In the case of adoption, however, nurturant acts and cooperative living between the adopting and adopted sides are socially recognized, and a sort of kinship is established. The same may be said of affineal relationships of the husband and wife. Mutually provided care and foodstuffs are exchanges of nurturant acts and behavior which strengthens relationships.

I should point out here that these exchanges of nurturant acts among groups are recognized even at the local group level.

I will cite another example from the stories that have been told to me. There once was a man, formerly a missionary who originally came from a Pugous *eterekes*, in Eer, who prepared a will just prior to his death, indicating that he wished to associate with a certain village on the island of Tol in the same atoll. In June, 1977 people of his Pugous *eterekes* went to that island and were received cordially. On August 28 of the same year, people from Tol Island made a visit to repay their obligations to Sapwuuk. People of both islands sat up late feasting and chatting together. Afterwards, they spent the night together at the meeting house. The banquet was sponsored by the Pugous *eterekes*, but all residents of the Eer district lent a hand. Residents of the other districts on Sapwuuk also cooperated by bringing cooking utensils and food. However, it is said that there was a contrary opinion, to the effect that those who received the people from the island of Tol should be limited to "members of the Pugous *eterekes* who had gone there and eaten food so that from then on only Pugous could give them (the people from Tol) food."

This pattern of the respective groups staying together and exchanging food (meals) locally between groups, is sanctioned in the same way as the feasts that are held on Sapwuuk. Such events are called *wuwa* on Truk. There are two varieties, related to ritualized food presentation. One of these is the ritual gift of first fruits offered to sisters of a father from the children of her brothers. The other is ritualized gift giving of first fruits to the chief from his people. The former I shall speak of in more detail below. As for the latter, the important first fruits of the harvest are breadfruits or yams. In certain cases bananas, tapioca or other foods are substituted. After this ritual has been performed the people are free to prepare and harvest the remainder of the crop. Crops that have been gathered and arranged in front of the chief in the *wuwa* ceremony are exchanged with similar crops prepared for a chief in a neighboring village. Redistribution is carried out through the chief. Sapwuuk, which is composed of four inhabited districts, is divided into two exchange pairs: Nemwaan/Eer and Winipis/Nuukanap. (The other exchange pairs on Moen are Peniya/Peniesene, Tunnuuk/Mechitiw, Iras/Mwaan, Neewuwo/Wichap all of which are geographically adjacent to each other [Fig. 1].)

I have taken a somewhat tortuous path to reach this point, but what is important to recall is that where food (meals) exchanges exist among actual groups, such as mentioned above, the event takes place at an overnight together in the meeting house. Staying overnight and dining together in the meeting house is clearly an experiment for confirmation of a mutual identity with the other local group. As one Truk informant mentioned, "We reach the point where it can be said that we are *pwiiipwi* (siblings) if we are living together." Thus, even though they are not related by blood, they become kinsmen when they eat the same foods and live in the same homestead. Living together and sharing the same food, called *naawmnaawn*, is a condition of the relationship between husband and wife, as well as of the relationship among near kinsmen. We can thus regard staying together and the sharing of

food with members of a different local group at a feast accompanied by an exchange of food as an attempt to confirm a mutual identity.

THE MEANING OF PATERNAL NURTURING

One may question why formal responsibility for the nurturing of children rests with the father, even though the kinship system on Truk is matrilineal. Let us then next direct our attention to areas of overlap between the father's responsibilities toward his children and the models for the offering of nurturant acts from group A to group B.

First of all, it must be recalled that the obligation of a father to nurture his children is a notion fundamental to Trukese culture. This situation has been summarized by R. G. Goodenough as follows:

Trukese preoccupation with food and eating is well documented. Perhaps not so clearly stated in the literature is a related and intense concentration on problems of nurture—taking care of and being cared for by others. The cultural ideal of the good parent is at the core of this preoccupation. The good parent is one who not only feeds his children well, but also protects them against evil spirits, takes care of them when they are sick, and imparts his own knowledge to them. This ideal extends to the Trukese people's religious conceptions of the good spirits and their political conception of the good chief. A good spirit "will provide the living with food, teach them new lore, and generally look after their health and welfare" (Goodenough 1963: 134). The chief's role is similarly seen as a nurturing one; the good chief is expected to be a father to his people, allocating food and protecting them against their enemies. Indeed, the word for chief, *sómwoon*, seems originally to have meant 'head father'. Nurturing roles are valued in virtually all societies, but the nurturing adult, particularly the nurturing male, is an especially strong cultural ideal among the people of Romonum. [GOODENOUGH 1970: 331]

It can be said that social relationships of a vertical nature—between beneficent spirits and humans, between a chief and his followers, between parent and child—are revealed in the cultural concept of strong nurturing.

It can be further stated that these relationships have come to embody something in the way of an all-pervasive value structure in Trukese culture. At present, the upbringing of children is the responsibility of both the father and mother. In fact, one informant mentioned that "a father and a mother are people who give food to a child." Nevertheless, the ultimate responsibility for nurturing the child rests with the father. This is explained by saying that "even though the mother nurses the child, if the father does not provide for the mother she cannot give milk."

However if the father and child, adhere to the rule of matrilineal descent they belong to separate matrilineal groups. Therefore the relationship of a father and child is not simply a personal sort of patrification, but an intermediary association of the connection between the father's *eterekes* and the child's *eterekes*. Children

possess a particular relationship with their father and all of their father's *eterekes*. This is called *éfékúr* of the father's group. The link that symbolizes the positioning of this *éfékúr* is probably the *wuwa* ritual, to which I alluded earlier. In this ceremony first fruits are presented to sisters of the father from the *éfékúr*. *Efékúr* gather these fruits from lands of the father's sisters and present them along with something else, which either includes copra or fish. This act of gift giving is called *agey*, "take it!" and may be the converse of *niffang*, which is offered at the birth rite of a first child. *Niffang* is a presentation of fish or breadfruit to children of the brother (*éfékúr*) from his sisters.³⁾

This term *niffang* is also used in reference to gifts of real property from father to child. On examination of all 45 tracts of land in the Eer district (all of which had been claimed), I determined that 14 were lands belonging to *eterekes*, 17 were plots a person had obtained from his father, 8 were plots people had received from their mothers, and 5 had been purchased. There was only one about which the people seemed to be unclear. As for the 8 obtained from mothers, there would have certainly been some which were given to the children by the *niffang* transfer from father to mother. Thus we may think of tracts of land handed over to children by their fathers as being more numerous than is at first apparent.

According to the Trukese, lands given by males to their wives and children are called *niffang*, but they should more properly be termed *niwinin túmúnúw*. *Niwinin* carries the implication of things "sold" or a "favor returned", and *túmúnúw* the sense of "kindness" rendered toward another. In other words *niffang* is a present given by a man in return for care rendered during a period when his wife was ill. Then again it may be that a present of land is made to a wife or child on the basis of a feeling which makes the father think that the real property owned by his son is so insignificant that he feels embarrassed.

Because the matrilineal system on Truk possesses this characteristic of "flexibility"—allowing for gifts of land from father to child—it has given rise to considerable debate among anthropologists. The views of G. P. Murdock and W. H. Goodenough are typical. Although they recognize that a patrilineal system of inheritance also exists, they maintain that "the inheritance of real property is exclusively matrilineal in principle" [MURDOCK and GOODENOUGH 1965: 225]. They dispute the idea that the existence of matrilineal inheritance is central to Trukese descent. Similarly, W. H. Goodenough says, "Perhaps the best translation of term *jéfëkyr (éfékúr)* is 'heir'" [GOODENOUGH 1955: 92], and strongly implies the role of *éfékúr* as potential heirs of the father's *eterekes*.⁴⁾

Both researchers give considerable attention to inheritance and the ownership of real property in this way and construe the matrilineal system of Truk as having

3) There was an old person known as Esopw. The story has it that he was given this name because the things he received from his father's sisters at his birthday celebration only amounted to half a portion, *esopw*. The things that were passed from the *éfékúr* to the father's sisters, *agey*, also came out in the telling.

flexible land rights either for the purpose of adapting to unstable ecological conditions [GOODENOUGH 1955] or as part of the process of evolution leading to some sort of high level corporate matrilineal descent group [MURDOCK and GOODENOUGH 1965]. If we bear in mind classical bilateral and unilateral modes, such thinking forces us to comprehend the obligations and flexible rights of a Trukese father in relation to his children or a gray area lying somewhere between these two models. This theory clearly resembles the concept of complementary filiation, which so-called descent theorists would place in the area of unilineal descent.

It may at first appear feasible to conceive of the relationship between a father and his child (*éfékúr*) on Truk as a kind of complementary filiation. When the nature of *éfékúr* is examined, however, it becomes evident that the matter is rather more complex than that.

First, according to one informant, *éfékúr* denotes "a person belonging simultaneously both to the father's and the mother's *etereke*s." This statement is clearly in accord with the concept of blood relationships among the Trukese.

The basic relationship in the Truk matri-group (*futuk* [meaning flesh]) is the bond either between mother and child or the mother and other siblings. Further siblings succeed to the property interests of the mother's matri-group (*etereke*s) which is the main unit for jointly held tenure. Wherever the mother-child association is expressed as a bond of *futuk*, maternal substance, the relationship of father and child is spoken of in terms of the resemblance in facial appearance. Ordinarily, when a child is born, such expressions as "*wuupun woomw Wakin*" ("It looks like Wakin") or "*naawn Nishi*" ("That's Nishi's child") will be uttered. (No significance is attached to the two personal names used in these examples; they were merely the names of the husband and wife informants interviewed). It is commonly thought a child may resemble its father, but such verbal expressions are never made with regard to the mother.

Trukese also receive their blood (*cha*) through their mother, but it is also said that children inherit *cha* from their father. In these two cases the actual significance of the term *cha* differs. A Trukese proverb says *chú chok cha*, literally "food is the sole source of strength". However, this saying has a particular metaphorical meaning. *Chú* means bone (*chiú*) in a metaphorical sense and in some contexts *cha* may mean semen. Thus the proverb may be interpreted as meaning "[Father's] semen is the source of [his children's] bones." Accordingly, this saying is usually uttered when in the company of people of the same sex and would be considered impolite in a mixed group. Similarly, whenever an inquiry such as "whose child is this?", is made by a third party, the child's mother will usually reply, "this child was conceived by the *cha* of so-and-so." On Truk it is said the *éfékúr* receive

4) They also probably see the custom of Trukese fathers presenting gifts to their sons as the result of the attempts by the Japanese and Germans, who formerly ruled these areas, to change from matrilineal to patrilineal succession by a legal process [MURDOCK 1965: 226].

life because they have obtained the father's *chaa* (or seed). This is used to explain why the duty of assisting with various ceremonies or helping the congregation of the father's *eterekes* falls on the *éfékúr*. This notion, that is, dual affiliation of the *éfékúr* toward both the maternal and paternal *eterekes*, although differentiated, corresponds to the Trukese bilateral idea of consanguinity.

The second problematical area which should be considered is the theory of extension which places the individual front and center while maintaining the concept of complementary filiation. We usually think of individuals as being in the midst of relationships, and once born recipients of both their mother's and father's blood. This is because such a cultural premise exists in our own culture and, for whatever reason, it is simpler for us to conceive of the bloodlines within society as centering on the individual and radiating outwards to the mother's and father's side. As noted earlier, there are elements in Trukese culture too that trace bloodlines from individuals to fathers and mothers.

However, the meaning of the father's *chaa* and mother's *chaa* are not in accord with this concept. First, this differentiated character of *chaa* suggests that the placement of the "individual" in the family hierarchy is not a matter of bloodlines. Second, we see that it is the custom of the Truk people to place siblings in the center.⁵⁾ Their rationalization for this is as follows:

Trukese think of the blood of *feefiney*, sisters, as being stronger than that of *mwongey* (brothers). Children of brothers are called *éfékúr* and children of sisters *naa ri nuuk*. In other words, the blood of *naa ri nuuk* is stronger than that of *éfékúr* (Fig. 2).

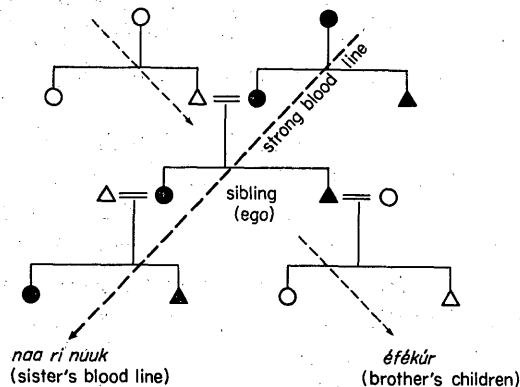


Figure 2.

Note: Blood lines focused on a sibling group (the black symbols show members of the same matri-group)

5) Recently considerable attention has been given to the siblingship of Oceania. The articles contained in *Siblingship in Oceania* (1981), Marshall (ed.), are especially noteworthy. I, too, have written previously on the importance of siblingship in Micronesia [KAWAI 1974]. The data in the present article were gathered in 1977.

As stated previously and as may be seen in the figure, both the blood of brothers (*éfékúr*) which is inherited by children, and the more potent blood inherited from the female line of their *naa ri nuuk* sisters, is spoken of as *chaa*. The *chaa*, semen or seed, transmitted from brothers to their children, however, is not always as important as the other *chaa*, i.e., the blood representing the sisters and the relationship of descendants in the female line. Furthermore, *chaa* transmitted to children from brothers is not as clearly demarcated as that of the *chaa* of the sisters in the female line. People are generally aware only of the brotherly *chaa* that has passed to the latest generation.

It might well be appropriate to designate this rule of blood line as being connected to land succession practices.⁶⁾ That is to say, the maternal line of the *eterekes*, the main land owning unit, is repeated in the strong blood line of the *naa ri nuuk*, the female line of the sisters. Just as the blood/flesh shared by a *naa ri nuuk* line is symbolic of the identity of the *eterekes*, land shared and inherited by the matrilineal group is symbolic of the presence of the *eterekes*. In contrast, transfer of land by *niffang* from father to son corresponds to the *éfékúr* relationship of children. In other words, just as semen or seed is transmitted from brothers to *éfékúr* it is permissible for brothers to present land to their children through *niffang*. In cases where *éfékúr* and *naa ri nuuk* differ even though the latter may be the same unit line

6) The fine example shown in their concept of blood and land passing not only from the mother's side but also from the father's is probably an instance of a marriage of second cousin conforming to the rule: "do not alienate land too far." It is said this marriage was performed to avoid the breaking up of *eterekes* land. They think of an ideal succession of land in the following terms:

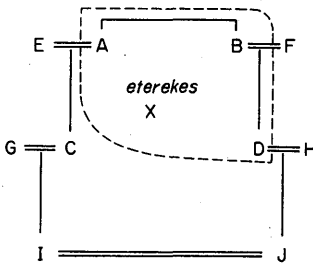


Figure 3. A Second Cousin Marriage Associated with Land Inheritance

In the Fig. 3 the genders of A~J may be initially ignored. They are all regarded as being capable of inheriting land from both their father and mother. Thus C can receive land from E and A and D from B and F. By the same token, I can acquire land from G and C and J from D and H. In this case since A and B, members of *eterekes* X, do not wish to break up the property of their group, it would be permissible for second cousins having blood in common with them to marry. Alternately, I and J could marry. Even though they are not members of *eterekes* X, they do have blood relationships in common so, from the viewpoint of X, the land is not being alienated to as uncomfortably remote degree. This is not to say that such marriages are particularly frequent, although in many areas of Truk they constitute a marriage scheme that is by no means rare.

within the *eterekes*, the crucial factor is the point where the former intersects cross-unit lines of other *eterekes*.

We are generally inclined to see nurturing behavior as a type of behavior occurring within the family, *i.e.*, children caring for the elderly, parents caring for children, etc. As we have seen, however, on Truk the expression of nurturant acts is in the context of relationships with the father's groups. In other words, nurturing behavior on the part of a Trukese father for his child must not be interpreted as merely the loving relationship of father and child, but rather as a social act which possesses facets of gift giving behavior of a man belonging to one group directed towards his wife and children who belong to another group. Nurturant acts by the father towards his children, or *niffang*, is a part of the exchange and gift giving process with other groups.

On the basis of this concept we may conjecture that horizontal nurturing relationships, exhibited in affinal practices such as *kisekiis*, and vertical nurturing relationships between father and child which were briefly examined above (a chief's nurturing of his people, a spirit's relationship to humans), are both founded on the same rationale. Both are attempts to establish mutual identity between one group and another through the exchange or presentation of gifts. These acts possess the characteristic of being within the conscious sphere of nurturing acts which A exhibits toward B. The person performing this act may be a father exhibiting this behavior toward his child, the chief of one local group toward another group, or on occasion a chief toward his people. These male nurturer roles may be more clearly understood when they are contrasted with the symbolic roles of the female. This will become more apparent in the following section.

SYMBOLIC ROLES OF FEMALES IN THE *ETEREKES*

In April or May 1977 an incident occurred in which a person from the island of Tol was stabbed to death by someone from Udot. This angered the residents of Tol and they gathered near the Continental Hotel on Moen. Meanwhile residents of Udot prepared to fight back. They boarded their boats and assembled near the Bay View Hotel, also on Moen. A row was averted, it is said, through the mediating efforts of a man who was the principal officer of the government of Truk.

An old informant (64 years of age at the time) hails from Tol, but has no wife or children. At present he resides on Moen, but should a quarrel arise between Tol and Moen, he will cast his lot with those from Tol. The reason for this he said is because, "the fact of birth prevails and so we must remain loyal to the island on which we were born and raised."

This episode suggests several things. Most important has to do with a rule of belonging related to "the fact of birth"; blood is associated with the island where one first saw the light of day. In the Trukese language *fénú*, the land belonging to *eterekes*, also means a whole island. Island affiliation is prescribed in accordance

with the fact of having been born and raised on the island of the mother's *eterekes* and mother's island.

I asked the old man that which island his son would take sides, supposing he had a son and an incident such as the one described above occurred between Tol and Moen. He answered that in this case as his son was born and raised on the mother's island, Moen, he would take the side of Moen. Therefore, we may conclude that attachment to the island where members of one's group live and blood connections with members of the mother's group exist are exceedingly difficult to sever. We may regard land and blood as not only binding in the symbolic sense but also as being at the core of *eterekes*. This is because:

The land of Truk is divided into various types of holdings which include *fénú pwínúei* (a husband's land) or *fénú eterekes* (*eterekes* land). Of these, *eterekes* land in particular is held in joint tenure by the members of the group. The permanence of the *eterekes* and the permanency of the land exist in an indivisible relationship. Partition of the land is therefore thought of as being equivalent to dissolution of the *eterekes*. Man and land comprise a unity, so to speak, and because of this men exist along with the land. Conversely, humans who hold land jointly are kinsmen. The relationship of men and land is fundamental to Trukese culture. As one informant aptly put it, "we are men because we hold land. If we have no land we are like birds with no branches to rest on." Land provides men with food and is the foundation of life. It is the basis of all human activity. Men, on the other hand, till the soil, manage it and pass it on from one generation to the next.

Women serve as the symbolical medium between men and the land. The women of Truk become aware of this at an early age by means of customary phrases drilled into them by the older generation. Each of these phrases depicts the vital symbolic role women play in sustaining and carrying on the *eterekes*:

chon owupwu fénú feefin

(Women bear people on the land.)

feefin re owupwu fénú

(Women give birth to all the land.)

eu fénú ren feefin

(Women hold a tract of land.)

feefin owupwu eterekes

(Women bear the *eterekes*.)

Feefin stands for womankind and *fénú* the land. What is apparent on examination of these sayings is that with the use of *owupwu*, "giving birth to", similar concepts of regeneration are expressed with regard to both the land and the human procreation of the *eterekes*, or matrilineal group. In the thinking of the Trukese, not only are women the source of humans, but they are also the bearers of the land and the *eterekes*. In this light it is simply not possible to conceive of property in the context of human ownership—*i.e.*, the inalienable possession of humans or assets possessed by human by legal right. In symbolic terms, land is women and women is land and that is all there is to it.

As is widely acknowledged, the rule of residence on Truk is uxorilocal. Virilocal marriage do occasionally occur for various reasons but, even if the bride moves to the home of her husband, she must return to the *eterekes* of her mother once she has born children. We may regard this custom too as being allied with the rationale of the oral folklore which describes woman as giving birth both to the land and the *eterekes*. A woman must bear her children, so to speak, on her land.

That the *eterekes* is the primary unit for holding of land is frequently evident in Trukese sayings where the idea of *eyinang* or *eterekes* are said to be *eu*: i.e., they are one. This was discussed previously. The maternal line of the *eterekes* overlaps the *naa ri nuuk* line or the female line of sisters, and *nuuk* means abdomen, stomach or center. They were born from the stomach of the same woman.

This is further evidenced by the fact that *chaa* (blood) is inherited by that line and includes the concept of food. Joint possession of blood and food describes the identity of the *eterekes*. Marshall has reported that land at the level of the subclan or lineage on Namoluk is called *mōngō chu*, or "the source of food" [MARSHALL 1976: 38]. The two apparently symbolic connections between land and food and land and blood are perhaps universal to all the regions of Truk. In both cases the two elements are tied by the female bonds of the matrilineal line, and, as been stated, may be contrasted to the role of the male as nurturant.

The local group which acts as the political unit of the residents of a district at first sight seems to be completely different from the *eterekes* described above. This is because, in anthropological circles, blood relations based on kin group and the local group making up the district unit have traditionally been considered to be mutually exclusive. On Truk, however, such distinctions are vague.

First, both the chief of the local group and the male chief of the *eterekes* not only support social order within the group, they both serve as representatives of their group in political affairs and in dealings with other groups. They are both concerned with the welfare and health of the members of their group and are obliged to provide protection against enemies. The chief is, in essence, a father (nurturer), to all the members of the group. Second, as is evident from the statement of the residents that "sisters of the chief, *feefiney*, never leave by getting married", the chief's sisters are important entities for the chief. His sisters, like the sisters of the leader of the *eterekes*, symbolize the source of human life and the permanence of land within the local group.

This may be the reason that sisters of a chief must dwell on the land on which they were born, even after marriage. In one sense the *eterekes* can be said to be a replica of the local group. Because the role of the chief of the local group and the role of the chief of the *eterekes* are similarly contrasted with the symbolic roles of women as sisters.

CONCLUSIONS

As I stated at the outset, Clay's view of affinal nurture is obviously helpful in

analyzing data from Truk. It is also possible to place exchange associations between affine groups on Truk in the nurture-symbol-exchange relation category. However, we must depart from Clay's model when we come to the matter of exchange agreements between affine groups. In this regard Clay contrasts the two culturally acknowledged differences between reciprocal interaction in the communication of Mandak symbolization as "sharing" and "exchanging":

Sharing entails interactions in which through the prestation of things, persons communicate relationships which are of one kind. Sharing does not endanger indebtedness in either of the persons participating. Exchanging, by contrast, is an interaction which expresses 'differences' between persons and groups who are giving and receiving things [CLAY 1977: 102].

On Truk the distinction between sharing and exchanging as proposed by Clay is relatively meaningless in terms of affinal exchanges. By contrasting the male social function of performing exchanges with the symbolic role of females within the group we begin to perceive a greater significance:

Trukese affinal exchanges serve to reduce or remove the boundaries that people naturally tend to establish. Creating and sustaining a mutual identity is therefore conceived of and embodied in the performance of an exchange. Here we should look once again at the fact that the sharing of blood, food, or land is a quality of the affinal group. In *kesekiis*, a gift giving relationships between affines, the exchange arrangements first commence when the communal upbringing of children who share the bloodlines of both the mother's and father's is begun.

Similarly, a man and a woman, who come from different *eterekes*, live from the outset in the same place, eat the same things, and become husband and wife. It is tantamount to divorce if they separate. When foodstuffs like copra or breadfruit are exchanged mutually between the wife's and husband's sides the conditions for the mutual sharing of food are established. The acts of staying together, eating together and exchanging food between persons in separate local groups is also regarded in the same way.

The conditions of sharing and confirming mutual identity within groups established through the symbolic roles of woman are duplicated in inter-group relationships through the nurturer/protector roles played by men.

Schieffelin concluded from his research on the Kaluli, in Papua-New Guinea that sharing creates categories, while exchange, is used to identify separately existing categories: *i.e.*, behavior creating conditions conducive to sharing [SCHIEFFELIN 1980]. He believes the former is based on the theory of "taboo" and the latter on "magic." Employing Schieffelin's idea, I would venture to say that Trukese exchange behavior or sharing with another group is a "magical" rite.

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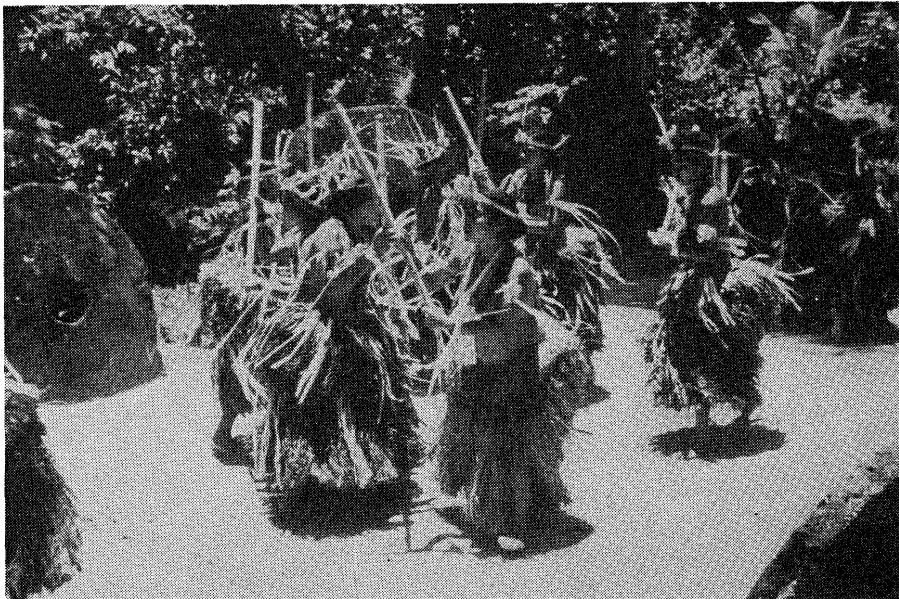
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Chapter III

Socio-Cultural Aspects of Chieftainship



Women's Dance, Yap Island

