

## Political Structure and Formation of Communication Channels on Yap Island : A Case Study of the Fanif District

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## Political Structure and Formation of Communication Channels on Yap Island: A Case Study of the Fanif District

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The primary unit in Yap society is the estate group, called *tabnaw*. "Power" resides in the land of the *tabnaw*, while man merely serves as the "voices" of the *tabnaw*. This article constructs a definite system based on the ranked *tabnaw*. But, the relationships among *tabnaw* and the positions and authority held by various *tabnaw*, are conceived as the product of historical processes. That is, present non-historical social relationships are based on historical social relationships. If one observes closely the process of formation and organization of the traditional communication channels that exist between *tabnaws* or villages, it becomes apparent that there is a highly volatile property for change within the seemingly rigid social framework.

In Yapese society, the various elements and groups are linked by networks maintained by the villages. Those networks, termed *tha'*, are channels through which the "voice" of the *tabnaw* (land) is transmitted. These networks were established by historical decisions made among the *pilung* (chief). In particular wars contribute greatly to the creation of the new *tha'* and encourage the reorganization of relationships among villages.

**Keywords:** estate group, village organization, political leadership, communication network, historical legend.

### INTRODUCTION

The political structure of Yapese society is complex. Here, one finds village organizations based on various combinations of functional positions and age rankings; local organizations divided into two opposing alliances (*baan*—side), each with different political roles; and communication channels both between villages and between estate units. This paper describes and examines the political structures encompassing the estate units, the villages and the districts; the leadership structure prevailing on the whole island; and the structural framework, process of formation and organization of the traditional communication channels that exist between villages, based on an analysis of cases found in the Fanif district of northeastern Yap Island.

In Yap, the political system is based on the authority and positions attached to specific tracts of land and on the ranking of the estate units. However, this traditional political organization is perceived to be the product of a historical process which has undergone various modifications through time. Thus, present day non-historical social relationships are considered to be the result of patterns which have developed through history. If one observes closely what the Yapese people mean by "history" when they speak about the present order, it becomes apparent that there is a highly volatile propensity for change within the seemingly rigid social framework.

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE VILLAGE

Yap Island is comprised of more than a hundred villages in total. The basic structural element of the village is the *tabnaw* (*ta*—one, *binaw*—land, a tract of land), termed here the estate unit. The various *tabnaw* in a village, which are known by names attached to their stone foundations (*dayif*), are the primary units for the keeping and utilization of food resources, as well as being the fundamental political units. Scattered plots of land for specific root crops such as taro and yam, for fruit trees such as coconut and breadfruit, and for all food crops are attached to each *tabnaw*, fishing grounds are also allocated to them. The *tabnaw* are independent estate units for holding food resources.

*Tabnaw* is also the basic political unit. The governing principle of the Yapese political system may be summed up in the phrase "land is power". All *tabnaw* (to be more accurate, all *dayif*) have a name. They are ranked and assigned specific roles. By inheriting a certain *tabnaw* or by becoming the elder (*matam*) representing a *tabnaw*, an individual acquires the positions and prerogatives connected with it. In Yapese society, land is the principal determinant of political power. The elder who holds land "speaks" the "voice of the land" (*lungun*). Political office is regarded as an appendage of the land itself. And it is through the heirs to these plots of land that the "voice of the land" speaks. It is the holder of land (*tafen*) or his representative (*matam*) who performs the society's politically significant functions. For instance, the elder who holds the highest ranking *tabnaw* in the village becomes the village chief.

In Yap, the village chief or the holder of the *tabnaw* with the higher ranking office or authority is termed *pilung*. This word means "many voices" (*pii*—many, *lung*—voice). The source of the *pilung*'s authority is said to be *gil'lungun* (*gil*—a fixed location). In other words, land is the source of authority and man is its voices (*lungun*). The orders (*lungun*) of the *pilung* are always transmitted in "spoken" form.

The village (*binaw*) is composed of a number of *tabnaw*, and usually divided into two or more sections. These sections are called *gile'ch e binaw* or *buguruy e binaw*. Each section is further organized into two *baa'raba e binaw* in the village. The elder of the highest-ranking *tabnaw* in each section becomes the chief of that section, controlling (*suwon*) the land and its inhabitants. He is the responsible

authority for the section. He "speaks" for the land and its inhabitants within the boundaries governed by the voice of the *tabnaw* (*lungun*). The people act collectively only when the *pilung* gathers them together and "speaks" to them. The voice of the *pilung* (*lungun*) both represents and directs the collective will. In Yapese society, the "sitting" position is the posture of authority. The chief "sits down" and "speaks", while the people "stand" and act. The controlling rights held by the *pilung* are called *suwon*. The word *suwon* includes within it the meaning of making those who are seated stand up. It is also said that, until the *pilung* speaks, the people are asleep and immobile.

The people live and work on the *pilung*'s land, consulting "my *pilung*" (*pilung rog*) or the "*pilung* of the land" (*pilung ko but*) on various matters and carry on their lives under the grace of his control. In return, when trouble arises, the *pilung* shows his concern for and provides protection to the people he governs. He has the power to confiscate land and exile those who do not abide by the voice of the *pilung* (*lungun*). In the Yapese ideological framework authority in the village is represented by three *pilung* holding different positions, namely: *pilibithil ko binaw* (old man of the village), *pilung ko binaw* (village chief) and *langan pagal* (mouth of chief young man). These positions, which are attached to specific *tabnaw*, are filled either by the heir of such *tabnaw* or its representative (*matam*).

The role of the *pilibithil ko binaw* (old man of the village, "sitting chief") is to "sit" and listen to the suggestions and plans of others and to decide whether or not these contravene established customs or previous decisions made by the *pilung* (*yarean*). No plan may be executed without his consent. The *pilung ko binaw* controls the land and food in the village. He plans public projects such as the building of meeting places and the reclamation of taro fields, ritual exchanges (*mitemit*) and wars, and assumes leadership over the internal and external affairs of the village. The *langan pagal* (chief young man) is the representative of the young men (*pagal*), the most productive group of the male population in the village. He carries out plans as instructed by the village chief or deals with matters as specified by the old man of the village.

Speaking plainly, the "old man of the village" does little more than "sit", listening and giving his consent or disapproval; the "village chief" works out and presents plans; while the "chief young man" mobilizes the menfolk for action. The relationship of these three corresponds to that of grandfather, father and son in the *tabnaw*. The oldest person in the *tabnaw* embodies the historically developed relationships just as the "old man of the village" embodies the accumulated traditional relationships in the village. The second oldest person in the *tabnaw* takes charge of matters involving the authority of the *tabnaw* just as the "village chief" represents the authority of the land of the village. Young men in the *tabnaw* carry out the plans of the father in the same way that the "chief young man" undertakes the plans of the village as the representative of the labor force.

Beneath the three leaders mentioned above, other *tabnaw* are designated various positions. In the upper echelon of the village, the holders of seven specific *tabnaw*,

called *chas*, form a council. In addition, other *tabnaw* are assigned various positions, such as the leader of fishing activities, *pilung ko fita* (*fit*a—fishing), practitioners of magic (*tamerong*), the leader of women (*suwon e pin*), the intermediary between the magicians and the village chief (*nganini*), messengers (*molog*), etc. Furthermore, there is a *langan pagal* (chief young man) beneath each *pilung* of the *gile'ch e binaw*.

In the traditional Yapese political system, each person is given the right to assume certain political and religious roles according to the rank of the *tabnaw* he holds and his seniority. As mentioned before, authority and position are attached to specific tracts of land, and the system is composed of various *tabnaw* with different rankings. Positions within the village are determined not by individual qualifications but by the ranking of the *tabnaw* one represents. A specific tract of land which gives a holder such a authority is termed *tafen e pilung*.

In present day Yapese society, a chronic decrease in population has resulted in the *tabnaw* becoming concentrated in the hands of a small number of people. Not infrequently, one individual will hold a number of different positions, a situation which adds considerable complexity to the structure. Moreover, there are many holders of land who also control a number of *tabnaw* in other villages. Since the voice of the *pilung* of the village (*lungun*) also bears on these *tabnaw*, the holders of the *tabnaw* are obliged to perform the duties assigned to them. On the other hand they are also able to enjoy the privileges attached to the *tabnaw* they hold in other villages. For instance, the holder of the *tabnaw* with the authority of the *pilung* in another village has a say in the village council (*puruy*) and is recognized as the *pilung* of that village.

The authority attached to each *tabnaw* in the village is observed to have been determined mainly by the historical position of each land unit (for instance, during the opening up of the village). However, there are also positions gained as a result of war. When the political fabric of Yapese society is examined in more depth, it is clear that great changes have occurred over time. Within the apparently rigid framework of Yapese political life, there are undercurrents of change and renewal.

## POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN RANG VILLAGE, FANIF DISTRICT

The Fanif district, which faces the Philippine Sea on the northeast, is comprised of the following villages stretching inland from the coast: Ateliew, Gurong, Rang, Gilfith, Yiin and Runu'w. The Fanif district is under the authority of the *bulche* (highest ranking village) of Gilfith village, though it is said that formerly Rang village was the highest ranking. In Rang village today there are only five *tabnaw* left, but vestiges of 50 *tabnaw* have been found. In the past the village was divided into four *gile'ch e binaw* with the following ranking: (1) Matedowor, (2) Echro, (3) Fulang, (4) Kegluuf. (1), (3) and (2), (4) belonged respectively to two different *baa'raba e binaw*.

The village chief of Rang is the holder of the highest ranking Guchol estate

and is called *pilung ko binaw* (village chief) or *pilung niga* (elder chief). The representative of the second ranking Apirgog estate consults the magician (*tamerong*) at the sacred site (*taliew*) of Molway village on the occasion of each month's festival and reports to the village head of Gilfith village, who belongs to the Warag'eche estate. He acts as the intermediary for the magician and is called *bireibav* or *nganini*.

The position of *langan pagal*, which rules over the village menfolk, was previously held by the Echro estate, while that of the *suwon e pin*, which rules over the women, belonged to the Fulang estate. These two formerly controlled the Fulang and the Echro sections, respectively. However, this situation changed during the war between Rang and Gilfith villages. Since these two *tabnaw* were then inhabited by people from Gilfith village, the *pilung* of the village discussed the matter and decided to kill or drive out the residents in those *tabnaw* and transfer the "voice" (*lungun*) of the *tabnaw* to other *tabnaw*. That is, they transferred the position of *langan pagal* and the "voice" which rules the Echro section attached to the Echro estate to the Tayib estate and moved the position of *suwon e pin*, the control of a portion of the sea adjoining the village, and the right to rule over Fulang section from the Fulang estate to the newly created Funagluul estate in Matedowor section. This *tabnaw* was also made responsible for overseeing the common properties (*tatibigili ko pilung*, *tati*—safeguard, *bigili*—a place for safekeeping) of the village.

Furthermore, since the war, it has become uncommon for women of Rang village to marry into the higher ranking villages of Gilfith and Okaw. It is considered more appropriate to marry men from the villages of Ateliew, Yiin or Gurong which are similar in rank. Today, the Funagluul estate rules the Fulang and Matedowor sections; the Galuuf estate rules the Kegluf section and the Tayib estate rules the Echro section, which has been renamed Braifos (Fig. 1).

Other *tabnaw* which hold the "voice" of *pilung* are the Tabaw estate, which holds the right to control collective fishing activities (*suwon e ruwol*: *ruwol*—collective fishing); two blocks formed by the Tabaw, Fite'eche estates and the Apirgog, Guchol estates, respectively, take charge of the canoes (*muw*) used for *athing* fishing on the deep seas, and are called *pilung ko muw ko fita nu athing*; specific *tabnaw* in charge of

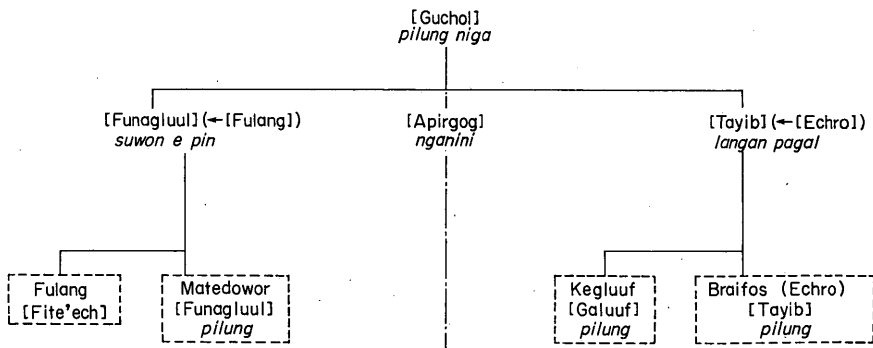


Figure 1. The Political Structure of Rang Village, the Fanif District

the sea area of the village, with the Galuuf estate ruling over the sand (*iv*) on the *ei* (dry portions of the seashore) and the Funagluul and Tayib estates ruling over the *naa'* (reef) and the *rayem* (sea area that remain partly underwater during low tide).

The sea controlled by the Tayib estate was formerly attached to the Fite'yaan estate. At that time, the *tabnaw* of the Funagluul estate was managed by Irai. After Irai's death, his wife Burgmet was still living in the *tabnaw*. A daughter of a sister of Irai's father, Rutenag, was the *mafen* of the *tabnaw* who protected and supervised the inhabitants of the *tabnaw*. Now, when the villagers fished, a portion of their catch (*leg*) is given as the rightful share to this particular *tabnaw*. When Burgmet failed to give the *mafen*, Rutenag, her share, Rutenag became angry and took away the "voice" of *suwon e daav* (right to control the sea) from the *tabnaw*. (Rutenag was a "sibling" of the *pilung* in Gilfith Village, that was the reason she possessed such power.) Rikin of the Tayib estate took care of Rutenag during her last years. Rikin managed to gain control of the *suwon e daav* by offering *bul* (a kind of valuable), stone money, *rang* (turmeric powder), and shell money in exchange. (This practice is called *pulidaay*; the sea, *daay*, which has been suspended is lifted down, *puli*.) Thus, the "voice" of *suwon e daay* was transferred to the Tayib estate and where it remains to this day.

Apart from the above *tafen e pilung* (*tabnaw* holding the voice of the *pilung*), the following chart shows the *tabnaw* which have the possibility of advancing to the highest rank (*munthing*) in the eating grade system (called *yagum*: this system is a social and religious grouping of men with express reference to religious rituals, obtaining and eating of food, and the concomitant taboos accompanying rank and age). The Bile'aaw estate is the *tamerong ni mulul* (magician of war), whereas the Bileganow estate is the magician of *athing* fishing, *tamerong ni athing* (Table 1).

Table 1. Position in Rang Village

Ranking	Name of <i>Tabnaw</i>	Position	Holder
1	Guchol	<i>pilung ko binaw</i>	Wa'ath
2	Apirgog	<i>bireibav</i>	Gilrun
3	Galuuf	<i>pilung</i> of Kegluf	Mangbuchan
4	Tayib	<i>langan pagal</i> <i>pilung</i> of Echro <i>suwon e daay</i>	Mangbuchan
5	Fanagluul	<i>suwon e pin</i> <i>tatibigili ko pilung</i>	Wa'ath
6	Tabaw	<i>suwon e ruwol</i>	Mangbuchan
7	Fite'ech	<i>suwon e athing</i>	Gimen (Gilfith)
7	Bile'aaw	<i>tamerong ni mulul</i>	Rubmow (Gilfith)
7	Bileganow	<i>tamerong ni athing</i>	Mangbuchan
7	Flitechiiig		Bapilung (Ateliew)
7	Eluul		Wa'ath
7	Fite'yaan		Matmak (Ateliew)
7	Fitedoo		Wa'ath

As stated earlier, the *tabnaw* is the basic political unit of Yapese society. "Power" resides in the land of the *tabnaw*, while man merely serves as the voice of the *tabnaw*. However, as shown by cases in Rang village, the voices of the *tabnaw* (*lungun*) are not fixed but have a certain mobility. The relationships among *tabnaw* and the positions and authority held by various *tabnaw* in the village are the product of historical processes. The past relationships of people connected to the various *tabnaw* have determined the present position of these *tabnaw*. That is, present non-historical social relationships are based on historical relationships, or what the Yapese call *yarean*. The word "yarean" refers to traditional customs and previous decisions made by the *pilung*. It can be conceived as the sum total of customs and decisions stored in the local society's memory. When faced with any type of problem, Yapese look for a solution in accordance with the *yarean* (i.e., searching for *yarean*). In Yap, an incisive knowledge of traditional customs and past decisions is the mark of a "man" (*pumo'on*).

## POLITICAL STRUCTURE AMONG THE VILLAGES

Hierarchical ranking is the guiding principle of Yapese society. Each village is assigned a specific place on a scale of eight "steps of village" (*bethal e binaw*). Those belonging to the upper five ranks are called *pilung* or *arow*, whereas those in the lower three ranks are called *pimilingay* or *milingay* (*mili*—to escape, *ngay*—to that direction). The presence or absence of land holdings differentiates the *arow* villages from the *milingay* villages. Specific *tabnaw* in *arow* villages are entitled to the right to control (*suwon*) *milingay* villages. They protect the *tabnaw* of *milingay* villages under the control of their *suwon* or voice (*lungun*) and are responsible for the livelihood of their inhabitants. The difference between these two categories of villages is also shown in the concept of *tabgul* (purity) and *taay* (impurity). The land and people of *milingay* villages are considered *taay*.

Thus, all villages on Yap Island occupy a specific position according to their *thal* ("step", ranking). The villages are also members of two opposing alliances (*baan*—side) which are unrelated to geographical location. These two alliances are called *baan pilung* and *baan pagal*, respectively. The highest ranking village in the *baan pilung* union is called *bulche'*, while that in the *baan pagal* union is called *ulun*. Both exercise leadership rights in their respective alliances. Villages of other

Table 2. The *thal* ("steps", ranking) of Villages

<i>plung/tabgul</i>	<i>bulche'</i> / <i>ulun</i> <i>mathban/tathban</i> <i>dorchig</i>
<i>pimilingay/taay</i>	<i>milingay ni arow</i> <i>milingay</i> <i>yagug (kaan)</i>



rankings are also members of either side (*baan*). The first place in the *thal* (ranking) is comprised of *bulche'* and *ulun*; the second place of *mathban* and *tathban*; while the third place is called *dorchig*. *Milingay* is divided into three classes (Table 2). On the other hand, all villages in Yap were originally organized into eight *nug* (nets), districts, with the first ranking village in each district (*bulche'* or *ulun*) as leader (Figure 2). These *nug* and *thal* are by no means static, but have undergone historical changes.

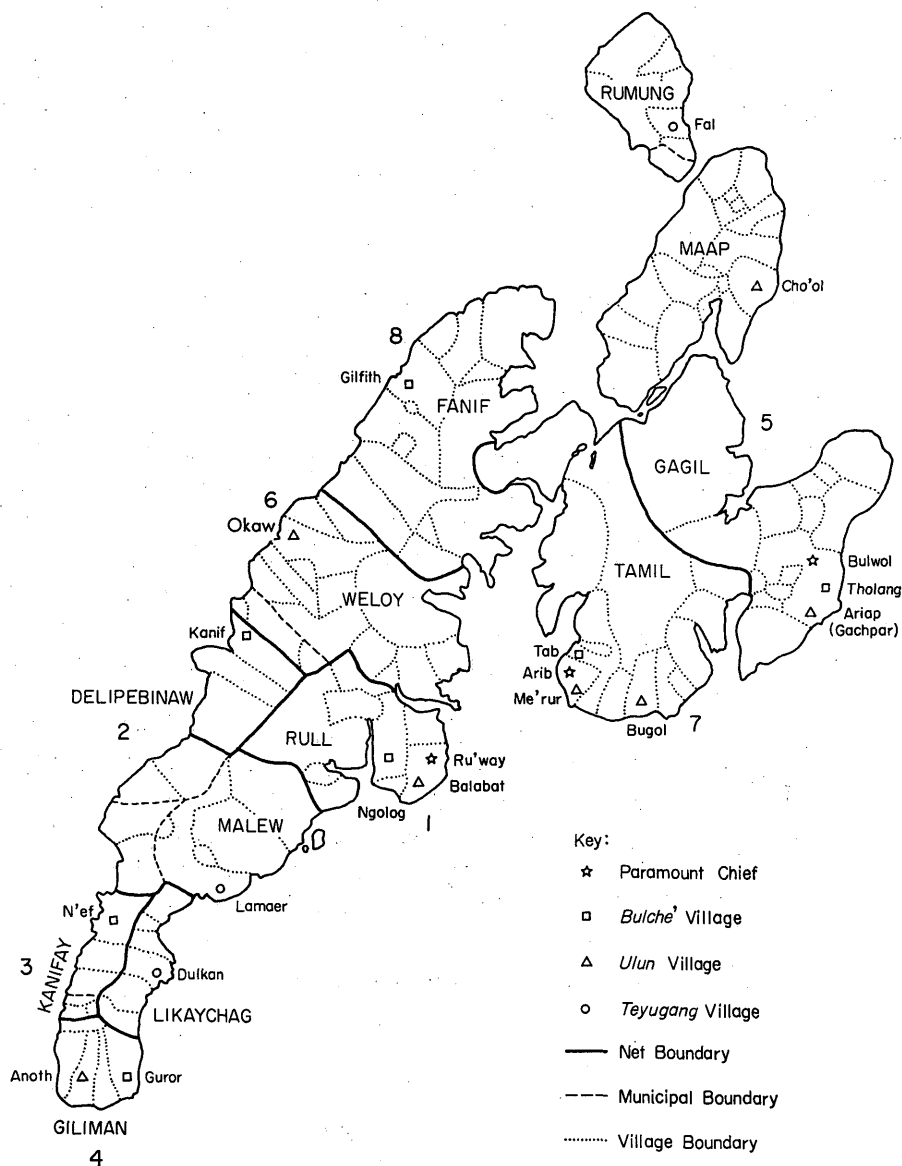


Figure 2. *Nug* and *bulche'*/*ulun*. Source: [LINGENFELTER 1975: 135]

In the following section, first a general description of the political structure will be given, followed by a more detailed discussion.

1. On Yap island, *nug* is the basic geographical organizational unit by which villages are grouped into districts. In the three largest *nug*: Gagil in the northeast, Tamil in the center and Rull in the south, there are 12 districts. The leaders of these *nug* are the representatives of the *bulche'* or *ulun* villages. The villages in the *nug* are connected to each other by various communication networks (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Geographical *nug* and Villages Exercising Leadership

Rull		Gagil		Tamil	
<i>Nug</i>	Head Village	<i>Nug</i>	Head Village	<i>Nug</i>	Head Village
1 Rull	Ngolog	5 Gagil	Gachpar	7 Tamil	Tab
└ Malew	Lamaer	└ Maap	Cho'ol	8 Fanif	Gilfith
└ Likaychag	Dulkan	└ Rumung	Fal		
2 Delipebinaw	Kanif	6 Weloy	Okaw		
3 Kanifay	N'ef				
4 Gilman	Guror				

2. The three *nug* are each symbolically united under a chief *tabnaw*, and these three *tabnaw* all have the appellation "the old man of the island" (*pilibithil ko nam*).

Under each chief *tabnaw* are a pair of complementary villages or sections. These are the *bulche'* and the *ulun* (Table 4). Among the *bulche'* villages, Tab has a partner (*daotu*, the horizontal bar connecting the main hull and the outrigger of the canoe), Gilfith, while Ngolog's partner is Kanif. These four villages make up "the base of *bulche'* (*kengin e bulche'*). Below Ngolog and Tab are Guror and N'ef villages. These along with Tholang section in Gachpar Village are called "the seven *bulche'*" (*medelip bulche'*). Among the *ulun* villages, the partner of Balabat is Anoth, the partner of Me'rur, Bugol, the partner of Ariap, Okaw. These along with Cho'ol Village in Maap are called the seven *ulun*.

Incidentally the three chief *tabnaw* are related to the sacred land, which is said to be the origin of man on Yap Island or the first place inhabited by man. The three chief *tabnaw* are likened to "the three stones of the hearth" (*dalip nguchol*) while Yap Island is compared to a pot which is supported by these three stones. Because if any one of the stones collapses, the contents of the pot will be spilled, the balance among the three *tabnaw* must always be maintained.

**Table 4.** Three Centers of Political Power

	Gagil Bulwol Estate	Tamil Arib Estate	Rull Ruway Estate
<i>bulche'</i>	Tholang (Gachpar)	Tab	Ngolog
<i>ulun</i>	Ariap (Gachpar)	Me'rur	Balabat

In another metaphor, they are likened to three fingers: Tamil is the thumb, Rull is the index finger, while Gagil and the eastern islands below it are referred to as the longest of the fingers, the middle finger.

3. There are several interpretations concerning *bulche'* and *ulun*. *Bulche'* represents the side of the *baan pilung* or the village head, while *ulun* represents the side of the *baan pagal* or young people.

*Bulche'* is likened to the elder brother who stays at home, while *ulun* is the younger brother who left home and became independent. On the other hand, *ulun* is also referred to as the "point of fingers" of the *bulche'* (*bugul i paa' bulche'*). When there is a *pilung* who defies or threatens the authority of other *bulche'*, the *bulche'* tells this to the *ulun* and has him kill the offending *pilung*. The *bulche'* is said to "sit down" and speak the "voice" (*lungun*) while the *ulun* is said to "stand up" and take action. The *ulun* passes on instructions and makes war according to orders from the *bulche'*.

The words of the *bulche'* are like the pillars of the house, strong, durable and immovable. The words of the *ulun*, on the other hand, are likened to a prominently tall coconut palm which is very strong out sways wildly when strong winds blow.

The *bulche'* is like a woman who stays at home, makes plans, and concerns herself with how these they are being implemented. The *ulun* takes the active of the man. He executes the decisions of the *bulche'* or the old man. [LABBY 1976: 94-113].

4. Thus, under each of the three chief *tabnaw* there are a pair of villages with the above-described characteristics. The chief *tabnaw* act as counsellors, hold the most prominent seats in meetings of the *pilung*, and listen to the proposals of the *bulche'* and *ulun* in order to judge whether or not they are in violation of traditional customs. The relationship among the chief *tabnaw*, *bulche'* and *ulun* resembles that of the *pilibithil ko binaw* (old man of the village), the *pilung ko binaw* (village chief) and the *langan pagal* (chief young man).

5. *Bulche'* and *ulun* also hold leadership rights over the two village alliances which encompass the whole of Yap Island. *Bulche'* is the leader of the *baan pilung* (village chief's side), while *ulun* is the head of the *baan pagal* (young men's side). Formerly, the chief *tabnaw*, Bulwol estate of Gagil, was the symbolic head of the *baan pagal* while the chief *tabnaw* Ruway estate of Rull, played the same role for *baan pilung*. The chief *tabnaw*, Arib estate of Tamil, situated itself between the two *baan* and acted as the balancer of power. In other words, a tripolar structure existed, with the chief *tabnaw*, Arib estate, together with Tab village and Me'rur village acting as the "old man of the island", the chief *tabnaw*, Ruway estate, together with Ngolog village and Balabat village as the leader of the *baan pilung*, and the chief *tabnaw*, Bulwol estate, together with the Tholang and Ariap sections of Gachpar village as the leader of the *baan pagal*. However, at present, the Arib estate is considered to be the head of the *baan pilung*. This is the result of the concentration of power in Gachpar village of Gagil which came after it took control of and began to monopolize

Table 5. *Teyugang ni rodgiin e bulche'*

Kanifay	Magaf	[Bileydid]
Rull	Dachgar	[Tafanefel] (←Balabat [Pekel])
Tamil	Madlay	[Machagod] (←Leng [Utiyum])
Gilman	Magchagil	[Bileyow]
Fanif	Runu'w	[Fiiterugud]
Kanifay	Fura'	[Gay]
Maap	Wocholab	[Uliban]

the produce of the eastern islands. This changed the balance of power which obtained previously.

6. All villages on Yap Island belong either to the *baan pilung* or the *baan pagal* and are attached either to the *bulche'* village or the *ulun* village, which is the head of the *nug*. *Mathban*, *tathban* and *dorchig* are such villages. Incidentally, a case in which the *tabnaw* holding the position of *bulche'* is located in *dorchig* village was found. This *tabnaw* is called *teyugang ni rudgiin e bulche'* (*teyugang*—the *tabnaw* which holds the voice, *lungun*, of the *pilung*, *rudgiin*—a second sprout which appears alongside the stalk of a banana). This *tabnaw* is situated between the *baan pilung* and *baan pagal* and acts as an intermediary between the two. It is also a *tagil ngapath* (*tagil*—place, *ngapath*—quiet), that is, a place where a person in trouble can go. Such a person is given protection in this *tabnaw* from outsiders. There are several *tabnaw* which perform this function (Table 5).

## THE FORMATION OF THE NUG OF GILFITH VILLAGE

The present Fanif district corresponds to the *nug* (net) of the traditional Gilfith village (*bulche'*, *baan pilung*), that is, the *nugan yu Gilfith*. This *nug* is not a static structure, but the result of historical processes. At present, it is essentially meaningless to make enquires concerning the *thal* (ranking) of the villages because each village gives different answers. However, according to the people of Gilfith and Rang, the ranking system is something like the following Table 6.

The villages of Rang, Gilfith and Yiin are considered the "base" of Fanif district (*kengin e Fanif*). In the past, the villages of Rang, Runu'w and Gargey were the powers to be reckoned with in the area as the *ulun*. The *bulche'*, Gilfith village, is said to be a newcomer to the scene (Fig. 3).

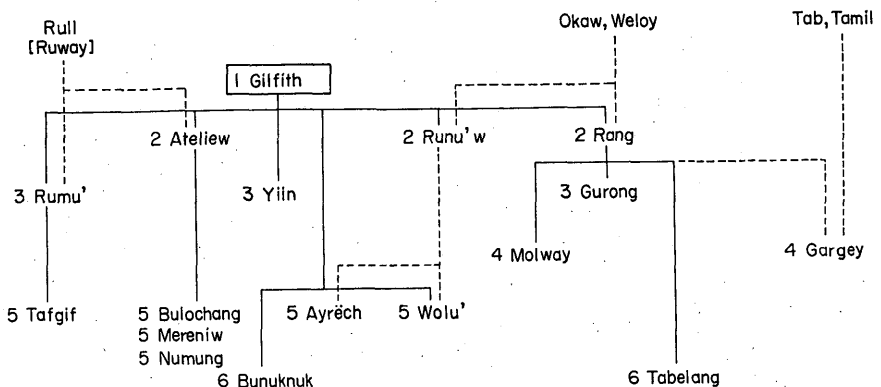
Rang village was an *ulun* (*baan pagal*) village which had the following of a vassal village (*chon paa'*), Gurong village. It also ruled over Molway village, in which the altar (*taliew*) for the god Arilev is located. Eight generations ago, the village head was Garatabal of the Guchol estate. At that time, Rang village ruled over half of the western coastal area and had the privilege of collecting shell money from all the other villages to be offered up on the altar of the goddess Magaragoi which is located in Tab village in Tamil. Here, prayers were made for the propagation of human

Table 6. *Thal* in the Fanif District

Village	Number of <i>tabnaw</i>	<i>thal</i>	
1 Gilfith	11	<i>bulche'</i>	<i>pilung ko nug</i>
2 Ateliew	7	<i>tathban</i>	formerly <i>dorchig</i>
2 Rang	5	<i>mathban</i>	formerly <i>ulun</i>
2 Runu'w	1	<i>dorchig</i>	formerly <i>ulun</i> , <i>thal</i> undecided
3 Rumu'	?	<i>dorchig</i>	
3 Yiin	6	<i>dorchig</i>	<i>tama'af</i>
3 (Gurong)	6	<i>dorchig</i>	<i>tama'af</i>
4 Malway	7	<i>milingay ni arow</i>	
5 (Tafgif)	0	<i>milingay</i>	
5 Wulu'	4	<i>milingay</i>	
5 Ayrech	2	<i>milingay</i>	
5 (Bulochang)	0	<i>milingay</i>	
5 (Mereniw)	0	<i>milingay</i>	
6 (Tabelang)	0	<i>milingay ni yagug</i>	
6 (Bunuknuk)	0	<i>milingay ni kaan</i>	

beings, fish and fruit. Furthermore, the estate received tribute in the form of ropes made of coconut fibers, shell money, yams, and stone columns from the villages of Rumung, Weloy and Kanifay, choosing the best items to bring with them to Tab village. However, when the village head of Rang, Garatabal, appropriated stone columns from Rumung for use in building his own house, bringing only what was leftover to Tab village, the authority of Tab was slighted. This evoked the wrath of the *pilung* of Tab and, when Garatabal came to the village, he was killed.

Rang was also set back by an attack from Gilfith village. At that time, the size of a village was measured by the number of spear-throwers (*mun delak*) it could muster. It is said that Gilfith was able to mobilize a good 200 spear-throwers, while

Figure 3. *Nug* (District Unit) of Gilfith, Fanif

Rang only had about 150. Nevertheless, the battle was initially won by Rang. Then, the village head of Gilfith, of the Walag'ech estate, negotiated with the *pilung* of Tab village, which belonged to the hierarchy of Gilfith's masters, and had the villages of Ateliew and Rumu', which were under the authority of Ruway estate in Rull, transferred to its jurisdiction. These two villages were *dorchig* villages and suppliers of spear-throwers. Even today, they are still related to the Ruway estate. After seeking further assistance from Maa' village in Tamil, Gilfith renewed its attack. This time, Rang was defeated. The *tabnaw* of the Guchol estate was destroyed and a portion of the stone money and stone columns in the village meeting place were taken to Gilfith, where they remain to this day.

As a result of this battle, Rang village fell in rank from *ulun* to *mathban* and it was forced to join the *nug* of Gilfith village. Yet, at the same time, it also belongs to the *baan pagal* of Okaw village. In other words, Rang village belongs both to the *baan pilung* and the *baan pagal*. During rituals, it joins the *baan pagal* of Okaw village and, in wartime, it supports Gilfith village by staying in the rear and taking charge of food supplies. The following story is related to these events. The meeting place in Rang village was called Gilingafan. When the inauguration rites for the new *wunbey* (stone flooring) of the meeting place were held, the *pilung* of Okaw village performed a *tayor* (dance) and, while dancing, named the new *wunbey* Galigaded (everyone's place). "This new *wunbey* is our place (*galigaded*). Let the two of us meet here." In other words, while Gilfith village would like to think of Rang village as its sole possession, the Okaw people wanted it to be a place where both Okaw and Gilfith people could go and were trying to remind the *pilung* of Gilfith of this. This was a reconfirmation of past decisions (*yalean*) of the *pilung*.

Furthermore, on the seashore in front of the men's house in Rang village, there are two *waag* (a stone used to fasten a canoe). The men's house is called *bile waag*. The two *waag* are for mooring the canoes of the *baan pilung* and *baan pagal*, respectively. The men's house now destroyed in Rang village was different from those in other villages in that it had an additional doorway in the middle. Only the *pilung* of the *bulche'* villages Ngolog and Kanif could occupy the seat near this doorway. If any other person chanced to sit there unknowingly, he would not be given a share when food was being distributed. This custom was based on the fact that when Rang was invaded and defeated by Gilfith, its partner, Okaw village, took stone money and shell money from Gilfith and did not come to its rescue, while the *bulche'* villages, Kanif, Ngolog and N'ef, provided assistance. Without the support of these three *bulche'* villages, the ranking of Rang village would have descended as low as *milingay*. Thus, whenever the *pilung* of these three villages go to Gilfith for meetings, they spend the night in the men's house of Rang. Moreover, whenever there is an important ceremonial exchange in Rang, the *pilung* from these villages are invited. On the other hand, Rang village holds *suwon* (controlling rights) over the *milingay* village Tabelang and also rules over *milingay ni arow* village Malway.

In former times, Gilfith had had only its vassals (*chogin*) Yiin village and the *milingay* village Bunuknuk under its authority. In Yiin village, it had delegated its

authority to two *tabnaw*, the Gamow and Baleganaw estates. Then, Gilfith attacked the nearby *ulun* village of Runu'w, obtaining half of its land and all of its sea area and taking control over the *milingay* villages Ayrech and Wulu', formerly under the authority of Runu'w. In this way, Gilfith augmented its power. The ranking of Runu'w was left undefined and Gilfith placed a *tabnaw* holding the rank of *bulche'* (*ridgiin e bulche'*) in the village. Gilfith is actually a very small village in terms of land area and has no large taro fields. Instead, it uses the taro field in Runu'w. However, since Gilfith people cannot enter a village belonging to an another *baan*, they have designated the responsibility of tending the fields to the people of the *milingay* village Ayrech. But, because these taro are considered *taay* (impure), they cannot be used to serve the *pilung* of the *bulche'*. Thus, whenever there are gatherings of *pilung* in Gilfith, the taro of Ateliew and Rang are served, while the young people eat taro either from Gilfith, Runu'w or Yiin.

As mentioned earlier, during the time of Gilfith's attack on Rang, it negotiated for the transfer of the villages of Ateliew and Rumu' from the chief *tabnaw*, the Ruwai estate, in order to reinforce its spear-throwers (*mun delak*). In wartime, the most important things are the spear-throwers and the altar where prayers for victory are made (a *taliew* called *yaw*). Gilfith uses the spear-throwers of Ateliew and

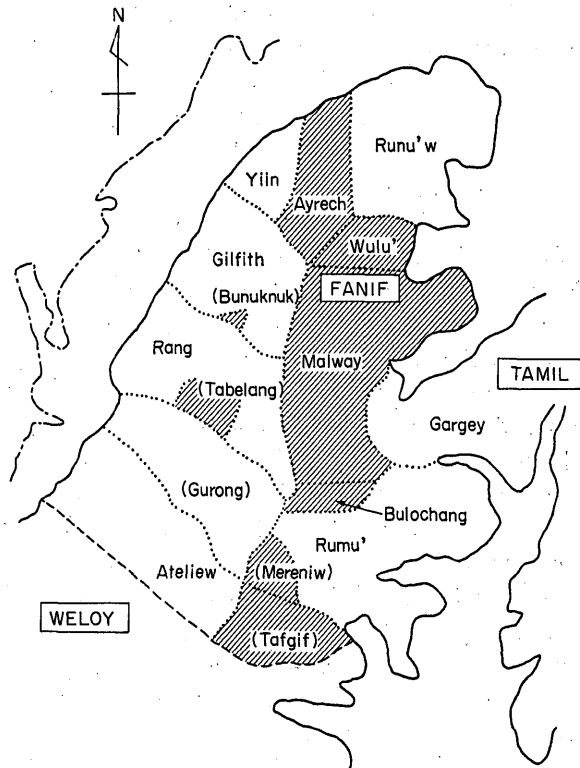


Figure 4. The Fanif District.

Rumu' and the *yaw* of Yiin and Gurong. The meeting place of Gilfith is called Gabchag, which is the name of a fish having a spine on its back and one on each side. The *yaw* of Yiin and Gurong are thought of as the spine on the back and Ateliew and Rumu' villages as those on the sides. These "spines" protect Gilfith village and are used to thrust out at invaders. Ateliew has even been raised to the rank of *tathban* for its achievements in battle.

The conventional way to hold a meeting (*puruy*) of villages in Fanif district is for Gilfith village to communicate the agenda for discussion to the people of Ateliew, Rang and Runu'w, making these three villages the center of discussions. Then Gilfith approves or disapproves the suggestions of the villages which have resulted from these preliminary discussions. Thus, Gilfith village not only gives out orders, but oversees the procedure for consultation and planning.

The *milingay* villages Bulochang, Mereniw and Numung are under the authority of Ateliew village. Numung was previously on loan to Okaw village and a part of in the Weloy district during the time of German occupation. Runu'w village controls the *milingay* village Tafgif, where the altar obtained from Alog village is held. The magician (*tamerong*) here is related to the chief *tabnaw*, Ruway estate.

Gargey village was formerly an *ulun* village but, because its village head committed the offense of breaking the *rarow* (a flat stone used to divide fish) belonging to the chief *tabnaw*, Arib estate, in Tab, the punishment of *ganthir*, which originally meant "to cut down fences with a sharp blade"—*i.e.*, the houses of the village were destroyed by removing the stone foundations and cutting down the trees (essentially, the whole village was razed)—was imposed on Gargey by all the other villages and its rank dropped to *milingay ni araw*. Its people were transferred to the *nug* (district) of Tab village, whereas its land became a part of the *nug* of Gilfith. Rang, the former *ulun* village, took over the responsibility for Gargey.

As suggested above, the process by which the *nug* was formed and evolved into its present form has been very volatile. Even the *thal* (ranking) of the villages within the *nug* became permanent only after the German occupation.

## NETWORKS BETWEEN VILLAGES

The distinguishing feature of the interrelationship of the villages on Yap Island are the communication networks that have been formed among them. These are called "paths" (*kanawo*) or *tha'*. *Tha'* refers to a group of objects joined together by a string. On the human level, it describes a series of communication networks connecting villages which have different geographical locations and political affiliations. In Yap, every political action is initiated by the verbal communication, *i.e.*, the "voice of the land" (*lungun*). All authority must be exercised and all requests and communications transmitted via the traditionally developed *tha'* (network). Only messages which have been communicated through the appropriate channels carry the authority of the *pilung* and must be respected. The "voice of the land" (*lungun*) is ineffectual if transmitted through unrecognized channels. All *tabnaw*



of the *pilung* rank in a village maintain their own respective *tha'* with *tabnaw* of other villages. These channels are used for the procurement of valuable ritual objects, requests for free labor, payment of compensation, requests for military assistance, invitations to gatherings and even for commissioning the murder of an enemy. These days they are also used to gather votes during elections.

The largest communication network among the villages consists of the channels maintained by the *pilung* of the highest ranking *bulche'* and *ulun* villages. All announcements concerning important projects, such as war, public works and ritual exchanges are transmitted through the lines of this network (*dakean e tha'*). As well as open requests (for instance, invitations to the inauguration rites of a meeting house) transmitted via the *tha'* among the *baan pilung* or *baan pagal* of the higher ranking villages, secret messages (for instance, commission for murder, war plans) are also transmitted through those channels. These latter are called *makas*, and the network is thus termed *tha' ko makas*. In both cases, the "voice of the land" (*lungun*) which travels through the *tha'* (network) is accompanied by passing of shell and stone money. The *tha'* linking the *tabnaw* of the *pilung* is a fixed structure. For example, such a permanent channel exists between the *pilung* of *baan pilung* village A and *baan pilung* village B. The following illustration show the major networks between the *baan pilung* villages and between the *baan pagal* villages which are used by the alliance in times of war.

The basic political structure in Yap consists of a pair of *bulche'* and *ulun* villages each under the three chief *tabnaw*, the Bulwol estate in Gagil, the Arib estate in Tamil and the Ruway estate in Rull. That is to say, there are three pairs—the Tholang and Ariap sections in Gachpar village, Tab and Me'rur villages, and Ngolog and Balabat villages—which form the core of the *baan pilung* and *baan pagal* alliances. *Ulu*n is under the leadership of *bulche'* and is responsible for the actual execution of plans. In other words, it is said that if *bulche'* is the chief of staff and *ulun* is the general.

Let us look at the *baan pagal* first (Fig. 5). The jurisdiction of the Ariap district covers the alliance of villages called *galigoci*, composed of Ugil, Maap' and Rumung. Its partner Bugol village has jurisdiction over the village alliance of Tamil called *darippebai*. Okaw village rules over the village alliance of Weloy under Dugol village called *galiwayan*. Its partner Anoth village controls the village alliance of *giliman*, and Balabat village controls the village alliance of *maréw* and *rikaichog*. On the other hand, in the *baan pilung* alliance, the villages of Tab and Gilfith, and Ngolog and Kanif are *daotu* to each other (Fig. 6). These four villages are considered the "base" of the *bulche'*. N'ef village and Guror village are also members. As shown in the illustration, alliances are connected by a network of lines which might be likened to telephone cables.

There are also networks connecting villages belonging to different *baan*. In the higher ranking *bulche'* or *ulun* villages, there are always *tabnaw* belonging to other *baan*. They are called *til nga owchen e baan pilung/baan pagal* (the ears and eyes of *baan pilung/baan pagal*) or "*owchen e tabnaw*". These *tabnaw* serve as links between the two *baan* and between the *bulche'* and *ulun*. For instance, when the *pilung* of

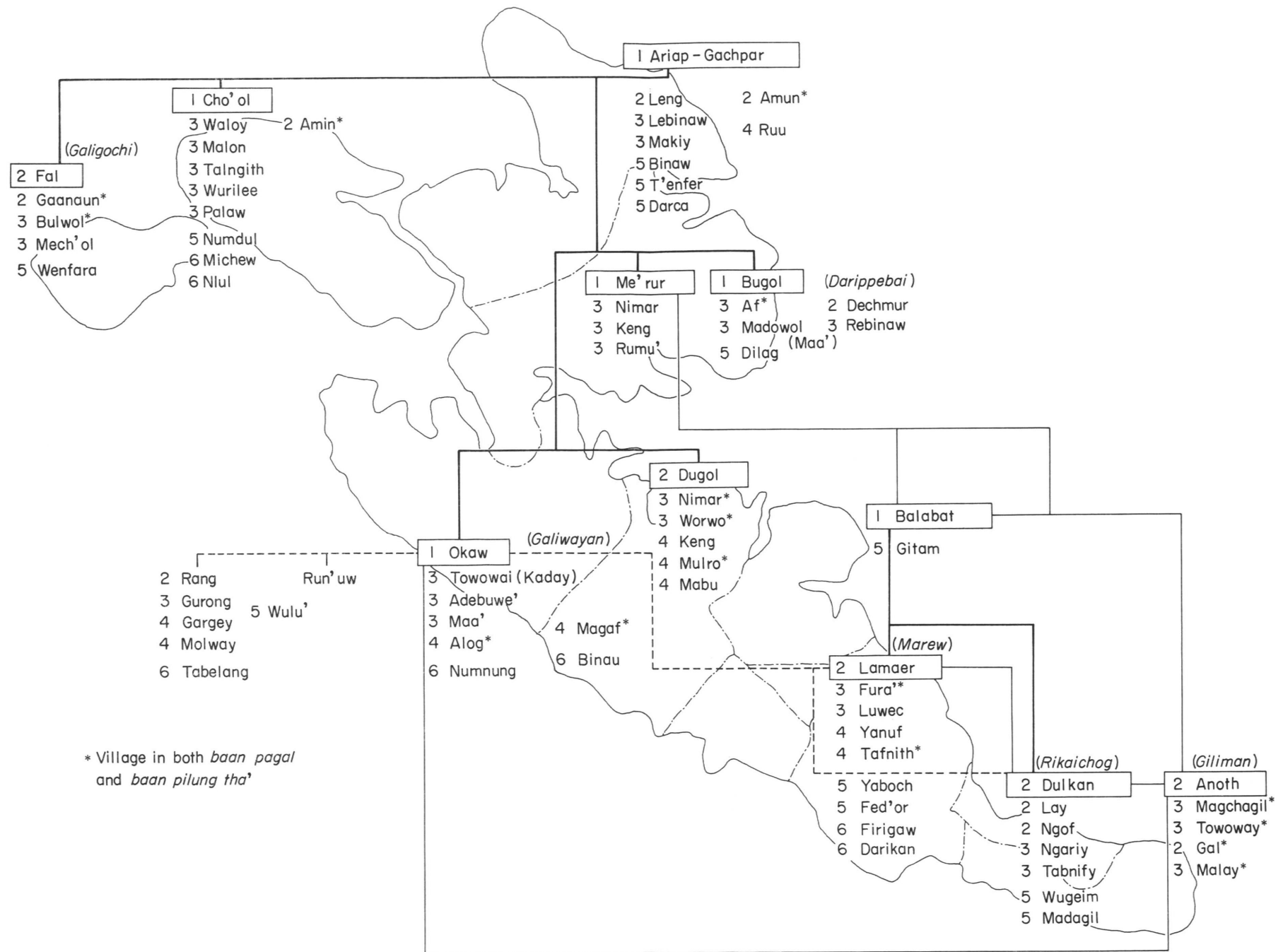


Figure 5. The baan pagal Alliance



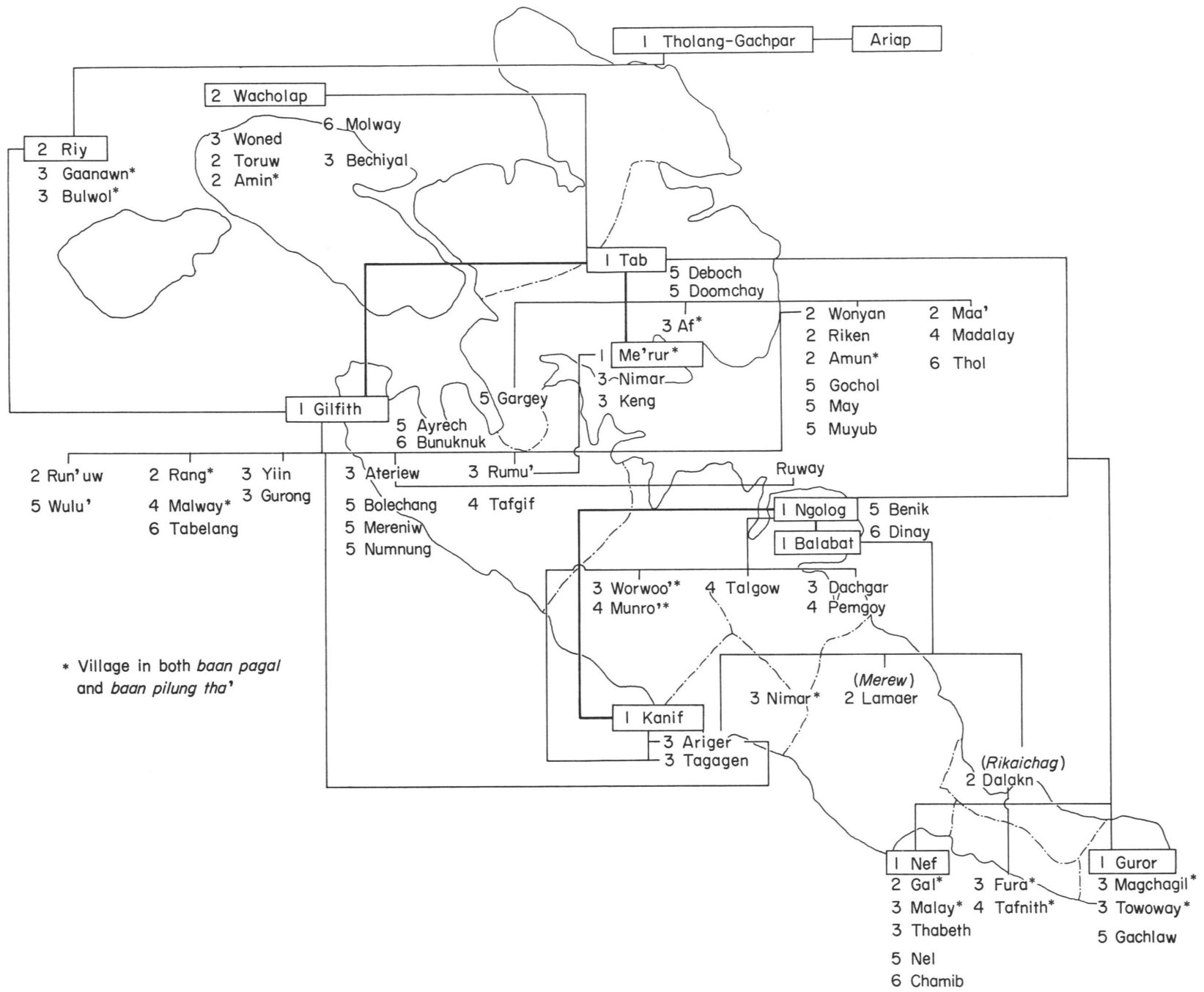


Figure 6. The *baan pilung* Alliance.



*baan pilung* village A (*bulche'*) has a message or request to be communicated to *baan pagal* village B, he uses the *tabnaw* termed "ears and eyes of the *baan pilung*" to transmit this. The elder of this *tabnaw* relay the message to the *pilung* of village B.

Let's illustrate this by using an example. The highest ranking village in Fanif district is *bulche'* Gilfith village, and the village head of Gilfith is the Walag'ech estate. This *tabnaw* maintains networks connecting it to other *bulche'* villages. However, Rang village in the same area, since formerly it was the *ulun* of the other *baan*, has no direct means to transmit the "voice" (*lungun*) to the Walag'ech estate in Gilfith village. Thus, it passes through the Tehey estate in Gilfith village. This particular *tabnaw* not only controls the council composed of seven *tabnaw* in Gilfith, but is also the "ears and eyes of the *baan pagal*". It can communicate any message from Rang village to the *pilung* of Gilfith. Rang maintains a line with *ulun* Okaw village, and the village head of Rang, leader of the Guchol estate, has a direct link with the village head of Okaw, leader of the Da'ech estate. On the other hand, communication from Gilfith to Okaw is handled by the people of the Tehey estate, who contact the Biliyog estate which serves as the "ears and eyes of the *baan pilung*" in Okaw.

Sometimes, the *rudgiin e bulche'* *tabnaw* existing in *dorchig* villages are also used for communications between *baan pilung* and *baan pagal*. For instance, when the *bulche'* chief *tabnaw*, the Ruway estate, has a message for the *ulun* village Anoth in connection with the settlement of a dispute, the chief *tabnaw*, the Ruway estate dispatches someone from the Tangil estate, which holds the position of messenger, to the village head of the *bulche'* village Guror, who is leader of the Manfel estate. A member of the Manfel estate will then visit the *rudgiin e bulche'* *tabnaw*, the Bileyow estate, in Magchagil village. Acting as the intermediary between *bulche'* Guror village and *ulun* Anoth village, this latter *tabnaw* relays the message to the village head of Anoth. The messages of the "voice" (*lungun*) transmitted through such these traditional *tha'* (network) are respected.

The *pilung* of higher ranking villages control certain communication networks for transmitting the voice of the *tabnaw* (*lungun*) to the villages under the jurisdiction of their *nug*. For example, two large *tha'* which extend from Gachpar village to the villages of Maap' and Rumung are quite famous. The *tha'* called *damanomang*, emanating from the Togobuy estate, head of the *ulun* Ariap section, and the *tha'* named *bilemalab*, beginning from the Pebinaw estate, head of the *bulche'* Tholang section are also wellknown. Messages destined for Maap' and Rumung are all transmitted through one or the other of these two *tabnaw*. The *tha'* called *rukanmu'w* linking *baan pagal* villages which originates in the Ariap section and extends to Okaw village via Bugol village is also very large in scale. As indicated in the following chart, the corresponding *tabnaw* varies depending on the type of *tha'* (network), even within the same village (Fig. 7).

Lower ranking villages as well as higher ranking villages have their own independent *tha'* (network). Villages of the same rank are called *bugul i yow* (edges of the rafter). They invite each other to ceremonial exchanges or act as fellow competitors. These villages are under the protection of the higher ranking villages which

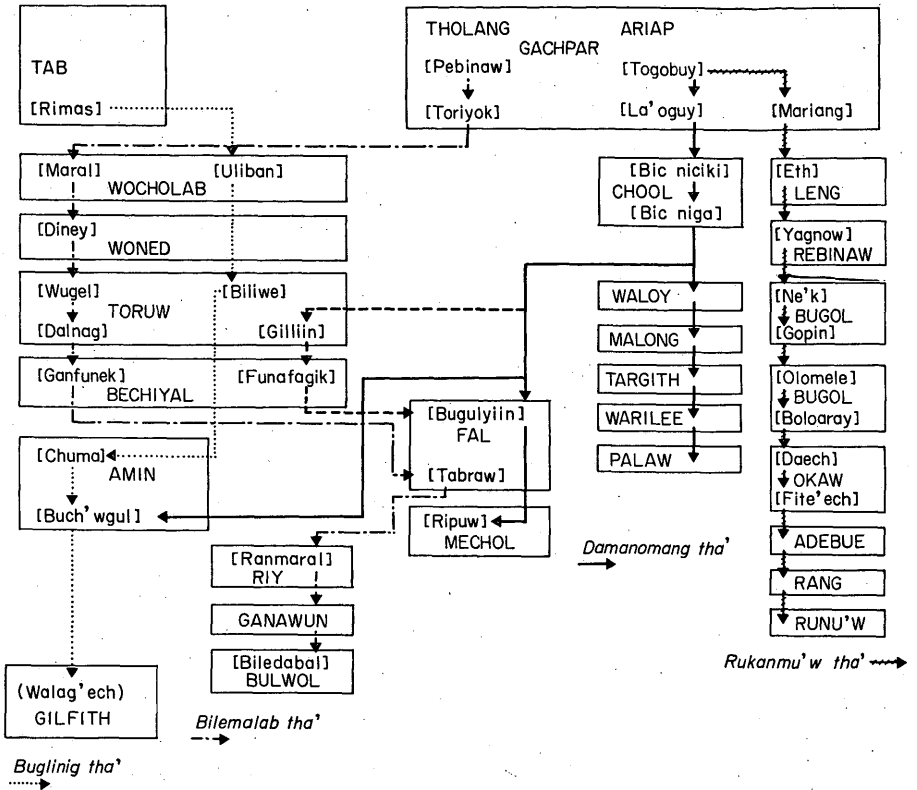


Figure 7. The Network (tha') between Rumung, Maap and Gachpar

claim controlling rights (*suwon*) over them as *fak* (children) or *chon paa'* (vassals). They supply goods and services as requested by the "voice" (*lungun*) transmitted from the higher ranking villages.

The *pilung ko binaw* (village head) represents the village. He has the strongest voice (*lungun*) and controls the *tha'* (network) used to request economic and political aid from other villages. This network provides the basic framework for collecting valuables and food and asking for military assistance in times of war. However, the *tabnaw* of the village head does not monopolize the communication networks. Other *tabnaw* have their own separate *tha'* with other villages and other *tabnaw*. For instance, the *tabnaw* that holds the position of *langan pagal* (chief young man) has its own *tha'* linking it with the *langan pagal tabnaw* of other villages. The distribution of *tha'* among a number of *tabnaw* in the village prevents the concentration of power.

Furthermore, the particular *tha'* employed depends on the nature of the message to be transmitted. One *tha'* is used for the supply of materials and labor for projects such as building of meeting houses. Another *tha'* is used to secure military assistance and communicate battle plans in times of war. Still another *tha'* is used for invi-

tations to ritual exchanges. And, apart from these, there is the *tha' ko wolbuw*. *Wolbuw* is the annual ritual exchange of food which is performed at a predetermined time of year. Different kinds of food, for example, are given at tribute, according to past precedents or in return for assistance received in the past. In particular, during the seasonal ritual called *togmog*, *wolbuw* from several villages are gathered and a ceremony for the giving of tribute or the distribution of food is held. This *wolbuw* relationship does not only serve a ritual function, but also provides yearly reconfirmation of the alliances formed by the *pilung* of past generations.

In summary, the following types of networks exist between villages:

1. *tha' ko bulche'*: networks among *bulche'* or *ulun* villages;
2. *tha' ko pilung*: independent networks maintained by *tabnaw* of the *pilung* class;
3. *bugul i yow*: networks among villages of the same rank;
4. *suwon*: networks by which higher ranking villages transmit their "voice" (*lungun*) to villages under their authority;
5. *tha' ko wolbuw*: networks for food exchanges during seasonal rituals.

These types of *tha'* have been created and reorganized time and time again through the ages. In the following section, we examine the *tha'* found in Gilfith village of the Fanif district.

### THE *THA'* (NETWORKS) OF GILFITH VILLAGE

The *pilung ko binaw* (village chief) of Gilfith is the leader of the Walag'ech estate. This *tabnaw* also holds the voice (*lungun*) of the *langan pagal* (chief young man). The position of *pilibithil ko binaw* (old man of the village) was formerly held by the Balebaraw estate, but that voice no longer exists and only the position of *suwon e pin* (leader of the women) remains with this *tabnaw*. Gilfith village has a council called *toriyok* formed by seven *tabnaw*: Techey, Walag'ech, Balebaraw, Da'ech, Yil, and Gamow and Baleganow in Yiin Village. The Techey estate serves as the head of this council and is also the "ears and eyes of *baan pagal*". Although geographically located in a *bulche'* village, it maintains communication lines with an *ulun* village.

All the above *pilung* class *tabnaw* have separate *tha'* (networks) with several villages. The following types of *tha'* are found in Gilfith Village:

1. *tha' ko bulche'*, used by the *pilung ko binaw* (village chief) to communicate with other *bulche'* villages;
2. a network used by the "ears and eyes of *baan pagal*", linking it with *ulun* villages.;
3. a network maintained by the *pilibithil ko binaw* (old man of the village);
4. a network for the voice (*lungun*) of the *pilung ko binaw* (village chief) for communication with the villages in Fanif district;
5. the network for ritual exchanges of food, *tha' ko wolbuw*.



THE *THA'* (NETWORKS) OF THE *PILUNG KO BINAW* (VILLAGE HEAD),  
WALAG'ECH ESTATE

The leader of Walag'ech estate is the village head of Gilfith village, as well as being the chief of the Fanif district. Villages in this district are all under the jurisdiction of this *tabnaw*. As mentioned earlier, this *nug* has undergone reorganization through history. The *nug* of to which the Gilfith village of today belongs is composed primarily of the higher ranking villages (*arow*), Ateliew, Gurong, Rang, Yiin, Runu'w and Rumu'; the *milingay ni arow* villages Molway and Tafgif and a number of *milingay* villages. Gargey village of the Tamil district is also a member of this *nug*.

The largest network is the one linking the *bulche'* villages (Table 7). The relationship with Tab village in particular is termed *daotu*, a word referring to that part of the canoe which connects the outrigger to the main hull. Tab village plays a role which is the equivalent of father to Gilfith village. This network goes from the Walag'ech estate to the Magaf estate in Tab. Here, the messenger rests and asks someone to summon a head of the *pilibithil ko binaw* (old man of the village), *tabnaw*, the Rimas estate. Requests transmitted through this route are certain to be granted, and the outcome of discussions transmitted via this *tha'* cannot be altered by any other *pilung*. This network is used particularly for military assistance during times of war, the settlement of disputes and invitations to ritual exchanges (*mitemit*).

Furthermore, through consultation with Tab, Gilfith also maintains networks with Ngolog village and its *daotu* Kanif village, as well as with *bulche'* villages such as Ne'f and Guror. In addition, when the power of the *yaw* in Yiin and Gurong village proves to be insufficient, the magician of war (*yaw ni murur*) of Tafnith village can be summoned to Gilfith to give assistance by means of the link with Ne'f village.

Table 7. *Tha'* (Channel) of Gilfith Village

[Walag'ech] ( <i>pilung ko binaw</i> )			[Techey] ( <i>owchen e baan pagal</i> )		
Tamil	Tab	[Rimas]	Rull	Balabat	[Mano'ol]
Gilman	Guror	[Pebchey]	Gachpar	Ariap	[Mariang]
Kanifay	N'ef	[Gowal]	Tamil	Me'zur	[Ganal]
Delipebinaw	Kanif	[ ]	Weloy	Okaw	[Biliyog]
Rull	Ngolok	[Tidirra]	Tamil	Bugol	[Gu'pin]
	Balabat	[Ruway]			
Maap	Wocholab	[Uliban]	[Balebalaw] ( <i>suwon e pin</i> )		
Gilman	Malay		Weloy	Adbuwe	[ ]
Kanifey	Tafnith		Dalipebinaw	Magaf	[Bilydid]
			Gilman	Magchagil	[Bileyow]
			Rull	Balabat	[Ruway]
[Machey] ( <i>langan pagal</i> )			Rumung	Riy	[ ]
Rumung	Fal	[Tabraw]			
Gagil	Wonyan (Ool)	[Ganfunek]			
Kanif	Arigel	[Da'ech]			

There is a *tha'* called *buglinig* which extends from the Rimas estate in Tab through the Uliban estate of Wocholab village in Maap, the Biliwe estate in Toruw village and the Chuma estate in Amin village, to the Walag'ech estate in Gilfith but it is not being used (see Fig. 7). The Walag'ech estate also holds *suwon* (controlling rights) over major sacred places on Yap Island. It has the privilege of taking refuge from typhoons and of praying for protection from illnesses and for the fertility of both human beings and fruit trees in the sacred area for worshipping Magaragoy in Tab village and in sacred places in Maki and Alog villages. A small network is maintained between the Walag'ech and Malay village in the Kanifay district. This channel is used only for ritual exchanges which were first established during the Japanese occupation. Next we will illustrate the process by which *tha'* are formed by means of an example.

The young men of Gilfith village were commissioned by the Japanese army to reclaim Air-fields and were forced to stay temporarily at the men's house in Malay village. For this, the village head of Gilfith sent the village head of Malay some stone money and requested that these young men of Gilfith be given coconut juice to drink when they so desired. The village head of Malay answered, "very well. All the coconuts in the area reaching from the men's house to the boundary of the village are yours. Even after the war ends and peace returns, the people of Gilfith can come here to pick coconuts anytime." Thus, the *tha'* was established.

Since the Walag'ech estate holds the position of *pilung ko binaw* (village chief) in a *bulche'* village, it has many channels for the ritual exchange of food (Table 8). During the month of *Masaek* (around October), a wind called *maraggil* starts to blow. During this month, the young men of Gilfith and Rang villages engage in *athing* fishing and pool their catch in the men's house (*faluw*) of Gilfith. On the day of the catch, people from Tab come in canoes, bringing with them a crate of *mal* (*Colocasia* spp.). Gilfith villagers offer the Tab people fish and request, "please

Table 8. The Network of the Ritual Exchange of Food

Villages which come to Gilfith	Food Given	Food Received as Tribute
Dugol	fish	taro ( <i>lāk</i> )
Tab	fish	<i>mal</i> ( <i>Colocasia</i> spp.)
Fura	fish	taro ( <i>lāk</i> )
Palaw	fish	banana
Villages to which Gilfith goes	Food Given	Food Received as Tribute
Amin		<i>mal</i> ( <i>Colocasia</i> spp.)
Toruw		yam ( <i>dāl</i> )
Rang	fish	banana, coconuts
Ateliew	fish	cakes made from taro ( <i>Colocasia</i> spp.), <i>yeogil</i>
Rumu'	fish	coconuts

pray to the god of the sacred place of Tab for the birth of many children next year." Furthermore, two days prior to this occasion, people from Fura in the Kanifay district also come to engage in *ruwol* fishing in the waters of Gilfith. On this day, the womenfolk of Dugol village bring 50 taros and are given the fish caught by the menfolk of Fura in return.

Two days after this, the villagers of Maap and Palaw come to Gilfith and Rang in four canoes with gifts of preserved colored bananas for which they are given fish caught during *athing* fishing in return. The bananas received are distributed to the Gilfith and Rang villagers during the ritual performed for advancement to a higher age rank (*mukun*). The *pilung* of Gilfith then tells the Palaw villagers, "please report to the people of Amin village that our festival is over." After the festival in the Fanif district ends, the information is passed on from Gilfith to Palaw, and from there to Amin, to Toruw, and to Wocholab, when this has been done, another annual cycle of feasts begins on Maap Island.

This offering and exchange of food in ritual is known as *wolbuw*. Such networks have been established through past decisions or as means of repayment for services received in the past. These exchanges serve to reconfirm historical ties. The *wolbuw* network can also be used for other purposes.

#### THE *THA'* (NETWORKS) OF THE TECHEY ESTATE

The Tehey estate is the *tabnaw* which controls the council called *toriyok* (equivalent to *chas* in other areas) made up of seven *tabnaw* in Gilfith village. It also serves as the "ears and eyes of the *baan pagal*". For this reason, although geographically located in a *bulche'* village, it maintains *tha'* (networks) with the *baan pagal*. Since there is no direct channel by which messages can be transmitted between the *baan pagal* villages and the village head, the Walag'ech estate. Such messages are communicated via the Tehey estate. Upon receipt of a message from a *baan pagal* village, the elder of the Tehey estate assembles the *pilung* of Gilfith and relates the information to them.

In the following section we briefly discuss the various *tha'* that exist between the Tehey estate and *ulun* villages of the *baan pagal* (Table 7): There is a *tha'* between Tehey estate and the Mono'ol estate in Balabat village in Rull used for the settlement of disputes resulting from fights, murders, adulteries, etc.. For instance, if someone from Balabat village causes some disturbance and desires to apologize later, this message is transmitted to the Tehey estate, which is obliged to handle the matter (*tha' ko buyul*). The Biliyog estate in Okaw Village is also one of the "ears and eyes of *baan pilung*" located in an *ulun* village. Like Tehey estate, this *tabnaw* serves as an intermediary between *bulche'* and *ulun*.

*Tabnaw* which maintain *tha'* with the Tehey estate include: Mariang estate in the Ariap section of Gachpar village, the *lagan pagal tabnaw*; Gu'pin estate in Bugol village, the *pilibithil ko binaw* (old man of the village) *tabnaw*; and Ganal estate in Me'rur village, the *pilibithil ko binaw tabnaw*.

The network between the Tehey estate and Gu'pin estate in Bugol village is

a traditional one. This link was reformed as the result of an incident that occurred a few generations past. A man in Bugol village was killed by a person from Waloy village in Maap. The *pilung* of Bugol village (*ulun*) made a secret request for assassination (*makas*) to Gachpar and Balabat villages, with which it maintained *tha'*, asking that a man from Waloy village be killed in revenge (*forbiy*) for the wrong done to them. However, since nobody lifted a finger for them, the villagers of Bugol went to Y, the elder of the Tehey estate at that time to seek assistance. Y thought up a strategy and composed a song.

The words of the song ridicule the Rimas estate of Tab, the Ruway estate of Rull, the Tehey estate of Gilfith and the *tabnaw* of other *pilung*. Toward the end, it extolled the name of Yawu' estate, the *pilung* of Waloy village and declared that "we are going to change the name of this *tabnaw* to M'uwan and this *muw* (canoe) will be the canoe of *makas* for the whole of Yap Island." Y taught this song to the people. Once, when the *pilung* of various villages were assembled, somebody sang this song. After the *pilung* who heard this song went home, they contemplated its meaning. The *pilung* discussed the matter and later punished Waloy village by *ganthir*, i.e., cutting down all the fruit trees in the village. This incident occurred four generations ago. By setting in motion this chain of events, Y reasserted the link with Gu'pin estate.

Among the *wolbuw* received Tehey estate are coconuts from Mech'ol village in Rumung and *rang* (turmeric powder) from Numdul village in Maap. These villages are given fish and coconuts in return for their tribute.

#### THE *THA'* OF THE *PILIBITHIL KO BINAW*, BALEBARAW ESTATE

Although the Balebaraw estate was at one time the *pilibithil ko binaw* (old man of the village), it has since been deprived of this voice (*lungun*). Once during the Spanish Occupation, seven brothers of this *tabnaw* caught a giant tuna fish. Then a big shark came along and devoured the whole tuna immediately, leaving only the head. When a large fish such as this one is caught, the custom is to offer it to the village head. However, since the brothers realized the inappropriateness of offering only the head, they decided to cook and eat what was left of the fish in the men's house without first gaining the permission of the *pilung*.

The *pilung* of Gilfith held a meeting to discuss this act, which showed wanton disregard of their privileges as *pilung*. After consultation with other villages of the *baan pilung*, they killed the seven brothers. The voice (*lungun*) of this *tabnaw* as old man of the village was also revoked and it was left only with the voice (*lungun*) of *suwon e pin* (leader of women). This *tabnaw* maintains a *tha'* with the *rudgiin e bulche' tabnaw* located in a *dorchig* village, and with the Riy village in Rumung island through Ganawn village (Table 7).

#### THE FORMATION OF THE *THA'* OF THE MACHEY ESTATE

This *tabnaw* is a vassal of the Walag'ech estate. There was once a valiant warrior (*mun delak*) called Wa'ath *ni kaan* in this *tabnaw*, who was a central figure in

the formation of the *tha'* and, as a result, his *tabnaw* rose to the rank of *pilung*. However, since he left no heirs, the voice of the *tabnaw* was taken over after his death by the Walag'ech estate, where his wife had come from. This *tabnaw* maintains *tha'* for requesting warrior reinforcements with Fal village in Rumung, Wanyan village in Gagil, and Arigel village in Kanif.

The network with Fal Village can also be used for requests for assassination (*makas*). On the other hand, Gilfith village is entitled to make requests for spear-throwers (*mun delak*) and for mullet fish used in rituals (*togmog*) from Fal village. Furthermore, in problems involving women, for example, when a man from Fal abducts the woman of another man and escapes to Gilfith village, the problem can be solved by Machey estate paying compensation (*buyul*). Additionally, this *tabnaw* has a network with the Ganfunek estate of the Ool section in Wanyan village for requesting for spear-throwers (*mun delak*). In such cases, the menfolk of Ateliew or Rumu' village are used. The Machey estate also has a similar *tha'* with the Da'ech estate in Arigel village. This village is one that was taken over from a Balabat village and is obliged to supply spear-throwers (*mun delak*) to Gilfith.

The historical legacy surrounding the formation of the *tha'* of the Machey estate provides us with critical information to help us understand the nature of war and the characteristics of networks among villages in Yapese society. A brief discussion follows.

- 1) The head of the chief *tabnaw*, the Arib estate of Tab Village in Tamil is selected from Fanif *ganon* (sib). The last head was Tamanfelthin of the Gireng estate. Since this estate is a *pilung*, he became extremely powerful upon acquisition of the voice of both *tabnaw*.
- 2) Gamadbay, the *pilung* of Okaw village had the privilege of distributing *labalaba* (textiles) during *mitemit* (ritual exchange). On one occasion when Gamadbay was not there, Tamanfelthin distributed textiles and started to dance. Gamadbay, who came later, became very furious of this behavior which showed blatant disregarding of his privilege. He thrust a rod used for cutting coconuts through the ears of Tamanfelthin and killed him. He then returned to Okaw village.
- 3) The decisions made in the meeting held by the *pilung* after this incident provide insight into the nature of the ranking system in Yapese society. It was decided that the head of the Arib estate should be selected from the men of the low ranking village Fanif *ganon* (sib). This measure was designed to prevent the leader of this estate from wielding power in Tab by lowering the rank of the village where he came from. The Arib estate is the highest ranking *tabnaw* in Yap, as well as being chief of the *bulche'* conference. Here we observe an adjustment that was made to prevent the concentration of too much power in the hands of one *tabnaw*.
- 4) A meeting of the *pilung* of *bulche'* and *ulun* villages was also held to determine the punishment for the killer of Tamanfelthin, Gamadbay. However, none of the *bulche'* *pilung* who attended showed any intention of challenging the Okaw

village in battle. At that time, a man named Thapugek rowed the canoe for Pitomag, the head of the Ruway estate in Rull. This Thapugek came from Kanif village, which was *milingay* (low ranking) in those days.

Thapugek volunteered to kill Gamadbay and the *bulche' pilung* granted him the opportunity. He mobilized the Kanif villagers and the people of other allied *milingay* villages and then ambushed and killed Gamadbay on his way home from a ritual (*togmog*). They cut off Gamadbay's head and brought it to Pitomag. Then, they took the head to Tab village and presented it to the *pilung*. For this meritorious deed, Thapugek became the *pilung* of Okaw village and was given a seat for use in meetings (a stone to lean against). Kanif village was raised to the rank of *bulche'* and became a partner (*daotu*) of Ngolog village in Rull. Okaw village, meanwhile, was transferred to the *baan pagal*. Up to this point, the incident had no direct bearing on the formation of the *tha'* of the Machey estate but was to have other repercussions later.

5) A daughter of the chief *tabnaw*, Bulwol estate, married into Gilfith village but was unable to bear children. She adopted the son of her elder brother, naming the child Wa'ath, who became the heir to the Machey estate and was gained fame for his prowess as a spearthrower (*mun delak*). He came to be called Wa'ath *ni kaan*. On the other hand, the elder sister of the slain Gamadbay also married into Gilfith village and gave birth to two sons. Wa'ath took care of these two boys and taught them spear-throwing. With his two sons, who were "brothers" to Gamadbay, Wa'ath contemplated revenge against Thapugek.

6) There is a battlefield called Bile'malang between Rumung Island and Maap Island. Maap was the consistent loser in the struggles that took place there. To amend the situation, the Amin villagers of Maap requested assistance from Thapugek of Kanif village. Their strategy for winning Thapugek's help was to send a beautiful woman to him. Although the women they chose has a husband. She had no choice but obey the orders of the *pilung*. The *pilung* took this woman to the magician (*tamerong*) to have an incantation (*pig*) performed which would make Thapugek become enamoured with her. With *gaw* money under her waistcloth, the woman went to Kanif village and subsequently became Thapugek's woman. After a while, acting on a suggestion from this woman, Thapugek went to Maap. Since he knew it would be dangerous to go near Gilfith village, he took a detour along the western coast, passing through Tagreng strait and finally reaching Maap. Upon arrival the *pilung* of Maap asked him for help and consented to aid them in war. Thapugek burned down the meeting place (*faluw*) of Fal village in Rumung and killed many men.

7) Reports of the above incident reached Gachpar village, which is under the control of Rumung, as well as Gilfith. The village head of Gachpar, Funepuluw, and Wa'ath of Gilfith village were brothers. Upon hearing the news, Wa'ath went to Rumung to order a search for Thapugek. After learning that Thapugek was in Bechiyal village in Maap, Wa'ath travelled to Maap with the aforementioned two sons of Gamadbay's sister and a man named Rigow from Ateliew village.

They found Thapugek and Wa'ath ordered Rigow to throw a spear at him. The spear killed the already wounded Thapugek. Then they went to the Gachpar villagers and said "Thapugek is in Bechiyal village, if you find him bring him to Gachpar." The Gachpar villagers, went to Bechel and, shouting "We killed Thapugek," brought Thapugek's body to the village. Since Gilfith and Okaw belonged to the same alliance (*baan*) and thus were not supposed to fight each other, this scheme it appear that it was people from Gachpar that killed Thapugek. Moreover, in this case, Wa'ath fought not for the sake of his village but for the two young men under his charge and for the *pilung* of Gachpar village who were his "brothers". In the same vein, Thapugek had taken up the cause of the people on Maap for the sake of his wife and his relatives by marriage (*we'chuma*).

8) After the war ended, Wa'ath of Gilfith village and Funepuluw of Gachpar village held consultations. "What do you want?" asked Funepuluw. "Shall I give you the right to control (*suwon*) the women"? "I cannot bring this talk before the *pilung* of my village with an offer such as that" answered Wa'ath. "Then you may have control (*suwon*) of the food used in rituals (*togmog*, i.e., bananas and coconuts) and of mullet fish (*tongir*)". "No, give me more," Wa'ath demanded. "What will satisfy you?" Funepulaw asked. "Give me the betel trees". "Very well, you shall have control (*suwon*) of the betel nuts and trees". Betel trees are used as the material for spears (*delak*). The term also denotes spear-throwers (*mun delak*). Since that time, whenever Rumung people catch fish, they offer them to Gilfith village. They supply food for rituals whenever there is such a request. Gilfith can ask for the dispatch of spear-throwers (*mun delak*). Moreover, problems involving women can be resolved by Gilfith village's payment of compensation.

9) Although, in reality, it was Wa'ath of Gilfith village who killed Thapugek of Kanif village, to outward appearances the slaying was committed by the people Gachpar. Meanwhile the womenfolk of Maap and Kanif village, using Wanyan village—which belonged to the same alliance (*baan pagal*)—as mediator, attempted to obtain the release of Thapugek's body. However, the Gachpar people refused and, in result, Wonyan village went to war with Gachpar village. On this occasion, Tab and Gilfith joined forces with Wonyan village. Because of this, after the war, the *pilung* of Tab village gave spear-throwers (*mun delak*) from Wanyan village to Gilfith. Since that time, Gilfith had a channel for requesting the dispatch of spear-throwers from the Ganfunek estate of the Ool section in Wonyan village. This channel can also be used for settling payments of compensation (*buyul*). Moreover, a channel for requesting warriors from Arigel village, was established when the chief *tabnaw*, Ruway estate, lent warriors and *yaw* (magicians of war) to Wa'ath when Gilfith village attacked Rang and Runu'w villages. Wa'ath contributed significantly to the expansion of the power of Gilfith village and established *tha'* (networks) with *langan pagal tabnaw* of several villages.

In Yapese society, the various elements and groups are linked by networks maintained by the villages. These networks, termed *tha'*, are the channels through which the "voice" of the *tabnaw* (land) is transmitted. *Pilung* class *tabnaw* in the villages possess several networks. These were established by historical decisions made among the *pilung*. In particular, wars contribute greatly to the creation of new *tha'* and encourage the reorganization of relationships among villages.

Although we have not had time to discuss this subject, ritual exchanges, which involve competition for fame and prestige, serve as a balancing force which reconfirms and reinforces the traditional networks.

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