

OUTERS MOVING IN : THE RESIDENCE OF OUTER ISLANDERS IN YAP PROPER

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Abstract

This study examine the living processes and the types of residences of Outer Islanders in Yap Proper. As the result of our investigation we found three main types of residence—villages, government houses and private dwellings. Dabach was newly constructed as the village replacing Madrich, but it has not been necessarily successful to remove Outer Islanders to Dabach. This study also made clear the existence of several types of private dwelling, including one based on “confidence”. One noteworthy development is the appearance of private land which Outer islanders have bought for money. Yap society is steadily changing although it retains some traditional elements.

Key words: Confidence, Dabach, Outer Islander, Private land, removal

Purpose

There are eleven small inhabited islands besides Yap Proper (Y.P.) in Yap State, Micronesia. It is said that there is a cultural and ranking difference between the Yap Proper people (Yapese) and Outer Island people (Outer Islanders) (O.I.). There is a custom called *sawei* in which O.I. give gifts to three villages in Y.P. (one village in Gilman and two villages in Gagil) and receive goods they need from these villages. This custom continues to some extent even now. For these reasons O.I. don't live in Y.P. as full “customary citizens”. However nowadays, many O.I. do in fact live in Y.P. in various type of residence.

After the war western bureaucracy was introduced to Yap under U.S. rule and it is said that there exist both traditional and western political systems in contemporary Yap. Social change in Yap State is mainly caused by Western influences.

This study aims to make clear the processes underlying such change by exploring the several types of O.I. residence in Y.P.

Methods

We stayed about two weeks in Colonia, Yap State, as members of a study team from Kagoshima University, and visited the state government to gather materials.¹⁾ We also visited the chief's office of O.I. at Madrich to get to know the residential situation of O.I.'s in Y.P. We interviewed all householders in Dabach using a questionnaire and searched out and interviewed as many residents of O.I. in Y.P. as we could. We also draw maps using the data collected to make clear the spatial situation of O.I. residence.

Results

As a results of our investigation, we identified three main types of residence of O.I. in Y.P. These are 1) villages, 2) government houses, and 3) private dwellings (houses). Alkire²⁾ referred

to 1) and 2), but not to 3) which we found existing in several forms. Below we explain the three main types of residence:

1) *Villages*

Today, there are two village of O.I. in Y.P. One is Madrich which lies southern seaside of Colonia, and the other is Dabach which was constructed in northern part of Colonia recently.

(i) Madrich

Alkire investigated Madrich in 1976, 1980 and 1992 and wrote a paper based on these investigations in 1993. I will describe 1) the process of establishing Madrich and 2) the problem of the increase in numbers of permanent residents by summarizing his paper. (Fig 1)

(a) The process of establishing Madrich.

We have already noted that O.I. usually don't live in Y.P. long term, because of cultural and rank differences. However, some people such as sick persons and students among O.I. have stay short term, even in the period of rule by Japan, and the same tendency continued after World War II. These people stayed in the dormitory of these facilities, but there was no sleeping place for their attendants. Thus the Catholic Church offered its own land, Madrich, to the O.I. for a temporary stay.

(b) The increasing number of permanent residents

A small house was constructed at Madrich in 1950's, and this house was expanded little by little later on. In the middle of the 1970's, it was clear that some of the resident were staying long term. This means that the character of Madrich had changed from a place for temporary sojourn to one for permanent residents.

Alkire points out the strengthening of permanent residence in his three investigations.

Madrich was seen as a sojourn place in 1980, yet he reports that about half of the residents were permanent by 1992.

The reasons for staying about O.I. were to have access to hospitals and schools in earlier days; however by 1992 they were learning new technology and undertaking short time employment as well as visiting hospitals. He stressed that it was especially employee who stayed permanently.

(ii) Dabach

Dabach was newly constructed in the northern part of Yap Proper away from Colonia in the middle of the 1990's as a village to replace Madrich which was regarded as too overcrowded and dirty to be near the state capital, Colonia. The State government bought the land from the Yapese owner and offered it to O.I. Two collective public houses and six private houses were constructed and 68 persons lived there by October 1999.

Dabach was constructed to persuade the people living in Madrich to move; however most people in Madrich did not agree to move to Dabach. It is said that Dabach is ten kilometers away from Colonia, that is, far away from hospital and work place, so it is inconveniently situate especially for people having no car.

I will discuss Dabach further in another paper.

2) *Government houses*

Government houses are another type of residence where O.I. live. O.I. who can stay in government houses are public officers and assemblymen. Another type of person who can live there is foreigners who support the government or work for the government. Government houses are constructed at three places near Colonia: Talang, Talguw and Gitam (or Dinay).

Table 1 shows the capacity of these government houses and the number of O.I. families

Table 1. The number of O.I.’s family in Government House

	Total rooms	Number of O.I.’s family
Talang	8	7
Talgu	9	6
Gitam	10	5
Total	27	18

living in them. O.I. must leave their government houses after four years, and this causes trouble because many of them cannot find any other dwelling.

3) *Private dwellings (houses)*

As the dwelling type of O.I. in Y.P., Alkire only deals with Madrich and government houses. He does mention “friend’s houses,” but does not explain this category in detail.

Table 2. The reasons of making possible to living in Yap Proper

Reasons	Number of household
(1) becoming relatives to Yapese	10
A before two generations	7
B recently	3
(2) confidence	3
(3) buying private land	4
A own land	2
B live in the other islander’s land	2
(4) rent house	1
(5) YCA dormitory	1
Total	19

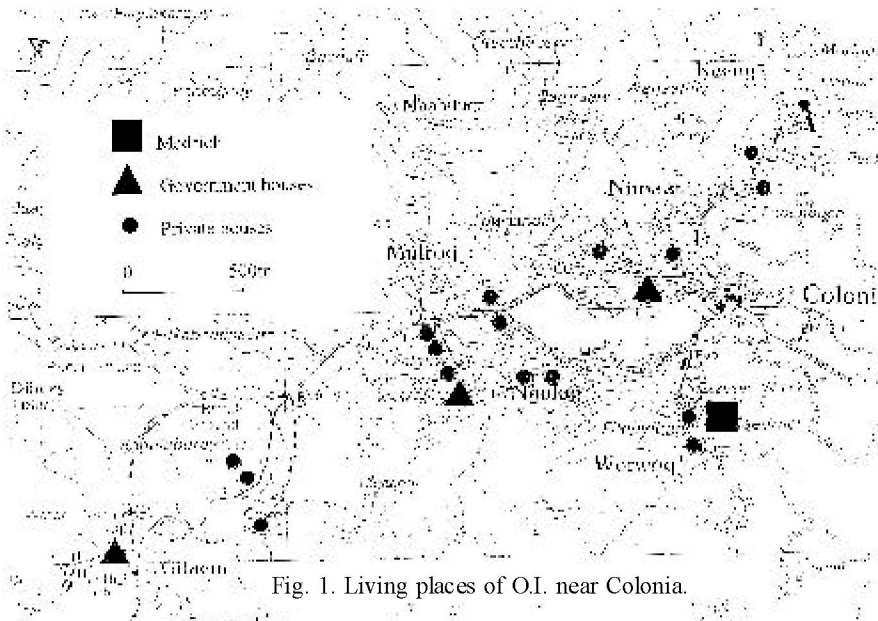


Fig. 1. Living places of O.I. near Colonia.

However, our investigation made clear that there were three main types of private dwellings besides the newly established settlement, Dabach. These are dwellings of relatives, "confidence" dwellings and dwellings built on private land. Followings are these details. (Table 2) (Fig.1)

(i) Dwellings of relatives

This case arises from marriage between O.I. and Yapese. As a result the husband (wife) lives in the house of the wife (husband) in Y.P. There seem to be two cases of this type. One is rather old. Before the War, under Japanese rule, several O.I. moved to Y.P., married the Yapese and have lived ever since in the spouses houses in Y.P. The O.I. in this case live in Gilman, in the southern part of Y.P. and Gagil³⁾, in the northeastern part of Y.P., as well as near Colonia. (Fig.2)

Other cases are more recent, and the spouses also live in the partners' houses in Y.P. Almost all these O.I. live near Colonia. It is said that the marriage between O.I. and Yapese is rare because of cultural and rank differences. However, it is clear that in fact there are some cases according to our investigation. Alkire, however, does not refer to such cases.

(ii) "Confidence" dwellings

Yapese sometimes allow friendly O.I. to stay on their own land when they put deep confidence in them. In this case O.I. never pay for land and house. I found such a case when we car-

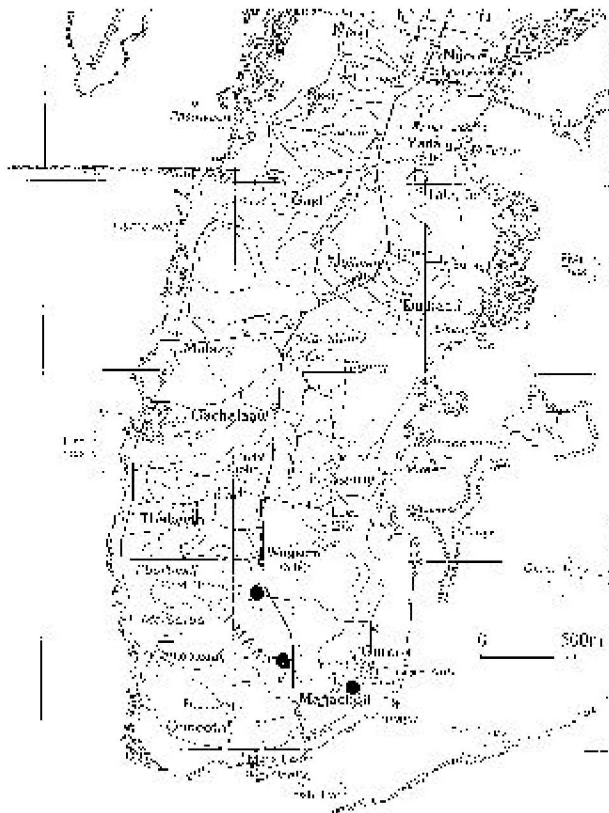


Fig. 2. Living places of O.I. in Gilman.

ried out our interviews. We can never understand such a case from an economic point of view, but I think this is one of the key phenomena for understanding present day Yap society. This case may correspond to the “friends house” that Alkire refers to. However, it may be different. This case concerns not a room but a house; not temporary but permanent accommodation, and only applies to reliable persons.

(iii) Buying private land and building a house

In this case O.I. buy Yapese land and build a house to live in. There are four cases of this type. Land was bought by two O.I.’s in one case⁴⁾, and by individuals in the other three cases. Land had not been an article of commerce up to that time; therefore it had not been sold, and selling it to foreigners is prohibited even now. It seems that land was recently sold for the first time in Dabach, although it was the government that bought the land. In the following stage, the individuals, I think, started to buy and sell land. As for buying land, traditional chiefs corporation bought a much larger piece of land at Gargey, Tomil⁵⁾. Alkire does not refer to the buying of land at all, because the Dabach land was sold after 1993 when the Alkire paper was published; any dealing in land by individuals is very recent, showing change in Yap society from community orientation to individualism.

4) *Other private dwellings*

There are two types of private dwelling other than those mentioned above. One is the rental house. An outer islander was lent a house by a Yapese because he had to leave his government house after a four year stay, and he could not leave Colonia because his wife was ill.

The other type is the dormitory of Y.C.A.⁶⁾ An interviewee’s son had worked at the Y.C.A and lived in its dormitory. His father visited this dormitory to meet his son and ended up staying two months.

The above two cases may be special, but rental housing may increase under the influence of the commercialization of land.

5) *Other results*

So far I have explained some main reasons why O.I. need to live in Y.P. Here I will raise other questions related to the dwelling of O.I. in Y.P.:

- (1) Since when have O.I.s lived in their present Y.P. residences?
- (2) Which island did they come from originally?
- (3) What are their experiences of having lived in Madrich?
- (4) How strong is their wish to return to their home island in future?
- (5) How strong now their custom (*sawei*) of gift exchange?

(1) Starting year of present residence

Table 3 shows most interviewees arrived on Y.P. in the 1990’s but some came before 1989.

(2) Original island

Table 4 shows most interviewees came from Ulithy. About 74 percent of interviewees came from Ulithi or Ngulu. Few interviewees came from far away islands.

(3) Living in Madrich.

Over half the interviewees had lived in Madrich (Table 5). No interviewees in Gilman had had this experience.

(4) “Will to return”

Over half the interviewees intended to live in Y.P. permanently, but a quarter wished to return to their home islands in future (Table 6). It is clear that, although the tendency to settle down is strong, some islanders hope to return to their home islands.

Table 3. Starting year of the present residence

Year	Number
1960~69	3
1970~79	3
1980~89	4
1990~99	9
Total	19

Table 4. Original islands of O.I.

Island	Number
Ulithi	9
Ngulu	5
Woleai	4
Lamotrek	1
Total	19

Table 5. The experience of having lived in Madrich

The experience of having lived in Madrich	Number
Yes	11
No	6
No answer	2
Total	19

Table 6. The will of returning to their home islands in future

Residence in future	Number
Permanent residence	10
Retrun to the home islands	5
Both here and islands	1
Depends on children	1
Not decided	1
No answer	1
Total	19

Table 7. Custom of exchange gifts to the particular village in Y.P.

Practicing this custom	Number
Yes	12
No	5
Depends	1
No answer	1
Total	19

(5) Custom gift exchange

About two thirds of interviewee, still practice this custom. This shows that traditional custom remains strong (Table 7).

Discussions

1) *The Removal Problem*

(i) There were two kinds of removal problem in October 1999. One, removal from a government house, the other removal from government land in Madrich.⁷⁾

(a) Removal from a government house

As I mentioned before the O.I. who can stay in government houses is public officers and assemblymen.

They can live there only four years. Following six months after four years are prepared as the time for them to search another dwelling. They must pay a half of the ordinary house rent if they stay there after this six months. Moreover, they must pay the same amount of the ordinary house rent if they stay there over five years.

It is usually difficult to find another dwelling place although many of them try to search a substitute dwelling after four years stay.

(b) Removal from Madrich

It is said that government stops to pay the land lent in Madrich this year. Madrich was originally the land owned by Catholic Church. The seashore attached to Madrich was buried later by the government and some houses were built on this buried land. Government had promised to pay the land lent only for ten years, and this year is the last year of this promise.

Thus O.I. in Madrich were forced to leave there.

(ii) The government insists that “we prepared Dabach instead of Madrich.” However, the O.I.s in Madrich and the government houses have rarely moved to Dabach in fact, because they have several complaints shown in:

- ① Dabach is far from their work places.
- ② Their old parents need to live near the hospital in Colonia.
- ③ Dabach is far from school for their children.
- ④ It is said that people in the Dabach area are culturally different and not friendly.

The government has a public traffic scheme to solve these complaints. However, it is doubtful whether these scheme is effective. Besides many O.I. have little money for building houses, even if they moved to Dabach. Can increased government loans solve this problem? Some people say Dabach in turn will be confused if all Madrich residents move there. In fact, there is not much space in Dabach.

(iii) After all, O.I. must select one from the following three options if they cannot remain in their existing dwellings:

- ① move to Dabach
- ② seek for another dwelling place in Y.P. by buying land.⁸⁾
- ③ return to their home islands

In general it seems that two changes are proceeding now among Yapese and O.I. in Y.P. One is the transformation of land into an article of commerce, and the other the transformation of the family from an extended one to a nuclear one.⁹⁾

2) *The Special Character of Ngulu islanders*

Ngulu island is situated in the southern part of Y.P. It is said that the ancestors of Ngulu come from Ulithy. One interviewee told me the following story. “An Ulithy man came and stayed in Mafal, Gilman. The chiet of Mafal estate aranged his marriage to a woman in Gachilaw village. Then they went to Ngulu island, stayed three days and came back to Mafal. Soon this couple went to Ngulu again, settled there and bore their children.” This story means that in Ngulu marriage between O.I. and Yapese came into existence in early times, since the ancestor of Ngulu is a man from Ulithy and a woman from Gilman.

Three of five interviewees from Ngulu have lived in Gilman, have their own land there and come and go to Ngulu frequently. It is said that they are bilingual and bicultural.¹¹⁾ They are very close to the Yapese, and differ little from them compared to the other islanders, although they still exchange gifts to Yapese in Gilman.

Conclusion

This study considers one aspect of change in Yap society through an investigation of the dwelling types of O.I. in Y.P. Here the direction of change in Yap society is summarized in four elements. Two strong traditional elements in Yap society were exposed by our investigation. One

is dwelling “by confidence”; the other the continued existence of *sawei* (the custom of gift exchange). Although of course there were contrary tendencies such as house rental it seems to be the exception, still. Although some families didn’t exchange gifts, it is also only a few yet.

But there are two strong elements for change. One is the shift from the extended family to a nuclear one; the other is the new status of land as an article of commerce. While the extended family remains strong, the land trade emerging recently will change Yap society more deeply.

Notes

- 1) “We” means I and my assistant undergraduate student Tetsuro Sueyoshi.
- 2) William H ALKIRE (1993): ‘Madrigh: Outer islanders on Yap.’ *Pacific Studies*, Vol.16, No.2
- 3) We heard from the chief of Madrich that one of O.I. were living in Lebinaw, Gagil. But we couldn’t find his house.
- 4) We heard this story from an interviewee. These two landowners had not yet built their house.
- 5) I was told this by an interviewee. The news later appeared *Yap Networker* Vol.1, No.9. August 20, 1999.
- 6) Y.C.A. is an abridgment of Yap Cooperative Association.
- 7) *Yap Networker* Vol.1, No.9 and 10.
- 8) Most of them don’t have the means to buy land, in fact.
- 9) House rental shows the same tendency.
- 10) Source: Mr. Michel Ragmau in Gilman.
- 11) ALKIRE, ‘Madrigh: Outer islanders on Yap’, p64.