AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS of David T. Tibbetts for the Master of Arts in Micronesian Studies presented May 31, 2002.

Title: Tobian Cultural Identity in the Republic of Palau

Approved: _____
              Donald R. Shuster, Ed.D., Chair

Over the past century Tobian islanders have relocated from their remote home island in the westernmost corner of the region known as Micronesia, and with the permission of the leading Ngerakebesang chiefs established residence in the village of Echang, in the Republic of Palau (ROP). Tobians comprise a partially relocated, resettled, and definitely marginalized minority group located on the geographic, cultural, economic, and political fringes of the ROP. In ethnographically exploring the dynamic and blurred boundaries of Tobian identity and diaspora in the nascent nation-building ROP, I find a very ambiguous, flexible, and adapting identity that encompasses both Palauan national identity and growing regionalism, while still maintaining fundamental Tobian values. Tobian identity emerges from Tobian customs, ideology, and sociopolitical makeup. It also derives from historical origin relations, wide ocean expanse, multiple colonial histories, population relocation and resettlement in the ROP, minority status, contemporary diaspora beyond historical migration boundaries and networks, and the current socio-political context and interplay of state-level politics, Palauan nationalism, regionalism, and globalization.

This thesis teases out the threads of a blurred Tobian/Palauan identity by analyzing multiple theoretical arguments with rich ethnographic insights and several poignant ethnographic events. Exploring this Tobian/Palauan 'site' provides a compelling academic space to conceptualize and explore politics, culture, and identity within a post-colonial and globalized context. It speaks to issues of modernity, hybridity, diaspora, economic development, and ethnographic license. At the local-level, exploring the relationships between Palauans and Tobians reveals an ongoing and complex, multi-leveled and layered, occasionally tenuous relationship between Palauan national identity, and Palauan and Tobian cultural identity.

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE SCHOOL AND RESEARCH

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TOBIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU

BY

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Chapter One

Blurred Boundaries

Introduction

> The movements of Native Pacific people suggest newly inventive struggles for breathing space, for relational sovereignty, in post- or neocolonial conditions of complex connectivity. They are about finding ways to exist *in* a multiplex modernity, but with a difference, a difference derived from cultural tradition, from landedness, and from ongoing histories of displacement, travel, and circulation. (Clifford, 2001:483)

As a point of reflection, the new millenium reveals a 'smaller' world, where computer technology, telecommunications, high-speed transportation, a common economic market, and democratic politics interconnect the global world. The term 'globalization' is frequently used at all levels of popular discourse. Politically and culturally, this concept suggests a global model that is comprised of nation-states, government entities, ideologies, and policies that plug into one another at various levels.

The movement of peoples and the establishment of resettled communities has always been a dynamic feature of history and has resulted in the culturally diverse world we know today. My research interests derive from exploring concepts and politics of culture, cultural processes, and power relations and boundaries between persons, peoples, and governments. I am particularly interested in cultural identity, maintenance, and change. And I am continually perplexed at the cultural diversity and associated complex and varied histories of the Oceanic region.

Oceanic peoples are interconnected through historical events, multiple colonial histories, contemporary politics, and the commerce of peoples and ideas, yet they maintain separate and distinct cultural identities through their varied histories and maintenance of land, language, and customs. In contemporary Micronesia, I am

interested in the interplay between these negotiations and the processes and effects of

emerging national identities on cultural identity and customs. In the broader context of

globalization and diaspora, as islanders move further away from their home islands their

expanding communities continue to negotiate and maintain their cultural identities at

home, while also negotiating new challenges abroad in the urban setting. As multiple

peoples and cultures increasingly interact and interconnect at multiple levels and sites, I

am curious how these moving peoples maintain their cultural identities while away and

supposedly 'displaced' from their homes.

This general idea leads me into a broad curiosity. If we are all 'plugged' into this

global cultural model, what happens to our cultures and identities? What interactions and

processes are taking place within and between cultures? Considering post-colonial

politics, recent and emergent nationalism, and the increased diaspora of Pacific Islanders

moving within the global sphere, what happens to cultural and national identities? What

happens to 'culture' in this modern 'global' world? Are less populated cultural groups

marginalized? Are they losing their cultures and identities as nascent nation-states

develop their national identities? Are these developing nations attaining national

identities? With diaspora comes notions of hybridity. What does this mean for cultural

loss and cultural identity? What does this mean for national identity?

I pose the following specific research questions. Within an ambiguous political

context of neo-colonialism, growing Palauan nationalism, increasingly interdependent

regionalism, and globalization, are Tobians becoming more 'Palauan'? Given this

dynamic of social-cultural change, are Tobians able to maintain their cultural identity and

sense of indigenous roots? This research endeavor will show that Tobian identity and

values are rooted in Tobian socio-political value structures and ideology of 'mobile' homes, or homes in flux. These last two terms I use in an attempt to convey the Tobian ideology and historical use of sailing canoes and the transformation of this ideology into their contemporary negotiation and maintenance of homes within the larger Palauan society, Echang, Tobi island, and increasingly, beyond Palau to places such as Guam, Hawaii, and the United States. Historically, Tobians have always been mobile, traveling the seaways far beyond the reef to fish for their families on Tobi island and visit families in other islands. This historic circumstance enables me to frame an ethnographic research endeavor that reveals the complexities of an adaptive, contested, fluid, and ambiguous Tobian cultural identity.

Over the past century Tobian islanders have relocated from their remote home island and resettled in the Republic of Palau (ROP). Tobians comprise a partially relocated, resettled, and definitely marginalized minority group located on the geographic, cultural, economic, and political fringes of the ROP. In ethnographically exploring the dynamic and blurred boundaries of Tobian identity in the nascent nation-building ROP, I find a very ambiguous, flexible, and adapting identity that encompasses both Palauan national identity and growing regionalism, while still maintaining a strong Tobian identity. Tobian identity emerges from Tobian customs, philosophy and ideology, and sociopolitical makeup. It also derives from historical origin relations, wide ocean expanse, multiple colonial histories, population relocation and resettlement in the ROP, minority status, contemporary diaspora beyond historical migration boundaries and networks, and the current socio-political context and interplay of state-level politics, Palauan nationalism, regionalism, and globalization.

In the past 100 years the total Tobian population has decreased from approximately 1000 (Eilers, 1936, from Black, 1983: footnote) individuals at the turn of the 20th century to less than 200 individuals at the turn of the 21st century.[1] Almost the entire population has relocated to the re-settled Southwest islander community known as Echang[2] (pronounced, "ay-ong"), near the current Palauan national center of Koror[3]. These population dynamics point to the impact of introduced disease, colonial policy, economic development, and urbanization. Considering the population relocation into the larger urbanized Palauan host society, the increasingly congested and hybrid Southwest islander resettled community of Echang, and the rapid change in traditional Tobian lifestyle, questions of Tobian identity markers, the maintenance and transformation of cultural identity, and notions of indigeneity in this contemporary setting arise.

However blurred, Tobian identity persists, in what I find to be a dynamic and unique geographical, environmental, cultural, and politically mixed landscape. This is an excellent setting to explore politics and culture, blurred boundaries, multiple identities,

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[1] Peter Black describes this depopulation in a footnote to his paper, *The In-Charge Complex and Tobian Political Structure*. "Tobi's recent demographic history is starkly tragic. In 1910 a German government vessel arrived. A reasonably careful census was taken and nearly 1000 souls were counted (Eilers, 1936). Shortly thereafter, perhaps as a result of this very ship's visit, influenza struck and the population halved and halved again. The population then began a steady decline, only arrested in the mid-sixties. This second slower decline was due to reproductive failure associated with various pathologies" (Black, 1984: footnote). I wish to describe Dr. Black here because I utilize his excellent ethnographic insights into Tobian culture throughout this thesis. Between 1967-73 Dr. Peter Black spent two and half years conducting ethnographic research primarily on the island of Tobi. He later returned in 1990, 1993, and 1999 to continue research with the Tobian community of Eang. He continues his work with the Tobian community and is presently (2001) working on an exhibit for the new Belau National Museum titled: *Tobi: 100 Years of History*. He is well respected in the Tobian community and considered a "Tobian elder". Aside from his extensive knowledge of the Tobian community, history, and politics, he is a great resource for younger generations and often utilized by them when pursuing Tobian histories, genealogies, and older generation Tobian language. His published work, Friends of Tobi Island website (FOTI, see bibliography), and personal communication have been extremely helpful to my work here.

[2] There are several spellings and pronunciations for the village of Echang. Another spelling is Eang (same pronunciation as Echang) and another pronunciation is Hopsong. This flexibility and diversity in just a village name is symbolic of the flexible and ambiguous nature of Tobian and Southwest islander identities.

and the 'spaces' in between. To explore this setting further I first locate and describe

several general but significant features of and between Palau, Tobi, and Echang.

Background: Locating the Republic of Palau, Tobi, Helen, and Echang

Palau. The world's youngest nation, the Republic of Palau is an island

archipelago of 340 islands with a population in 1995, of 17,225 (ROP Statistical

Yearbook, 1999). It is located approximately 500km east of Mindanao, Philippines, and

just north of the equator, comprising the westernmost boundary of the Micronesian

region in the southwestern Pacific ocean. The diversity, complexity, and intricacy of

Palauan culture and society have been cultivated for the past 3,000 years. Archaeological

evidence suggests that the archipelago was inhabited around 1000 B.C. (Douglass, 1990).

Linguistic and cultural affinities suggest that the founding population of the Palauan

islands likely derived from the Indonesian archipelago, although this is still under debate

(Irwin, 1992).

Palau's physical environment is diverse. It is comprised of six high volcanic and

uplifted limestone islands; Babeldoab, Koror, Ngerakbesang, Malakal, Pelilieu, and

Angaur. Kayangel atoll lies just off the northern tip of Babeldoab and is Palau's

northernmost point of land. Scattered throughout the central and southern parts of the

archipelago are thousands of limestone cusps, protruding out of the sea and covered with

jungle vegetation. These are known as the Rock Islands. A barrier reef surrounds most

of the archipelago, providing a natural lagoon that is 12 miles wide and up to 130 feet

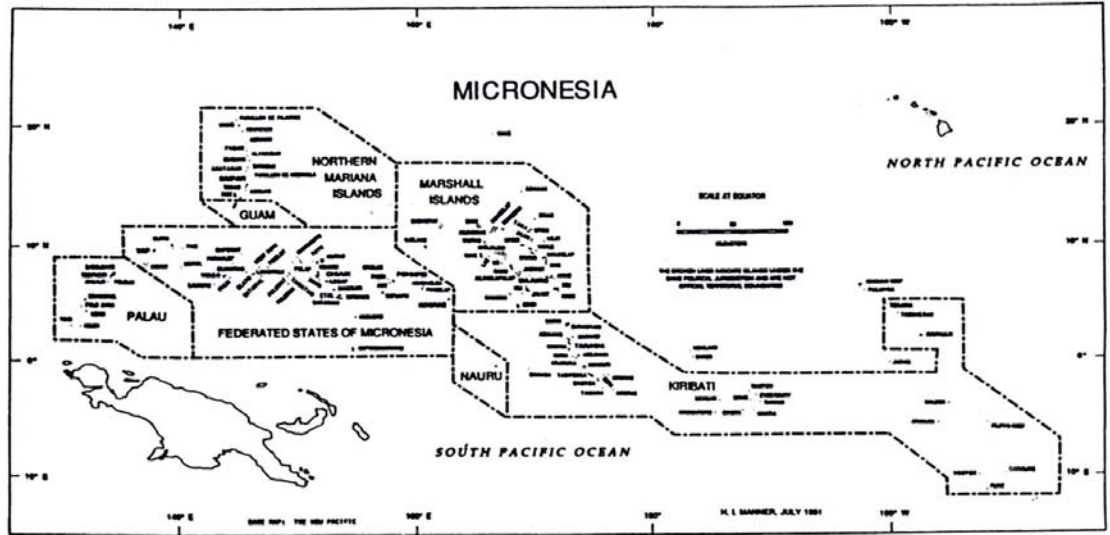deep (Johannes, 1992).   Palau's jungle, savannahs, a freshwater lake, mangrove forests,

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[3] In August of 2001, construction of a new national capital began in Melekeok State, in northern
Babeldoab. This development is supported by various sources including funding from the 1994 Compact
Agreement with the U.S. and a loan from the Republic of China (Taiwan).

coral reefs, and associated marine, faunal, and terrestrial wildlife are world renowned for their species diversity and quantity.

Tobi. Comprising the southernmost land areas of the Palauan archipelago are the coral limestone low islands known as the Southwest islands. These are; Fana, Sonsorol, Pulu Ana, Merir, and Tobi. Tobi[4] comprises the extreme southwest boundary of the ROP's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In contrast to the Palauan high islands, Tobi is a low coral island with very limited land area (.5km^2). The approximate center of the island is located at 3º00'25" latitude and 131º07'25" longitude and is located over 380 km south of the ROP's national capital, Koror. Tobi has a small and shallow lagoon with a steep fringing reef and no barrier reef. It is naturally abundant in marine resources. The interior of the island sits high enough above sea-level to provide a freshwater lens and a large taro swamp.

In the context of an increasingly globalized Palau, Tobi island remains fairly disconnected from the urban national center of Koror. Even geographically, Tobi appears to be one of the more isolated places in the world (see Map 1 and Map 2, p.7-8). This is the only map I have located that actually makes a connection between Tobi and the Republic of Palau. Unfortunately, it is deceiving, as perhaps all maps are. Here, you can trace a finger from the national center down a long thin line to its southernmost island, Tobi. It is not a long trip for the eye here, about 12 centimeters on this map. But after literally traveling 38 hours and 599 km on the Tobi State ship (a converted Japanese longlining vessel) to personally and physically connect these two locations I soon realized just how far apart and distinctly different Tobi is from Palau.

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[4] The people of Tobi use the indigenous name of Hatohobei when speaking between themselves and use the name Tobi otherwise. This likely is due to the difficulty outsiders have pronouncing the former.

MICRONESIA

NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN

NORTHERN
MARIANA
ISLANDS

MARSHALL
ISLANDS

GUAM

PALAU

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

NAURU

KIRIBATI

SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN

Map 1

The Southwest islands of the Republic of Palau
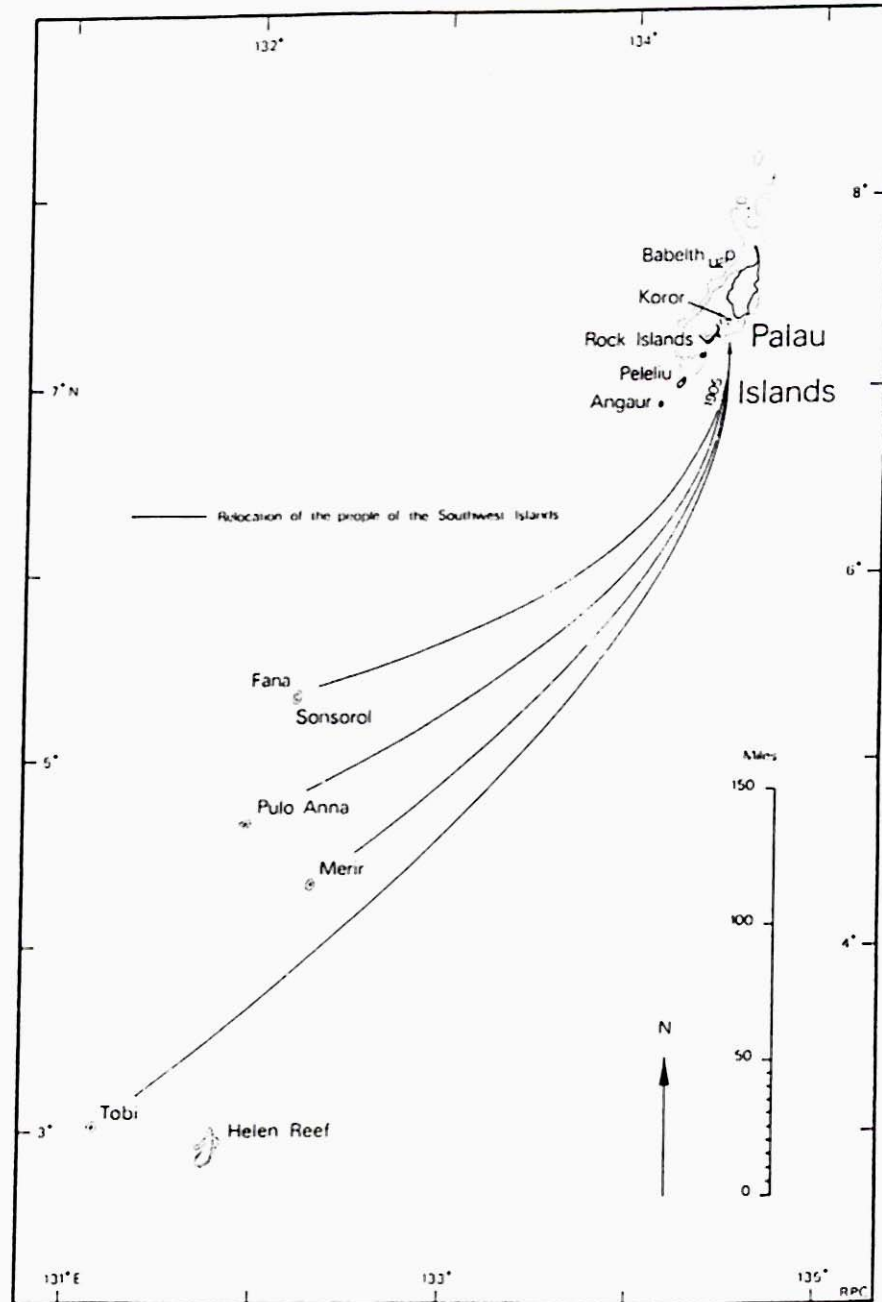
Map 2

Tobi is geographically closer to Halmahera and Moratai, Indonesia (approximately 200km) and equally as close to Mindanao, Philippines (approximately 500km), as it is to the national center of Koror. In obvious relation to this, Tobi is geologically more closely connected/related to Indonesia and the Philippine sea plates, whose territorial waters border the ROP EEZ. Archaeological evidence suggests that the founding population of Tobi arrived at least 300 years ago. (Hunter-Anderson, 2000:37).

Helen. Located 65km to the east of Tobi is *Hotsiharie*[5], commonly called Helen Island or Helen Reef. This uninhabited atoll island has a 163 km^2 lagoon. As environmental groups describe it, "Surrounded by fringing reefs and serving as a rookery for numerous seabird species, Helen Island possesses marine resources that are traditionally an important source of sustenance for the livelihood of the Hatohobei people" (HRAC and CCN, 2001). Sonsorol, the inhabited island nearest to Tobi, is located 125km to the north. Further south of Sonsorol are the islands of Pulu Ana and Merir. These four islands share some similarities in culture and language due to common ancestry from the outer Yapese islands of Ulithi atoll, yet they also maintain distinctly different cultural and political practices, values, and identities.

Cultural Differences and Similarities

Linguistically there are no similarities between the Palauan and Tobian languages. Palauan language falls into the non-nuclear Micronesian category with an Indonesian/Philippine influence while Tobian language falls in the nuclear Micronesian (non-Indonesian) linguistic category and is closely related to the Trukic languages. In

fact, Tobi Island delineates the western boundary of the nuclear Micronesian Trukic languages. The only languages west of Pohnpei not in this group are those of the high islands of Yap and Palau (Bender, 1971:438). The Tobian language is closely related to the Carolinian dialects, Ulithian in particular.

Most Tobians are gaining fluency in English and Palauan languages through formal education, daily activities in Koror, and increasing intermarriages. Having similar dialects, the hybrid community of Echang hamlet naturally has developed a hybrid Echangese language. As Peter Black describes these dynamics,

> I use the adjective *Echangese* to describe the language and culture of Echang hamlet. *Echangese* language and culture are syntheses of those of the four Southwest Islands and are increasingly influenced by the language and culture of Palau proper as well as the ever more cosmopolitan culture of Koror, host to people from many different parts of the world. (Black, Helen Reef Report, 2000)

Representative of their regional interconnectedness, many Tobians speak Japanese as well as Tagalog and Indonesian due to the historic and contemporary interactions with foreign fishing vessels visiting Tobian waters.

The complex Palauan social and political structure revolves around matrilineal clans and a competitive and complementary duality (the concept derives from Palauan origination myths) between brother and sister, men and women, space, villages, hierarchical clans, and islands. Matrilineal descent and the complementary brother-sister relationship is the basis of all Palauan relations. From here, exchange practices and alliances are established, maintained, or broken. All families are tied to land, which is the social matrix that holds families together within and between villages. Both marriage and adoption are considered business practices.

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[5] This is the Tobian indigenous name, meaning "reef of clam".

Where Palauan social structure is hierarchical and competitive, Tobian social and political structure is egalitarian, traditionally based around one traditional leader and originally, seven clans. Relations within and between families are based on male-female complementary roles, food and labor exchange, and age and gender respect. Land is primarily passed from the father to the eldest male in the family. A unique aspect of Tobian social and political life is the method of dealing with conflict while living within a small community. As we will see, Tobian socio-political structure is highly fractured and competitive. The following oral history sheds light on this internal socio-political dynamic.

Tobian Origin History

The following story was told to Peter Black in 1968 by Patricio Tahimaremaho. I have heard the same story numerous times from various Tobian friends. Atypical of most oral histories with multiple perspectives, this piece of Tobian history seems to remain constant between all individuals, at least in my experience. I believe it is an essential feature of Tobian identity.

> The first ruler of Tobi Island and also its discoverer was a woman from Fais called Ramoparuhe. She and her husband Yongoihari and her father Tahabech were fleeing a war on Fais and came directly to Tobi without stopping. Patricio does not know how long it took them to get here, or anything about Ramoparuhe's mother or about the equipment in the canoe except that she did have a piece of thatch which she used to eat her food off at every new moon. He doesn't know if they had a crew or not but he does know that their god's name was Mabuwat. Ramoparuhe was the navigator. They landed on Tobi about where the present channel is and Ramoparuhe buried a clam shell in a small hill near the beach. The island was much smaller then than it is now; it was about the size of Helen Reef. There was only one tree on the island, a tree called Moh. Moh is now extinct on Tobi but it does grow on Sonsorol, Merir, Helen Reef and maybe Pulo. There were no spirits on the island either. They decided to go back to Fais for awhile and they went straight back, not stopping on the way. After a short stay in Fais they decided to go back to Tobi, and once again they left Fais. On arriving

back on Tobi they found Souhopit, Ramoparuhe's full brother. A dispute arose because Souhopit and Ramoparuhe both claimed the island. Souhopit asked: "You say you were first but where is your sign?" So they dug in the hill and found her clam shell but underneath it they found an old piece of thatch which Souhopit said belonged to him, thus it proved that he was the first to come to Tobi. Ramoparuhe said he had put it underneath her clam shell and chased him off the island. A little while later Tahabech left Tobi for Fais but his daughter and son-in-law remained. On his way back to Tobi, Tahabech stopped at Merir where he found Souhopit who had discovered Merir after being chased off Tobi. Tahabech didn't stay long but continued on to Tobi. After several years had passed, Tahabech, Ramoparuhe, and Yongoihari decided to go up to Merir and visit Souhopit. When they arrived, Ramoparuhe was sea sick so Tahabech asked Souhopit to take her ashore and keep her for awhile. But Souhopit answered that if she came ashore, he would kill her and burn her like a turtle. So they turned back to Tobi, where Tahabech left the other two and went to Fais--never to return. Ramoparuhe had her first child soon after this. His name was Yango and he was to be the next ruler of Tobi. Ramoparuhe had six more children and from them she made five clans. About this time a woman named Roubah drifted to Tobi from Wolei on a bundle of material used in making mats. Her children became the sixth clan, Haworei, and Yango and Ramoparuhe were in the seventh, or chief's, clan. (FOTI website, as told to Dr. Peter Black by Patricio Tahimaremaho in 1968)

This story reveals much about Tobian social-political ideology and this will be addressed in chapters four and five. In Peter Black's analysis, "It speaks of the importance of women to the social order, the role of matrilineality, the sacredness of clans, the importance of the tie between a woman and her brother, and the centrality of conflict and its management in social life" (FOTI Website, 2000). When corroborating this oral history with the archaeological evidence (carbon-dating from the Tobi taro patch) mentioned earlier and ethnographic work carried out by Dr. Donald Rubinstein [6]

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[6] As discussed by Dr. Peter Black on his FOTI website, "In June 29, 1973, the anthropologist Donald H. Rubinstein was carrying out ethnographic research on Fais Island in Yap. In an interview about clan origins with Uwedog, an old man, he recorded the following information: "Soflacig, this clan originated on Faraulep, then moved to Sulyaep on Woleai. When clan members came to Fais, they lived first on Peymay. A woman of the clan married into Peymadol Licholchol. Her daughters are Marechim and Lifarpaluy. Lifarpaluy was on a canoe bound for Yap, but went astray, and landed on Palau at a place called Hadagobey. This canoe-load was allegedly the first group of inhabitants on this place" (Rubinstein, correspondence to Peter Black, see FOTI). Black continues, "Do you think Lifarpaluy is the same person as Ramoparuhe? And is Hadagobey the same as Hatohobei? And does this mean that people from the two

on Fais in 1973, it appears that Fais and Tobi have had close relations and although

arguable, it is likely that people from Fais were the first inhabitants of Tobi island.

Colonial Relocation and Resettlement History and Echang

Karen Nero writes that, "Just as some islanders are engulfed by foreigners, others

became minorities in new islands through resettlement by colonial administrations, either

for the perceived welfare of the islanders after a natural disaster, or to answer colonial

needs for labour or land" (Nero, 1997:451). After a major typhoon damaged several of

the Southwest islands (but not Tobi) at the turn of the 20th century (1905), the German

colonial administration relocated most of these island populations to Palau. This was

more out of the colonial governments' interest in administrative convenience and

economic efficiency than anything else. As Mike Lieber explains, "The Southwest

islanders, for example, constituted a problem for the German administration in Palau:

expensive shipping was necessary to service the atolls. The typhoon offered a pretext for

solving the problem by relocating the islanders" (Lieber, 1977:346). However, we will

see in chapter four that there are additional variables in this relocation dynamic.

Echang. As mentioned earlier, since the turn of the 20th century almost the entire

Southwest island community, including Tobians, have relocated and established

themselves on Ngerakbesang island, near the now urban center of Koror. In chapter four

I will discuss in more detail the dynamics of the initial relocation and land claims.

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small phosphate islands of Fais and Tobi are relatives? Or does it mean that the Ramoparuhe story
somehow had made its way to Fais and there become part of Fais culture"? In personal communication
Don Rubinstein stated, "When Uwedog gave me that information in 1973, he was about 75-80 years old.
Figuring about 25 years per generation, I came out with the estimate of about 1690-1700 for the birth of
Marechim and Lifapaluy. Most of the links in this genealogy are corroborated by other genealogies I
collected, so I think it's pretty reliable."

Tobians, especially in the past twenty years, have relocated to gain access to secondary education, health care, wages, and the amenities of an urban lifestyle.

There is, however, continual interaction between Tobians in the Echang settlement in Palau and the now minimally populated Southwest islands via state supply ship and radio communication. The population of Tobi Island fluctuates between 5 and 30 people, depending on the schedule of the state supply ship, the state budget, secondary and tertiary school schedules, and family matters.

Peter Black discusses the duality of Tobian society noting that, "…ever since the early years of the 20th century, when Southwest Islanders first pioneered the Echang settlement, Tobian society has been dual in nature, with an urban, cash-based, pole based in Palau proper, contrasting with a rural, subsistence pole (in the context of *bipolar*), located on Tobi Island" (P. Black, Helen Reef Report, 2000). This duality is further highlighted by Black:

> Very often in Echang, especially on rainy mornings when the place is a sea of mud and hangovers are worsened by the necessity of getting to work, one can hear someone wistfully remark that things are probably much better on Tobi. "I bet they are eating tuna sashimi right now on Tobi, or maybe even turtle, and we can't even afford to buy canned mackerel." Yet even as they are saying this, Tobians savor the irony of knowing that the chances are good that at the same moment someone on Tobi is saying, "I really want to drink some cold beer. I bet in Echang right now they are drinking Kirin beer and smoking Winstons, while all that we have are coconuts and twist tobacco." In fact, people have often told me that if they could find a place with both fresh tuna and cold beer they would never leave. As it is, the two poles of their society complement each other nicely. Echang's (relatively) fast pace and consumer goods are matched by Tobi's secure, relaxed atmosphere and plentiful high-prestige foods. (Peter Black, 1984:53/4)

Fifteen years later I experience this same type of local-level discourse when visiting my friends in Echang and Tobi. In the past twenty years however, the modern and urban lifestyle has taken priority over rural traditional life. This is reflected in that virtually the

entire Tobian population chose to relocate and reside permanently in Echang and away from their home island. Black notes that, "All major areas of Tobian communal life (economics, politics, education, religion, kinship, and family) have changed dramatically and rapidly in recent years, and this process continues" (P. Black, Helen Reef Report, 2000). Yet although the duality of Tobian society remains, with continual albeit sporadic travel between Koror and the increasingly de-populated home island, Tobian cultural values, cultural-political structure, and belief system continue to shape the transformation of Tobian culture and identity in the context of larger Palau. Quoting Murray Chapman's research in the Solomon islands, "...we should be wary of binary oppositions between home and away, or a before-after progression from village life to cosmopolitan modernity" (1978; 1991). Similarly, Clifford notes, "As we try to grasp the full range of indigenous ways to be 'modern', it is crucial to recognize patterns of visiting and return, of desire and nostalgia, of lived connections across distances and differences" (Clifford, 2001:470). Tobians have a long history and dynamic practice of negotiating the gulf between the home island and their new island of residence.

Contemporary Political History and Setting

After three successive colonial administrations, Palau became a Trust Territory of the United States after World War Two. In 1980 the Palauans ratified into law a nuclear-free Constitution. Hatohobei (Tobi) State signed into law a state Constitution at this time, as well (see *Hufehiri Farau Ri Faruheri Hatohobei*). In 1994, after eight controversial plebiscites, negotiation and resistance to U.S. hegemonic political negotiations, and internal opposition and violence, an attempted house bombing, death threats, one presidential assassination, and one presidential suicide (see Aldridge and Myers, 1990),

the ROP attained its political independence by issuing a declaration of independence and signing a Compact of Free Association Agreement with the United States.[7] As Minoru Ueki writes, "The Compact Agreement, for US$500 million, is front-loaded with subsidies through 2009. The overriding concern of the national government has been to develop a self-sustaining economy before the year 2009, when funding under the Compact of Free Association, which established independence, comes to an end" (Ueki, 2000:481).

As the ROP continues to promote economic independence through tourism development and regional interdependence in preparation for a post-Compact future, there is increasing pressure on the Hatohobei State Government (HSG) to justify its state-level existence. Significant in this political debate is the fact that most of the community (approximately 200) reside in the urbanized and cosmopolitan center of Koror State and less than twenty reside on the distant home island. (Crispin Emilio, personal communication, 2000) Additionally, there is growing concern amongst elders in the Tobian community over Tobian cultural maintenance as younger generations are raised in the increasingly hybrid Southwest Islander community of Ngerakbesang and larger Palau. This is exacerbated by the increasing congestion of Echang.

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[7] "The compacts of free association between the United States and the FSM, the Marshalls, and Palau have been characterized by its supporters as satisfying American security interests while recognizing the integrity of Micronesian Governments. The compacts provide funding to maintain existing governmental operations and to develop self-sustaining national economies for the three Micronesian governments. In outline form, the compacts of free association with the three Micronesian governments recognize their sovereignty, their right to complete control over all domestic and internal matters, and their authority to conduct their own foreign affairs though in consultation with the United States. The United States, assuming responsibility for all defense and security matters, pledges in the compact to defend the freely associated state "as if they were a part of the United States" (Hanlon, 1998: 222). The free association relationship is defined in U.S. Public Law 99-239 (1986) and U.S. Public Law 99-658 (1986).

Chapter one has provided a broad introduction to this research endeavor. After establishing my research questions I have introduced, located, and described the Tobi, Palau, and Echang settings.

In chapter two I discuss historical and recent anthropological discourse on cultural identity, economics, and politics before transitioning into recent culture studies discourse on the same topics. Both discussions are grounded in my research questions.

Chapter three describes my ethnographic methods. In closing this chapter, I position myself by describing my conflicted insider/outsider role and personal relations with the Tobian community.

Chapter four examines a contested Echang land event that reached a climax in 1998. This event highlights the sometimes tenuous status of Southwest islanders and Tobians in Palau. I also explore several ethnographic events and symbols that positively express Tobian identity within Palau. I utilize historical and contemporary ethnographic work, oral histories, and personal observations and insights and weave these into my theoretical framework.

In chapter five I examine the intersection of Tobian local-level identity, state-level identity, and national and international agendas that revolve around a significant Tobian resource, Helen Island and reef.

Chapter six concludes this ethnography by synthesizing the theoretical framework and ethnographic events.

Chapter Two

De-Blurring

> States have used their force to create cultural diversity, and (also) to create
> cultural uniformity. This has made the state the most powerful cultural force
> in the modern world and the most schizophrenic. – Imanuel Wallerstein, *The
> National and the Universal: Can There Be Such a Thing as World Culture?*
> (1991)

This thesis, on one scale, is an attempt to address the continued western

hegemonic discourse deriving from 'globalization'. Both as individual nations and as a

collective island group, I find the Micronesian [8]'oceanscape' marginalized in post-

colonial global political discourse. I ponder whether this is any different than past

colonial situations of marginalizing and categorizing, and consequently, attempting to

control and dominate. From this hegemonic perspective, although Micronesia is a 'place'

that is filled with complex histories and peoples, it is a 'space' of empty blue ocean to

non-Micronesian politicians and policymakers from the 'global' arena. Where the

western Pacific Ocean has historically provided routes of interconnectedness among the

peoples of 'Micronesia', the predominant historical Western political ideology and

discourse continues to perceive and categorize the diverse and complex Micronesian

islands as a 'space' of homogenous isolates, perpetually confined to insularity by

location. Epeli Hau'ofa comments on this:

> Nineteenth-century imperialism erected boundaries that led to the contraction
> of Oceania, transforming a once boundless world into the Pacific Island states
> and territories that we know today. People were confined to their tiny spaces,

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[8] The term "Micronesia" and "Micronesian" reflect colonial forces more than the realities of a culturally
diverse region of western Oceania. I will use these terms in this paper for convenience as I am conducting
this work from a post-colonial perspective.

isolated from each other. No longer could they travel freely to do what they had done for centuries. They were cut off from their relatives abroad, from their far-flung sources of wealth and cultural enrichment. This is the historical basis of the view that our countries are small, poor and isolated…This assumption, however, is no longer tenable as far as the countries of central and western Polynesia are concerned, and may be untenable also of Micronesia. The rapid expansion of the world economy since World War II…had a liberating effect on the lives of ordinary people… The new economic reality made nonsense of artificial boundaries, enabling the people to shake off their confinement and they have since moved, by the tens of thousands, doing what their ancestors had done before them…They strike roots in new resource areas, securing employment and overseas family property, expanding kinship networks through which they circulate themselves, their relatives, their material goods, and their stories all across the ocean, and the ocean is theirs because it has always been their home. (Hau'ofa, 1993:10)

Although I do not agree with Hau'ofa when he claims that Oceania was a 'once boundless world', this excerpt poignantly addresses the tradition of mobility among Pacific Islanders and also colonial hegemonic ideology, discourse, boundaries, and categories. Historical imperial and colonial forces perceived Oceanic islands, cultures and peoples as too isolated and resource poor to attain "any meaningful degree of autonomy" (Hau'ofa, 1993:6), which is far from reality. As Hau'ofa further explains, this is:

an economistic and geographic deterministic view of a very narrow kind, that overlooks culture history, and the contemporary process of what may be called 'world enlargement' carried out by tens of thousands of ordinary Pacific Islanders right across the ocean from east to west and north to south, under the very noses of academic and consultancy experts, regional and international development agencies, bureaucratic planners and their advisers, and customs and immigration officials, making nonsense of all national and economic boundaries, borders that have been defined only recently…(Hau'ofa, 1993:6)

Hau'ofa asserts that post-colonial boundaries are fading as the diaspora of Pacific Islanders continues in a contemporary setting. Certainly, old boundaries and hegemonic discourses are changing positively due to the increased global migration and interactions

of and between Pacific Islanders. Despite this positive social, cultural and political direction, in my opinion post-colonial contemporary global politics and discourse continue to marginalize Micronesia politically and economically, despite an increasingly 'interconnected' and globalized world. This larger marginalized context and discourse of power inequality initiates my impetus to explore diaspora and hybridity, cultural identity, and blurred boundaries from within a Tobian cultural context. This accentuates another level I wish to address. Surely, if 'Micronesia', as a western-derived category, is marginalized, then certainly Tobi is, *both* from the broader global perspective *and* within the Palauan local and state-level perspectives. Nevertheless, Tobians engage in the larger global sphere with state-level politics, and they also interact in a sometimes tenuous and imbalanced power relationship as minorities within the larger Palauan society.

In effect, the marginalized 'Micronesian' identity is but one identity layer of a multi-layered vehicle I use to explore notions, negotiations, and processes of cultural and national identity within the theoretical frameworks of post-colonialism, nationalism, and globalism. A large thread of my work here intends to critique contemporary western (global) perspectives of not only 'Micronesia,' but also western notions and perceptions of identity, economic development, migration/movement, and cultural and family interconnections. Ethnographically speaking, I utilize the above theoretical frameworks dialectically with several ethnographic events to tease out the multi-leveled and layered, shifting identities, from a blurred Tobian/Palauan relationship.

To answer the research questions I posed in chapter one I must discuss a theoretical framework that involves several inter-related discourses. I first discuss concepts of insularity and global world culture that is founded on the ideology of

capitalism and economic development, of which I have already introduced. Nationalistic discourse arises within the framework of post-colonial global nation-state politics, raising additional issues of modernity and hybridity. Anthropological theory on cultural identity and ethnicity in Oceania also contributes to my analysis in my exploration of historical and contemporary ethnographic work in Micronesia. I complete this framework by discussing the latest discourse on Oceanic identity from the field of cultural studies. This will, perhaps, introduce a less western-focused perspective on cultural identity, although cultural studies remains deeply ingrained in western epistemologies.

The remaining chapters of this study utilize ethnographic events in Tobi and Palau at the local, state, and national levels, where I analyze relations between Palauans and Tobians. I do this by utilizing and critiquing this anthropology focused, western-modeled framework of identity studies and analyzing and highlighting the Tobian local-level meanings of identity and expression through specific ethnographic events, my personal observations, past ethnographic work in Tobi, and discussions with Tobian friends and family.

Ronald Stade's (*Pacific Passages: World Culture and Local Politics in Guam, 1998*) discussion of remoteness and hybridity examines the concept of a 'world culture' system. Within his conceptual framework, the larger idea of a capitalistic nation-state is that it is best developed by replicating uniformity. This requires the hegemonic discourse of stereotyping and categorizing I have mentioned earlier in this chapter. This concept of uniformity creates problems for anthropologists who, on the one hand, ethnographically experience a culturally diverse reality and, on the other hand, for the most part attempt to categorize cultures and peoples within a linear and dichotomous oppositional framework.

As a result, we have seen anthropological discourses revolve around binarisms such as 'tradition' vs. 'modernity', 'authentic' vs. 'inauthentic', 'center vs. periphery', and 'pure' vs. 'hybrid'. And this discourse is an extension of the Western dominated global discourse. This is all highly problematic when placed in reality. Stade critiques past anthropological works as, "(R)esenting the hybrid, the 'half measure', the inauthentic, (which) has been a common passion in many contexts." Stade further writes, "Convinced of their role as guardians of genuine cultures that were turning inauthentic, anthropologists have been inclined to denounce cultural hybridity as well" (Stade, 1998: 29).

As Stade discusses oppositional categorization further, "All of these maneuvers of identification (of identifying individual with collective phenomena, private with public domains, and places with people) have generated problems and debates in anthropology" (Stade, 1998:25). He points to 'topological stereotypes', or 'metonymic constructions of places and people' (see Stade, p. 25) as methods of labeling and categorizing in dominant discourse, whether it be from within the discipline of anthropology or economics, nation-state politics, cultural groups, or the individual.

Considering broad 'topological stereotypes', Stade cites examples found in Arjun Appurandai's *Place and Voice in Anthropological Theory* (1988) such as, "Honor-and-shame in the circum-Mediterranean, hierarchy in India, ancestor-worship in China, *compadrazgo* in Hispanic America," and "the matrilineal belt in Oceania" (Stade, 1998:25). Micronesia, I believe, has been troped from a global perspective as a group of small insular islands lacking in resources. Moreover, Tobian islanders are often stereotyped within Palauan perspectives as 'backward turtle people' (turtle being a major

Tobian food source). Such discourse is insidious and hegemonic as it promotes negative

stereotypes that are propagated and perpetuated within the dominant cultural and/or

political system. These 'topologics' create inequalities and immediately take voice and

representation away from the less dominant culture, as Stade elaborates here:

> This type of *topo-logic* (original emphasis) – in which the units were things like "societies", "cultures", and "peoples" – does more than state that indigenes are from certain places or belong to those places, it suggests that they "are somehow *incarcerated* (original emphasis), or confined, in those places" (from Appudurai, 1998:37). "Natives are in one place, a place to which explorers, administrators, missionaries, and eventually anthropologists, come. These outsiders, these observers, are regarded as quintessentially mobile; they are the movers, the seers, the knowers" (Appudurai: 37). Today we can add "all the language of niches, of foraging, of material skill, of slowly evolved technologies" (Appudurai: 37), in short, of ecological adaptation, to the language of incarceration. (Stade, 1998:25)

In *Remaking Micronesia: Discourses over Development in a Pacific Territory,*

1944-1982 (1998), David Hanlon explains this concept of 'topologic' as it applies to the

U.S. colonial administration in Micronesia and how this created the illusion that

economic development and sustainability in Micronesia was/is impossible. Regarding

early U.S. colonial policies:

> In these first formative encounters between Americans and the people they called Micronesians, images were formed and set, given an almost canonical legitimacy that would explain at once the necessity for economic development in the islands and the reasons for the failure of those efforts. Micronesians were described as quaint, happy, but backward people who no longer could afford to enjoy the luxury of living apart from the larger global order. …Distance, isolation, climate, the calumnies of previous colonial regimes, the lack of exploitable resources, and, most important, the perceived unwillingness and inability of the different island peoples came to constitute a litany that would be articulated by many among the succeeding generations of administrators, planners, visitors, and development specialists. (Hanlon, 1998:14)

An excellent example of the conceptually linear ideology I find fault with above

is Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). His theoretical

work is drawn from the works of the German philosopher G.W. Hegel, who connected

history and humankind to the evolution of economic development. Hanlon observes:

> Hegel saw human history as working its way from simple tribal societies
> based on slavery and subsistence agriculture through various theocracies,
> monarchies, and feudal aristocracies, and ultimately to modern liberal
> democracy based on technologically driven capitalism. In Fukuyama's
> analysis, the inevitable triumph of liberal democracy results from the
> interplay of pragmatic economics, rational science, and a primordial human
> drive for recognition. From this complex interplay emerges a mature
> capitalist economy capable of meeting the needs of all. The end of history
> brings too the appearance of a universal "last man," content, democratic, free,
> prosperous, productive, and globally conscious…The world, according to
> Fukuyama, seems in the process of becoming like "US". (Hanlon, 1998:218)

This hegemonic discourse privileges economics above all other aspects of human

interaction, and subsequently, with the supposed final development of all cultures and

peoples into a capitalistic economy we arrive with one world culture. Hence, as

Fukuyama argues, economic uniformity creates cultural homogenization. Or as Hanlon

suggests, "Development now meant transformation toward an ever more perfect state that

reflected the influence of both the Hegelian concept of history and the Darwinian notion

of evolution" (Hanlon, 1998:8). The term 'development' then takes on the quality of

measurement. It becomes a tool or model to gauge 'less developed' nations and peoples

and justify all policy-making. Hanlon agrees, "Applied to colonial situations of the

nineteenth century, development became a conceptualizing tool for measuring native

peoples against standards of Western civilization", and further, "By the early decades of

the twentieth century, the word 'development' was most often employed to refer to the

productive capabilities of a colonized population that could be employed in the

establishment of a modern market economy" (Hanlon, 1998:9).

This again reveals the emphasis of capitalism and the hegemony of economic development discourse in the contemporary interconnected nation-state and global arenas. As I reviewed earlier, if past colonial policy was based on economic development, then I find the post-colonial political context of a global 'world culture' no different. This oppositional type of discourse, whether that of 'economic development' or 'world culture', unfortunately ignores the adaptability of Pacific Islanders. It does not account for their efficacy and resiliency as they have historically internalized outside models and influences and incorporated them into their own cultural value systems, remaking global influences rather than being overwhelmed by them.

Hanlon's *Remaking Micronesia* (1998) provides an excellent analysis of hegemonic discourse and indigenous responses to it. His work here critically examines economic development in Micronesia and the various methods used to subordinate Micronesian peoples and how those methods are locally negotiated and counter-attacked. He sees economic development discourse as a "discourse of domination" (p. 7) that the U.S. policy-makers utilized in their attempts to control the geo-politically strategic Micronesian region. Applying this to a broader context, Hanlon adds, "The remaking of Micronesia and Micronesians is, in part, about the way dominant systems of power preserve themselves." Here he discusses the economic framing of U.S. policy in Micronesia:

> Disciplinary or managing technology, drawn from the empirical sciences and with a strong statistical orientation, is employed to reshape the populace into a docile body that can be monitored, controlled, transformed, and directed toward the purposes of the state. Since Western society has become largely capitalist in character, the concerns of the state focus on the methods and profits of production, and with considerable effect. From the history of capitalism in the West emerges "homo economicus," a normalized, controlled subject who produces under certain conditions to satisfy perceived needs and

imposed requirements. The lives of economic men and women of the West are now mediated by the constructs of the market and the process of production. Economization has touched almost all aspects of life, including personal relationships, human biology, and even dealings with the natural world. (Hanlon, 1998:8)

Carrying this further with insight from Arturo Escobar's *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1994), Hanlon introduces the formulation of global economic development discourse. Referring to U.S. President Harry S. Truman's historic speech to the United Nations on January 20, 1949, he describes the speech as a response to the "tensions and rivalries of the post-World War II world (that) made economic stagnation and backwardness a threatening, dangerous condition for the capitalist West, particularly the United States," and the core of the speech as a "program of modernity or development for those areas of the world now characterized as 'underdeveloped'..." (Hanlon, 1998:9). He further elaborates on this post-World War Two turning point in the subordination and discrimination of so-called Third-World and underdeveloped peoples by the capitalist postwar U.S. dominated West:

> Escobar writes of Truman's "fair deal" for all as a call for development, a development concerned with replicating the features that distinguished the more advanced nations of the capitalist, postwar West the world over. These distinguishing features included industrialization, urbanization, high levels of technology, an affluent material culture, and specific, value-laden structures of education and cultural expression. What this particular vision of the world really entailed, believes Escobar, was but another, albeit more totalizing and global colonization of reality. (Hanlon, 1998:9-10)

Post-colonial and post-modern discourse has examined the counterhegemonic aspects of 'underdevelopment'. Underdeveloped peoples have not taken a passive role in this global hegemony but are often mistakenly perceived this way. Resistance comes in nuanced and varied methods. Hanlon first describes a more contrapuntal approach to discussing colonialism by offering Jean and John Comaroff's (1991) "notion of culture

that includes others as well as selves, actions as well as signs, creativity as well as

mimesis, and empowerment as well as subjugation…This empowerment…shows itself at

different times and in varied ways that often defy simple romanticized Western notions of

colonial resistance" (Hanlon, 1998:12). Paraphrasing Marshall Sahlins, Hanlon suggests

that "Pacific peoples are neither awed nor overwhelmed by external systems beyond their

control. Their response is rather to appropriate. Such pragmatic behavior lies at the heart

of every cultural scheme known to history" (Hanlon, 1998:12).

There is a dialectical interplay here between building national identities and

global uniformity. With the increase of commodities and interdependency, national

boundaries are less clear or significant. Paraphrasing Immanuel Wallerstein, Miles

makes the point, "Commenting on the dialectic that gives rise to national uniqueness and

global uniformity, Immanuel Wallerstein has written, 'At the very moment that we have

been creating national cultures each distinct from the other…flows of commodities…of

capital…of labor…have been breaking down…national distinctions'" (Miles, 1998:15).

Oceanic Identity and Anthropological Theory

Anthropologist Lin Poyer asserts that, "In the last fifteen years, issues concerning

ethnicity and personal and group identity have come to occupy an increasingly central

place in anthropological theory" (Poyer, 1999:197). Speaking about identity issues in the

Pacific, Joceyln Linnekin makes the salient point that, "Central to many political and

constitutional disputes in the Pacific Islands is the fact that cultural and national identities

– and categories such as 'indigenous' – are ambiguous and contested", and further states

that, "People who once identified themselves with a tribal group, a locality, or a

particular leader have been asked to accept over-arching affinities with strangers and

former enemies" (Linnekin, 1997:397). The processes of cultural identity maintenance are complex, involving politics within families at the rural and urban local-level, inter-island relations and conflicts, histories from the colonial pasts, and contemporary politics of nationalism, regionalism, and globalization. Negotiations of this maintenance of identity vary between cultural groups according to their respective customs, beliefs, sociopolitical structures, and histories. As they have done historically, contemporary Oceanic peoples and cultures actively negotiate and express multiple and shifting identities depending on the political and cultural context.

As I will discuss momentarily in this chapter, Pacific Islander concepts of individual and group identity differ from the Western concept of the same. Identity for Pacific islanders is blurred as these flexible, ambiguous, and increasingly contested identities are (un)defined in the multiple and fluxing boundaries resulting from the geography, cultural and historical diversity of Oceania, and such hegemonic nation-state forces as colonialism, contemporary post-colonialism, nationalism, and increasing regionalism and global interdependence.

Speaking of boundaries and identity in his book *The New World Disorder*, Ken Jowitt mentions, "Boundaries are an essential component of a recognizable and coherent identity. Whether the borders in question are territorial, ideological, religious, economic, social, cultural, or amalgams thereof, their erosion or dissolution is likely to be traumatic" (taken from Miles, 1998:184). Although I am in general agreement with this statement I have to caution that, especially in the case of Oceania, boundaries are often unclear and as mentioned above, ambiguous and continually negotiated and reconstructed. So what may appear on the surface as 'traumatic' may be deceiving. Boundaries overlap and are

in a constant state of flux and transformation as Pacific Islanders negotiate their futures in an increasingly interdependent international arena. As I will show in this ethnography, cultural diversity and identities are maintained in a complex and dynamic setting. Linnekin notes, "Cultural diversity is reproduced even as it is reinvented. Local identities, however they are reconstructed in the present, are not superseded so much as augmented by national and international affiliations" (Linnekin, 1997:398). This is revealed in the Tobian context when I discuss Helen Island and an international conservation group in chapter five.

The volume *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific* (edited by Linnekin and Poyer, 1990) addresses the complexities of cultural identity in the Pacific and introduces a theoretical continuum whereby, cultural identity and ethnicity in Oceania has become increasingly politicized as various peoples and cultures integrate into western systems of economics and politics. In this volume Alan Howard comments on the anthropological perspective here:

> We have in Oceania the possibility of seeing people struggle for the first time with who they are – their cultural identity – in an increasingly complex social world. Change and transition are also taking place within developed ethnic traditions, such as in Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii, that parallel changes occurring in other regions of the world. So we have a continuum to explore in Oceania, from indigenous notions of group differences and similarities (which generally emphasize open boundaries and flexibility) to institutionalized systems of ethnic discrimination. (Howard, 1990:259)

Although it is beyond the scope of this research to determine how pre-contact Pacific islanders defined and categorized cultural groups and boundaries thereof, "it is clear that as soon as European concepts of ethnicity entered the Pacific, they interacted with local realities to produce new sensibilities about islander vs. non-islander identities, and about differences among islanders" (Poyer, 1990:199).

All of the Micronesian islands have experienced multiple and varied colonial regimes in the past 300 years, from early Spanish rule, to German, Japanese, and most recently, American. The pre-war Japanese Empire basically ordered people into racial hierarchies with Japanese holding the highest status and islanders the lowest. This ideology fit into the larger nation-state system that requires the categorization of peoples in order to govern them. Under the US in World War Two, a 'structure' of politicized ethnicity continued. However, the emphasis from within the latter 'structure' was based more on capitalism and economic development, and less on racial hierarchies. As Poyer suggests, "When the American government withdrew from Micronesia in the 1980's, it left a legacy of competitive pluralism, the ethnic model most familiar in American public politics" (Poyer, 1990:200).

At this juncture I want to note the differences in western and Pacific Islander concepts of personhood and group identity. I believe, as a resulting element of early nation-state development (with this comes imperialism and colonialism founded on capitalism), western ideology and sense of empowerment derived through categorizing peoples by 'class', 'race', and 'ethnicity'. This categorization and discourse of race and class went hand in hand with the colonial geographical expansion and institutional hegemony that characterizes the highly politicized Western-dominated global discourse we see today.

In a simplified context, Western concepts of the individual are focused on the individual's traits. Discussing this idea, Howard suggests, "The central idea is that the world can best be understood by looking at the qualities of individual entities, with only secondary attention paid to relationships between entities... that persons can be thought

of as discrete beings, bounded by their skins, and *possessing* (original emphasis) attributes" (Howard, 1990:262).

In contrast, considering the Geertzian term 'consociates' as, "persons who encounter one another somewhere along the course of life" (Geertz, 1973:365, in Lieber, 1990:72), in Pacific Islander ideology of the individual, "The person is not an individual in our Western sense of the term. The person is instead a locus of shared *biographies* (original emphasis): personal histories of people's relationships with other people and with things" (Lieber, 1990:72). Discussing Pacific Islander identity concepts further Miles adds, "Distinctions were based on locality and genealogy, and sometimes on bush-coastal differences, but only with colonialism were 'we-they' dualisms thrust to the forefront of consciousness" (Miles, 1998:81).

To take these contrasting concepts further, in general dichotomized terms, western concepts of individual and group identity are more rigidly determined via genetic inheritance. Pacific Islander individual and group identity are more determined by context, behavior, environment, and interactions with and between other people and the environment. As Marshall Sahlins suggests, "Substance is not merely acquired from one's parents but may derive equally from living in a place. We are suggesting here that Oceanic cultural identities are made as well as born" (Sahlins, 1985:28, from Linnekin and Poyer, 1990: 8). Indeed, as Karen Nero posits, "Who can be labeled Pacific Islander, and by what criteria? Racial purity may be a more Western than Pacific manner of conceptualizing membership" (Nero, 1997:446).

Geography also played a determining factor in the differences between these conceptual models of identity and ethnicity. Island populations were relatively small and

isolated from each other in the past. Although interaction took place through warfare,

exchange systems, marriage, and exploration, this happened on a relatively infrequent

basis. Alan Howard notes:

> In Polynesia, for example, before Western contact the known social world
> consisted largely of people who were alike physically, linguistically, and
> culturally. In other areas, including large segments of Melanesia, terrain
> served to separate populations into small pockets…These ecological
> conditions had some important consequences for ethnicity, or rather for its
> de-emphasis. Perhaps most important, there were few instances in which
> people who were clearly distinguishable on the basis of physical appearance,
> language, or culture dominated another people for a protracted period. Thus,
> one of the main conditions leading to ethnic consciousness on the continental
> land masses of Europe, Asia, and Africa was absent in Oceania. (Howard,
> 1990:260)

As mentioned earlier, the work in *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific*

formulates a linear continuum that assumes the increased politicization of identity and

ethnicity in the Pacific in correlation with the varying degrees of interaction with

colonialism and now contemporary post-colonial globalization. Miles suggests, "The

individualization of identity, followed by the objectification of cultural groups (now

perceived as ethnic categories) is a by-product of Westernization" (Miles, 1998:81).

Linnekin and Poyer add, "The colonial expansion of states in the Pacific imposed new

administrative definitions on native peoples and in turn provoked shifts in self-

perception. Self-categorization continues to evolve in the postcolonial era", and

furthermore, "Today, state-level politics is the most potent factor in the ongoing

transformation of Pacific cultural identities. Throughout the island Pacific, cultural

identity has become or is in the process of becoming politicized" (Linnekin and Poyer,

1990:12).

Although this linear model can appear too rigid and simplistic, the editors do emphasize ambiguity and the continual maintenance of Pacific Islander identity conceptions within this increased 'politicization' of identity and ethnicity. Linnekin and Poyer write, "Regardless of their degree of contact with Western institutions, Oceanic groups are often quite self-conscious and insistent about their identities," and as I have mentioned earlier, "these groups maintain separate cultural identities within pluralistic social environments, and their theories of affiliation consistently emphasize context, situation, performance, and place over biological descent" (Linnekin and Poyer, 1990:11). Although their model seems simplistic with its linear continuum paradigm I find it useful for teasing out nodes of cultural identity processes in various political contexts. This was the intention of the ASAO formulated *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific* (1990) volume. In contrast to this linear paradigm and ideology, a chapter by one of the above volume's editors in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (1997) reveals the transformation of anthropological perspective with regards to cultural identity. Jocelyn Linnekin states, "Our cultural identities are always in a state of becoming, a journey in which we never arrive; who we are is not a rock that is passed from generation to generation, fixed and unchanging. Cultural identity is process, not product" (Linnekin, 1997:428-9).

The ethnographic events described in chapter four and five reveal the 'flux' of Tobian cultural identity. Rather than viewing Tobian identity as part of a linear politicized process, I will examine the multiple levels of identity that are always changing depending on context. This is what Linnekin means when she defines cultural identity as process, not product.

Anthropology, Identity, and Ethnicity in Micronesia

Anthropologists have studied the concept of cultural groups and 'ethnicity' in Micronesia since World War Two, when the U.S. administration attempted to determine methods to "manage" and "administer" Micronesians. Two civil affairs handbooks, *Western Carolines* and *Eastern Carolines*, were developed by social scientists to assist U.S. officers in their cross-cultural administrative efforts. Initial efforts revolved around the U.S. administration's concerns about problems pertaining to ethnic minorities. Poyer notes that, "In part, this early postwar attitude toward 'ethnic minorities' as potential problems derived from contemporary sociology and public policy issues in the United States; it also reflected the prior Japanese administration's interest in dealing with identified populations by using a similar ethnic model" (Poyer, 1999:201). After the post-World War Two repatriation of Japanese soldiers and war personnel, "researchers in the 1950's shifted from a discussion of ethnic minorities – even when the situation might usefully have been described in these terms – to a concern with cultural differences" (Poyer, 1999:201).

Homer Barnett led the first anthropology-focused studies on relocated communities and ethnic boundaries, as Karen Nero mentions:

> In the 1960's Homer Barnett co-ordinated a study of displaced communities in the Pacific. These groups included entire societies that were forced to move, sub-groups who began as satellites of a home community, new communities formed by people who had not previously lived together, and immigrants from one island who chose to live apart and not form a new community. For some immigrants the relocation was part of older patterns of regional movement: for others the experience had no precedent. One of the most important factors that explained community differences was whether

members of the community chose to move (a migrant community) or did so at the instigation of an outside agency (a relocated community). The settlement of both types of migrants was constrained by the structures and cultural expectations of migrant and host communities (Nero, 1997:452).

Nero adds, "Settlement in the political systems that characterize most Pacific polities mediated towards gradual incorporation over several generations. In contrast, settlement in a hierarchical state or colonial system typically resulted in the maintenance of ethnic boundaries" (Nero, 1997: 452). And further, "During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries any relocation was mediated by colonial administrations, which supported the maintenance of ethnic boundaries even in non-hierarchical societies if the community's primary relationship was to the colonial agency" (Nero, 1997: 452).

Another example of this research focus, Jack Fischer's *The Eastern Carolines* (1957), examined the concept of ethnicity by exploring how close (or not) Micronesian populations were related through linguistics and history. This relation-oriented work would later, of course, become more specifically redefined through research in archaeology and physical anthropology. Regarding the work of these early post-World War Two anthropologists, "Their writing moved between 'ethnicity' discourse – in which intergroup relations were viewed as potential problems to be managed – and 'culture' discourse, in which intergroup differences posed scholarly questions of affiliation" (Poyer, 1999:201). Poyer discusses "two points that became central to studies of ethnicity: first, a recognition that foreign rulers used ethnic distinctions as a basis for differential treatment, and second, an awareness that continual interaction generated attitudes that maintained ethnic boundaries" (p. 201). She adds, "And while the colonial hierarchy persisted in emphasizing the broad category of 'Micronesian' subjects, islanders themselves both maintained complex nested identities determined by cultural

and linguistic background, and began to explore the social and political ramifications of accepting an identity as Micronesian" (Poyer, 1999:205).

Examples of this change in anthropological identity/ethnicity discourse and indigenous negotiations with colonialism are reflected in the ethnographies produced by the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) conferences in the 1970's. A large factor in this theoretical transition was the examination of colonial systems and their categorization of islanders. Alan Howard comments, "Of all the events that have implications for cultural identity in Oceania, none has been more important than the establishment of colonial regimes. Colonial administrations institutionalized ethnic categories as formal social entities, and generally prescribed rights and privileges accordingly"(Howard, 1990:268). This, he adds, "brought to Pacific Islanders an awareness of social ethnicity as a phenomenon – one that was relevant to obtaining political power and economic well-being" (Howard, 1990:268). The point that social (or cultural) identity is relevant to attaining political and economic power is a salient issue which will be addressed later in the chapter. Politics, capitalism, economic development, and western and global hegemony all play significant roles in the transformation of cultural identity.

Exiles and Migrants in Oceania (1977), was one of the first intriguing theoretical and ethnographic monographs on identity and ethnicity actually focused on relocated and resettled communities and emerged out of ASAO volume no.5.

A chapter from this early anthropological research on ethnicity examined the relocation and status of Palau's Southwest islanders. Robert McKnight conducted insightful ethnographic work in Palau between 1958 – 1963 (*Commas in Microcosm: The*

Movement of Southwest islanders to Palau, Micronesia, 1977) on ethnic boundary

maintenance and dissolution with regards to colonial systems and economic development

models. McKnight asserts that the post-World War Two U.S. Trust Territory

administration's policy, based on the Nathan Report[9], was to encourage outer island

populations to reside in the six district administrative centers of the Trust Territory[10].

McKnight explains that according to the Nathan Report, this "will provide proper market

and labor conditions from which industrialization can emerge" and further, "Aside from

the economic advantages of a labor pool and an enhanced market, relocation is advocated

as a means to accomplish ethnocide and engineer Micronesian unity" (McKnight,

1977:10). McKnight critically refers to the Nathan Report that suggested the relocation

would enhance Micronesian unity, thus speeding up the disappearance of "ancient

customs and traditions" (quoted in McKnight, 1977:10). McKnight's study critically

examines the ideology and impact of U.S. colonial policy in a rather limited physical

space, the relocated Southwest islander community of Palau.

McKnight's case study then clearly demonstrates the destructive intent of the

colonial policy of "uniting" Palauans. He details the differences between Palauans and

Southwest islanders, and their culturally enforced reactions to the Trust Territory

administration. Of the diasporic Tobians, McKnight writes, "Rather than adapting to a

Palauan social environment according to the Palauan model of assimilation, the relocated

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[9] This 1960's report was one of the first development studies prepared for the U.S. Trust Territory
government by a host of outside agencies. It focused on economic development and capitalizing on
indigenous resources.

[10]This economic development report advocated the relocation of outer islanders to the six district
administrative centers in the Trust Territory (Koror, Palau being one of them), "to facilitate the creation of
a Micronesian unity to replace the present somewhat artificial association of a dozen or so somewhat
similar nevertheless distinctly different, cultural, political, and economic entities. Increased mobility can
speed the replacement of local particularism with a cohesive Micronesia" (in McKnight, 1977:10).

communities have related primarily to the colonial administration and to the Catholic mission, remaining separate from the Palauan social structure" (McKnight, 1977:32). This reveals that colonial administration practices actually backfired by encouraging diverse cultural identity boundaries, rather than homogenized societies. Discussing the features of colonial administrations in more detail he says:

> [c]olonial administrations inhibit the emergence of various asymmetrical relations among independent social units and impose another kind of asymmetry, the subordination of all such units to the colonial administration itself. By assuring peace and protecting identity of each social unit, not only is assimilation of one unit by another highly improbable, but the former asymmetry among the various units involved is diminished. Each group under the colonial umbrella will be engaged in a process of relatively autonomous adaptation to the colonial administration and its policies, mirroring, perhaps, the colonial power in some respects but also reflecting its own cultural past. Ancient customs and traditions may or may not disappear; certainly adaptive changes may be expected. However, ethnic boundaries will remain intact and the anticipated ethnocide will not occur. It follows, then, that the kind of happy homogenization portrayed in the Nathan Report is, in fact, not possible in Micronesia as long as the colonial administration maintains itself as a dominant system controlling the social system it has created, or in the case of Micronesia, inherited. (McKnight, 1977:12)

I mention McKnight's ethnographic work first here for two reasons. The work examines political systems, boundary maintenance, and cultural identity in the same cultural setting that I now explore roughly 25 years later. On one level this allows for a historical ethnography of Tobian political and economic development, as well as Palau and Southwest islander relations in the colonial and post-colonial contexts. In chapter five I will offer this comparative perspective when I discuss Palauan economic development and Tobian cultural identity in a post-colonial context. On another level, McKnight's larger argument of boundary maintenance relates to my impetus to explore this setting. He argues successfully that "a cultural mosaic, when constrained by limited space, will produce human conditions quite different than those suggested by economic

models per se," resulting in, "cultural particularism and congestion with the emergence of rigid ethnic-class structures and accelerated intergroup tension" (McKnight, 1977:33). This was certainly the case between Southwest islanders and Palauans within the U.S. colonial context. I am curious to examine his secondary argument that I now discuss.

Following this critique of colonial policy and this dialectic, we then deduce that with the departure of the U.S. colonial administration (system) in Palau we should see relocated Southwest islanders becoming more 'Palauan' as generations go by. Less rigid ethnic-class structures and reduced intergroup tension should result. To some extent, with the 1980 Palauan constitution and later, the 1994 independence as a nation-state with the signing of the Compact of Free Association agreement, the U.S. colonial 'apparatus' was lifted and the framework of nation-state Palauan sovereignty took effect. Yet, let me point out here that the framework of 'nation-state sovereignty' fits into what I will call a larger not yet post-colonial but definitely neo-colonial global structure. I examine this later in this chapter.

As suggested in arguments of McKnight and Babadzan, and the earlier expressed intentions of the Nathan Report, we should see increased integration and acculturation of Tobians into larger Palauan society through intermarriages, adaptation to Palauan educational and political systems, and nation-building discourse and policies. The increased hybridity and modernization within Palau's globalized setting is rife for further inquiry into Tobian identity, especially considering the small Tobian population size.

Nationalism

Nationalist discourse begins with the development of unity through national traditions or customs. As the nascent nation-state of the ROP attempts to create a

national identity in the global nation-state system, it also works toward maintaining its cultural diversity and customs. Babadzan describes the concept of developing national unity through emphases on 'traditional' customs by using the Melanesian nationalistic term *kastom*, which "refers loosely to customs, values, beliefs, and traditional institutions, whether long abolished or still alive (whatever their state of preservation)" (Babadzan, 1988:205). Miles adds, "*Kastom* marks itself off from colonialism (though not Christianity), from Westernization, from unwelcome modernity" (Miles, 1998:81). Developing *kastom* paradoxically assists to oppose the previous western colonial powers while also progressing into the modern world of nation-states with national identities.

Babadzan notably utilizes the same Western ideology that he opposes. And while the concept of *kastom* certainly first applies to Palauan nationalism this ideology is triply paradoxical in that it produces a dichotomous relationship between indigenous tradition (developed into national *kastom*) and modernity. If one is 'modern' are they without 'traditional' values? And vice versa? Ideologically, does this paradigm suggest a linear continuum? Meaning, does one *progress* from traditional to modern? I think not. Rather, in reality the boundaries of 'tradition' and 'modern' are interdependent, overlapping, and, of course, blurred.

As I mentioned above, the oppositional dialectic between 'modern' and 'tradition' is unrealistic. In her chapter "Ideological Worlds Remade" in the *Cambridge History of Pacific Islanders,* Jocelyn Linnekin states, "We ask whether Islanders' ideological worlds were 'remade' by foreign contact and colonization and, if so, in what sense. Nationalist discourse and anti-colonial scholarship properly criticize many Western introductions, but some critiques propagate a simplistic dichotomy between traditional and modern"

(Linnekin, 1997:399). And in a point I wish to make salient in this thesis she adds, "A visit to any Island confounds that distinction. Messy syncretisms and blurred boundaries are as common in the Islands as in popular culture anywhere, since Islanders have attempted to bend foreigners and their scenarios to their own agendas, 'indigenising' Christianity and other institutions" (Linnekin, 1997:399).

Western-oriented anthropological, historical, and economic theories and nation-state discourses have historically created models and paradigms based on linear and oppositional thought. In my opinion, this fundamentally relates to a Western obsession with an evolutionary concept and frame of mind that perceives only a beginning and an end to any type of phenomena. It is this ideology that framed colonialism and continues today in the post-colonial global nation-state sphere. It is this ideology that frames, intertwines, and perpetuates the processes of nation-building, economic development, and cultural, state, and national-level identities. It is this ideology that I often experience in local-level discourse also. The cycle perpetuates itself.

I should note that with Oceanic ethnographies in the past fifteen years however, the anthropological study of identity and ethnicity has begun to see phenomena as less linear and more intricately complicated and interdependent. There has been a paradigmatic shift from linear and dichotomous framing to a better understanding of multi-leveled and layered shifting contexts in flux.

The ethnographic events which I will discuss in chapters four and five reveal Tobian responses to both Palauan and global hegemony. Chapter four discusses the Tobian response to a Palauan clan's land contestation in Echang, along with several events and symbols that reveal a positive Tobian identity within the Republic of Palau.

In chapter five I analyze the interplay between Tobian state and local-level politics and national politics with regards to economic development and Tobian identity. Here, I will argue that although both Tobians and Palauans are increasingly interacting in regional and global economics and politics, both groups continue to resist global forces and maintain their local-level identities. And specific to this thesis, while resisting Palauan and global forces, Tobians still maintain *both* a Palauan and Tobian identity. I now turn to the latest theoretical discourse on identity and cultural transformation coming from the field of cultural studies.

Clifford's 'Articulating Sites of Indigeneity'

As I mentioned in chapter one, the ROP, since 1994 the world's newest nation, actively negotiates its post-colonial national identity while also negotiating its regional identity in the context of an increasingly interdependent and globalized world. Their decolonization process has entailed, as Clifford theorizes, "not an all-for-nothing, once-and-for-all, transition; (instead) long ongoing histories of resistance and accommodation, of unlinking and relinking with imperial forces, need to be kept in view" (Clifford, 2001: 473). Nation-building is becoming increasingly more ambiguous. Clifford adds, "…the current hegemony – call it neocolonialism, post-modernity, globalization, Americanization, or neoliberalism – is fractured, significantly open-ended" (Clifford, 2001:473). Considering what Vince Diaz calls "native productions of indigeneity" (Diaz, 2001:315) and the cultural diversity and varied histories of Oceania, Clifford adds, "Very old cultural dispositions…are being actively remade. Pacific decolonization struggles, thus, have their own temporalities and traditions. And because decolonization comes to the Pacific when sovereignty is an increasingly compromised reality, we see the

emergence of different forms of national identity, new sorts of negotiations among the local, the regional, the national, and the global" (Clifford, 2001:475).

Miles suggests a "paradigm of boundary permeability," where "Global networks of economy, communications, and environmental and security interdependence render the old notion of national boundaries as barriers or screens virtually anachronistic" (Miles, 1998:13). Miles elaborates further, "Boundaries are more accurately seen as porous membranes, transmitting a wide range of external forces to domestic society and allowing outside agents to deliberately or inadvertently exercise influence over internal politics and economies" (Miles, 1998:13).

Clifford introduces "articulation theory" to better understand and appreciate the movement, negotiations, and multiple histories and contextual identities of Pacific Islanders. Articulation theory offers a "nonreductive way to think about cultural transformation" (Clifford, 2001:478), rather than the 'fatal-impact', 'invention of tradition', or binary and oppositional 'tradition vs. modernity' views of culture and cultural transformations. Instead, Clifford posits, "Communities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing selectively on remembered pasts. The relevant question is whether and how they convince and coerce insiders and outsiders, often in power-charged, unequal situations, to accept the autonomy of 'we'" (Clifford, 2001:479). These models are complemented by similar ideologies introduced in Karen Nero's *The End of Insularity* and Epeli Hauʻofa's essay *Our Sea of Islands*. These models are alternatives to older paradigms that view the Pacific islands as isolates with limited resources, "rooted in place and time" (see Hanlon, 1998:239).

It is necessary throughout this work to keep in mind the transforming post-colonial context within larger ROP. However, the more salient point of this thesis is to reveal the complexities for Tobians who are in the process of negotiating their identities *within* both the ROP socio-cultural setting *and* the larger global system. Chapters four and five discuss several ethnographic events that show various forms of Tobian resistance to global and Palauan hegemonic discourse, and the transformation of Tobian cultural identity and values in this context. At this juncture I will describe my ethnographic method in better detail, the tools I utilize, and the dialectic interplay between them.

Chapter Three

Blurred and Thick

Since Malinowski's time the 'method' of participant-observation has enacted a delicate balance of subjectivity and objectivity. (*Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Clifford and Marcus, 1986:13)

Culture is a set of ongoing processes; there are no natural borders within or between cultures. All human societies have culture, but it is a necessary part of their self-consciousness to distinguish their version from every other. "A culture" is thus a common understanding, not an objective reality. In explaining how culture is 'done' locally, ethnographers have to accept that any ethnography, like a snapshot, turns a process into a static record of what existed and occurred at a particular time and place. Bohanan and van der Elst, *Asking and Listening; Ethnography as Personal Adaptation* (Bohanan and van der Elst, 1998:45)

Within the context of contemporary globalization and the rapid social and economic changes that I have alluded to earlier, ethnographic representation has undergone much criticism. This criticism includes charges that ethnography reinforces "exoticism, localism, and the perpetuation of colonial hierarchies" (Lederman, 1998, see Rohatynskyj and Jaarsma, 2000:1). An earlier and common argument against ethnography is that the researcher's *subjective* interpretation of cultural phenomena is produced within what is purportedly an institutionally and scientifically *objective* methodology.

I find this criticism legitimate but again choose to discuss the problematics of ethnography through a 'blurred' lens, rather than a binary one. Indeed, I would agree that

the process of traditional ethnography in its completed written form effectually codifies culture.

In Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism*, he discusses the hegemonic influence of language and the written word through the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Speaking in the past tense, Said mentions how academic works (in various forms), "…produced positivistically verifiable learning", and that these works, "are and always have been conditioned by the fact that its (their) truths, like any truths delivered by language, are embodied by the language, and what is the truth of language, Nietzsche once said that truths are":

> a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are. (see Said, 1978:203).

Considering this perspective from within the discipline of ethnography, Jaarsma and Rohatynskyj express, "The crux of the moral entanglement between scientist and citizen – anthropologist and native – is the permanence of a written representation of a community from the perspective of one individual based on a historically particular experience", and further that, "such a representation is supported by the cultural and material power of hegemonic authority…(and) with the imagination of a global audience, the community sees itself as robbed of its power to control representation of its self in this forum (Jaarsma and Rohatynskyj, 2000:2)

Certainly I am hyper-critical of institutionalized hegemonic authority and power inequality throughout this thesis. While I am in agreement with Said's (and Nietzsche's) argument, we must also take into account the complete dynamic of ethnographic

representation. In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986),

James Clifford and George Marcus address the politics of writing about culture and

highlight this work as a critical turning point within anthropology and ethnography. They

discuss how a false ideology of pre-1980's anthropology claimed to present a

"transparency of representation and immediacy of experience," and in contrast, how the

essays in their work here, "assert that this ideology has crumbled" (Clifford and Marcus,

1986:2). In further contrast they comment, "They [the essays] see culture as composed of

seriously contested codes and representations; they assume that the poetic and the

political are inseparable, that science is *in, not above* [my emphasis], historical and

linguistic processes," and that, [these essays] "assume that academic and literary genres

interpenetrate and that the writing of cultural descriptions is properly experimental and

ethical" (Clifford and Marcus, 1986:2). This seminal work here, he adds, "undermines

overly transparent modes of authority, and it draws attention to the historical predicament

of ethnography, the fact that it is always caught up in the invention, not the

representation, of cultures" (Clifford and Marcus, 1986:2). Indeed, who has what

authority to represent whom? And what is im/proper representation? And is the

ethnographic record the 'truth'? Is it fiction? These questions are not new and continue

to challenge the ethnographic process.

　　　Returning to the earlier Nitzschean view of language and truth, Clifford states,

"Even the best ethnographic texts – serious, true fictions – are systems, or economies, of

truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control",

and decidedly, that "Ethnographic truths are thus inherently *partial* [original emphasis] –

committed and incomplete" (Clifford and Marcus, 1986:7).

Clifford initially situates the ethnographic process better by explaining that, "It poses its questions at the *boundaries* [my emphasis] of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders…(It) decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes" (Clifford and Marcus, 1986:3). Within this role, a fuller understanding of representation and reflexivity in the ethnographic process makes an argument for its compelling utility. In telling my story of Tobian identity, I will keep in mind these limitations and conditions.

The Triangle of Ethnographic Method

In *Ethnographic Artifacts: Challenges to a Reflexive Anthropology* (2000), Sjoerd Jaarsma and Marta Rohatynskyj tease out the contemporary dilemma between representation and reflexivity within the discipline of ethnography by examining "the kinds of problems that arise in the production, distribution, and reception of ethnography" (Jaarsma and Rohatynskyj, 2000:2). In the contemporary global context they see a collapse in the "boundaries between sponsors, citizens/natives, scientists/anthropologists, and gatekeepers that encourages the imagination of a global community serving as audience for ethnography", and where "this change has made it impossible to ignore the mutual entailments of the relationships that bind [these individuals]…so that the production, publication, and reception of ethnography is not so much changed as become apparent to all observers" (Jaarsma and Rohatynskyj, 2000:2).

Jaarsma and Rohatynskyj state that, "ethnographic texts play a basic role in the creation of the conditions for the conduct of further ethnographic research and for the creation of community and personal identities", and that, "the writing of ethnography, its

publishing, as well as the dissemination of the texts in the world are social acts that impinge on the social activities and identities of those implicated in these processes" (Jaarsma and Rohatynskyj, 2000:3). They appropriately state, "In the realities of the local and regional negotiations of identity, the ethnographic text might well act to deflate and deflect local strategies, or on the other hand, to promote them…" and further, whether a particular text "plays a role in the power relations and struggles of local community interest is largely dependent on specific conditions…among them is the extent to which the community is open to outside influences and becomes entangled in extralocal political issues" (Jaarsma and Rohatynskyj, 2000:2).

In their work here they suggest an approach "in which ethnography comes to play a central role as it is no longer envisaged as merely the product of anthropological research, but as an artifact representing [and embodying] the triad of relations between anthropologist, subjects of research, and audience(s)" (Jaarsma and Rohatynskyj, 2000:3). The dynamics of contemporary ethnography discussed here certainly apply with my ethnographic research and writing. The process involved in my fieldwork queries generated much local-level discussion of Tobian culture and identity. This often brought to the surface many feelings that might not have been discussed otherwise, regarding particular events such as the Echang land protest and the Helen Island proposed conservation project I speak to in chapters four and five. Additionally, my completed thesis will be available to all Tobians and Palauans (and to anyone, for that matter) on Peter Black's website (see bibliography) and at the Hatohobei State Government office. I hope that the completed work will generate further discussion within the local-level Tobian community. This is an example of ethnography as part of the cultural process.

Power and a Post-Structural Perspective

At this juncture I find a post-structural perspective here useful when analyzing the multiple layers of Tobian identity that I explore. As Lynn Wilson suggests in *Speaking to Power: Gender and Politics in the Western Pacific* (1995), post-structuralism emphasizes the "interpretation of a text – a word, a book, an interaction of the street, i.e. any cultural production – where meanings are not fixed and where subjectivity is constructed and multiple" (Wilson, 1995:42). This approach views discourse as representational of multiple and shifting interpretations and meanings. As Wilson states further, "Discourse, then, becomes an arena where knowledge and meanings are constantly being constituted, where hegemony is produced, institutionalized, and challenged" (Wilson, 1995:42).

Wilson takes from Michel Foucalt's concept of discourse as "a war of sorts – a never-ending historical process where certain interpretations in particular moments gain authority and legitimation over others" (see Wilson, 1995:42). Within any given discourse, it is essential then to explore the omnipresent areas of difference and/or inequality. As Wilson adds, within post-structural analysis, "Analyzing difference involves a recognition that no category can be considered unified or fixed in a binary position to a contrasting counterpart", and further, "as essential, authentic subject constructions are called into question, representations of power relations as mutually exclusive linear dichotomies become disrupted" (Wilson, 1995:43).

Certainly, through my ethnographic lens I see all power relations, and representations thereof, as inter-related and interdependent. Conceptually, power and inequality exist from all perspectives of relationships; and are multiple layered, shifting, and contextual. And this leads to the 'blurred boundaries' that initiated and perpetuate

this research endeavor. Indeed, while this ethnography attempts to reveal the uniquely

messy, blurred, non-binary inequalities of the cultural process, this is not to ignore that

larger systemic discourse is based upon binary and linear thought, and thus, the global

and nation-state rhetoric we experience every day continues to perpetuate binary

thinking, language, and inequalities. As Wilson states, "Exploring power relations and

one subject's relationship to another becomes centered on the many layered character, the

interconnectedness, and the impossibility of constructing meaningful identity categories

outside of immediate political priorities" (Wilson, 1995:43).

With my neophytic approach to writing this text I have taken into serious

consideration the ethnographic difficulties of representation, reflexivity, and notions of

power. Indeed, one problem I have in constructing this ethnography is the possible

insignificance it holds within the Tobian community. In my opinion this work is useful

primarily within an academic space. With regret, I fear that I am simply speaking to a

small academic audience. To this day, I still question how this work holds value to

Tobians, except that it may draw attention and recognition to the unique geographic,

cultural and political space/s they negotiate. And perhaps this is detrimental rather than

beneficial[11]. Nonetheless, as I mentioned earlier (p.49) the encouragement I've received

from the community gives me hope that this ethnography adds more perspective to

continuing local-level discourse on future Tobian identity and resource management.

Yet another problem I have is in utilizing anthropological models with western

languages discourses, perceptions, and concepts when analyzing and discussing Tobian

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[11] For this reason I intend to focus future work on this dynamic Tobian 'space' around fictional writing,
film, and/or interactive media. In addition, I intend to incorporate members of the Tobian community into
such a project. This method will reach a wider audience and I believe hold more significance and potential
benefit to the Tobian community, if done properly.

culture and politics. This language and these models are useful in some ways but problematic if non-western perspective and meaning is lost. This is another aspect of the classic outsider/insider dilemma. In writing this ethnography I am naturally forced to use western-based ethnographic language. As I have professed earlier, this dynamic unfortunately utilizes binary and black/white logic, as most written word does. This is problematic when attempting to exude and explain reality in an ambiguous and ambivalent setting. As with any ethnography, it is difficult to convey realities in flux when using a static written method.

And last, I unfortunately find the nimiety of my work here necessary. This may prove difficult for the reader at some times. However, I find no other means than to discursively describe the overlapping boundaries within the multiple layers and levels of culture and politics that I discuss. Throughout the writing process I have attempted to minimize any potential confusion here. In concluding the discussion of this methodological approach I now point to George Marcus' recent multi-sited approach to ethnography.

The 'triangle' of ethnographic method in this contemporary work shows how the ethnography is very much a part of the cultural process. This additional perspective fits well with my post-structural approach, which concentrates on the complexity of multiple perspectives within the processes of cultural identity maintenance.

A Multi-Sited Approach

In *Ethnography through Thick & Thin* (1998), George Marcus outlines and discusses several problematics inherent in the ethnographic process. He first states that, "ethnography should not be overdetermined before it begins, that there should be

something to be discovered, found out, in a world that in the literal (geographical) sense has been totally discovered already" (Marcus, 1998:17). Through these problematics he encourages multi-sited work that is informed by an ethnographic process (both the fieldwork and writing) and not by the traditional culture-area approach and theoretical framework. Because I have chosen a multi-sited and multi-layered approach I find his analyses and arguments here useful in guiding my method.

In discussing traditional ethnographic culture-area approaches Marcus claims that, "There is an increasing need to contextualize in *equally ethnographic terms* [original emphasis] focused, site-specific projects of fieldwork that address topics and problems shaped *outside* [emphasis added] the traditional ethnographic archive developed in terms of geographic culture area" (Marcus, 1998:12). He adds that with traditional ethnography, because there was a "density of distinctive preexisting problem-defining discourse for fieldwork in any given culture…the problems in terms of which one conceived one's ethnography were already given, so to speak" (Marcus, 1998:12). He states that ethnography was "thus, designed to be only description, or description as a form of argumentation, within the well-regulated discourse regimes of culture-area," and that this is "still very much the situation, even after the 1980's critiques of ethnography…" (Marcus, 1998:13) His main problem with "much contemporary historicized, and historically sensitive ethnography is that its arguments and significance are not produced or given within the frame of ethnographic work itself but by the contextualizing discourses and narratives in which the ethnography comes to be embedded" (Marcus, 1998:13). He adds that, while anthropologists are "more actively selecting framing contexts, theoretical associations, and narratives for their

ethnography….they still mostly are not creating them from within the heart of the ethnographic process of fieldwork and writing itself" (Marcus, 1998:13).

Marcus' largest contention here within the field of ethnography is for the "development of multi-sited strategies…to discover and define more complex and surprising objects of study," and a "different and less stereotyped and more significant place for the reception of ethnographically produced knowledge in a variety of academic and nonacademic forums" (Marcus, 1998:14).

In my work here I have consciously attempted a less stereotyped ethnographic process in two ways. First, I am an exploring and dissecting (with tools discussed below) a complex 'multi-sited' study. Earlier in this paper (p.20), I explained this strategy as 'teasing' out multi-leveled and layered, shifting identities, from a blurred Tobian/Palauan identity. Second, as I mention in the next section, I believe my insider/outsider relationship is anything but the stereotypical one found in traditional ethnography.

However, in contrast to the multi-site strategy Marcus discusses, mine is definitely a traditional ethnographic endeavor in that it is deeply grounded in ethnographic experience, descriptive analysis, and argumentation supported and magnified by my theoretical framing, which I chose post-fieldwork period, to complement my specific ethnographic events and planned efforts to tease out the blurred and ambiguous spaces and identities. Referring to Marcus, by utilizing the theory and ethnographic data in a multi-leveled and multi-sited approach, I make the attempt to learn something new in both the ethnographic narrative and also within the theoretical framework I use and critique. I certainly have not 'overdetermined' my ethnographic process through my theoretical framework.

This ethnography draws heavily from ethnographic studies of identity and politics in Micronesia (and larger Oceania) while also referencing ethnographies in Palau (Black, Nero, and McKnight) and Tobi to support my historical descriptions and interpretive analyses. So in that sense, my efforts here may not be the "less stereotyped" work that Marcus is encouraging. However, historical and contemporary ethnographic work on concepts, meanings, and boundaries of identity, culture, and politics in Oceania abound. And these provide excellent tools for teasing out multiple and shifting levels of identity within this complex and multiple sited approach. Additional ethnographic work in Palau and Tobi also provides significant theoretical and empirical data to my arguments.

Marcus discusses another problematic of contemporary ethnography and the benefit of a multi-site approach:

> Estrangement or defamiliarization remains the distinctive trigger of ethnographic work, giving it the sense that there is something to be discovered by fieldwork. What provides this estrangement now is not so much literal crossing of cultural boundaries and the entering of strange spaces (this is a working fiction that so called globalization makes more difficult anyhow) as the determined effort to refuse the couching of one's work at its very beginning – in its very conception – in naturalized, commonsense categories that is so easy to do otherwise…..and so the subject is already bounded (and to some extent, described) before the ethnography begins. *If there is anything left to discover by ethnography it is relationships, connections, and indeed cultures of connection, association, and circulation that are completely missed through the use and naming of the object of study in terms of categories "natural" to subjects' preexisting discourses about them.* (my emphasis) (Marcus, 1998:16).

It is my intention with this ethnography to study relationships and connections. I examine and highlight the relationships between Palauans and Tobians, and between larger Palau, Echang, Tobi, and Helen Island. I focus on the connections between these peoples and places, rather than simply conducting an ethnography of Tobian culture, or Palauan culture.

As with earlier critiques of traditional ethnography, Marcus suggests that ethnographers become 'bounded' to a particular discourse or framework from the beginning of their work and become self-restricted from "engaging competing modes of representations about the same concerns and objects of study" (Marcus, 1998:16).

By choice the ethnographic vehicle I have created is unfamiliar, with something to be discovered. It is reflexive and "multi-sited" in theory, place/space, event, and cultural group ideology. Theoretically the vehicle is framed with several layers; cultural identity and identity politics, economic development discourse, and nationalism in a post-colonial and post-structural context. Physically, my analysis moves between the distant and relatively isolated island of Tobi, to the relocated and densely populated village of Echang near the Palauan national capital, and to sites beyond Palau. Culturally, my analysis moves between Palauan and Tobian cultural values and ideologies as represented through specific events. This research endeavor conceptually explores the 'spaces' between these places and events. These 'spaces' are the 'places' of blurred identities and power inequalities; the always present but never seen 'lines' of delineation between peoples.

In this study, I examine several salient ethnographic events, media articles, a letter, and a poem in relation to the theoretical frame. In this way I tease out blurred identity boundaries and the sensitive and sometimes tenuous relationship between Tobian and Palauan identity. The events and analyses include ethnographic histories, insights, and ideologies of both Tobian and Palauan culture. This type of work is what Marcus encourages in contemporary ethnography, stating, "…what I personally find missing in

much cultural studies scholarship and genres such as ethnography influenced by it in anthropology is precisely an exploration of these ambiguities" (Marcus, 1998:20).

With this "multi-sited" strategy I attempt to connect the multiple sites and relationships between them, and as Marcus mentioned in the above reference, "engage competing modes and representations." I like to think this work, in the end, will provide some unique perspective at least to the narrative of identity ethnography and also Palauan-Tobian relations. Marcus states, "Reflexivity about a contending field of representations in or around a particular site of ethnographic work stimulates radical rethinkings of research identities and relationships" (Marcus, 1998:17).

Myself

In discussing insider/outsider problematics Marcus suggests, "The extended exploration of existing affinities between the ethnographer and the subject of study is indeed one of the most powerful and interesting ways to motivate research design." Further, "The projection of these affinities from the realm of the more personal to the delineation of more generic social-cultural problems and issues is the key move which gives a project substance and force, and also more legitimacy in the mainstream tradition of social science." (Marcus, 1998:15)

Uncomfortable with intrusive and "objectifying" methods, I initially assumed my varied and intensive personal relationships within the Tobian community would provide the least difficulty for conducting ethnographic fieldwork. I could draw 'rich' information from my everyday experiences and when necessary, could comfortably ask specific research driven questions without feeling awkward and intrusive. This has largely proved true with my fieldwork and analytic experiences, yet highly problematic in

my writing process. My 'fieldwork' method was one of passive and relaxed, unobtrusive interactions, observations and casually directed questions regarding Palauan-Tobian relations. Beyond my long-term daily interaction with the multi-sited Tobian community, I spent untold hours sharing stories with both Tobian elders and my contemporaries about various Tobian histories, customs, and events. Over time I have checked and re-checked the multiple stories and histories against each other to validate my subsequent interpretations and analyses.

In contrast to this more subjective setting, I reluctantly learned how necessarily the reflexive and descriptive ethnographic writing process both objectifies the "subject" and emphasizes the "self" as an authority, which I found problematic. By "objectifying" my family, friends, and self, I contradicted my personal nature and also the Tobian value system, which I have learned complement each other rather well. I have certainly experienced difficulty in analyzing and writing about Tobian culture, history, and politics. It simply isn't my place, despite my close relations within and encouragement from the community. This said, it is precisely my 'existing affinities' that are the primary 'grounding' foundation of this entire research project. And despite my difficulties mentioned here, the 'rich' data I have subjectively attained and processed is essential in exploring multi-site relations and connections.

Since 1996, I have lived and interacted with several Tobian families on Guam. I have learned intimate and detailed knowledge of general Tobian and various family histories, Tobian customs and politics, and what I will call, "Tobian style," or ideology. I have engaged in all aspects of Tobian local-level practice and discourse, and I am nuanced with the intricacies of these. I was also privileged to have gained knowledge

and discourse from the state-level political sphere. Through my Tobian family and also separate relationships, I also interacted regularly and was comfortable and familiar with larger Palauan histories, customs, ideology and contemporary issues.

I studied formally and informally both Palauan and Tobian language, the latter of which has assisted in all areas of my ethnographic interpretation and analyses. While I am familiar with basic conversational Tobian usage I continue to develop my language skills and vocabulary. So, with necessarily more complex Tobian dialogue located around pertinent subjects, I relied on my close friends to translate ideas and meanings to me.

On countless occasions I visited adopted Tobian family and friends beyond Guam. I spent a month in Tobi, approximately twelve months in multiple visits to live in the relocated Southwest Island community of Echang and Koror, and also visited Tobian family in Miami. In particular, these visits were made with the purpose and mindframe of exploring and developing my particular research interests in this study.

Indeed, my adopted family is a large part of my own identity. I have directly and indirectly experienced the multiple levels of Tobian and Palauan identity that this thesis explores. My family has shaped my personal development and continues to motivate my future interests. It has been difficult distancing myself from my everyday lifestyle and close Tobian relations in order to objectify my relations and utilize parts of them to explore an academic problematic. In this regard, Marcus mentions, "The key move of course is distancing and the projection of a problematic that is first found and explored in the realm of the personal and in affinities with a particular subject matter to a more objectively defined subject of study" (Marcus, 1998:15).

In contrast to my anxieties about 'objectifying' Tobi, my family and friends within the community openly responded to all of my inquiries and continually encouraged me to gather information and complete my studies. Their efforts in this relationship are two-fold. From their perspective, they want me to complete my work for my personal growth and also because it will (hopefully) contribute positively to an ongoing local-level discourse of 'culture loss' and change.

I negotiated the insider/outsider dilemma in my "fieldwork" in the following way. First of all, my "fieldwork" was an ongoing process in my daily life. Living and learning everything about Tobi is part of my personal as well as academic life. Fortunately (and unfortunately), I continually gauge my ongoing Tobian relationships and associated relevant information within the framework of this thesis. I continue to maintain mental and written records of information that isn't personal or secret and is pertinent to the study. This is unfortunate because there are many times when I'd rather relax my 'objective' role instead of maintaining, in one way or another, a constant academic stance. So, I find that I am continually aware of and negotiating the insider/outsider dilemma. That is indeed, the paradoxical drawback of my less stereotypical 'richly' intimate and rather 'informal' method of data gathering. At the same time, I appreciate that this same drawback provides the more 'rich' ethnographic data and insights that ground my work.

Aside from my daily relations with Tobians (participant-observation), through informal and formal interviews I have directed specific research questions to past and present Tobian state-elected leaders, the traditional leader of Tobi, respected elders, and the general Tobian population, with the exception of pre-adolescent youths. Formal

interviews were recorded on an audio recorder and later transcribed and analyzed with friends or family. Throughout my writing process I have been sensitive and cautious in using certain privileged information received from the Tobian community. This community is small and politically fragmented and it is important that I do not create or enhance any tensions with pre-existing conflicts.

As I mentioned earlier, another process of writing unfortunately places Tobian identity and relations in a static mode. To offset this somewhat, I have made the effort while writing through the ethnographic events in later chapters to convey the flexible Tobian identity and 'homes' that are constantly moving but continually stable through family relations and Tobian sociocultural and sociopolitical makeup. Within the diaspora of the Tobian community there is a continual reciprocal interaction between visiting families. This constant interaction and communication is a large factor in Tobian cultural identity. For example, approximately every other week someone from Guam is visiting Palau or vice versa. If not in person, gifts and notes are sent in coolers via air cargo. Taro, tapioca, and fish arrive from Palau and chicken and beef arrive from Guam. Respect and relationships based around Tobian sociopolitical structure are reinforced, and any important communication transpires. I draw this out further here. On any given night in Guam we consume food sent from family in Palau (if lucky, it has arrived specifically from Tobi, but this doesn't happen often enough) and we take comfort and pride in knowing what is behind this food as we eat together. What is behind this activity and resource is family, based on Tobian sociopolitical structure and ideology. This plays a key role in defining Tobian identity.

In this thesis I have first utilized several theoretical threads to tease out power inequalities and concepts of blurred and shifting identities. The next two chapters are grounded in Tobian ethnographic events that dually relate to my presentation of theoretical issues while simultaneously providing a better understanding of what it means to be Tobian. I find it necessary to explain a further frustration. Because of my intimate relationships within the Tobian community over a long period of time, I hold a large amount of 'rich' enthnographic data. This entire data is potentially useful within my theoretical framework. It is my overall intent that the interplay between my methods and theory adequately and respectfully juxtapose Tobian and Palauan identities.

Chapter Four

No More Typhoon, Go Home

Dave, this is not easy to explain. I remember sitting down with my adopted grandfather Nanciso on the seaside in Hatohobei. He was a very important person in my life. It was back in 1981 or 1982. I was thirteen years old. He basically told me, "Haringesei (Justin's Tobian name), you have a decision to make". My grandfather told me I could stay in Tobi with him and learn the ways, the customs of Tobi, or I could leave to Koror for school. He told me that I would have to choose one or the other, but it was not possible to do both. His advice to me was to follow the path of western education. He said that it would be more important in my future. I followed his advice. I left Tobi a short time later and have not returned since. (Justin Andrew, August 1998)

This quote from my close friend Justin Andrew speaks immediately to modernity issues and a dilemma faced by many Pacific Islanders – the difficult choice of leaving their home islands in pursuit of urban lifestyles, higher education, wage earning jobs, and modern health care facilities. Obviously, it is a choice that all Tobians have faced and with only a few exceptions, virtually everyone has chosen to leave Tobi island to relocate permanently in Koror and increasingly, to locations beyond. Additionally, when juxtaposing Justin's quote above with a poem that I introduce below in a moment (see p. 67) I find an interesting contrast that speaks to notions, confusions, and frustrations in Palauan and Tobian identity.

I preface the poem with the following facts. On February 10, 1998, the Palau Supreme Court affirmed the Palau Land Claims Hearing Office's (LCHO) decision to

award Echang land titles to Southwest islanders, specifically several Pulu Ana and Merir families that were given these lands by the Ngerakebesang Chief Espangel Ewatel at the time of the German administered relocation. The court decided in favor of these Palau Southwest islanders in an appellate ruling by the Chief Justice Arthur Ngiraklsong, and Associate Justices Larry Miller and Barrie Michelson. This ruling denied the claims of the clans of Ngerakebesang Island who asserted that, in accordance with Palauan custom, 17 lots in Echang village did not rightfully belong to Southwest Islanders living on them (see *Tia Belau News*, March 14-28, 1998). Contrary evidence (oral histories, court testimonies, and land surveys) clearly show that in accordance with Palauan custom of assimilation, Chief Espangel Ewatel negotiated with the German official Winkeller, to accept these typhoon victims because of depopulation in Ngerakebesang. Since that time the Pulo Anna and Merir islanders respectively had divided the land given to them among themselves (and other Southwest islanders) and possessed and owned their respective parcels to the time of the Japanese land survey continuing up to the Palau Land Commision Survey and up to today. Title was officially given to these families after a land investigation and survey conducted by the Japanese before World War Two. (personal communication, Mariano Carlos, August 10, 1998)(see LCHO, closing argument of Claimants Kurterbis Kurtermalei, Sumor Albis, Quadolupi Carlos, Faustino Tirso, and Mariano Carlos).

On March 9, 1998 an official land protest site was established by these clans at the entrance of the road leading to Echang village (*Tia Belau News*, March 14-28, 1998, see photo and article, Appendix A). This protest continued daily for several months and magnified the sometimes tenuous position Tobians and other Southwest islanders hold

with their landowner status in Echang and as citizens in larger Palauan society. Situated in Ngerakebesang island at the only entrance to Echang village, Southwest islander adults had to pass by the protest site to and from work each day. Children walked past the site to and from school each day. This land protest served to remind many Southwest islanders of their ambiguous status as 'outsiders'.

The poem, *i remember* (see p. 67-8), is a response to the land protest event. The poem was written at a time when protester activities had climaxed and emotions were running high. Indeed, between May and August of 1998 while I lived in Echang, some violence did occur. On separate occasions two fires were set during late night hours and fortunately, nobody was injured. The first fire burned the Sonsorol State office to the ground and the second was started inside the Echang village Headstart School. Although formal investigations never led to any arrests, there was a general understanding among all that these incidents were directly related to the land protest and associated court case. While the land protest event and poem speak from opposing perspectives, further exploration of these voices offers a more complex understanding of Palauan nationalism, Palauan cultural diversity, Palauan identity, Southwest islander identity, and for me, Tobian identity.

I have retyped the poem verbatim and precisely in the format presented by the author, Mr. Mariano Yalap, who had circulated the poem by email. Mr. Yalap was a Palauan student at the University of Hawaii when this poem was written. Deeply affected by these particular events that took place in Koror in the summer of 1998, his touching and creative work here was written in support of Southwest islanders. Interestingly, he gives voice to Southwest islanders from a Southwest islander

perspective. This is unusual in two ways; it is rare for a Palauan to speak publicly in support of Southwest islanders and it is rare for a Southwest islander to speak publicly in Palau in any form. It was written to 'fellow belauans' as a whole, as a nation, and was sent to a local Palauan newspaper, *The Tia Belau News* to be published in the opinion section as the land protest was ongoing. Unfortunately, it was never published and Mariano Yalap's voice in this matter was not heard by many Palauans or Southwest islanders living in Palau. This is unfortunate because the poem invoked a very positive feeling of Palauan unity. In my experiences, this is often the case in inter-Tobian/Palauan public politics. The poem did circulate via email however, among educated Palauans and Southwest islanders that are living and studying abroad. To this day, I don't believe it has circulated much beyond this circle of people. I have since learned that Mariano Yalap tragically passed away in the year 2000 (pers. comm., Huan Hosei, June, 2001). It is my privilege to represent Yalap's eloquent and moving statement in this thesis.   I have added two footnotes in the poem to clarify Palauan word meanings for the reader.

i remember
by Mariano Yalap

i remember the day i was born/ i remember because it was a/ moment of joy and happiness/ for my parents, relatives, neighbors/ and all island residents.

i remember the day i was born/ i remember because the government/wrote down everything about me/

in a piece of paper called/ "Birth Certificate."/ a copy is kept at the hospital/where my life began/another copy is kept at the/ court where my destiny will be determined.

i remember the day i was born/ i remember because the government/declared me a citizen of this island/and not just a statistic/ my rights are assured in the constitution/ so the document promised.

i remember asking my father/to define the word "citizen" for me/ " a person owing loyalty to and/entitled by birth or naturalization/ to the protection of a given state."/my father's dictionary claimed/i remember because the definition/of the word evoked in me/a sense of importance.

i remember the feeling/of blood coursing through my veins…/pulsating my inner parts,/my brain throbbing of euphemism/when i mouthed/ "i am a citizen of belau."/i remember because the words gave me a sense of belonging.

i remember feeling so proud/when fellow citizens reap rewards for/accomplishing this, that…/doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers,/teachers, athletes…/i remember the words I whispered to myself,/ "i'm going to make belau proud/just like the ones before me"

i remember feeling melancholy/when i hear of my fellow citizens/killing each other, stealing from one another,/selling souls, hearts, deserting families,/abandoning cultures, and traditions./i remember because I saw my dreams/ of belau disintegrating into oblivion.

i remember the day i first set foot on oreor [12]/i remember because i was looked down/and snickered at, demeaned, stereotyped, /labeled, and oh, how i hate to say this,/rejected by the people i thought to be/my own.

i remember learning in school/the terms "assimilation" and "segregation."/i remember sitting alone under a mango tree/trying my best to understand the meaning/of these terms./i remember comparing "segregation" to "disease," / and "assimilation" being the "cure." / then i remember feeling confused.

i remember the dread of going to school, / stores, or knocking on government doors./ i was afraid even to use the word "alii."[13]/ i remember crying for my father/to send me back to his far away land.

i remember asking myself:/what is wrong with me?/is it the food i eat? is it my language?/is it my culture?/it could not be the island i came from,/could it?/why do you hate me so much?

i guard your boundaries against illegal activities/taking place on your waters./i respect your decisions, ideas, customs, and traditions/i trust you enough to place my vote/on the candidate of your choice./i remember because there are too many questions/with not enough answers.

i see you first as a human being, fellow belauan, / and citizen of this beautiful island./i want to believe that/my contributions to society/however small they may be,/will in some ways/serve for the better and not otherwise.

the storm of 1903 was,/i believe,/a blessing in disguise./my forefathers were swept away/to a far distant place/learned later on/as belau./the beauty of this island/convinced my forefathers/they have found paradise.

five years less of a century later/their children's children found/themselves in yet another storm./only this time, the storm is more/abrasive then the previous one./the eye of the storm/is concentrating on dehumanizing,/degrading/and shredding/our lives/beyond repair.

mind you/if i may call you/a fellow belauan/i must be protected by you;/i wish to be loved/and cared for/just like your forefathers/count on me/in your hour of needs/include me in good and bad times,/search in your heart for an empty space/for me before/ sending me to my grave.

i want to leave this earth/knowing that i was no longer/segregated from you/and that/my children of now and forever/will remain/assimilated with yours./that,/i want to remember.

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[12] *Oreor* is the indigenous Palauan name for Koror, the ROP's urban national center.
[13] *Alii* translates into the English word and meaning, "hello". In Palauan it is used to announce one's arrival.

note: the poem was written to show my support for the people of eang hamlet in their effort to gain their rightful place in our society, our government, and in our hearts. the people of eang and the southwest, are human beings just like you and me. they should be accepted as our own people, for they are! let us practice not to discriminate our own people --- outside they may appear different, but in their heart, they are very belauan like those from babeldaob and eouldaob. meantime, let's practice solidarity, not subjectivity. [sic]

I first read this poem late at night on July 30th by flashlight at a place called the 'Lookout', with a Tobian friend who had received it earlier in the day via email. Born and raised in Tobi, at the age of 12 he later moved to the Southwest islander community of Echang. Located just outside of Echang village on the hillside of Ngerakebesang island, the 'Lookout' is a convenient and popular social gathering space for Southwest islanders. It is a convenient meeting place where late night gossip and information travel fast. Indeed, it is jokingly called the "CNN channel" of Echang. The 'Lookout' also offers a panoramic view of the Rock Islands, Malakal Harbor, Koror, and distant Babeldoab, Palau's largest island. Coincidentally, it is located between the land protest site of mid-1998 and the Southwest islander village of Echang.

With the land protest in progress at the time, the poem's message was particularly poignant to my friend and I. We became somewhat emotional as we read the poem. It was not as if my friend was urgently worried about his personal safety or future in Palau. But in conjunction with the protest event, the poem drew out certain deeply imbedded feelings that many Tobians carry everyday. And for me, on a significantly less tense level, similar feelings surfaced because of my intensive relationships with many Tobians.

This poem powerfully addresses the emotions of Southwest islander/Tobian/Palauan identity in the context of post-colonialism and Palauan nationalism in a creative and concise form. I find it especially poignant when juxtaposed

with the photo from the protest site (with signs saying "No More Typhoon, Go Home") and Justin Andrew's quote about leaving Tobi for Palau and the path of western education because as his grandfather told him, 'it would be better for his future'.

The protest phrase, "No More Typhoon, Go Home" refers to the typhoon at the turn of the century that initiated the relocation of Southwest islanders to Palau. The message is clear – the typhoon brought you to Palau but it is now gone so go back home as you are not welcome here. This is a powerful statement as it speaks to the contestation of land and culture, conjuring up past events and emotions to emphasize the ongoing protest. In my opinion at the time, these words hit to the heart of the Southwest islanders, reminding them how they arrived in Palau and that they were still very much considered to be non-Palauan outsiders. I will discuss my conversations with several Tobians about this protest event later in this chapter.

Rather than discuss detailed land claimant depositions to analyze this protest event I have chosen to highlight portions of Yalap's poem in an effort to examine and analyze further meaning of the protest within a Tobian/Palauan context and my theoretical framework. He writes:

> the storm of 1903 was,/i believe,/a blessing in disguise./my forefathers were swept away/to a far distant place/learned later on/as belau./the beauty of this island/convinced my forefathers/they have found paradise. (Yalap, 1998)

This stanza refers to the aforementioned typhoon and tidal wave that ravaged Pulu Ana and Merir islands at the turn of the 20th century (1905). Involved in the subsequent relocation of Southwest islanders are two systems; the colonial apparatus (first Germany and later Japan and the U.S .), and the Palauan socio-cultural system. Under the Palauan system, as McKnight explains, "There were two possibilities for dealing with strangers –

they could be absorbed into the village community, and eventually, into the clan structure, or they could be put to death" (McKnight, 1977:28). According to McKnight, "Which alternative was chosen depended on the potential usefulness or the potential nuisance the strangers represented" (McKnight, 1977:28). As court records show, against the German official's (Winkeller) initial wishes for relocation land in Babeldoab, "Chief Espangel Ewatel and Ibedul Ilengelekei went to Winkeller and requested him that he, Espangel, would accept these typhoon victims because while Ngarekbesang had an abundance of uncultivated lands the population was decreasing year by year" (see LCHO, closing argument of Claimants Kurterbis Kurtermalei, Sumor Albis, Quadolupi Carlos, Faustino Tirso, and Mariano Carlos). In the above poetic stanza, when Mariano Yalap speaks of the "beauty of this island," I interpret this as both physical beauty and perhaps more importantly, the cultural invitation and reception of the Southwest islander "forefathers." They were given land to cultivate and live on. However, this becomes more problematic.

As I mention in chapter two, Mcknight argues that, "The Palauans were presented with an administration demand for land to domicile and ethnic group distinctly non-Palauan and over whom they had no control," and therefore, "Assimilation according to the Palauan tradition was impossible within the context of the relocation since the newcomers were under German protection." Thus, "the newcomers were to be…a challenge to the Palauan order of reality by their very existence" (McKnight, 1977:30). This consequently led to stigmatization of Southwest islanders by Palauans. McKnight explains this process saying, "By characterizing the Southwest Islanders as somehow subhuman, the threat to the Palauan social order is minimized while a symbolic symmetry

between the two groups is maintained"[14] (McKnight, 1977:30). In addition, this becomes intensified within a western framework of ethnicity and categorization. As I noted regarding the increasingly politicized continuum of identity in correlation with western models in chapter two we can see how the Palauan custom of assimilation that was based more upon "shared biographies: personal histories of people's relationships with other people and with things" (Lieber, 1990:72), transferred within the colonial model to a more politicized, "we-they" dualism (see Miles, 1998:81).

Returning to McKnight's larger argument from chapter two, in the absence of a colonial apparatus we should find less of this dualism, and increased assimilation, especially in the context of Palauan nationalism. In all of my interviews with Tobian friends, when I asked about the "we-they" dualism and "outsider" positions within Palau, they all mentioned that there is much more acceptance of Tobians as Palauan citizens since Palau attained political independence and political discourse emphasized "Palauan unity". Relative to past stereotypes of Southwest islanders in general and Tobians specifically, I was told numerous times "things are much better now." This certainly speaks to the dynamics of an increased Tobian population living in larger Palau, intermarriages and social interaction, Palauan language fluency by Tobians, and general nationalistic discourse. I also mention here that in my observation, the increased presence of Indian, Chinese, and Filipino migrant worker populations in Palau reinforces Tobian "Palauan-ness."

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[14] Peter Black refers to this in his paper *The In-Charge Complex and Tobian Political Culture* (1982), "Palauan society is markedly hierarchical. Its numerous clans, as well as its many villages, are all rank ordered. Even within villages, hamlets are ordered, and even within clans, lineages. For various reasons, ethnocentrism being among the most important, Palauans have traditionally ranked Southwest islanders below even the lowest of Palauan groups" (Black, 1982:59).

With this in mind, we can see how the land protest event invoked historical memories and negative stereotype, as the stanza from Yalap's poem reads:

> five years less of a century later/their children's children found/themselves in yet another storm./only this time, the storm is more/abrasive then the previous one./the eye of the storm/is concentrating on dehumanizing,/degrading/and shredding/our lives/beyond repair. (Yalap, 1998)

Tobian responses to the land protest, in my experiences, were based on fundamental Tobian sociopolitical values. Throughout the entire protest period I never experienced any hostility or aggression from a Tobian perspective. The protest event was largely ignored. However, if it did come up in a conversation (often through my queries), humor was used to discuss the situation. Indeed, several members of my adopted family would stop by the protest event and bring gifts of food and engage in jovial conversation with protesting relatives of their Palauan grandmother. This too, speaks of hybridity and contextual and shifting identities that I discussed in chapter two. Some Tobians are closely related to certain Palauan families through marriage while other Tobian families have no genealogical relations to Palauans at all.

Peter Black refers to the maintenance of the following core Tobian cultural values. These are, as he explains, "the use of fear in achieving self and social control and the high value placed on practical intelligence, long-range planning, self-reliance, cheerful interactions, and cooperative social relations," and that, "Perhaps the most important of all continuities is the absolute prohibition on interpersonal aggression…Tobians obey it with great fidelity even though disputes, hostility, and competition are major features of their society" (Black, 1983:9).

This makes a lot of sense when coming from a small island with a reduced population and where everyone must cooperate in daily subsistence activities despite ongoing politics, disputes, and arguments. Peter Black comments on this Tobian ideology as it derives from the home island environment saying, "The management of aggression and, especially, interpersonal violence, is a significant problem in small, close-knit groups. The inhabitants of an island such as Tobi live in a world more closed than most, a world in which both space and cooperation are at a premium," and furthermore, "In such a world, the expression of hostility through violent behavior can set in motion a sequence of events that will disrupt the harmony necessary for communal existence" (Black, 1991:162). And consequently, Black says, "Based on their indigenous understandings of human nature, the Tobians have created a sociocultural world that allows them to make their ability to cooperate in achieving pleasant, cooperative social relations, their main technique for managing conflict" (Black, 1991:162). Peter Black describes Tobian maintenance of these fundamental cultural values in the context of, "rapid depopulation…followed by prolonged demographic instability, loss of both political and religious autonomy, occupation by Japanese troops, bombing by the Americans in the Second World War, the imposition of Western-style institutions, (and) the beginning of economic integration into the wider world…" (Black, 1983:9).

In my experiences living with Tobians and in the context of contemporary Echang and Tobi, and the land protest, this technique of conflict management was a reaffirmation of these core Tobian values and identity. Where Peter Black speaks of these values in relation to neo-traditional Tobi and the sociocultural and physical environment of Tobi island, I see a successful transference of these values to the

contemporary Echang setting. This includes the context of post-colonial neo-nationalism, regionalism, and globalization. I think the success is possible precisely because of the tenuous position Tobians experience while living in Echang. This relatively small living space (in the context of larger Palau) is the only land they have license to reside within larger Palau. As the Southwest islander population grows within this finite land area, friendly cooperation, patience, foresight, and avoidance of hostility is completely necessary. These fundamental Tobian values continue to provide Tobians with not only their 'second' home of Echang (and primary residence) but also their sense of what it means to be Tobian. The latter is extremely important as Tobians also continually must negotiate their identity as Palauans. I reveal here a persistence of Tobian identity within the transformation from a traditional and colonial setting into the contemporary post-colonial neo-national setting. While Tobians are assimilating into a larger Palauan culture and society, their Tobian values and identity are maintained.

During the land protest event it was the passive Tobian resistance that diffused any potentially dangerous conflicts, outside of the violence to property previously mentioned. In August, when the following letter (see Appendix B) was distributed by the Ngerakebesang chiefs throughout Echang village, everyone I talked with simply ignored it and threw it away, and used humor to discuss it in response to my queries. The letter reveals conflict between Palauan traditional authority and the western-modeled court system, and also between traditional custom and the rights of Southwest islanders within this context of Palauan custom. The protest event ceased in late September of 1998, soon after the chief's letter was made public. I have not heard anything of the land conflict since. The sentence in the letter that claims, "A day and time will come when we will

once again revisit and face these unfinished deliberations," however, speaks to the continually open-ended, ambiguous status of the Echang residents.

Taking place four years after national independence was established, this protest event is contradictory to both nationalistic discourse and McKnight's larger argument of eventual Tobian assimilation into Palauan culture. Although I don't consider the event the norm in the contemporary setting of Palau nationalism, it was useful here for me to reveal a sensitive piece of Tobian identity within Palau. This is but one level of the multi-leveled, or, "messy syncretisms and blurred boundaries" that Linnekin speaks of in any culture (see Linnekin, 1997:399).

I refer back to Clifford in chapter two who says "And because decolonization comes to the Pacific when sovereignty is an increasingly compromised reality, we see the emergence of different forms of national identity, new sorts of negotiations among the local, the regional, the national, and the global" (Clifford, 2001:475).

The Tobian responses to the land protest event reveal the continual negotiations of their Tobian and Palauan identity. When Mariano Yalap speaks to Southwest islander Palauan identity in the following poetic verses he invokes the Tobian sense and pride of their 'Palauan-ness' that was always evident in my daily interactions and conversations with Tobian friends of all ages. Speaking from a Tobian and Southwest islander perspective he says:

> i remember the day i was born/ i remember because the government/wrote down everything about me/

> in a piece of paper called/ "Birth Certificate."/ a copy is kept at the hospital/where my life began/another copy is kept at the/ court where my destiny will be determined.

i remember the day i was born/ i remember because the government/declared me a citizen of this island/and not just a statistic/ my rights are assured in the constitution/ so the document promised.

i remember asking my father/to define the word "citizen" for me/ " a person owing loyalty to and/entitled by birth or naturalization/ to the protection of a given state."/my father's dictionary claimed/i remember because the definition/of the word evoked in me/a sense of importance. (Yalap, 1998)

Beyond offering a sense of Tobian pride in their Palauan citizenship these verses speak to notions of nationalism, cultural identity, and hybridity. Tobians are born citizens of the Republic of Palau and their rights as citizens are protected by the national constitution. Additionally, their rights as state citizens within the ROP's sixteen states are protected by the Hatohobei State Constitution (*Hufehiri Farau Ri Faruheri Hatohobei*). The protest event defied these rights as Yalap writes:

five years less of a century later/their children's children found/themselves in yet another storm./only this time, the storm is more/abrasive then the previous one./the eye of the storm/is concentrating on dehumanizing,/degrading/and shredding/our lives/beyond repair. (Yalap, 1998)

While the event protested the 1998 Supreme Court decision 1962 High Commissioner's decision (as well as the 1962 High Commissioner's decision recognizing the Southwest Islanders right to the Echang land), the protestor's utilized western legal terminology and actions (in the form of the protest hut, signs, and the letter distribution) to justify their efforts within the Palauan clan structure and custom as is evident in the letter from the Ngerakbesang chiefs (see Appendix B) when they say:

The Court did not preclude Echang from the traditional or cultural jurisdiction or authority of Ngerkebesang and its traditional leaders according to customs…Your residency and properties are properly located within Ngerkebesang where we hold traditional authority with many responsibilities. (from Ngerakebesang chiefs' letter, see Appendix B)

Before exploring the protest and poem further through Tobian voices I introduce several Tobian individuals and conversations I've had with them regarding their Palauan and Tobian identity.

Lorenzo, Huana, Justin, Judy, Nikki, and Linzy. Tobians, Palauans, both

During the summer of 1998 I asked Lorenzo Simion, a respected older generation Tobian whether he considered himself Palauan. He answered, "Yes, of course, I am Palauan, I am a citizen of Palau, but first I am a man of Hatohobei" (pers. comm.., Lorenzo Simion, July, 1998). Both of his parents, now deceased, were born and raised in Tobi. When I asked Huana Nestor, a respected elder Tobian woman the same question she laughed and said, "Of course, I am Palauan. My mother is Palauan from Ngiwal [15], we are all Palauans". So I asked her if she identified herself as a Tobian and she said, "Of course, I am Tobian. I was born and raised in Tobi. I follow Palauan custom and Tobian custom. I know my Palauan family history and my Tobian family history" (pers. comm.., Huana Nestor, July, 1998).

My friend Justin Andrew is closer to my age. I asked him his perspective on his Palauan and Tobian identity. He explained that he is proud to be Palauan but that he identifies culturally as being Tobian. He said, "I know the Tobian customs and histories and that is who I am. My grandmother is a Palauan woman from Ngiwal but I grew up mostly within Tobi and Echang and identify more strong with my Tobian side. However, sometimes I still pay respects to my obligations on my Palauan side, of course." He added, "I live in Guam now but I still communicate with my family in Palau and Tobi

very often. I have obligations to my Palauan and Tobian sides. That is my family"

(pers. comm.., Justin Andrew, September, 1998). Justin further explained that when he is

in Guam or traveling to other areas of Micronesia, if asked, he introduces himself as

Palauan. When traveling and working in the United States he introduces himself as

'Pacific Islander', or 'Micronesian'. Yet, when he is in the context of larger Palau if a

person doesn't already know him (which is usually the case), he identifies himself by

family name as the grandson to his Palauan grandmother from Ngiwal. He mentioned

that, of course, in a Tobian context, everyone already knows exactly who he is, his

family, and his ancestors.

Like Justin, Judy Nestor is close to my age. Her grandmother is Palauan from

Ngiwal, her grandfather is Tobian, and her mother is Huana Nestor. She grew up in Tobi

and later lived with Palauan family in Koror and also Tobian and Sonsorol family in

Echang during her early high school years. She moved to Saipan and lived with an aunt

whose mother is Palauan from Ngiwal and father is Tobian. Judy identifies strongly as a

Palauan and Tobian. She explained to me with humor, "I am Tobian first but I am also

Palauan. What? Don't you know that my grandmother is Palauan? What does that make

me? Do you see my passport? It says Republic of Palau on it. My mother is Tobian and

Palauan" (pers. comm.., Judy Nestor, August, 1998). She explained further that when

she was young her mother almost sent her to live with an aunt in Yap and if she had, then

she would probably identify as Yapese, but that she always considers herself Tobian.

My good friend Nikki's mother and father are Tobian and his grandmother is

Palauan. He explained to me that he considers himself Tobian and Palauan. He said, "I

am Hathobei (Tobian) and also Palauan" (pers. comm.., Nixon Andrew, July, 1998). He

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[15] Ngiwal is a village on the northeastern coast of Babeldoab, Palau's largest island.

explained that his home is Tobi island, despite not having lived there since he was a young boy. He said that it is important that he pay respects to his mother and grandmother and that involves both Tobian customs and Palauan customs.

Crispin Emilio, then governor of Hatohobei State, does not have any Palauan genealogical ties. Both of his parents were born and raised in Tobi. He answered my question by saying, "I am Palauan. I am a citizen of Palau and protected by the constitution. I consider myself both Palauan and Tobian. I know I am Tobian because that is my family history. That can never change" (pers. comm.., Crispin Emilio, August, 1998).

All of these discussions revealed a sense of pride in both Palauan identity and Tobian identity. Throughout my many conversations with the above individuals I continually experienced the shifting contextual identities that I discussed earlier in chapter two. Those individuals with genealogical ties to a Palauan clan (i.e., their mother and grandmother in Ngiwal) emphasized their 'Palauan-ness' through their family relations. These individuals identified with both Palauan family and custom and Tobian family and custom. This is what I mean by hybridity.

Of further interest is that when I asked several young children, such as Judy's daughter Linzy about her identity, she said, "I'm Palauan." Linzy is seven and was born and raised in Echang. Her father is Sonsorolese. She speaks a mixture of Tobian and Sonsorol, "Echangese," as Peter Black calls it (see p. 10). She is also fluent in Palauan and English, and through her various family members identifies with Tobian, Sonsorol, and Palauan customs. Identifying herself as Palauan speaks to the larger context of

Palauan nationalism but practicing Tobian, Sonsorol, and Palauan customs accordingly speaks to the notion of hybridity and the cultural diversity found within larger Palau.

When Lorenso and Crispin identified with their 'Palauan-ness' it was through their rights as citizens of the ROP. This speaks to a more politicized context of nationalism. Judy Nestor stressed both her family ties and her citizenship rights regarding her Palauan identity and Justin elaborated on even further notions of his identity when he travels beyond Palau, Guam, and Micronesia. Throughout all of my conversations however, including the quotes above, all these individuals emphasized their strong sense of Tobian cultural identity. Despite living away from their home island, these individuals and many others I have spoken with all distinguish themselves as Tobians first but also Palauans. Indeed, all Tobians I have discussed these issues with in the past six years have expressed their desire to spend more time visiting and living in Tobi. And all have expressed the difficulty in doing this because of the distance, indefinite ship schedule, and obligations to family and work in Echang and Palau, and places beyond, for some.

When I asked these individuals about the land protest event and the poem I didn't receive much in the way of responses. This relates to the fundamental Tobian values mentioned above, which, as I have said, are additionally perpetuated by the contextual minority status of Tobians and the Echang land. Lorenzo and Huana hadn't heard anything about the poem and weren't interested in it. Crispin, who has access to email at the Tobi State office and probably read it, didn't respond to my questions about it, except to say that it's probably not wise to concentrate on the land protest event because "things for Tobians are much better now and we don't want to go backwards" (pers. Comm..,

Crispin Emilio, July, 1998). Huana Nestor basically told me the same thing regarding my interest in the protest event. However, she also took me along with her to the protest hut and delivered some food to one of her Palauan relatives. This speaks to hybridity and the complexities of boundaries and cultural identity, and methods of resistance and contestation. Justin and Judy both lived in Guam at the time of the land protest event and basically laughed off the event as "clan politics" (pers. comm.., Justin Andrew, Judy Nestor, July, 1998). But I also know through my close relations with the two of them and Nikki that the event itself made sensitive for them their status as Palauans and Echang land residents. I see their humor and passivity as simply a form of resistance within Tobian value structures.

Indeed, my questions to these friends at these times speak to the difficulty and complexity of the land protest event. I had asked them if they consider themselves Palauans and they all answered positively. Yet at the same time a land protest was saying, "No More Typhoon, Go Home." In hindsight, I see that their passivity and foresight into this entire event prevailed. The court decision still stands, the land protest event finally ceased in September of 1998, and Tobian cultural identity along with their Palauan identity has been maintained. All of the voices above speak to the separate levels of hybrid Tobian identity and how these levels shift accordingly within changing contexts.

Throughout the land protest event I attempted to interview several of the Ngerakebsang chiefs but all of my interviews with them fell through. It is likely that they had no desire to discuss the details of their arguments with an insignificant outsider

conducting research. Further, I interpret their silence toward an outsider on this matter as a form of resistance to the outcome of the court decision.

In contrast to the tension surrounding the land protest event, I present the following three examples of positive Tobian (and Southwest islander identity context in one example) symbols of politicized identity within emergent Palauan nationalism.

War Hero. In 2001 the *Palau Horizon* memorialized a Sonsorolese man as a war hero. Bonifacio Basilius wrote, "Captain John J. Kintaro, from the Island of Sonsorol, was the first and only Palauan to die in combat in Vietnam…a genuine Palauan hero", and in closing the article, "If you are ever in the Washington DC area and have some time on your hands, visit the Vietnam Memorial Wall. Look for Captain John Kintaro's name. When you locate it, pause for a moment and say a short prayer for his family and the Republic of Palau" (*Palau Horizon* article, September 28 – October 4, 2001, see Appendix C). John Kintaro was a decorated helicopter pilot who served two tours in the Vietnam War. Unfortunately, he was shot down and killed. I understand that only the jewelry he was wearing that day was recovered and sent home to his family. John Kintaro married a Palauan woman and it is no surprise that her family is responsible for assuring his memory through this article. At one level this recognition speaks to larger Palauan national discourse, which involves the ideology of 'Palauan unity' that Mariano Yalap writes about in his poem.

In addition, John Kintaro's memory and accomplishments often came up in my conversations with Sonsorolese and Tobian friends. This speaks to another level of identity as these individuals and families take pride in not only their Sonsorol identity, but their identity as Southwest islanders of Palau, and as Palauan citizens. Perhaps, a

large factor involved in this great pride is the recognition Mr. Kintaro receives with his name on the Vietnam Veteran's Wall in Washington D.C. He is the only Palauan who died serving his country in a foreign war. Certainly, the memory of this culture-hero speaks to these three levels of national identity, but also the notion of hybridity within nationalistic discourse. As John Kintaro married a Palauan woman, the politicized recognition of his memory assists in highlighting the diversity of Palau's national setting. His children today are respected as both Palauan and Southwest islander (and Sonsorol) citizens. This exemplifies the hybrid context of Echang and larger Palau.

Tobian Dance. For historical reasons Tobians had largely ceased dancing publicly within the context of larger Palau. This relates to a social *faux pas* that happened at a Japanese Festival of the Arts held in the 1930's in Koror. At this festival Tobian men performed an obscene dance constructed around the ongoing rumor of a prominent Palauan woman masturbating in her garden with a tapioca root. At the time, the Tobians had felt that their existing relationship with a certain Palauan businessman provided them license to perform the dance, but what happened after the performance proved they were wrong and had misread their place within Palauan society. A riot broke out and the Tobian dancers were hustled back to Echang (see Peter Black's *The In-Charge Complex and Tobian Political Culture* (1983:60) for details of this event). Taking place some sixty years prior to the advent of post-colonial Palauan nationalistic ideology, this event reveals the tenuous minority status of Tobians within Palau.

In 1998 at both the Micronesian Games festivities and the Palau Constitution Day festivities, I observed that the Tobians specifically refrained from performing any public dances. I often asked why they did not encourage the performance of dances

representing their island, as other villages and islands of Palau had done. I always received ambivalent responses to these questions, which I believe are for the following reasons. First, because of the Tobian desire and method of maintaining a low profile, especially considering their minority status within larger Palau. Perhaps, there existed still, a negative, if distant, memory of the social *faux pax* of the 1930's. I also learned that only a few elders knew the 'proper' Tobian dances and I was told that they were reluctant to pass this knowledge on. I believe the reluctance derives from factional clan politics within the Tobi community. This is significant and it shows how Tobian clan factionalism often results in a lack of outward Tobian unity that never gets recognized within larger Palau. Within the context of nationalism, the time for Tobian unity and larger recognition could come in the context of larger national Palau festivities, but Tobian politics negates this.

In 1999 however, I observed several respected Tobian women (who happened to have Palauan relatives on their mother's side) teaching young girls Tobian dances that were later performed at the Palau Constitution Day festivities. The dances were performed beautifully and were well received by the larger Palauan audience. I remember the general feeling of acceptance and pride among the Tobian dancers and community in general. Their efforts here perhaps strained clan relations (or perhaps not) within the Tobi community but certainly provided recognition of a Tobian cultural practice that was accepted as a part of larger national Palau. This is an example of how local-level clan politics tie into larger national politics. I find this dance performance to be yet another symbol of Tobian identity within larger Palauan nationalism.

Wara Uhuh. A final example of a positive political expression of Tobian identity concerns the traditional Tobian sailing canoe, the *wara uhuh*. This involves Tobian canoe construction and its transformation from practical fishing use in everyday Tobi, to contemporary use as a tool (or vessel) for negotiating Tobian identities at local and national levels.

I should first give a brief and simplified history of the Tobian canoe. It is a derivative of the western-Carolinian voyaging canoe that is constructed with a v-shaped, asymmetrical hull. Unique within the Caroline islands (with which I have mentioned in chapter one that the Tobians have an earlier history of voyaging relations), the Tobians modified their canoe strictly for multiple fishing purposes in and around Tobi island and nearby Helen Island. This modified canoe was smaller with a rounded hull and distinctly thin walls to allow the canoe greater flexibility in the ocean swells.

Thirty years ago every adult man in Tobi carved and owned at least one canoe used for fishing. Since that time, canoes have become less significant as more people migrated from Tobi and fiberglass boats with outboard motors became preferred fishing vessels for the remaining adult population. I was told the last practical use of the Tobian sailing canoe for fishing purposes was over twenty years ago (pers. comm.., Justin Andrew, May, 1998). Canoes remained in canoe houses or were relocated to Echang to sit outside houses in various states of deterioration – reminders of a recent past.

In the contemporary context of Palauan nationalism, this recently changed. In an effort to show the complexities of Tobian identities and the notion of hybridity and national symbolism in Palau, I highlight a canoe project that was initiated in 1996 by the Palau Old Age Center in Koror. The canoe building project involved one Tobian and one

Palauan canoe builder. I checked on the progress of this project during several visits to Koror between 1996 and 1998.

After almost two years of working together (which is a long time for canoe construction), canoe construction stopped due to differences of opinion between the two canoe builders. Shortly after, the respected Tobian elder and canoe builder Lorenzo Simion proceeded to carve a traditional Tobian sailing canoe on his own.

Canoe construction took place at the meeting house in the center of Echang. At various times on any given day children and adults congregated at this meeting house and discussed both significant and trivial matters. And each day, Lorenzo continued to carve, and finally completed, the first Tobian sailing canoe to be carved in many years. The canoe was purchased by a then prominent Palauan congressman and businessman, Alan Seid, for $1,500.00US. It now sits on display at the new Outrigger Resort Hotel. The unfinished Palau Old Age Center canoe still rests in the same spot, also on display.

Symbolically, I find it interesting that the 'hybrid' Palauan/Tobian canoe took two years to become *incomplete* while Lorenzo's Tobian canoe was completed and placed on public display as a representation of Palauan cultural traditions. It is important to note that during this period of time, the Echang land protest was ongoing. It is ironic that while the Tobians (and other Southwest islanders from Sonsorol, Pulu Ana, and Merir) were being told to leave Palau by the clans of Ngerakebesang, another prominent Palauan was purchasing a Tobian canoe for public display. This shows that contestations about land and culture are always shifting, as various groups, families, clans, and individuals compete for resources and identity maintenance.

Two months later, Lorenzo Simion completed a second canoe which was also purchased by Alan Seid (for the same amount), to later be displayed in a new private museum in Koror, the Etpison Museum and Gallery. In addition, Lorenzo is planning to build (for payment) two more sailing canoes for the new Belau National Museum, expected to open for the Pacific Festival of the Arts in 2004, in Koror.

From a Palauan perspective of nationalism, the Tobian canoes represent larger Palauan traditions and also express their diversity within the ROP. From a Tobian perspective, these canoes represent both Tobian identity within the larger Palau body politic, and reminders of important Tobian traditions, history, and identity within the Tobian community. Although these canoes are not used for sailing and fishing, the construction of these Tobian canoes developed new meanings about contemporary Tobian political identity. I believe that the Tobian canoe is a strong symbol of both Palauan national identity and Tobian cultural identity.

The Palauan culture-hero recognition reveals nationalistic pride from several levels; that of a Palauan writer, a Palauan citizen, a Southwest islander, and even recognition of this pride within the context of global politics (i.e. the Vietnam Veterans Wall Memorial and Palau/U.S. political relations). In the recent past when Tobians avoided performing at public ceremonies, we can see how Tobian factional clan politics can possibly be detrimental to Tobian recognition. The recent dance events I mention express a positive acceptance of Tobian cultural identity and that identity within the Republic of Palau. The contemporary construction of the *wara uhuh* provides another example of positive acceptance of a Tobian cultural artifact as a symbol of Palauan nationalism and unity.

These examples of hero recognition, a revival of dance, and canoe construction and purchase are expressions of Tobian cultural identity and Southwest islander identity within the context of Palauan nationalism that reveal a positively politicized identity. In my opinion, this enhances the increasingly politicized 'Palauan-ness' of Tobians. And Tobians embrace this. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Tobians are very proud to call Palau home while they are also grounded in their identities as Southwest islanders and Tobians from Tobi island. The above ethnographic events and expressions reveal the shifting and contextual identities of Tobians as well as the larger transformation of Tobians in a larger Palau.

Chapter Five

Helen Reef: Issues and Complexities for the Tobians

This chapter examines the interplay between local-level Tobian politics, Palauan national politics, a global environmental organization, and the inter-relationships of these forces on Tobian cultural identity.

Helen Island is located 65km east of Tobi. As mentioned in a recent report, "Helen Island possesses marine resources that are traditionally an important source of sustenance for the livelihood of the Hatohobei people" (Helen Reef Action Committee, Helen Reef Pilot Surveillance/Deterrence Program, 2001). Also referred to as Helen Reef, it is surrounded by a $163km^2$ lagoon with a fringing reef. Peter Black mentions its position within the continuity of Tobian cultural identity and values, expressing that, "Another striking continuity is in the commitment Tobians continue to show as they exert their claims to responsible ownership of Helen Reef. That commitment is a constant theme in the oral history of Tobi" (Black, Helen Report, 2000). I find this true with my experiences and conversations with Tobian friends. They take great pride in acknowledging the resources of Helen Island.

In recent years Tobian oral history of marine resources at Helen Island has changed dramatically. As Peter Black describes, "In place of the stories of fatness and adventure told about the visits there during the previous era, Tobians now recount stories that express their concern with Helen's diminishing resources. Tales of contemporary events tend to stress destruction and diminishment, not just of the various forms of organic life there, but of Helen Reef itself" (Black, Helen Reef Report, 2000).

Specifically, Tobians have expressed concern regarding the exploitation of Helen Island and reef by illegal foreign poachers from Indonesia and the Philippines, as well as by national government officials stocking up on field ship trips in the past (see Black, Helen Report, 2000). This is further documented in a recent assessment of Helen Island resources, which notes, "While Helen Reef's remoteness has helped to protect its resources from over use, in modern times its ecological integrity is significantly threatened by overexploitation and destructive fishing, particularly by foreign vessels. Recently, Helen Reef has been identified as a reef at 'high risk' by the World Resources Institute's Reefs at Risk Program (1998) due to these external factors" (HRAC, Helen Reef Pilot Surveillance/Deterrence Program, 2001).

In June of 2001 the Hatohobei State Government office designated a voluntary group of Tobian citizens as the Helen Reef Action Committee (HRAC). This committee has worked with an outside international conservation agency, Community Conservation Network (CCN), to develop and implement a Helen Reef Pilot Surveillance/Deterrence Program. According to HRAC and CCN, "Marine resource management at Helen Reef and Hatohobei Island is a priority for the people and State Government of Hatohobei," but unfortunately, "While the National Government has recognized the need to increase surveillance and enforcement in SW territorial waters, and Exclusive Economic Zone of Palau, the current configuration of marine enforcement activities, technical assistance, and donor aid is unlikely to be sufficient to completely protect Helen Reef's biological resources"[16] (HRAC, Helen Reef Pilot Surveillance/Deterrence Program, 2001).

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[16] "For example, the (Palau) National Patrol Boat is scheduled for 80 days at sea a year, allowing for very few days for patrolling the immediate Helen Reef area (HRAC, Helen Reef Pilot Surveillance/Deterrence Program, 2001).

The objective of this initial pilot project is "to protect the outstanding marine resources of Hatohobei State by supporting a human presence at Helen Reef to discourage destructive activities and all illegal entry into the reef" (HRAC, Helen Reef Pilot Surveillance/Deterrence Program, 2001). As of September 2001, two of four individuals had completed a Marine Law Enforcement training program as required by HRAC and the Palau National Marine Enforcement Division.[17] The project is still stagnant as there have been myriad difficulties getting this project initiated and functional (pers. comm., Lorenzo Simion, January, 2002; Thomas Patris, July, 2001; Michael Guilbeaux, July 2001).

As Karen Nero claims, "International organizations have played contradictory roles…National parks and nature reserves, unless carefully planned with community participation, can also alienate people from their habitats" (Nero, 1997:394). Nero explains this concern from a Palauan historical perspective, drawing on issues that emerged in the 1970's controversy over a proposed supertanker port in Palau:

> While some Palauans welcomed the International Union for the Conservancy of Nature, the World Wildlife Fund, and the US-based Sierra Club and Oceanic Society in their battle against a proposed supertanker port in the 1970's, the proposal to establish Palau as an international nature reserve, in order to protect it from development, understandably raised questions of how local peoples would live and the degree of control they would exercise (Nero, 1997:394).

The proposed supertanker port and the idea of establishing Palau as an international nature reserve never developed beyond proposals, the former out of concern for the environment and the latter because of the uncertainty of indigenous control over

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[17] Several Tobians are already trained in resource protection and enforcement and are currently working for the Palau Marine Enforcement Division. (pers. comm., Thomas Patris, July, 2001).

resources. This is precisely one dilemma facing Tobians with regards to Helen reef and its resources.

On one level, the broader agenda for CCN is to develop a marine enforcement program and marine monitoring program with on-site facilities at Helen Island[18]. This would also involve the eventual establishment of Helen Island/Reef as a marine preserve under the umbrella of the World Wildlife Fund, with CCN coordinating operations as an NGO (pers. comm., Michael Guilbeaux, July, 2001). As a marine preserve under the authority of CCN and the World Wildlife Fund, the resources of Helen Island would not be available to Tobians.

With regards to outside involvement at Helen Island, at the local-level many Tobians are concerned about who has final command over their resources. Their questions posed to me have been: "Can we still fish for our families?", and "Who has the right to tell us when and what kind of fish we are able to take from our own island?" One intriguing example for me is the contradiction in cultural values regarding turtles. While turtle is considered a food source for Tobians living in Tobi, it is considered an endangered species to the outside international agencies. Are these outside agencies going to demand that Tobians cannot eat turtle, a significant part of their diet and cultural identity? This raises questions without clear answers that trouble Tobians.

Another Tobian concern is the question of who is really making a living (subsistence or otherwise) off of their resources? Many Tobians I have spoken to made reference to the large salaries paid to the CCN consultants in this pilot project, while nothing has been paid out to Tobians. At the same time in the Tobian view this larger

agenda is to control these resources within a marine preserve, thus taking the resources completely away from Tobians. This does not seem to be in the best interest of Tobians. One friend asked me, "If I want to start my own business selling fish in Palau or Taiwan, will I be able to?" and "Could we operate a diving tourism business there?" I should note that a fisheries business operated in Helen reef in the early 1990's. The business involved one Tobian and two Taiwanese partners. From several sources, I have heard that a grouper population in particular was seriously exploited and depleted as a result of this business.

I have asked CCN consultant Mike Guilbeaux about the possibility of another fishing business operating within the larger CCN agenda. He explained, "That would be possible after we have established baseline surveys of fish populations and when we see that certain populations have reached an adequate population size for fishing" (Mike Guilbeaux, July, 2001). That is reasonable yet I question if it conflicts with the larger agenda and reality of maintaining Helen Island/Reef as a marine preserve under World Wildlife Fund financial resources and policies. It is certainly ideal to have a continual assessment of the fisheries populations of Helen Island/Reef so that such a Tobian owned business could operate when populations were of sufficient size, or at the very least, for subsistence use. But due to the uncertainty over the control of indigenous resources, many Tobians are hesitant to move forward with such a project. Because of these above questions and conflicts, the HRAC committee was formed to educate and communicate with the Tobian community about future prospects beyond the pilot deterrence/surveillance project.

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[18] If the pilot project is successful, CCN hopes to establish a permanently moored ship outside of Helen Reef. This would provide facilities for marine patrol personnel, patrol boats, monitoring technicians, and

Another level of concern is the involvement of the national government. The HRAC/CCN report mentions, "The Palau National Marine Enforcement Division has indicated support both for this pilot program, and for the long-term enforcement program if proper training and authorization is provided by National Agencies responsible for law enforcement". Also, the report states, "The Marine Enforcement Division has also expressed its willingness to contribute joint enforcement and training efforts once a program is underway" (HRAC, Helen Reef Pilot Surveillance/Deterrence Program, 2001).

This is promising. However, it leads to further questions about the control over Tobian and Helen Island resources. Presently, when poachers fishing within the Palau Exclusive Economic Zone in Tobian and Helen Island waters are caught by the National Patrol Boat, all fines are paid to the national government. Incidentally, a Tobian friend that works as an officer on this boat told me that virtually every time they patrol this area they find poachers, and often catch them and confiscate the boat, fish, and gear (pers. comm., Maximo Marcello, July, 2001). Some Tobians wonder if a percentage of these fines could go toward Hatohobei Stage Government, especially if the proposed HRAC/CCN project comes to fruition.

As I mention in chapter one (see p. 16), there is increasing pressure by the national government on the Hatohobei State Government (HSG) to generate its own income and become less of a burden on the national government. The HSG operates on an annual budget of $160,000US. Most of this is paid in salaries, and the remaining balance is utilized for operating expenses for the HSG supply ship, *The Atoll Way*, to make three to four visits to Tobi and Helen each year. One round-trip visit to Tobi costs

also for visiting marine scientists (pers. comm., Michael Guilbeaux, July, 2001).

$8,000US for fuel and operating expenses. (pers. comm.., Lt. Gov. Crispin Emilio, July, 2001).

Historically, there has been state-level political rhetoric involving the formal status of Sonsorol and Hatohobei state governments. As Peter Black mentions, "As part of the constitutional negotiations leading up to the emergence of the Republic of Palau, it was decided that old municipalities would become states…but I was told that the High Chief of Koror proposed to incorporate Tobi and other Southwest islands within the State of Koror" (Black, 1982:62). I have heard myself that even recently, senators from Koror have proposed the incorporation of the Southwest islands into Koror State, especially considering that most of the Southwest Islanders reside in Echang, which falls under Koror State jurisdiction (pers. comm., Lt. Gov. Crispin Emilio, July, 2001).

I return to the Echang setting that Peter Black speaks of in the early 1980's. He describes Palauan and Southwest islander relations and Echang land, saying, "Lacking economic or political power, then, the Eang community's access to the commercial and administrative institutions in Koror, dominated by Palauans, is fragile," and further, "As economic conditions continue to deteriorate in Palau, with ever-increasing unemployment, competition for the unskilled jobs held by Eang people increases…and as the Palauan population expands rapidly, pressure on Eang's land only increases" (Black, 1982:60). In another article Peter Black makes a similar point about Echang politics, saying, "In Eang the central political issue facing the residents is the achievement and maintenance of access to the economic and service sectors of Palauan society," and that, "Such access is both the *raison d'etre* and the necessary precondition for Eang's continued existence. This challenge is made severe by the tenuous nature of the title

which Eang residents have to their lands" (Black, 1982:55). This of course lends insight into the Echang land protest I discussed in chapter four.

In addition though, these insights also apply twenty years later within my own research scope, as the ROP continues to develop its economy outside of U.S. Compact funds through tourism and foreign government grants and aid. Echang is becoming increasingly congested. Opportunities are limited. More Southwest islanders are moving away to Guam, Saipan, Hawaii, and the U.S. in search of jobs and education. Most Tobians are employed by the HSG. Some are employed with tour companies, and a few take employment with national government agencies, such as the Belau Hospital. If the HSG is eliminated and incorporated into Koror State, most of the Tobian community will be unemployed. In addition to this scenario, Tobians would definitely lose state-level control over their indigenous resources.

Ideally, the pilot project and proposed conservation and marine patrol facilities address some of the concerns I have discussed regarding sustainability of both the HSG and the Tobi and Helen Island resources. If this potential scenario came to fruition, it might provide training and employment for Tobians, and consequently, local and state-level sustainability. This would alleviate some of the congestion in Echang also as it would provide more incentive for adults to reside in Tobi and have their children involved in elementary education there. Also, in conjunction with the HSG, the proposed conservation project would generate income to sustain *The Atoll Way*. Certainly, if a percentage of poaching fines went to HSG, this too would alleviate some of the dependency and financial pressure on the national and HSG governments. Considering sustainability and all of these inter-related agendas, I refer to Karen Nero who says,

"Sustainability, the key word of all these interventions, must simultaneously be redefined on the local, national, and international levels" (Nero, 1999:82).

Realistically, this potential scenario likely will not happen due to Tobian cultural-political reasons. In explaining the result of what he describes as the "in-charge complex," Peter Black says, "Achieving consensus for new courses of joint action is extremely difficult on Tobi because Tobians take a rather jaundiced view of altruistic claims made by anyone but the chief [19]…Time after time, plans offered for the island's betterment have failed because of the near universal distrust of those taking the initiative" (Black, 1983:15). I have certainly seen this reaction in the contemporary context of the proposed conservation and deterrence project. It is the result of the in-charge complex and clan politics that Tobians are reluctant to move forward on this project. While these dynamics speak to core Tobian values and cultural identity, they also speak to a redefined Tobian identity in the context of contemporary Palau.

The In-Charge Complex

As Peter Black mentions, traditional Tobian society was based on the "creation of a people whose ancestors had solved the problems of survival on small, vulnerable islands" (Black, 1982:57), and the "challenge to Tobi's first inhabitants was to fit those solutions in detail to their new home, a challenge which they met very successfully. The challenge to each succeeding generation has been to maintain that hard-won balance" (Black, 1982:57). One significant mechanism in achieving this balance is the in-charge

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[19] The present chief, or traditional leader is away studying in the U.S., with plans to return to Palau in 2003/4 (pers. comm., Sebastian Marino, July, 2000). His position is seriously contested within Tobian clan politics and this position has become less instrumental in contemporary Tobian politics. See Peter Black's *The Teachings of Father Marino: Christianity on Tobi Atoll* (1978) for further details of this contested position and Tobian clan factionalism.

complex.[20] Peter Black's, *The In-Charge Complex and Tobian Political Culture* (1982)

details this mechanism and describes it as a method in which Tobians have continually

met and negotiated political change. The basic idea of the In-Charge Complex is that

each person in the community has a senior person in charge of him/her, with the

exception of fully mature men and "certain women rich in property and kin" (Black,

1982:57), who with their maturity are expected to follow proper customs.

      However, the community as a whole falls under the political autonomy of the

chief. As Peter Black says, "The office of the chief, the status which combined ultimate

political and religious legitimacy, *was* [my emphasis] the key social mechanism for

guaranteeing compliance with custom, and thus the maintenance of social and ecological

balance", therefore, "The chief was the Tobians say, *in charge* of their island" (Black,

1982:57).

      Within the contemporary setting and my research scope, there are two conflicts

within this mechanism. One, although this mechanism works well within the political,

social, ecological, religious, and spiritual dynamics of neo-traditional Tobi island, it is *not*

effective within the political framework and social dynamics of contemporary Echang

and larger Palau. Peter Black's, *The In-Charge Complex and Tobian Political Culture*,

discusses three significant political events that reveal the Tobian communities' failed

attempts to "seek a Palauan to be in charge of Echang"[21] (Black, 1982:60). The second

conflict is the current status of Tobi's traditional leader. As I have mentioned in an

earlier footnote, the status of the current traditional leader is highly contested due to

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[20]I utilize Peter Black's simplified explanation here: "Tobian society can be viewed as a vast array of linked dyads. In each of these pairs of persons, one member is superior to another. Tobians say that the senior person is "in charge" of the other (Peter Black, 1982: 56-7).

historical political events and typical Tobian clan political factionalism (see Peter

Black's, *The Teachings of Father Marino: Christianity on Tobi Atoll*, 1978). My

observations and experiences have shown that this position is not as empowered as it

used to be [22]. This is likely a result of the transition into Palauan political dynamics and

the historical Tobian chiefly contestation. In any case, these two conflicts leave a gaping

hole in a fundamental mechanism of Tobian socio-politics.

It is a natural curiosity to consider whether the leadership of the Hatohobei State

Government office has supplanted the traditional role of chief with regards to

contemporary Tobian politics and the *in-charge* complex. That possibility is anything

but the case. All decisions and actions taken by the Tobi state government leadership and

office are contested within the typical framework and ideology of Tobian clan

membership and associated factionalism. This factionalism works as a system of "check

and balance" within this small community in all political matters. This concept refers

back to the Tobian's "jaundiced view of altruistic claims made by anyone but the chief"

(Black, 1983:15). This situation with the contemporary HSG office and Tobian and

Palauan politics is no different than Peter Black's historical perspective of the U.S. Trust

Territory modeled office of the magistrate. He wrote, "I think much of the contention

surrounding the office of magistrate in its early years was generated by the perception

that, through their schemes to help the island, the magistrates were trying to usurp the

place of the chief," and thus, "achieve his position as the person in charge of Tobi"

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[21] For this thesis it is not necessary to examine in detail these events. Please see Peter Black's *The In-Charge Complex* (1982) for further details.
[22] I want to leave a serious amount of room here for subjectivity. Sebastian Marino, the current Tobian traditional leader is quite respected as the traditional leader within certain clans and also happens to be completing a degree in environmental science, with intentions of applying his education and leadership skills toward the betterment of the Tobian community. Indeed, he has been extremely helpful to me personally and toward the preparation and process of writing this thesis.

(Black, 1983:15). Constant contestation between traditional leaders and elected leaders tells us that the maintenance of cultural identity is fraught with constant struggles for power and authority.

All Tobian state-level decisions are contested, as are the recent plans and discussions regarding the implementation of a conservation, preservation, and marine patrol program at Helen Island. The project was initiated by CCN and HSG state leaders. Tobian responses to the initiatives have consistently been distrusting of the real intentions of all the above individuals. This distrust as taken the form of individuals simply not attending associated meetings about the project, through gossip, and various clan claims that the people involved in the decision making process for Tobi and Helen have no right to do so by custom. The leadership response to this has been to form the earlier mentioned HRAC, a voluntary committee of respected individuals within the Tobian community. Nonetheless, the Tobian dynamics of clan factionalism still persist. The above analysis explains why, from a Tobian socio-political dynamic, this project will have difficulty in succeeding. For me, the entire scenario is not necessarily negative, for this clan factionalism significantly marks Tobian values, ideologies, and consequently, Tobian cultural identity maintenance. Nonetheless, whereas the Tobian clan factionalism results in a *status quo* regarding the continuing exploitation of Helen Reef in this situation, perhaps it also keeps a potentially unified Tobian community from developing and sustaining their indigenous resources.

Economic Development and Sustainability

Through my various conversations with HSG leaders and HRAC members, the larger intention with the proposed Helen project is twofold; to preserve indigenous

resources for future Tobian generations, and to create more economic and state-level identity for the Tobian community. The difficulty here, as I have mentioned above in detail, is threefold; the larger agenda of the outside environmental non-governmental organization, the Community Conservation Network, and its funding sources, the political and economic development agenda of the national government, and Tobian clan politics.

With regard to creating economic sustainability and the difficulties associated with the first two agendas here, (that of the Palau national government and CCN), and within the contextual theoretical framework of economic development I mention in chapter two, I refer to Karen Nero's work on economic development in the Marshall islands. As she suggests, "A primary failing of "top-down" development planning is an emphasis on economic (as opposed to social and cultural) factors as they are understood from a Western economic perspective" (Nero, 1999:87). This has led to "insufficient attempts to understand the broader socioeconomic systems currently operating in communities for which development projects have been proposed" (Nero, 1999:87).

As I detailed earlier with David Hanlon's *Remaking Micronesia: Discourses over Development in a Pacific Territory, 1944-1982* (1998), and Arturo Escobar's *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1994), Nero refers to the same concern with regards to economic development and sustainability. She says, "Western economic models tend to dichotomize – between monetary and subsistence sectors of the economy, between urban and rural issues, between modernized and traditional activities, between imported and local goods – separating rather than studying the linkages of these components" (Nero, 1999:87). She adds, "Most important,

agencies may fail to recognize the ways that multiple economic models may be operating simultaneously, differentially inscribed with meaning in their constant linkages between members of rural and urban communities." She mentions two levels that "must be considered in rethinking development from the perspective of the economy" (Nero, 1999:87). One level emphasizes the need "to make explicit the existence of a plurality of models of the economy", in conjunction with the second level, which is "involving the mechanisms by which local cultural knowledge and economic resources are appropriated by larger forces and, conversely, the ways in which local innovations and gains can be preserved as part of local economic and cultural power" (Nero, 1999:87-8). And utilizing Escobar's work she adds, "Such a redirection requires a rethinking of global-local connections, a recognition of the possibility of multiple economic models operating and interacting…" (Nero, 1999:88).

Regarding local views of sustainability, especially in the outer islands, Karen Nero suggests that "life on these islands has for centuries been adjusted to cycles of resource availability and periods of hardship when there might be months of rough weather making fishing difficult or when staple crops are not yet in season" (Nero, 1999:94).   Therefore, she says, "Work is oriented to the task at hand, and its requirements must be integrated with other demands on workers' time. Because of the fragile nature of atoll life it has never been practical to specialize in one economic option: the ability to draw on multiple sources provides the flexibility needed to survive when one option is at least temporarily available" (Nero, 1999:94). Consequently, "individuals are reluctant to limit their productive labor to one activity" (Nero, 1999:94).

In a way, this is precisely one of the features of the conflicts I see with regards to the Helen Reef project. My friends who have been asked to give up their current jobs in Koror to pursue training for future jobs with the Helen Reef project are reluctant to do so because of the uncertainty of the project. They insist that they would like to pursue such opportunities but cannot commit. The paradox persists.

Karen Nero emphasizes that a solution to the above dilemmas of economic development and sustainability calls for a return of control over indigenous resources to respective local leaders. She says, "It appears that the most feasible way to reestablish management and conservation of resources for future generations would be to return to (and support) control by leaders of the local communities, while basing such controls on (updated) indigenous practices" (Spenneman and Alessio, 1991; from Nero, 1999:98). But while a return to local control is imperative she says, "no simple return to once-existing practices is possible. Traditional and contemporary regulations must be combined and supported to ensure there is no gap similar to that experienced by some communities now," where it "appears that neither traditional nor contemporary regulations are recognized and maximum gleaning and destruction occur" (*ibid*).

We can see that despite difficulties mentioned above, the interdependent relationships in this modern post-colonial context between the outside environmental group, the Palauan national government, and the Tobian community provide a potential scenario for accomplishing multiple goals within differing and overlapping agendas. Many Tobians would like to utilize the indigenous resources of Helen Island toward sustainable development. In doing so their cultural identity is reinforced through the empowerment of controlling their own resources. At the same time, this development

could possibly alleviate some of the population congestion in Echang and provide some Tobians the incentive they have been waiting for to come home to their island and still earn income to support their families. At another level, if income is generated within this context the Tobi state office justifies its existence within the larger Palauan body politic. Outside of Tobian cultural politics, the main conflict here is the conflicting agendas between Tobians and the environmental organization. It simply is not acceptable for an outside agency to take control over indigenous Tobian resources, as in the proposed marine preserve for Helen Island. The bottom line overall is whether or not the Tobian community will carry this multiple faceted project into fruition, with Tobian control over their indigenous resources.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

This research endeavors to integrate qualitative ethnographic fieldwork, secondary ethnographic sources, and a significantly broad theoretical framework to tease out the multiple layers and levels of Tobian cultural identity in the nascent nation-state of the Republic of Palau.

In chapter one I asked the following questions to engage and drive my research: Within an ambiguous political context of neo-colonialism, growing Palauan nationalism, increasingly interdependent regionalism, and globalization, are Tobians becoming more 'Palauan'? Second, given this dynamic of social-cultural change, are Tobians able to maintain their cultural identity and sense of indigenous roots? I asked these two particular questions to examine not only shifting and multiple Tobian identities but also the complexities and notions of power, politics, diaspora, boundary maintenance, concepts of culture change and maintenance, and the conflicted role of ethnographer as insider and outsider.

As I have mentioned, I find the Tobian and Palauan setting a significantly unique and complex space to explore these questions. In chapter one I introduce the complexities of this setting. However, as unique as I find the setting, I also find that exploring Tobian identity in this context also parallels in many ways many other Pacific Islander contemporary scenarios. This includes issues relative to diaspora and the interdependence and interrelations between the local-level community and national and international entities. To examine the specific research questions above I found it necessary to provide theoretical background and critique in several areas.

I first examined different concepts of culture, and cultural identity and ethnicity within the field of anthropology. I provided historical and anthropological background to these concepts from within the region of Micronesia before examining recent theories on cultue and identity in Oceania. I then introduced a critique of colonial policies and their impact on ethnicity from a theoretical perspective, specifically to the Palauan and Tobian context. This was done by examining Robert McKnight's ethnographic work on Tobian identity in Palau in the mid-1970's. Outside of McKnight's critical examination of U.S. colonial policy in Micronesia, his argument regarding Tobian identity is that with the eventual lifting of the colonial apparatus, over time Tobians would become more 'Palauan' through assimilation within the larger Palauan socio-political and cultural context.

My research examines this specific question 25 years later in this same geographical setting (now post-colonial) while attempting to also navigate, conceptualize, and analyze the integrated and interdependent contemporary Tobian and Palauan context. This context includes post-colonial Palauan neo-nationalism, globalization, an environmental NGO agenda, economic development, Palauan cultural politics, Tobian state-level politics, and Tobian local-level politics. In addition to conceptualizing these multiple overlapping and interdependent factors of Tobian identity, my final theoretical framing derives from James Clifford's concept of 'articulation theory', which essentially offers a broader contemporary appreciation and perspective to the diaspora, negotiations, and multiple histories and contextual identities of Pacific Islanders, and in this case, Tobian islanders.

At first appearance Tobian culture and identity is confusing. The relocated Southwest islander community of Echang reveals a cultural mix of people from Tobi, Sonsorol, Pulu Ana, Merir, and Palau. Tobians reside in and call Tobi and Echang their home. While most Tobians reside in Koror, the national center of Palau, and consider themselves both Tobian and Palauan, they also take great pride in their home island of Tobi. I initially found this 'blur' of overlapping identities difficult to analyze and articulate.

Regarding ethnography as an anthropological tool to explore this 'blur', in chapter three I discussed how Western-oriented anthropological theory generally has historically created models and paradigms based on linear and oppositional thought. In my opinion, this fundamentally relates to Western obsession with an evolutionary concept and frame of mind that perceives only a beginning and an end to any type of phenomena (see p.28). In contrast to this approach, this research shows that exploring culture involves getting away from binarisms and linear logic, and appreciating a more interdependent, shifting, and contextual setting. With this ethnography and my conceptualization of multiple layers and levels of identities, I believe that I bring into focus that certainly, McKnight is right when he argues that beyond the historical colonial context of Palau, Tobians have become more 'Palauan', but salient to my argument is that, this transformation is not a linear process, but rather shifting, contextual, and never complete. While Tobians continue to negotiate and transform their identity as Palauans, they also negotiate, transform, and maintain their Tobian values, epistemologies, and of course, cultural identity.

With this ethnography I am also concerned with the difficulties of representation, reflexivity, and notions of power. I have attempted to balance Tobian perspectives along with my own into analyzing and interpreting Tobian identity, while also utilizing insights from secondary sources and at the same time, placing these all within my theoretical framework. Although I am placing my voice, opinions, framework, and words into Tobian identity throughout this thesis, I am confident that I have done so with the respect of the larger Tobian community. This work is useful within an academic space, and I maintain hope that in the future it holds useful significance within the Tobian community. It avails additional understanding of, and meaning to, Tobian identity in a contemporary context.

Giving my opinion and perspective of a non-western cultural setting within a western-oriented academic framework is problematic. This is a perpetual conflict within the field of ethnography. I remain confident, that although I am utilizing western models and language, through my intensive relations within the Tobian community and subsequent understanding of Tobian ideology, I am adequately giving Tobian meaning and perspective to the larger research question regarding Tobian cultural identity.

Because I have utilized a broad theoretical framework and multiple sites to plug into it and conceptualize contemporary Tobian identity, I have found some redundancy necessary throughout the writing process. This hopefully helps the reader to more fully comprehend the blurred reality of Tobian culture and identities.

In synthesizing the theoretical framing and multiple layers and levels of ambiguous and shifting identity within the Tobian and Palauan context I now revisit the several ethnographic events that I chose to highlight in this thesis. I highlighted these

particular events in conjunction with my theoretical framing to tease out the multiple

layers of blurred identity that I speak to throughout this thesis.

In chapter four I utilized a poem by Mariano Yalap to reveal some of these

identity layers and the tenuous position of Tobians within larger Palau. The poem speaks

to the differences between Southwest islanders and Palauans and how the Echang land

protest pitted Palauans against Southwest islanders. This situation poignantly speaks to

the sometimes painful minority experience of Tobians and Southwest islanders, despite

their contributions to larger Palauan society and desire to be considered Palauans.

We can see how the politics of culture in this case categorized and grouped the

people of Echang as 'Southwest islanders', despite the unique differences and subtle

boundary maintenance between the islanders of Tobi, Sonsorol, Pulu Ana, and Merir.

Obviously, the politics of culture with this event speak to the importance of land within

Palauan custom and clan structure. Because Southwest islanders do not hold any clan

status within the Palau socio-cultural structure their tenuous position became magnified

within the protest event. It was a reminder that they are not always considered Palauans,

but rather, Southwest islanders that do not belong in Palau. The typical passive Tobian

reaction to this conflict not only reinforced Tobian cultural identity through Tobian

sociocultural and political values and ideology, at the same time Tobian identity was

reinforced through the Palauan lens of Tobian 'otherness'.

I introduced several Tobian voices into the matter of their Tobian and Palauan

identity and their sometimes tenuous position within larger Palau. Their voices speak

largely to the politics of culture and identity that I discussed theoretically in chapter two.

I contrasted this tenuous layer of Tobian and Southwest islander identity with several events and symbols that portray a positive construction and politicized perspective of Tobians and Southwest islanders as they fit into larger Palauan society. In my opinion, these events speak to the long-term relocation status and relations between Tobians and Palauans, Tobian assimilation into Palauan culture and society, Palauan cultural flexibility in receiving 'outsiders', and are a direct result of increasing Palauan nationalistic policy and ideology.

The politicized example of John Kintaro, from Sonsorol, as a Palauan culture-hero reveals a positive layer of Southwest islander identity. The media article does not distinguish Mr. Kintaro as Sonsorolese, or Southwest islander, but as a "Palauan hero". In an historical context this is unusual, but in a contemporary context it is supportive of Southwest islander and Tobian acceptance as Palauans. In my opinion it reveals an unspoken, unseen acceptance and pride of a Southwest islander within larger Palau. Sonsorolese, and Tobians within a "Southwest islander" context take pride in this larger "Palauan" recognition. As a Palauan culture-hero, the late Mr. Kintaro positively expresses Sonsorol identity, Southwest identity, and Palauan identity. Tobians as Southwest islanders within Palau, take pride in this recognition.

My exploration of the Tobian dance event reveals an increased Tobian confidence in expressing Tobian culture and identity within a national Palauan public festival. I explained why historically, this type of cultural display was not practiced, due to differences in Tobian and Palauan cultural values and politics, and also the larger status of Tobians as second-class citizens within larger Palau. The fact that contemporary Tobian dance was displayed as I described it speaks both to a transformation of Tobian

cultural pride and national pride as they portray a piece of larger Palauan culture within a nationalistic context.

I next explained how the Tobian sailing canoe has become a symbol of Palauan national pride as it is utilized in museum and hotel displays. The canoe is uniquely Tobian, constructed by Tobians, and portrayed as a piece of Palauan culture. This type of national symbolism is definitely an additional layer of Tobian identity within larger Palau, and speaks again to the increasing political and cultural acceptance of Tobians as a part of larger Palau.

In chapter five the multiple agendas I speak to with regards to the Helen Island and Reef conservation project expose the multiple interdependent levels of Tobian identity and also the politics involved within these levels of identity. Further, this event addresses ongoing contemporary Tobian negotiations with and within these interdependent identity levels. In this way it divulges all of the complex and conflicting realities involved in Tobian cultural identity maintenance that I touched on throughout this thesis. Contemporary Tobian identity is shaped by the Tobian actions, and reactions to, national and international politics and agendas.

With my theoretical framing and specific ethnographic events, along with secondary sources, this ethnography shows that cultural diversity and identities are both (re)constructed and maintained in a complex and dynamic setting; this includes the multiple and shifting levels of identity within and between cultural groups and also within and between national and international affiliations. Despite increasing intermarriages between Southwest islanders, Palauans, and non-Palauans, along with

Palauan nationalism, Tobian identity derives from Tobian clan structure and its associated politics. All of which, is tied to Tobi island and history.

The examination of this setting shows how colonial and post-colonial governments and politics impact culture. The complex contemporary setting involves political and economic hegemony and discourse from an international and national level, placing Tobians at a minority level because of their small and 'displaced' population and remote home island. Tobian diaspora and historical and contemporary events shows the people's resistance to this hegemony and minority status, and their adaptability to new environments. Global politics and economic discourse marginalize a place such as Tobi because of its remote location relative to global power centers. In addition, the larger Palauan system marginalizes Tobi island and Tobian islanders. At its broadest level and arguing against a western misconception, this research shows that a place such as Tobi is anything but insular and disconnected. Rather, Tobi island and Tobian islanders are very well integrated and interconnected with larger Palau and the larger global society. Tobians actively engage in global, national, state, and of course, local-level politics.

Further, this research shows that within this adaptability Tobian identity and values are rooted in and maintained through Tobian socio-political ideology and value structures and a larger ideology of what I call, 'mobile' homes, or homes in flux. In my experiences living with Tobians, 'home' is always Tobi island but also it is wherever family eats together off the same plate. This may be in Miami, New York, Saipan, Guam, Koror, or Tobi. Based on Tobian clans and clan politics, Tobians maintain their identity through interacting and relating to and through these politics, especially in a diasporic context of mobile 'home' sites. Indeed, I see Tobian home sites and identity in

constant flux yet constantly stable and maintained through family relations and core values that are based on Tobian socio-politics. I find a definitive Tobian identity through this stability.

The cultural identity boundary maintenance of this small island population is actively negotiated despite and because of, global and national Palauan hegemony and politics, state-level politics, and Tobian clan politics. Indeed, Tobians are at the same time Micronesians, Pacific Islanders, Palauans, and Southwest islanders, as well as Tobian islanders. Although their identity shifts within a post-colonial, neo-national, and regional setting, this research shows that despite a virtual relocation away from their home island, a transformation into larger Palauan society and its sociocultural values and nationalistic ideology, and an increasing contemporary diaspora, Tobian cultural identity and values are not lost.

As I mentioned in chapter two, James Cliffords' articulation theory provides a "nonreductive way to think about cultural transformation" (Clifford, 2001:478), rather than the 'fatal-impact', 'invention of tradition', or binary and oppositional 'tradition vs. modernity' views of culture and cultural transformations. Instead, Clifford posits, "Communities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing selectively on remembered pasts. The relevant question is whether and how they convince and coerce insiders and outsiders, often in power-charged, unequal situations, to accept the autonomy of 'we'" (Clifford, 2001:479). This contemporary ethnography of Tobian culture and identity, in my opinion, demonstrates the truth of this position.

Personal Communication

Lorenzo Simion (elder)   July, 1998
                                                            January, 2002

Huana Nestor (elder)   July, 1998

Sebastian Marino (Hatohobei Traditional Leader)   July, 1998
                                                            July, 2000

Crispin Emilio (Hatohobei State Governor)   July, August, 1998
               (Hatohobei State Lt. Governor)   July, 2001

Thomas Patris (Hatohobei State Delegate)   July, 2001

Mariano Carlos   August, 1998

Justin Andrew   May, July, September, 1998

Nixon Andrew   July, 1998

Maximo Marcello   July, 2002

Huan Hosei   June, 2001

Judy Nestor   August, 1998

Michael Guilbeaux (CCN representative)   July, 2001

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TIA BELAU
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PROTEST AT NGERKEBESANG

Disputes over ownership of lands in Ngerkebesang spilled over from the Judicial Building in Medalaii to the streets of Koror's southern hamlet this week. On Monday, March 9, over 50 people of Ngerkebesang gathered with signs to protest at the entrance of Echol, a section in the hamlet where 17 lots which were subject of a recent lawsuit, are located.

It all started with an appellate ruling of the Palau Supreme Court last month awarding the ownership of 17 lots td Rosamunda Tubelto, Florentine Yangilmau, Faustino Tirso, Kuterbis Kutermalei, Sumor Allis, Quadalupe Carlos, and Mariano Carlos who are all originally from the southwest island. The Court denied the claims of the original clans of Ngerkebesang including Omrekongel Clan, Odilang Clan, and Lufk Clan.

On February 10, 1997, the trial court affirmed an LCHO decision awarding titles to the southwest islanders. Ngerkebesang clans then appealed but Chief Justice Arthur Ngiraklsong, and Associate Justices Larry Miller and Barrie Michelsen on February 20 affirmed the decisions of the lower court.

On March 4, 1998, the people of Ngarkebesang sent a petition to Chief IBEDUL Yutaka Gibbons expressing their grievance. In the petition, they said that the people of the Southwest Islands were brought to Koror to live because a typhoon devastated their island In1903. When they had first come to Koror, they were brought by Ibedul Illengelekei to Ngerbodel to live but because of difficulties that they encountered, they were al-

Ngerkebesang Protest _____

lowed by Espangel Ewatel pursuant to Palau custom of generosity to live at Echang, Ngerkebesang. They moved to another place during the war but returned after and the Ngerkebesang Chiefs let them settle in Echang. The petition went on to say that the people residing in Echang are selling these lands and that Ngerkebesang people are living on. They want to reclaim all the lands in Echol as original owners and will employ any means through custom or any other measure to take back their lands. The petition was signed by over 100 people of Ngerkebesang.

When Tia Belau interviewed Inabo Katsumi, who holds the title of Mad ra Tol and spokesperson for Espangel, the highest ranking Chief of Ngerkebesang, at the site of demonstration, he said the demonstration will continue until some sort of agreement is reached between both parties and the Palau courts. He said the demonstration is peaceful and that he has asked Public Safety to send Patrol cars once in a while to insure that peace is observed.

People of southwest island states of Sonsorol and Hatohobei were considered non-Palauans as they have different language and culture which are closer to those of outer islands of Yap and Chuuk of the FSM. They came to Koror in 1903 during the German occupation when their islands were destroyed by a typhoon. They were relocated in Eang village in Ngerkebesang with the agreement of High Chief Ibedul of Koror and Espangel of Ngerkebesang. They have resided in Eang since then and their names were registered in the Japanese Land Registration (Tochi Daichio) as owners of the lands in Eang and Echol which was the basis of their victory in Court.

TO SOUTHWEST ISLANDERS AT ECHANG

August 11, 1998

No doubt , you prevailed in a recently concluded court case and must be pleased with the outcome. We, on the other hand, are neither pleased nor do we feel the judicial process has been right.

We wish to make it perfectly clear on behalf of all the people of Ngerkebesang, young and old, today and all the future generation that; there will never be peace in our hearts until this matter is properly and satisfactorily resolved according to Palauan culture and history.

The Court did not preclude Echang from the traditional or cultural jurisdiction or authority of Ngerkebesang and its traditional leaders according to customs. You are not governed under the traditional authority of Southwest Chiefs. At the same time, Echang was abolished as a hamlet of Koror by virtue of Koror State law. Your residency and properties are properly located within Ngerkebesang where we hold traditional authority with many responsibilities. The Court did not grant you any of these traditional responsibilities or rights - nor did our Palauan custom - for these are our ancestral and traditional rights.

Please know that you are governed by the rule of customs and traditions under the leadership of Ngerkebesang Chiefs - by virtue of your residency in Ngerkebesang, Now and forever.

Please know that we will not continue to live with no peace in our hearts and our lives. Do not think for a moment that the conclusion of the court case brought peace and harmony, sense of justice or good relationships to the Ngerkebesang community.

A day and time will come when we will once again revisit and face these unfinished deliberations. When that day is decided you and your representatives will be called by the traditional leaders of this community pursuant to custom.
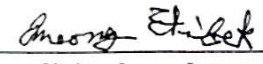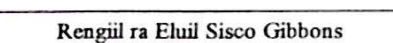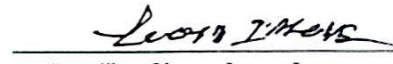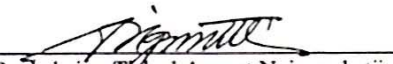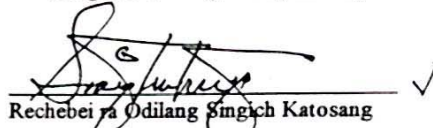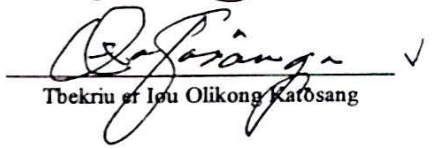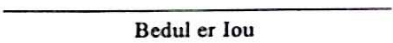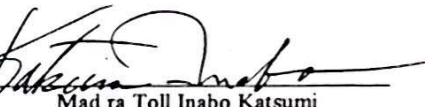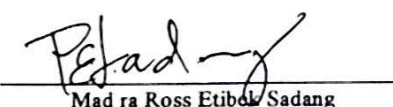
Be prepared for this is a serious challenge and a responsibility that grips the heart and soul of Ngerkebesang and its people. In a few days an announcement will be made and a messenger will duly inform you in advance of the meeting.

Ngerkebesang Chiefs:

_____   _____
Espangel Esebei   Obak ra Iwong Imeong

_____   _____
Rengiil ra Eluil Sisco Gibbons   Rengiil ra Okreng Leong Imeong

_____   _____
Rechebei ra Tabed August Ngirameketii   Rechebei ra Odilang Singich Katosang

_____   _____
Tbekriu er Bab Ricky Mechol   Tbekriu er Iou Olikong Katosang

_____   _____
Bedul er Bab Masaharu Maidesil   Bedul er Iou

_____   _____
Mad ra Toll Inabo Katsumi   Mad ra Ross Etibek Sadang

CC: *High Chief Ibedul Yutaka M. Gibbons*
        High Chief Reklai Rafael Ngirmang

        President Kuniwo Nakamura
        Senate President Isidoro Rudimch

        Speaker Ignacio Anastacio, House of Delegates
        Governor John C. Gibbons, Koror State Government
        Speaker Salvador Tellames, Koror State Legislature
        WWFM 89.5

What They Say

Captain John J. Kintaro remembered

Thirty years ago last Thursday (September 27, 1971) Captain John J. Kintaro was killed in action in the Vietnam War. A report released at the time by the Trust Territory Military Liaison Officer on Saipan said Captain Kintaro was the Pilot of an Army helicopter that crashed in Vietnam during a military mission. Kintaro was attached to the 187th *Assault Helicopter Company.*

Captain John Kintaro from the Island of Sonsorol was the first and only Palauan to die in combat in Vietnam. Many other Palauans who served in Vietnam were wounded in action, but John was the only one who made the ultimate sacrifice. His remains were brought to Palau on October 13, 1971 where he was honored in a state funeral, which was held at the Civic Center next to the Baseball field. His very close friend Senator Joshua Koshiba did a fine job arranging for the wake at Echang, the state funeral ceremonies, and the burial services at the Catholic Mission Cemetery.

I knew Captain Kintaro quite well. He was two years behind me at Mindszenty School in the late fifties and Xavier High School in Chuuk in the early sixties. He was one of those rare individuals who are blessed with golden personalities. As far as I can recall, nobody was ever angry at him and vice versa. He was a wizard in mathematics. He could do complicated math problems in his head and come out with the correct answer ahead of those of us who were attacking the same problem on papers. This ability probably accounted for his rapid rise through the ranks in his military career.

John Kintaro entered the US Army in 1966 as a private and was promoted to the rank of sergeant the following year. During his first tour of duty in Vietnam in 1968 he was wounded in action. I remember meeting him in Hawaii that year and asking him if he was calling it quits after his wounds have been healed. He said no; he was aiming at a higher goal.

In 1969, John was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia to attend Officer Candidate School where he graduated and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant. He served in Berlin, Germany for a while and then attended flight schools in the United States at Fort Walters, Texas and Fort Rucker, Alabama. He graduated with the rank of Captain. Shortly after his pilot training, Captain Kintaro signed up again for the war zone. He was killed in action barely three months into his second tour of duty in Vietnam. His wife, Masae Temengil and two children, son John and daughter Sumech survive him.

Captain John J. Kintaro's name is engraved on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington DC along with the names of over fifty thousand US service men and women who died in action during the Vietnam Conflict.

John Kintaro was a genuine Palauan hero. He and many other Palauan servicemen before and after him paved the way for today's young Palauan men and women in the US Armed Forces under the terms of the Compact of Free Association. If you are ever in the Washington DC area and have some time on your hands, visit the Vietnam Memorial Wall. Look for Captain John Kintaro's name. When you locate it, pause for a moment and say a short prayer for his family and the Republic of Palau.

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