Connected by the Sea: Towards a Regional History of the Western Caroline Islands

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Connected by the Sea: Towards a Regional History of the Western Caroline Islands

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ALTHOUGH THE PACIFIC ISLANDS' REGION IS ONE OF THE FEW TRULY OCEANIC habitats occupied permanently by humankind, surprisingly little research has been conducted on the maritime dimension of Pacific Islanders' history. This neglect has resulted in an underestimation of the extent and importance of inter-island relations in indigenous history. Pacific historians have generally focused on instances of rapid change in the period of sustained European contact from the 1770s onwards. They usually emphasise European influences as the main reasons behind the transformation of Islander[1] communities in this period. Indigenous relations with Europeans receive the lion's share of attention, while ongoing and new interactions between local communities tend to be neglected.[2] As a result, the impact of Europeans is perhaps exaggerated.

Until quite recently archaeologists and others who study the pre-European history of the region tended to treat Island communities as relatively self-contained. Modern academic writings portray external contacts as being of limited significance in the development of individual islands after their initial colonisation by human beings. Pre-European cultural development is usually depicted as driven by the interaction of internal processes. These include: adaptation of the founding culture to a new environment; population growth on a limited land area; environmental change, both natural and human-induced; and cultural emphasis on competition for status channelled into warfare, or the intensification of production for redistribution to forge social and political obligations. The possibility of new arrivals introducing cultural innovations is not dismissed, but it is almost always considered of secondary importance.[3] Douglas Oliver's view of Tahitian indigenous history is typical:

> The picture I perceive ... is of numerous landings on the Society Islands throughout a millennium or more, from other archipelagos near and far, and ranging in size from a lone and near-dead survivor in a drifting canoe to a modest-sized fleet. Most newcomers would have added some new ideas and objects to the local cultural inventory, and during the earlier centuries some of the larger-scale immigrations were probably near revolutionary in their influence. But as time passed and the local population made settlements on all the islands of the archipelago, subsequent new

[1] The terms Islanders and Island are used henceforth to refer to Pacific Islanders in general.

[2] There are some notable exceptions. See Niel Gunson, 'The Tonga–Samoa connection 1777–1845', *Journal of Pacific History*, 25 (1990), 176–87, and Niel Gunson, 'Great families of Polynesia: inter-island links and marriage patterns', *Journal of Pacific History*, 32 (1997), 139–52.

[3] This scheme is most elegantly argued in P.V. Kirch, *The Evolution of the Polynesian Chiefdoms* (Cambridge 1984), 71–216. For a concise overview on the evolution of theory in Oceanic prehistory see P.V. Kirch, 'Prehistory', in Alan Howard & R. Borofsky (eds), *Developments in Polynesian Ethnology* (Honolulu 1989), 13–46.

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> arrivals, (say after about AD 1200), even large-scale ones, could not have been large enough or culturally 'superior' enough, to have effected radical changes in the technological and social patterns that had by then become fairly well consolidated.[4]

In the past few decades there has been growing unease at this tendency to treat islands as closed cultural systems. In the late 1970s, a series of well-argued articles called for an end to the pervasiveness of narrowly focused studies. Kerry Howe called this approach 'monograph myopia', which he and others characterise as 'finding out more and more about less and less'.[5] These critics noted that there seemed to be no guiding direction or overall purpose beyond accumulating information and filling gaps. Oskar Spate observed that such historians 'may on occasion not see the Ocean for the Islands, may be content to be marooned on the tight but so soft confines of their little atolls of knowledge, regardless of the sweep of the currents which bring life to the isles'.[6] Howe offered a comprehensive strategy to correct the shortcomings. He proposed a variety of approaches ranging in scale from precise studies to inter-group regional history, and more general studies still, that focused on Pacific islands as part of wider regions, or even the global economy.[7] Few have taken up Howe's call for more wide-ranging studies.

Calls for academics to view the sea more as a means of communication than as an isolater have mounted. Now Island communities are increasingly portrayed as connected 'in a wider social world of moving items and ideas'.[8] Local traditions, the distribution of cultural traits, and observations by literate outsiders all attest to inter-island voyaging within most archipelagos. Voyaging between archipelagos was also apparent in the 18th and 19th centuries in at least three regions: the Western Caroline Islands, Western Polynesia, and central Eastern Polynesia. Such external contacts probably waxed and waned, as did their impact. For example, Ian Campbell notes that archaeological, linguistic and traditional evidence all suggest that the period from *c.* AD 1100 to 1500 was an era of significant upheaval and inter-island movement through much of Oceania.[9]

Perhaps the most articulate voice for this new vision has been that of Epeli Hau'ofa. In his 1994 article 'Our sea of islands', Hau'ofa asserts that the pre-colonial Pacific 'was a large world in which peoples and cultures moved and mingled, unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers'.[10] He argues that colonial boundaries and policies imposed an artificial sense of isolation and separation upon Islanders. They must now decolonise their minds, and recast their sense of identity by rediscovering the vision of their ancestors for whom the Pacific was a boundless sea of possibilities and opportunities. Hau'ofa's vision has

[4] D.L. Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian Society*, 3 vols (Honolulu 1974), II, 1122.

[5] K.R. Howe, 'Pacific Islands history in the 1980s: new directions or monograph myopia?', *Pacific Studies*, 3 (1979), 81.

[6] O.H.K. Spate, 'The Pacific as an artefact', in Niel Gunson (ed.), *The Changing Pacific: Essays in Honour of H.E. Maude* (Melbourne 1978), 34.

[7] Howe, 'Pacific Islands history in the 1980s', 86–9.

[8] Geoffrey Irwin, *The Prehistoric Exploration and Colonisation of the Pacific* (Cambridge 1992), 204.

[9] I.C. Campbell, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (Christchurch 1989), 36.

[10] Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our sea of islands', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 6:1 (1994), 153–4.

generated much praise in academia,[11] but is virtually lacking in evidence. Thus far, it has not inspired scholars to produce detailed studies in support or otherwise of its claims about the world of the ancestors.

The Western Carolines are a particularly appropriate region to explore the regional dimension of Pacific history. Many of its smaller islands remained largely free from colonial influence, allowing traditional seafaring to flourish well into the 20th century. This is also a 'crowded sea', full of islands and open sea markers that assisted inter-island voyages. The history of the Western Carolines is as much a history of interactions along sea routes as individual communities. There are a number of excellent histories of individual islands, but few regional histories. The latter focus on the intrusion of Europeans and pay little attention to indigenous interactions.[12]

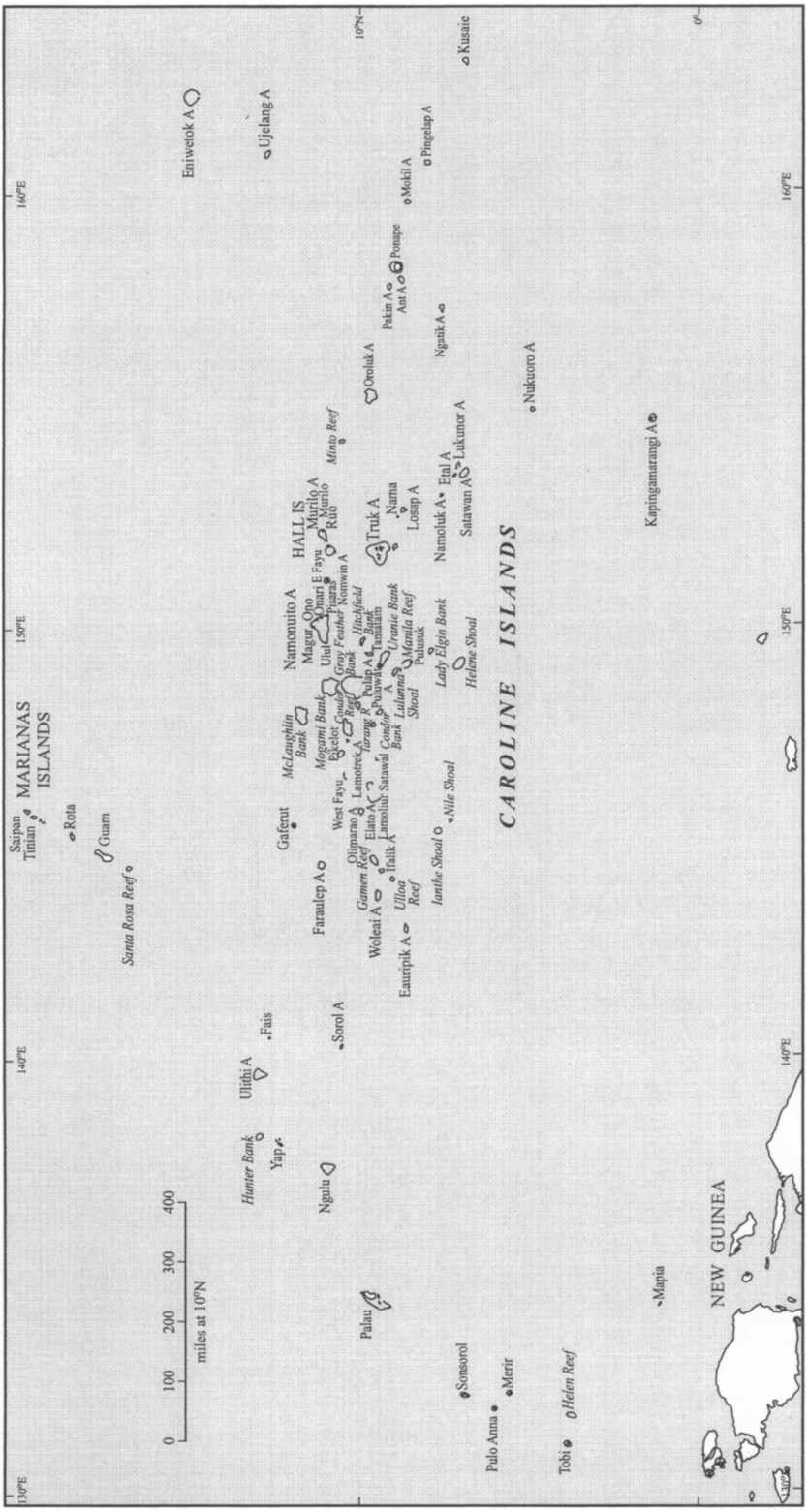
The history of the region is here examined in the century prior to the imposition of modern colonial boundaries in the late 19th century. It is argued that the history of this period is best understood as a series of interactions between four distinct, yet inter-connected worlds. Those were the three high island complexes of Yap, Palau and the Mariana Islands, and one consisting of the 20 atolls and two raised coral islands between Yap and Chuuk (i.e. Truk — see Map 1). The annual *sawei* exchange between Yap and the atolls to the west is first reviewed, before demonstrating how this coexisted with a relationship between Yap and Palau. Each introduced different goods into Yap that were used by rivals to extend their influence. The focus then moves to the atolls, and challenges depictions of them as peaceful, stable entities unified by the *sawei* relationship. Both continuity and change are visible in their relationships between 1770 and 1870. The survey concludes with the colonisation of the northern Marianas by Carolinians fleeing natural disasters and military threat, and their impact on relations between atolls and the *sawei*. By adopting this regional perspective, the Western Carolines may be seen as a more dynamic place than hitherto, with Europeans just one of many groups of outsiders to influence communities. Indigenous history becomes more prominent, and inter-island contacts become an important part of that history.

The sawei *system*

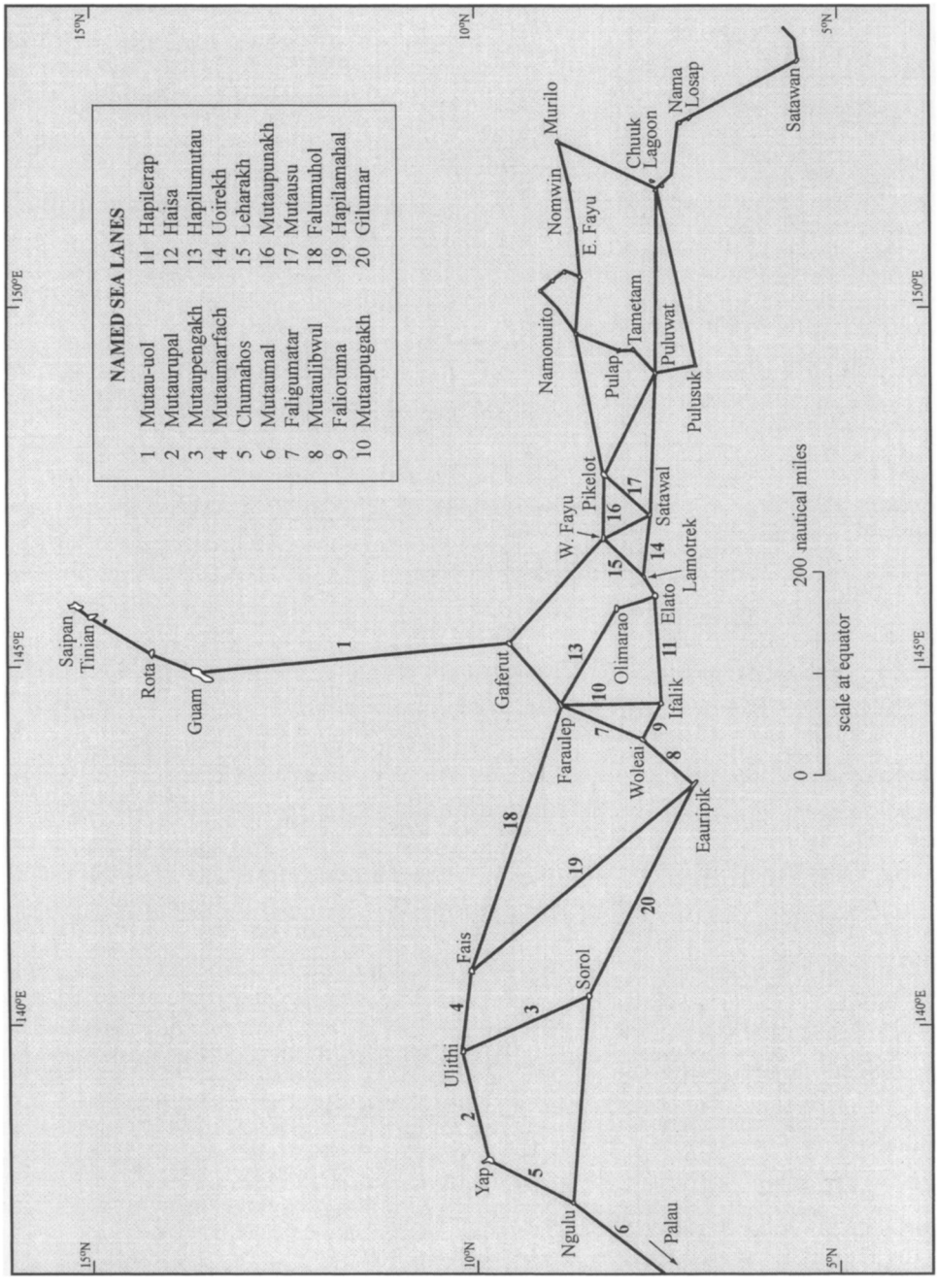
The only published studies of indigenous interactions in the Western Carolines that adopt a regional perspective are post-war anthropological studies of the '*sawei* system'. This exchange relationship centred on Yap is still in existence. It extends 900 nautical miles east to Namonuito Atoll, and consisted in the past of regular and lengthy visits from low island fleets to Yap to present tribute and exchange goods.

[11] These issues are discussed in Karen Nero, 'The End of Insularity', in Donald Denoon (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge 1997), 441.

[12] In particular, see Francis X. Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization: A History of the Caroline and Marshall Islands in Pre-Colonial Days, 1521–1885* (Honolulu 1983).



MAP 1: The Caroline Islands region



MAP 2: Sea lanes of the Western Carolines

The majority of studies focus on the reception of the low island fleet on Yap, and emphasise structural continuities rather than historical disruptions.[13]

The delivery of the *sawei* tribute occurred annually or every two to three years.[14] The tribute fleet contained representatives of all islands from Ulithi to Namonuito. They delivered their tribute to Gachpar Village in Gagil district of Yap.[15] It set out from Namonuito and went from island to island in a set order, picking up representatives. The fleet increased the further west it sailed, until it numbered 10 or more canoes. The islands of Lamotrek, Wottagai on Woleai, Fais, and Mogmog on Ulithi had higher status than the others, and served as focal points for the fleet. Each led the fleet west from their island to the next high-status island. In other words, status within the *sawei* increased further west and closer to Yap.

The fleet set sail during the season of the northeast winds between December and June, and remained in Gachpar for a few months until the winds changed to the southwest to allow a relatively easy passage home. Three distinct forms of tribute were presented. Religious tribute (known as *mepel* on the atolls and *magbil* on Yap) was presented to Yongelap, the great god worshipped throughout the Carolines. Then came canoe tribute (*pitigil tamol* on the atolls and *kapitalwa* on Yap) presented to the chiefs of Gachpar. Finally, there was tribute of the land (known as *sawei* on the atolls and on Yap) presented by individual outer island lineages to their Yapese lineage hosts. During their stay on Yap, outer island 'children' were also required to show their Yapese 'parents' respect. In return, their hosts were obliged to take care of them, and give them gifts when they left. Informal trading was also conducted during the stay.

Outer islanders received tangible benefits from participating in *sawei* fleets, receiving more than they gave in the tribute and trading exchanges in Gachpar.[16] Yapese also fed and sheltered them. Although William Alkire claims that the difference in resource use between high islands and low islands is more one of scale and emphasis than kind,[17] exchanges during the time in Gagil consisted largely of items that were scarce in the recipients' areas. Outer islanders brought woven banana fibre loincloths (*thu*), sennit twine, turtle and coconut shell, mother of pearl shell, and spondylus shell. Yapese also occasionally purchased canoes from Woleai.

[13] See William A. Lessa, 'The Place of Ulithi in the Yap empire', *Human Organization*, 9 (1950), 16–18; idem, 'Myth and blackmail in the Western Carolines', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 65 (1956), 67–74; idem, *Ulithi: A Micronesian Design for Living* (New York 1966), 35–9; William H. Alkire, *An Introduction to the Peoples and Cultures of Micronesia*, 2nd edn (Menlo Park 1977), 50–2; idem, *Coral Islanders* (Arlington Heights 1978), 122–4; Sherwin G. Lingenfelter, *Yap: Political Leadership and Culture Change in an Island Society* (Honolulu 1975), 147–53; and Rosalind L. Hunter-Anderson and Yigal Go'ospan Zan, 'Demystifying the Sawei, a traditional interisland exchange system', *Isla*, 4 (1996), 1–45. The details about the structure and process of the *sawei* related in the next two paragraphs are based on the consistent analysis contained in these sources. Additional footnotes are only included when sources diverge in their details.

[14] Alkire, *Coral Islanders*, 122, states that the *sawei* was an annual undertaking, but Lessa, 'The Place of Ulithi', 42, claims that it took place every two to three years. Hunter-Anderson and Zan, 'Demystifying the Sawei', 41, n.5, claim that while Ulithi maintained annual links, atolls further east participated in the *sawei* less frequently.

[15] Both Gachpar and the contiguous village of Wonyan hosted the *sawei* fleet. Gachpar is the village most usually associated with the *sawei*, however.

[16] See, e.g., Lessa, 'Myth and blackmail', 71–2; Hunter-Anderson and Zan, 'Demystifying the Sawei', 4; and William H Alkire, 'Technical knowledge and the evolution of political systems in the Central and Western Caroline Islands of Micronesia', *Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, 1 (1980), 232.

[17] Alkire, *An Introduction to the Peoples and Cultures of Micronesia*, 14–15.

In return, the Yapese gave turmeric (used as a cosmetic skin paste in the Carolines), red earth pigment, tridacna shell, whetstones, orange wood used in ancestral altars, and Polynesian chestnuts. Occasionally, they also contributed wood for canoes, and European goods procured from visiting traders.[18]

Why did Yapese continue this apparently uneven exchange? The *sawei* link was particularly valued for the political influence it conferred on the chiefs of Gachpar. They enhanced their status by having overseas tributaries,[19] and could expand alliances by distribution of outer island tribute to potential allies on Yap.[20] Yap was divided into two rival camps during the 19th century. Broadly speaking, the districts of Tomil and Rull were allied against Gagil. In more precise terms, Gagil chiefs were prominent among the *vaani pagal* (young men's party), while the chiefs of Tomil and Rull dominated the *vaani pilung* (chiefs' party). These groups cut across district boundaries, and constantly sought to maintain and extend their alliances.[21] Spondylus shell from the outer islands was particularly valued by Yapese. This shell was made into much sought after *gau* (shell money). Spondylus shell was only available on Eauripik Atoll, Udot Island in Chuuk, and Etal Atoll in the Mortlock Islands.

The *vaani pilung*'s overseas links extended south to Palau rather than to the east. In this case, however, Yapese were guests rather than hosts. They travelled here to quarry Palauan aragonite for use as *fei* (stone money).[22] *Fei* was also distributed on Yap to cement alliances, fulfilling the same role that *gau* did for the *vaani pagal.* Yapese were not in a position to dictate terms, and had to act respectfully and humbly to their hosts. They were willing to do this because Palauan aragonite was of much higher quality than Yapese.[23]

The *vaani pilung* could use Palauan *fei* because the district of Rull had a strong seafaring base. Its navigation schools and sailing skills were still very evident in the

[18] For a comprehensive review of items exchanged, see Hunter-Anderson and Zan, 'Demystifying the Sawei', 4; Lingenfelter, *Yap*, 147; Alkire, 'Technical knowledge', 234; and A. Kramer, 'Zentralkarolinen, Part I (Lamotrek Gruppe, Oleai, Feis)', in G. Thilenius (ed.), *Ergebnisse der Sudsee-Expedition 1908–1910, II, B, x, I* (Hamburg 1937), 345. The information about the purchase of canoes from Woleai comes from Chamisso in Otto von Kotzebue, *A Voyage of Discovery into the South Sea and Behring's Straits, in Search of a North-east passage, Undertaken in the Years 1815, 16,17, and 18 in the Ship Rurick*, 3 vols (New York 1967), 3, 193.

[19] Hunter-Anderson and Zan, 'Demysifying', 33, believe this to be the key factor behind Gachpar's hosting of the *sawei* fleet. Reilly Ridgell, Manny Ikea, and Isaoshy Uruo, 'The persistence of Central Carolinian navigation', *Isla*, 2 (1994), 198–9, and Alkire, 'Technical knowledge', 234, also emphasise the importance of this factor.

[20] On the role of *gau* in Yapese politics see M.L. Berg, 'Yapese politics, Yapese money and the *Sawei* tribute network before World War 1', *Journal of Pacific History*, 27 (1992), 154–6. *Gau* consisted of discs of Spondylus shell about three millimetres thick and one centimetre in diameter, bored through the centre, and strung along a cord (150).

[21] On Yapese politics, see Lingenfelter, *Yap*, 153, and David Labby, *The Demystification of Yap: Dialectics of Culture on a Micronesian Island* (Chicago 1976), 106.

[22] *Fei* were huge wheels of aragonite with holes bored in the centre, with diameters of one or more metres. The form and role of *fei* are discussed by Berg, 'Yapese politics', 150, and Inez de Beauclair, 'The stone money of Yap Island', *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica*, no.16 (1963), 153–4.

[23] De Beauclair, 'The stone money', 153, notes the different quality of Palauan and Yapese aragonite. The subordinate role of Yapese quarrying communities on Palau is outlined in Alkire, 'Technical knowledge', 234, de Beauclair, 'The stone money', 155–6, Berg, 'Yapese Politics', 150–4, and Wilhelm Muller, 'Yap', in G. Thilenius (ed.), *Ergebnisse der Sudsee-Expedition, 1908–1910, II: Ethnographie:B: Mikronesien, 2, ii* (Hamburg 1917), 27. Alfred Tetens, *Among the Savages of the South Seas: Memoirs of Micronesia, 1862–1868*, trans. Florence Mann Spoehr (Stanford 1958), 10, noted that Yapese greatly feared Palauans.

latter part of the 19th century.[24] They were needed for the 454-kilometre sea gap between Palau and Yap. Canoes could make the crossing in five days with good weather. *Fei* measured a metre or more across, so that even the largest Yapese canoe could only carry one large *fei* at a time. Yapese used large bamboo rafts called *fofoot* towed behind canoes to carry them. The dangers of manoeuvring these heavy vessels in the open sea only enhanced the *fei*'s value.[25] Alkire, however, claims the sailing skills of Yapese atrophied. He speculates that one of the reasons Gagil may have been willing to continue its costly exchanges with outer islanders was to gain access to their seafaring skills. By using outer island canoes, they increased their access to more of the region's resources. Certainly all the Yapese navigational chants recorded by Wilhelm Muller in 1917 were in the language of Ulithi. Edelbert von Chamisso also noted that Yapese sought canoes from Woleai.[26]

European traders also came to play an important role in Palauan and Yapese politics in the 19th century. The rulers of Koror were quick to realise the advantages of courting European traders. When the *Antelope* was shipwrecked in Palau in 1783 the English crew found the *ibedul* of Koror a willing host. They found a shipwrecked Malay seaman already serving the *ibedul* after finding refuge there from less amiable hosts elsewhere in Palau.[27] A succession of beachcombers followed the Malay in gravitating towards Koror. The *ibedul* also welcomed visiting vessels seeking *bêche-de-mer*. Koror's control of the sheltered harbour of Malakal added to its attractiveness. Koror virtually monopolised European trade goods within Palau, including firearms.[28]

Traders gradually came to pose problems for the *ibedul*, however. In the middle of the 19th century, captains such as Cheyne and Woodin acted against the interests of the *ibedul*. Woodin established a commercial station in Ngerard, elevating the importance of a district that had been secondary to Koror and Melekeok. In 1860, Ngerard was able to fend off an attack from Koror.[29]

[24] Hunter-Anderson and Zan, 'Demystifying', 11–12, 39

[25] On the transporting of *fei* to Yap, see de Beauclair, 'The stone money', 155–6; Andrew Cheyne, Journal of a Voyage to the Islands of the Western Pacific in the Brigantine 'Acis' A. Cheyne Commander, log I 28/11/63 – 14/12/64 & 10/2/65 – 6/2/66 (hereinafter 'Acis') (Dorothy Shineberg generously lent me her MS copy of the log); Franz Hernsheim, *Sudsee-Erinnerungen, 1875–1880* (Berlin 1884), 19–20; and Father Salesius, Die Karolinen-Insel Jap, MS (Berlin *c.*1907), 96–7.

[26] Alkire, 'Technical knowledge', 235–6. The reference to the Ulithian navigational influence comes from Muller, 'Yap', 287, and is cited in Alkire, 'Technical knowledge', 235. Others detected a withering of Yapese seafaring in the 19th century, and a corresponding increased reliance on their (i.e. Gagil's) low island 'children' to fulfil their seafaring requirements. For example, see Lessa, *Ulithi*, 47, and William Lessa, 'The Portuguese discovery of the Isles of Sequeira', *Micronesica*, 11 (1975), 64–5.

[27] George Keate, *An Account of the Pelew Islands, situated in the Western Part of the Pacific Ocean, composed from the journals and communications of Captain Henry Wilson, and some of his officers, who, in August 1783, were there shipwrecked, in the Antelope, A Packet belonging to the Honorable East India Company*, 2nd edn (London 1788), 24–5.

[28] Richard J. Parmentier, *The Sacred Remains: Myth, History, and Polity in Belau* (Chicago 1987) 42–6, 187–91. See also Rev. John Pearce Hockin, *A Supplement to the Account of the Pelew Islands* (London 1803), 54, on the reception of beachcombers at Koror. On the development of Malakal as a roadstead for European shipping, see Dorothy Shineberg (ed.), *The Trading Voyages of Andrew Cheyne 1841–1844* (Canberra 1971), 232, 324.

[29] Cheyne, 'Acis', 1862, 9 Sept. 1862, noted that Woodin was arming Ngerard to resist Koror. See also Karl Semper, *The Palau Islands in the Pacific Ocean*, ed. Robert Craig, trans. Mark Berg (Guam 1982), 30–1.

Cheyne's position in both Palau and Yap became increasingly fragile after he alienated the *ibedul*. While he traded muskets with the Yapese,[30] he still mistrusted them. He constantly feared attack, and learnt that the *ibedul* was offering payment for his death. On 17 July 1864, for example, he met five canoe-loads of Yapese at the northern end of Babeldaob awaiting favourable winds for a passage back to Yap. They told him:

> that the Coroar [Koror] people have instructed them to cut off any vessel at Yap should I again go there; that no Coroar men will go in the ship, and that they will give the Yap men plenty of muskets for doing so, and that if they do not obey the Coroar chiefs instructions, they will not get any more stone money.[31]

Relations between Cheyne and the *ibedul* declined. Cheyne was increasingly insulting to the *ibedul*, who reacted by slowing down supplies of *bêche-de-mer* and other items. Cheyne soon learnt that the *ibedul* was also intimidating other 'tribes' into not trading with him. By September 1865 he felt the only way to overcome the *ibedul*'s hindrance was 'to arm the other tribes, so as to make them independent of Oreor [Koror]'.[32] He then began trading muskets and ammunition with Koror's rivals, contravening an 1843 agreement, in which the *ibedul* facilitated Cheyne's trade access to Palau and Yap in return for Cheyne agreeing to trade only with Koror.[33] The chiefly council of Koror ordered his execution. Cheyne was killed in Palau in 1866.[34]

The killing of Cheyne was only a temporary reprieve. In 1867, the British warship *Perseus* sailed to Palau to seek his murderers. Palauans had to execute the *ibedul* to satisfy British demands for justice.[35] By the 1860s, their ability to resist Europeans and their weapons was already eroding as introduced diseases drastically reduced the population. In 1862 Karl Semper estimated the total population of Palau was only 10,000. Estimates at the time of Captain Wilson's enforced sojourn 70 years earlier vary from 20,000 to 50,000.[36] Yapese hostility to outsiders reduced the number of visits from potential carriers of disease before 1870. Nevertheless, Cheyne still noted outbreaks of influenza during his visits to Tomil in the 1860s.[37]

Continuity and change within the sea of atolls

The atolls of the *sawei* system were also subject to visits from European traders and explorers from the 1790s. They found the inhabitants eager to trade, particularly for iron. Few Europeans sought to establish permanent stations on the atolls,

[30] E.g., see Cheyne, 'Acis', 31 Mar., 4, 8 Apr., 4, 12, 16 May, 3, 9 June 1864.
[31] Ibid., 17 July 1864.
[32] Ibid., 27 Sept. 1865.
[33] Parmentier, *The Sacred Remains*, 191.
[34] For indigenous reasons for killing Cheyne, see ibid., 192–3.
[35] Tetens, *Among the Savages*, 103.
[36] Semper, *The Palau Islands*, 289–90, 292; Parmentier, *The Sacred Remains*, 46.
[37] An outbreak of influenza in Tomil is described in Cheyne, 'Acis', 28 Mar., and 5 Apr. 1864.

however, as their commercial potential was limited.[38] The influence of the outside world was felt less directly here than in Palau and Yap, as its inhabitants sailed out and sought Europeans and their goods elsewhere. These new connections caused some disruption and reorientation of atoll life, although most relationships between the atolls of the *sawei* system continued. There has been little attempt to examine the *sawei* system's place within the totality of inter-island relations west of Yap. As a result, the *sawei* takes on more importance than it perhaps had outside Yap. The voyages of the *sawei* fleet were significant events among the atolls of the Western Carolines, but they were also just one of many regular exchanges.

The close proximity of most atolls, and the wealth of reefs and shoals between islands to serve as navigational markers, allowed relatively easy passages.[39] Locals considered any distance of less than 150 miles to be one day's sail in good conditions.[40] Only a few sea gaps exceeded this distance: Woleai to Sorol, Woleai to Fais, and Faraulep to Fais.[41] Most other gaps were about half as much, with routes punctuated by reefs and shoals to serve as markers. The eastern part was particularly crowded with atolls, reefs and shoals. As one sailed west, the number of atolls and markers declined. Woleai and Eauripik marked the western limit of the crowded sea.[42] Frederic Lutke was told that the passage from Woleai to Fais took two days with good winds, or three days in light winds. The return voyage took four days. Ulithi and Yap lay one and two days respectively west of Fais.[43] The high islands of Chuuk Lagoon lay just west of this crowded area, and western atolls like Puluwat had much more interaction with Chuuk than they did with Yap. Linguistic relations mirrored geographical relations. Linguists categorise these atolls into three groups, the internal coherence of which reflects the fact that each lies within a day's sail of its neighbours. The western group consists of Ulithi, Fais, Ngulu, and Sorol. The middle group takes in Eauripik, Faraulep, Woleai, Ifalik, Elato, Lamotrek, and Satawal. The eastern group consists of the string of atolls that circle Chuuk: Pulusuk, Puluwat, Pulap, Namonuito, Murilo, Losap, Nama, and the Mortlock Islands.[44]

The configuration of the atolls promoted inter-island ties. The sea was conceived of as named sea-lanes between specific destinations and *metau*, open sea outside sea-lanes (see Map 2).[45] The navigators of Lamotrek referred to the sea-lane between Lamotrek and Satawal as Uoirekh, for example. To travel to Ifalik they

[38] See William A. Lessa, 'An evaluation of early descriptions of Carolinian culture', *Ethnohistory*, 9 (1962), 338; and Hezel, *The First Taint*, 82–108, especially 99ff.

[39] Harold J. Wiens, *Atoll environment and ecology* (New Haven 1962), 29–30, and David Lewis, *The Voyaging Stars: Secrets of the Pacific Island Navigators* (Sydney 1978), 166.

[40] Frederic Lutke, *Voyage autour du monde executé par ordre de sa Majesté l'Empereur Nicholas Ier*, 3 vols (Paris 1835–1836), II, 340.

[41] David Lewis, *We, the Navigators: The Ancient Art of Landfinding in the Pacific* (Canberra 1973), 227; Alkire, *Coral Islanders*, 114–15; and Lutke, *Voyage*, II, 339–40.

[42] Ridgell et al., 'The persistence of Central Carolinian navigation', 202.

[43] Lutke, *Voyage*, II, 359.

[44] Jeffrey C. Marck, 'Micronesian dialects and the overnight voyage', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 95 (1986), 254–5. Ifalik is the modern rendering of Ifaluk.

[45] William H. Alkire, *Lamotrek Atoll and Inter-Island Socioeconomic Ties* (Urbana 1965), 124–5; and Glynn Barratt, *Carolinian Contacts with the Islands of the Marianas: The European Record* (Saipan 1988), 6–7.

sailed along Hapilerap, and to reach West Fayu they used Lekarakh.[46] Kin links were regularly maintained by visits along the sea-lanes throughout the region. Many clans had members on a number of atolls that kin could call on in times of need. The clans of Pulusuk, for example, sought wives from related kin groups on Puluwat and in Chuuk.[47] William Lessa records that the Mongolfach clan had members on 10 atolls from Ulithi to Puluwat, and beyond to the high islands of Chuuk lagoon.[48] Edwin Burrows and Melvin Spiro note that clans on Ifalik had links with Yap, Woleai, Puluwat and Pulap.[49] Inter-island exchanges were usually conducted between members of the same kin group.[50] These links served as a safety net in case of drought, war, or storms.

The value of items obtained from the Yapese must be gauged against the full range of goods exchanged. The *sawei* exchanges formed a significant part of the total goods obtained. Other exchanges were more limited. In the eastern atolls, tobacco grown on Fais was much sought after in Ulithi and Yap. Both Ulithi and Fais obtained canoes from Woleai, while Fais received shell ornaments and belts from the atolls to the east. Ulithi also had contact with Ngulu and the atolls southwest of Palau.[51]

The central atolls drew upon the resources of both the eastern and western atolls, as well as their own area. Woleai traded for shell valuables from Eauripik, Sorol, Ngulu and Fais. According to the Woleai navigator Kadu, his compatriots sailed west to Palau and the Southwest Islands, and as far east as Satawal. Satawalese were more orientated to the west, making annual visits to Chuuk, as well as regular visits to Puluwat. They obtained valuables from as far afield as Eauripik, Woleai, Chuuk and the Mortlock Islands.[52]

The western atolls had relatively limited interaction with the atolls to the east beyond their involvement in the *sawei*. Seafarers from Puluwat and Pulusuk sailed as far east as Woleai to trade and visit kin, although much of their seafaring was orientated towards atolls surrounding Chuuk such as Pulap, Namonuito, Murilo and the Mortlocks. Puluwatese visited Chuuk twice a year to trade and renew social ties. The quality of the turmeric from Chuuk was much higher than Yapese turmeric obtained through the *sawei*.[53]

[46] Alkire, *Lamotrek*, 125. Indigenous Carolinian sea-lanes are depicted in Map 2.

[47] H. Damm, P. Hambruch and E. Sarfert, 'Inseln um Truk (Polowat, Hok, Satowal)', in G. Thilenius (ed.), *Ergebnisse der Sudsee-Expedition 1908–1910, vol. II, B, VI, ii* (Hamburg 1935), 159ff.

[48] William A Lessa, *More tales from Ulithi Atoll: A Content Analysis* (Berkeley 1980), 42–3. Alkire, *Lamotrek*, 29, 154 refers to the clan as the Mongalifach clan.

[49] Edwin G. Burrows & Melford E. Spiro, *An Atoll Culture: Ethnography of Ifaluk in the Central Carolines*, 2nd edn (New Haven 1957), 131.

[50] Alkire, *Lamotrek*, 154–5, and Damm et al., 'Inseln um Truk', 43, 80.

[51] On the trade with Woleai for canoes, see Chamisso in Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, III, 192–3. The trade in tobacco from Fais is discussed in Hunter-Anderson and Zan, 'Demystifying', 7; Lessa, *More Tales*, 38–9; Lessa, 'Carolinian culture', 372; Lutke, *Voyage*, II, 309; and Kramer, 'Zentralkarolinen', 345. Kramer also discusses the sources of belts (322).

[52] Kadu accompanied the Kotzebue expedition on a return voyage to the north Pacific from the Marshall Islands where he had been caught at sea in a storm. Woleai's external contacts and trade partners are outlined by Chamisso in Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, III, 97, 196, and Kramer, 'Zentralkarolinen', 214. Those of Ifalik are discussed in Burrows and Spiro, *An Atoll Culture*, 174–5, and those of Satawal in Damn et al., 'Inseln um Truk', 37–41, 55.

[53] Damm et al., 'Inseln um Truk', 55–6, 82, 107, 155–8, 185, Thomas Gladwin, *East is a Big Bird; Navigation and Logic on Puluwat Atoll* (Cambridge, Mass. 1970), 37–9, 43, 62–3.

The *sawei* was not the only tributary relationship in these islands. The *hu* was a system of semi-annual exchanges between Lamotrek, Elato and Satawal, in which the others acknowledged the senior status of Lamotrek. Lamotrek received turtles from Elato, and *mar* (fermented breadfruit paste) and ripe coconuts from Satawal, in return for the right to forage on the uninhabited atolls to the north controlled by Lamotrek. They also had the right to ask for food from Lamotrek when they were in need.[54]

All these exchanges were regular and well ordered. European visitors noted the passive nature of low islanders. Lutke compared them favourably with the inhabitants of high islands:

> Among the inhabitants of the different kinds of islands which make up the archipelago of the Carolines, there reigns quite a considerable difference in manners and customs. While those of the high islands with the single exception of Ualan [Kosrae], are engaged in everlasting wars with their neighbours, we behold those of the low islands enjoying the most perfect peace; they busy themselves only with cultivation of the soil, with commerce and also with industrial labours.

He qualified this, however, by noting that, although they appeared to dislike war, it

> is by no means unknown to them; they even derive an advantage from the dissensions of their neighbours by providing them with the arms they lack. The most beautiful lances and the best clubs are manufactured in the low islands, they are made of the hardest part of the trunk of the coconut palm, and the workmanship is carefully done, they are much in demand and are very dear.[55]

This image of relative peace and stability among the atolls has persisted.[56] Alkire even suggests that the development of the *sawei* system helped to reduce conflict.[57] He concluded that traditions of wars of conquest by Ifalik occurred in the distant past. In these, Ifalik conquers and then colonises its neighbours.[58] Alkire may be correct that warfare had diminished, but traditions show that it was still a reality for many low islanders in the 19th century.[59] In a comprehensive survey of conflict on Ifalik, Laura Betzig and Santus Wichimai show that it occurred at all levels; from inter-personal violence within kin groups, to disputes over land between lineages, and beyond to inter-island disputes.[60]

Puluwat, in particular, began to play an increasingly dominant role in the western isles from the middle of the 19th century. In the era of chief Jamut,

[54] Alkire, *Lamotrek*, 145–6.

[55] Lutke, *Voyage*, III, 144–5.

[56] The tendency to play down the prevalence of conflict in this region is outlined in Laura Betzig and Santus Wichimai, 'A not so perfect peace: a history of conflict on Ifaluk', *Oceania*, 61 (1991), 240.

[57] Alkire, *Coral Islanders*, 116.

[58] William H. Alkire, 'Central Carolinian oral narratives: indigenous migration theories and principles of order and rank', *Pacific Studies*, 7 (1984), 1–14, especially 4–7. Some of these traditions are also reproduced in Lessa, *More Tales*, 131–3. Berg, 'Yapese politics', 159, suggests that the wars of Ifalik against its neighbours related in these traditions may refer to historical events in the 16th and 17th centuries when Yapese families moved into the area in an attempt to gain control of sources of *gau*.

[59] See an overview in Lessa, 'Carolinian culture', 354–7.

[60] Betzig and Wichimai, 'A not so perfect peace', 241, 244, 250.

Puluwat launched a number of attacks on its neighbours. The inhabitants of Namonuito seem particularly to have incurred the wrath of the Puluwatese. Wars against Namonuito ended when Puluwat inflicted a heavy defeat and peace was restored.[61] Soon Puluwat dominated most of the western isles. H. Damm noted that

> The natives of Polowat have always had a reputation among the Central Carolinians of being a particularly martial people. They consider themselves masters of quite a number of the Central Caroline Islands (as far as Onoun) and received tribute from some of them as late as 1910.[62]

The Puluwatese received tribute from Pulusuk, Pulap, Tametam and Namonuito, and also intervened in Chuukese disputes to assist their allies.[63]

Sailing north to the islands of opportunity

There is still one vital link missing from our analysis — the Mariana Islands. These northern islands became increasingly important to Carolinians from the early 1800s. When natural disasters struck the low islands, their inhabitants turned north to the Marianas for relief, rather than westward towards Yap. As these connections were forged, old connections within the Carolines were altered and redefined.

In 1788, canoes from Lamotrek under the direction of the navigator Luito sailed to the Spanish colony of Guam in search of iron.[64] Luito had never been to Guam, but knew how to sail there and about the Spanish and their goods. Luito was not the first Carolinian to visit the Marianas. A Spanish census of Guam in 1727 listed three Carolinians among the population of 2,780. These three drift voyagers came from Ulithi and were cared for by authorities on Guam in the early 1720s.[65] Spanish priests had followed up this encounter with an ill-fated mission to Ulithi in 1730–31, which disappeared without trace. A follow-up expedition received a less than friendly welcome, prompting the Spanish to lose interest in the Carolines.[66] In 1756–57 another Carolinian canoe was blown to Guam.[67] Links between the two archipelagos were older, however. Prior to the bloody conquest of the Chamorro by the Spanish in the last three decades of the 17th century, Carolinians had

[61] Damm et al., 'Inseln um Truk', 182–4. See also Takashy Chipen (comp.), *Uruon Chuk: A Resource of Oral Legends, Traditions and History of Truk*, 2 vols (Saipan 1979), 209.

[62] Damm et al., 'Inseln um Truk', 138.

[63] Ibid., 171, 180; Gladwin, *East is a Big Bird*, 16.

[64] Chamisso in Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, III, 111–12, and Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, II, 240–1.

[65] These numbers are in Document No. 1, AHN, Codices: 1727, 1787, 1828 ff.60–61 [Population], held in the Spanish Documents Collection, MARC, Guam, reproduced in Marjorie G. Driver and Omaira Brunal-Perry (eds), *Carolinians in the Mariana Islands in the 1800s* (Guam 1996), 2. Information on these drift voyagers comes from Don A. Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands* (Saipan 1991), 194, and Barratt, *Carolinian Contacts*, 20. Farrell's information came from a Carolinian historian on Saipan, Dr Benusto Kaipat. These traditions are particularly valuable as much of the archive relating to Carolinian traditions was destroyed in a fire in the CNMI Archive on Saipan (Scott Russell, Division of Historical Preservation, CNMI, Saipan, pers comm.).

[66] Chamisso in Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, III, 93–4; Luis de Ibanez y Garcia, *The History of the Marianas, with Navigational Data, and of the Caroline, and the Palau Islands From the Time of their Discovery by Magellan in 1521 to the Present*, trans. and annotated by Marjorie G. Driver (Guam 1992), 171–2.

[67] Barratt, *Carolinian Contacts*, 23, citing Louis de Freycinet, *Voyage autour de monde … executé sur les corvettes de S.M. l'Uranie et la Physicienne, pendant les années 1817, 1818, 1819, et 1820*, 5 vols (Paris 1825–44), II:2, Historique (1829), 84.

maintained regular contact with the Marianas. They ceased their visits after learning of Spanish brutality from Chamorro refugees.[68]

Luito's voyage restored the old links along Mutau-uol, a seaway between Gaferut and Guam remembered in a navigational chant.[69] Luito reached the old landfall of Talofofo Bay on Guam's southwest coast without difficulty. The Spanish received his party warmly. Luis de Torres, a young Guam-born *sargento mayor*, was particularly welcoming. Torres ensured that the Carolinians obtained iron and other trade goods, and encouraged them to return. Luito's party sailed home with word of the new opportunity. He voyaged to Guam again in 1789, but his fleet was lost at sea on the return leg. His relatives on Lamotrek feared that he had become a victim of the Spaniards, and voyages to Guam were suspended.[70]

Torres rose to become Vice Governor of Guam, and continued to ponder the absence of the Carolinians. In 1804 he chartered an American vessel and sailed south to investigate. He touched at Woleai, Faraulep, West Fayu and Pikelot, assuring all he met that no harm had befallen Luito on Guam, and promising them a warm welcome and trade if they returned.[71] Word of Torres's invitation spread, and Carolinian visits were resumed the following year when a fleet from Woleai, Lamotrek and Satawal landed on Guam.[72] Annual trading voyages were made along Mutau-uol from 1805. Although the size of the fleet varied, Chamisso records it as 18 *proa* (sailing canoes) in 1814.[73] Even the Chuukese were lured to Guam in search of trade goods. They unfortunately arrived off the coast at night during a festival, and were so perturbed by the display of fireworks that they returned to Chuuk.[74]

Caroline Islanders sought iron, copper, coloured cloth, tobacco and ornaments from the Spanish in return for shell, indigenous cloth, *proa* and sennit rope.[75] Guam soon occupied a prominent position in the minds of the low islanders. R.P. Lesson noted that 'Caroline Islanders call the island of Guam Waghal, and look upon it as a great country, where there are plenty of cattle, iron and other riches'.[76] Trade goods from Guam were soon circulating within inter-atoll networks, enhancing the status and influence of those who sailed north to obtain them. Iron was particularly

[68] Barratt, *Carolinian Contacts*, 4–8, Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*, 193; Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, II, 240, 244; de Beauclair, 'The stone money', 152, n.2; and V.M. Golovin, *Around the World on the Kamchatka, 1817–1819*, trans. Ella L. Wiswell (Honolulu 1979), 231.

[69] Alkire, *Lamotrek*, 125, and Barratt, *Carolinian Contacts*, p. 7. Mutau-uol is rendered as Metawal Wool, 'the sea route to the north', in Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*, 192.

[70] Two canoes came in May 1787, and four in 1788. According to Kaipat, Lamotrek, Satawal, Elato, and Woleai each contributed one canoe to the 1788 fleet led by Luito. Luito is rendered Luwito in Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*. However, Rogers names the expedition's leader as Arlegui: Robert F. Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall: A History of Guam* (Honolulu 1995), 85.

[71] Barratt, *Carolinian Contacts*, 24; Hezel, *The First Taint*, 104; Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, II, 241–2, and Chamisso in Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, III, 111–14.

[72] Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall*, 89.

[73] Chamisso in Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, III, 115. Later in the century, F.W. Christian recorded that the fleet consisted of 18 to 20 canoes (F.W. Christian, *The Caroline Islands: Travel in the Sea of Little Lands* (London 1967), 20).

[74] Barratt, *Carolinian Contacts*, 27; Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, III, 116.

[75] J. Arago, *Narrative of a Voyage Around the World* (New York 1971), Pt 2, 10–11.

[76] R. P. Lesson, *Voyage autour du monde entrepris par ordre du gouvernement sur la corvette 'La Coquille'*, 4 vols (Bruxelles 1839), II, 122.

sought, and soon ranked alongside *proa*, cloth and turmeric as the most valued items of indigenous trade.[77] Particular islands seized the initiative to become centres for redistribution. Pulusuk, for example, traded knives and axes from Guam as far west as Woleai, and eastward as far as Chuuk.[78]

Carolinians were of great use to the Spanish on Guam. Their seafaring skills were particularly sought after. By 1819 Guam was largely isolated from the outside world.[79] Although the Spanish Governor had a brigantine of around 40 tons to maintain communications with Manila, contact was infrequent and few European vessels visited the Marianas.[80] Virtually none of the Spanish on Guam were accomplished seafarers. Lutke noted that while his expedition was visiting Guam, the Governor's schooner was unable even to reach Saipan, such was the state to which 'the sailing compatriots of Magellan [have] been reduced'.[81] The Chamorro population had also lost their connection with the sea after a century of colonial rule.[82]

Carolinians began conducting inter-island traffic for the Spanish within the Marianas in return for trade goods. Seafarers from Elato were particularly prominent. They were primarily employed to ferry vegetables from Rota, and dried beef and pork from Tinian, to feed Guam.[83] One legacy of the violent seizure of power by the Spanish was that almost the entire population had been concentrated on Guam. The majority of the 5,389 inhabitants lived on Guam, while just a few hundred lived on Rota and Tinian.[84] These duties made Carolinians aware that the northern islands were largely unoccupied. Saipan, the largest island north of Guam, particularly drew their attention. Large, fertile and unoccupied, it was a tempting opportunity to inhabitants of the small, typhoon-prone atolls to the south. The low islands of the *sawei* system were all vulnerable to typhoons — the typhoon that hit Woleai in 1907, for example, killed 200 people.[85]

Saipan became a storm refuge for the low islanders in the second decade of the 19th century. Carolinian traditions record that Saipan was used within a decade of the resumption of trade voyages to Guam in 1805, when the Pulusuk navigator and chief Piwamwan gathered a group of navigators and sailed there to collect coconuts and other food for Pulusuk and neighbouring islands devastated by a typhoon.[86] Another typhoon in 1815 was severe enough to convince many low islanders to relocate to Saipan. According to J. Arago, over 900 people gathered at Lamotrek

[77] Chamisso in Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, III, 193.

[78] Damm et al., 'Inseln um Truk', 83.

[79] Due mainly to the cessation of Spain's galleon trade from Acapulco to Manila and return in 1815; whalers visited the area from the 1830s.

[80] Louis de Freycinet, *Voyage*, II, 460–1.

[81] Lutke, *Voyage*, II, 124–5.

[82] Chamisso in Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, III, 83, discusses the Chamorros' loss of maritime skills.

[83] Ibid., 83, 116; Lutke, *Voyage*, II, 122–4; F.H. von Kittlitz, *Denkwurdigkeiten einer Reise nach dem russischen Amerika, nach Mikronesien und durch Kamtschatka*, 2 vols (Gotha 1858), cited in Amanda A. Morgan, 'Mystery in the Eye of the Beholder: Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Western Caroline Islands with a Special Focus on Yap, 1525–1886', MA thesis, University of Hawaii at Manoa (Honolulu 1994), 67.

[84] Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall*, 91.

[85] Alkire, *Coral Islanders*, 50.

[86] Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*, 198. Faillelon is sometimes rendered as Failuulol.

and set sail in 120 canoes. Most of the fleet was lost in another terrible storm.[87] The impact of this loss on inter-island relations is hard to gauge.

What does appear certain is that the people of Lamotrek suffered significant casualties, and perhaps erosion of status. A few years later Chamisso commented that Woleai seemed to have risen past Lamotrek to become the dominant island in the region:

> In Cantova's time [*c.* 1728–], the islands comprising his Second Province were divided between the two states of Ulea [Woleai] and Lamureck [Lamotrek]. Today however those islands recognize the tamon [tamol] or prince of Ulea as their exclusive ruler. This chief, whose name is Toua, is also recognized in several other, more easterly islands.[88]

Woleai enhanced its position by embracing trade opportunities with Guam. Kadu claimed that the status of Woleai was particularly acknowledged in Chuuk. Chuukese desired iron and Woleai people traded *proa* for iron on Guam. Toua himself came to Guam in 1817 to seek iron. Chuukese did not participate in the annual trading fleets to Guam, but traded cloth for iron with Woleai seafarers visiting Chuuk. Torres believed that the ascendancy of Woleai was temporary, and would not last beyond the death of Toua.[89] His prediction proved to be correct.

New opportunities continued. When the Spanish authorities on Guam learnt of the Carolinian fleet's disaster, they requested permission from the Governor General of the Philippines to re-settle low islanders in the Marianas. The request was granted in 1818, and the Spanish gave the Carolinians permission to settle on Saipan providing they embraced Christianity.[90] Although Louis de Freycinet states that the initial group of settlers consisted of 100 islanders from Lamotrek, Carolinian traditions claim otherwise. They name two groups arriving to settle Saipan: one from Elato led by chief Nguschul, and a second, larger group from Satawal under the command of chief Agrub. They met at Lamotrek and sailed to Guam. After meeting the Spanish on Guam, they sailed north and established settlements at Arabwal on the shores of Saipan's broad eastern lagoon. Another group from Lamotrek and one from Tametam soon joined them.[91]

Arabwal became a permanent Carolinian settlement. The colonists remained distinctly Carolinians, practising their old lifestyle for the remainder of the century. They referred to themselves as *Falawasch*, Carolinians in their own language.[92] Visitors to Saipan in 1840 found the inhabitants living chiefly off fish and turtle,

[87] Arago, *Narrative of a Voyage*, Part.2, 12; Kramer, 'Zentralkarolinen', 127; Adelbert von Chamisso, *Werke, Bd.1: Reise um die Welt mit der Romanoffischen Entdeckungs-Expedition in den Jahren 1815–18 … : tagebuch. Bd.11: Bemerkungen und Anisichten* (Leipzig 1836), II, 187 cited in Barratt, *Carolinian Contacts*, 42; and Scott Russell, *From Arabwal to Ashes. A Brief History of Garapan Village: 1818 to 1945* (Saipan 1984), 13.

[88] Chamisso, *Werke*, II, 187, cited in Barratt, *Carolinian Contacts*, 42.

[89] Ibid.; Chamisso in Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, III, 193, 115; Kotzebue, *A Voyage*, II, 233.

[90] Arago, *Narrative of a Voyage*, II, 12; Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*, 201; Russell, *Arabwal to Ashes*, 11. Although traditions cited in Farrell claim the Carolinians settled Saipan in 1815, Hezel, *The First Taint*, 106, documents that permission for the settlement was not received from Manila until after this date.

[91] Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*, 201.

[92] Scott Russell, 'Roots of the Falawasch', MS paper held in the Micronesian Area Research Center Library, Guam, n.d., 1.

and cultivating plots of taro and yam.[93] A visitor to Arabwal in the 1860s described being entertained by traditional dancing, and noted that they had barely any notion of Christianity.[94]

Cultural continuity was aided by limited contacts with the Spanish on Guam. Most communication with Guam continued to be conducted on Carolinian *proa*. Carolinians visited Guam as they pleased, while the Spanish only established a presence on Saipan in 1835. This presence was hardly intrusive, consisting of a solitary resident Chamorro official. Few European vessels stopped at Saipan beyond the occasional whaling ship.[95] The Carolinian community continued to maintain annual links with their home islands.[96] Oral traditions suggest that Nguschul died of old age on Elato.[97] Settlers continued to come to Saipan as storms battered the low islands. In 1839 more typhoon victims arrived at Guam seeking refuge. Spanish government documents from the time record how just over 100 inhabitants from 'the Islands to the South' were settled on Saipan, at about the same time as the leper colony on Guam was moved there.[98] More refugees arrived as a succession of natural disasters wreaked havoc on Satawal and Lamotrek between 1847 and 1849. Three typhoons hit the atolls in 1847, another hit in June 1848, followed by a super-typhoon in August 1848. The latter resulted in at least three boat-loads of refugees sailing north to the Marianas.[99]

On 25 January 1849, a severe earthquake hit Guam. A *tsunami* resulted that inundated Satawal and Lamotrek. In April, refugees arrived at Guam describing how the *tsunami* caused death and destruction. In August, three more canoe-loads of asylum seekers arrived from Satawal and Lamotrek. A report to the Governor General of the Philippines outlined their plight:

> their migration had come about because of a great earthquake, which was followed immediately by a flood that caused the islands to disappear for several hours, destroying all plantings and most of the trees. These people and a few others, having remained [on the island] for lack of boats, had saved their lives by climbing trees. Many people had perished when the waters swept across [the islands]. Others, less fortunate than they, who had also climbed into the trees, were swept away by the waves.[100]

[93] D. Parker Wilson, Log of the *Gypsy*, kept by D. Parker Wilson, ship's surgeon, 23 Oct. 1839–19 Mar. 1843, Canberra, Australian National University, Division of Pacific and Asian History, Records Room, M198, entry for 30 Aug. 1840, cited in Hezel, *The First Taint*, 106–7.

[94] Don Eugenio Sanchez y Zayas, 'The Mariana Islands: The Caroline Islanders', *The Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle*, 35:1 (1866), no. 5, 253–66 (Saypan), 260–1, 264–5.

[95] Driver and Brunal-Perry, *Carolinians in the Northern Mariana Islands*, 292. Saipan's relative isolation from the European world is commented on in Zayas, 'The Mariana Islands', 365, and Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*, 219. Driver and Brunal-Perry, *Carolinians*, 62–4, produce Spanish records of payments for inter-island transport services rendered by Falawasch in the 1850s.

[96] Kramer, 'Zentralkarolinen', 195.

[97] Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*, 201.

[98] Document No. 3, PNA, Marianas, Bundle 5(1), Expediente, 3, ff. 1–6, 1839–40, Settlements, letter dated 1 July 1839 held in the Spanish Documents Collection of the MARC, Guam, reproduced in Driver and Brunal-Perry, *Carolinians*, 6–7.

[99] Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall*, 98.

[100] Document No. 4, PNA, Marianas-2, Bundle 25, Memorias, Perez, f. 29a, 1849, Settlements, held in the Spanish Documents Collection, MARC, Guam, reproduced in Driver and Brunal-Perry, *Carolinians*, 12–13.

Once they had recovered their strength, the refugees intended to sail back to their home islands, collect the other survivors, and abandon their islands forever and settle on Saipan. The majority of the population of the low islands did not relocate, however. In 1851 there were only 267 people on Saipan.[101] Chiefs such as Agrub of Satawal, Toua of Woleai, and Jamut of Puluwat had seized upon the myriad opportunities offered through contacts with the northern isles to advance themselves, but old patterns persisted. The links forged with the Marianas added to existing relationships, rather than replaced them.

Natural disasters were not the only reason for resettlement. A new wave of Carolinians came to the northern Marianas in the late 1860s. Most were brought as labour to develop new plantations. Carolinian traditions relate how a Captain Dororou came in the 1860s and took many people to Luta [Rota].[102] Records from the Marianas identify the entrepreneur as George Johnston, who travelled in his schooners *Ana* and *Aguila*. He initially hired 265 Carolinians from Pulusuk in 1865. Over the next four years, he hired another 1,234 from Namonuito.[103] Here the two archipelagos' histories interlink. All the workers were hired from islands under threat of raids and tribute demands from Puluwat. Puluwat's rising prominence during the reign of Jamut may have been in part due to the weakening of Lamotrek's influence after losses due to storm devastation and out-migration to the north. One source also claims that guns acquired in trade with Guam assisted Puluwat in its wars in Chuuk. Puluwat gained a relatively easy victory in Chuuk through possession of two rifles traded from Saipan 'as was the case on other islands'.[104] They encountered the unfortunate Chuukese offshore, where there was no place to hide.

In 1868, Arabwal was devastated by a powerful typhoon. Most of the buildings were destroyed as storm waves nearly three metres high washed over the village. With the luxury of high island resources, the community quickly recovered, and Arabwal was rebuilt in the same location.[105] By 1869, the population of Saipan consisted of 331 Carolinians. But life did not return to normal for Saipan's *Falawasch*. In the late 1860s, they faced a new factor from beyond the reef. The Chamorro population of Saipan rose from nine in 1865 to 128 in 1869, aided by regular shipping services between Guam and Saipan. They established themselves in a separate section of the settlement. There was little mixing between *Falawasch* and Chamorro, and the future of Falawasch autonomy became uncertain. Arabwal was renamed San Isidro de Garapan, and the Christian church was rebuilt to symbolise the faith of the new residents and the power of the colonial authorities.[106]

[101] Alexander Spoehr, *Saipan: The Ethnology of a War-Devastated Island*, Fieldiana: Anthropology, vol. 41 (Chicago 1954), 71, citing *Diccionario Geografico Estadistico de las Filipinas Historico 1851* (Madrid 1851).

[102] Damm et al., 'Inseln um Truk', 182–3.

[103] Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*, 220–2.

[104] Damm et al., 'Inseln um Truk', 180–1.

[105] Aniceto Ibanez del Carmen et al., *Chronicle of the Mariana Islands*, trans. Marjorie G. Driver (Guam 1976), 20–1.

[106] Farrell, *History of the Northern Mariana Islands*, 223. Government documents relating to the granting of a lease to Johnston to set up enterprises in the northern islands are reproduced in Driver and Brunal-Perry, *Carolinians*, 95ff. (Document No.16, PNA Marianas, Bundle 33, Expediente 72, ff. 1–39, 1877, Economic Development, Spanish Documents Collection, MARC).

A second settlement of Carolinians was established on Saipan in 1889. It consisted of Ulul islanders from Namonuito who had been working plantations on neighbouring Tinian. They founded the village of Tanapag eight kilometres north of Garapan. They represented a new era on Saipan. Many converted to Catholicism on Tinian, and married Chamorro on Saipan.[107] By 1902 Chamorro outnumbered Carolinians in the northern isles. Saipan's population consisted of 967 Chamorro, 621 Carolinians, and 43 'foreigners', while only 750 of the 2,264 people living north of Guam were Carolinians.[108] Falawasch remained distinct, but their unique character began to fade as links with the home isles weakened.

By 1902, all the Western Carolines were under colonial rule. Germany ruled until 1914 when Japan seized the islands. The Japanese forbade long-distance canoe travel in the name of safety. The *sawei* system was the main casualty of this policy, although 'tribute' was occasionally sent to Yap on trading vessels. The development of regular inter-island shipping services reduced low islanders' reliance on kin for disaster relief. German and Japanese colonial authorities used government vessels to ferry supplies to storm ravaged areas or to evacuate refugees.[109]

Colonial prohibitions on inter-island canoe travel were widespread across the Pacific.[110] Arbitrary colonial boundaries divided the ocean into spheres of European interest, while policies eroded Islanders' means of independent travel. Hau'ofa sees this as one of the greatest legacies of the colonial era:

> Nineteenth-century imperialism erected boundaries that lead 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, 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. It is true only insofar as people are still fenced in and quarantined.[111]

The pre-colonial history of the Western Caroline Islands offers much support for Hau'ofa's vision of the pre-colonial Pacific. When a regional perspective is adopted, Carolinian indigenous history in the era of European contact may be seen as more dynamic, and inter-island exchanges are an integral part of that history. The Western Carolines may not be typical, however, as the configuration of islands and distribution of resources combined with the strength of its seafaring cultures and limited European presence in the region to promote inter-island exchanges. The challenge now is to extend regional perspectives to other parts of the Pacific to ascertain the extent to which colonial policies and borders have distorted modern perceptions of the mobility and range of Islanders prior to the imposition of European boundaries.

[107] Ibanez del Carmen, *Chronicle*, 64.

[108] Georg Fritz, *The Chamorro: A History and Ethnography of the Marianas*, ed. Scott Russell, trans. Elfriede Craddock (Saipan 1984), 18.

[109] Alkire, *Lamotrek*, 149; idem, *Coral Islanders*, 140–1, and Damm et al., 'Inseln um Truk', 186–7.

[110] Lewis, *Voyaging Stars*, 93.

[111] Hau'ofa, 'Our sea of islands', 155.

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ABSTRACT

Few Pacific historians examine island communities as part of wider spheres of indigenous interaction. Indigenous relations with Europeans receive the lion's share of attention, while ongoing and new interactions between local communities tend to be neglected. As a result, European influence is perhaps exaggerated. This paper examines the Western Caroline Islands in the century prior to the imposition of modern colonial rule. It argues that the history of this period is best understood as a series of interactions between four distinct, yet interconnected worlds. When a regional perspective is adopted, the Western Carolines become a more dynamic place, with Europeans just one of many groups of outsiders to influence communities. Indigenous history becomes more prominent, and inter-island contacts become an important part of that history.