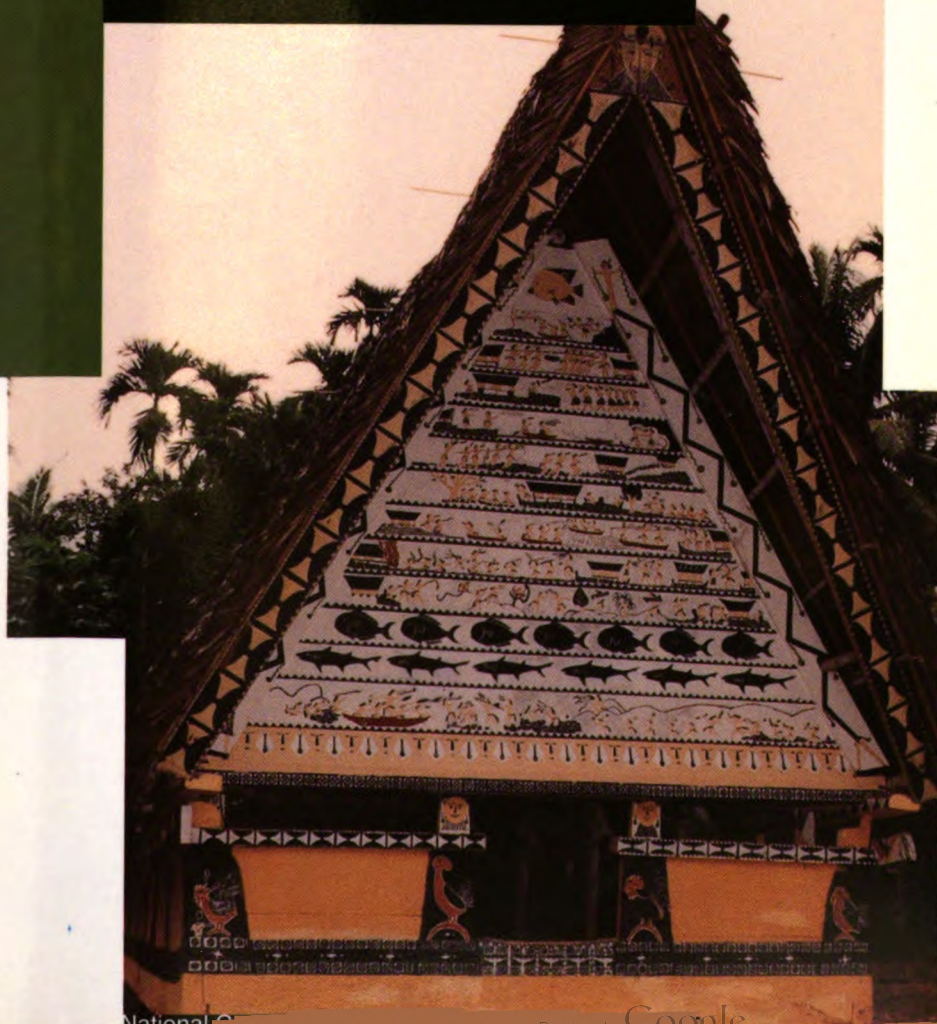


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# Leadership in the Pacific islands: tradition and the future

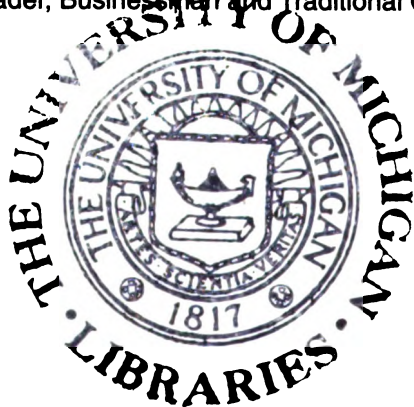


Edited by Don Shuster, Peter Larmour  
and Karin von Storkirch





Roman Tmetuchl  
Leader, Businessman and Traditional Chief



# Leadership in the Pacific islands



# Leadership in the Pacific islands: tradition and the future

Edited by Donald R. Shuster, Peter  
Larmour and Karin von Strokirch

Published by



National Centre for Development Studies  
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies  
The Australian National University  
Canberra

(Pacific Policy Paper 30)



Micronesia Area Research Center  
University of Guam  
Manilao

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1998

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This book is a publication of the National Centre for Development Studies. The contribution of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) towards the publication of this series is gratefully acknowledged. The opinions contained in this book are those of the authors, and not necessarily of the National Centre for Development Studies.

ISSN 0817-0444

ISBN 0 7315 2372 5

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

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Leadership in the Pacific islands : tradition and the future.

ISBN 0 7315 2372 5.

1. Political leadership - Pacific Area. 2. Pacific Area - Politics and government. I. Shuster, Donald R. II. Larmour, Peter. III. Strokirch, Karin von. IV. Australian National University. National Centre for Development Studies. V. University of Guam. Micronesian Area Research Center. (Series : Pacific policy papers ; 30).

320.996

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Series editor: Maree Tait

Editor: Tikka Wilson

Pagemaker: Tikka Wilson

Design: LujanSheen Design

Cover design: Annie Di Nallo

Cover photos: Donald R. Shuster

Printed in Australia by Paragon Printers

grad  
3120286x  
pasea  
8/19/98  
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# Acknowledgment

The Pacific Islands Political Studies Association (PIPSA) held its fifth conference in the Republic of Palau in December 1996 and many of the papers presented there are included in this volume. The Association's host was Mr Roman Tmetuchl who holds the title Ngiraked (high chief of Airai). Chief Tmetuchl invited the conferees to his home on the opening evening. At the close of the conference, he invited participants to tour the traditional Airai *bai* (chief's meeting house), and to the modern *bai* for lunch and an impressive speech about the role of the chief and the *bai* in Palauan culture. Chief Tmetuchl's speech is included in this book.

The publication of this volume has been made possible through a subsidy from Chief Tmetuchl. The National Centre for Development Studies at the Australian National University, the Richard F. Taitano Micronesian Area Research Centre of the University of Guam and the Pacific Islands Political Studies Association are especially thankful to Chief Tmetuchl for his generous and timely support.

Roman Tmetuchl has been a leader all his life and is probably Palau's most successful businessman, owning the Pacifica Development Group which comprises some fourteen business operations. Chief Tmetuchl has also distinguished himself in Palau's political and community affairs. In the 1960s he persuaded the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands government to give up large sections of land to local owners in the states of Angaur and Peleliu and on the island of Ngerkebesang. He was a key leader in gaining war claims payments for the people of Palau and assisted government workers in 1950 and 1981 to bring strikes to successful resolution. Tmetuchl was a member of the Congress of Micronesia, the Palau Congress and Legislature, served as governor of Airai State for eight years and was a candidate for the presidency of the Republic of Palau in three elections. Perhaps Chief Tmetuchl's greatest achievement in the political arena was his single-handed and successful movement to separate Palau from the other ethnic areas of Micronesia. For nearly



four years, Tmetuchl served as Palau's chief compact negotiator with President Carter's ambassador for Micronesian status issues, Peter Rosenblatt.

Chief Tmetuchl is an active member of Palau's Seventh Day Adventist Church, travels often, and resides with his wife Perpetua, ten children and eighteen grandchildren.

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# PIPSA

The Pacific Islands Political Studies Association (PIPSA), a non-profit group, was founded in 1987 with financial support from the Institute for Polynesian Studies, Brigham Young University (BYU), Hawaii. At that time Professors Jerry Loveland and Dale Robertson of BYU brought together a group of academics and practicing politicians to brainstorm how academics might engage themselves more productively in the contemporary political histories of the independent and emerging Pacific islands states. The participants were Ahmed Ali, Nao Badu, Pofitu Fesili, Peter Larmour, Steven Levine, Ron May, Norman Meller, Guy Powles, Donald Shuster, Moses Uludong and Edward Wolfers. Their concluding vision was to establish an association which would draw together political practitioners, teachers, university students and researchers to examine Pacific island political affairs from a multidisciplinary perspective. Conferences have been held since 1988 in Western Samoa, Guam, Australia, the Cook Islands and the Republic of Palau. This volume contains a selection of the papers and speeches delivered at PIPSA's 1996 meeting in Palau. The association's sixth conference is scheduled for 7-10 December 1998, at the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Island Studies, University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Currently, the association's president is Dr Ueantabo Neemia-Mackenzie at Canterbury and its vice president is Dr Sandra Tarte of the University of the South Pacific, Fiji.

# Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
aka	also known as
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
BATFOG	Bush Administration Task Force on Guam
BEM	big emerging market
CIP	Cook Islands Party
CNMI	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
ICPA	Island Conference on Public Administration
NZ	New Zealand
OEK	<i>Olbiil era Kelulau</i> (Palau National Congress)
OTIA	Office of Territorial and International Affairs (US)
PIPSA	Pacific Islands Political Studies Association
PPSC	Palau Political Status Commission
RPR	Rassemblement pour la République (French conservative party)
TTPI	Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (also TT)
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USN	United States Navy



# Introduction

**Donald R. Shuster**

Leadership is an elusive property difficult to pin down. Pursuing its meaning enlarges our understanding of the dynamics of social change and the nature of culture. The contributors to this volume examine what leaders do from various perspectives and in a diversity of island areas and the United States.

According to Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo (1996:16)

leadership is one component of social and political process; it is a collective product of organisational activity and interaction...; it has to do with power and influence, though role definition may vary widely; leadership includes individuals supported by a group of followers, on the one hand, who, though quite different from overt leadership, may actually perform the function of making decisions, on the other...; the forms and processes of leadership are shaped by situation, (material, demographic, historic or immediate); and leadership is typically imbued with culturally and socially important expectations, meanings and symbolism.

These characteristics will provide a guideline for a brief summary of the chapters in this book.

Roman Tmetuchl carries the title of *Ngiraked* which endows on him the paramount chieftainship of Airai State (traditionally Irrai) in the Republic of Palau. Chiefly titles are important to Palauans because they carry a sacredness and power unavailable in any other sphere of

Palauan life. In his chapter, originally delivered as a speech at the fifth conference of the Pacific Islands Political Studies Association, Chief Tmetuchl describes the chief's role in terms of the *bai* (the chiefs' traditional meeting house) and the symbolism of its decoration—the purpose of which is to remind leaders and followers of their proper relations and behaviour.

Consistent with the leadership characteristics noted above, Palauan chiefly title holders dominate the political and social relations of their spheres. As Chief Tmetuchl points out, a ranking chief is a multi-talented man who must negotiate consensus within his *klobak* (decision-making council of local chiefs) on all village and intervillage matters, must assist any needy persons in his realm and even feed people, if necessary. Palauan society has methods for the education of young men for titleships, mechanisms for the selection of chiefs (as well as corollaries for selecting non-matrilineal-line) and even 'wild card' individuals of merit, and mechanisms for the removal of chiefs who prove to be incompetent.

Chief Tmetuchl makes clear that the Palauan chieftainship is under threat in some areas. One internal threat, also mentioned by Churney in chapter nine, is the chief who uses his power to gain personal wealth to the detriment of the community for which he is responsible, and who is no longer willing to serve his people. Another internal threat in Palau is the governorship. With the development of constitutions for each of Palau's fourteen major village complexes, a two-part state government (governor and legislature) was put in place in the early 1980s. In some states this government has eclipsed and even usurped the powers and authorities of the traditional chiefs and their *klobak*, becoming a major governance problem. Chief Tmetuchl has observed these changes over the years and calls for a better blending of tradition with imported practices.

Julia Anastacio describes in chapter two an area often omitted in the study of leadership: women leaders. She examines contemporary women leaders within the context of the roles women have traditionally filled in Palau's matrilineal society: decision-makers, activity planners, organisers and money contributors. Anastacio describes these roles in considerable and rich detail, particularly the ways a woman may work behind the scenes to advance the prestige and position of her husband and the male relatives within her lineage.

This support role is obvious at election time when women, particularly wives, carry out face-to-face campaigning, prepare food, mobilise attendance at gatherings and sell the merits of their candidate-husbands to his clan, her clan, and then to the wider community. Anastacio provides short biographical sketches of Elong Nakamura, President Nakamura's wife; Debbie Remengesau, the wife of Palau's Vice President; former cabinet minister Sandra Sumang Pierantozzi, and former legislators Cathy Sugiyama and Lorenza Olkeriil. Anastacio closes her chapter with an examination of the vexing situation of the scarcity of women elected leaders and proposes a number of strategies women might use to change this imbalance.

Don Shuster's chapter describes Palauan political leader, Roman Tmetuchl, before he became Airai's paramount chief. Since his youth, Tmetuchl has been an ambitious, innovative, and searching individual. His success as a leader involved the artful use of Palauan political strategies which resemble the techniques employed by Melanesian big-men: the building of factions through persuasion, manipulation and placing others in one's debt. Tmetuchl has supplemented these techniques with an air of mystery, unpredictability and concealment in relations with his competitors.

As paradoxical as it may seem, Roman Tmetuchl is an un-Palauan Palauan. He has always been unorthodox, a man who goes against the current, a man eager to achieve, completely unafraid of any person or challenge. His leadership skills put him on the high wave of political success for twenty-five years. He served as the president of the Palau Congress, founder and member of the Congress of Micronesia, driving force behind Palau's political separation movement, joint author of the Hilo principles which established the theoretical basis for Palau's current compact of free association relationship with the United States, compact negotiator with President Jimmy Carter's special representative, first governor of Airai state and chief author of its first constitution, and finally, holder of the title *Ngiraked*, paramount chief Airai.

As an island leader, Roman Tmetuchl's career demonstrates features of both a Melanesian big-man and Polynesian chief, and in that temporal order. His big-man leadership was shaped by the historical circumstance of an unprecedented period of political openness and economic opportunity that characterised Palau from the



early 1960s to the present. His distinguished title was conferred on him relatively recently.

William Vitarelli, a colleague and contemporary of Roman Tmetuchl, is the focus of Dirk Ballendorf's chapter four. Vitarelli landed in Palau a few years after the Pacific war, and was dedicated to the United States' trust territory responsibilities to the peoples of the vast Micronesian archipelago: to foster political, economic, social and educational advancement. Vitarelli and Tmetuchl complemented each other in their efforts to advance local enterprise and foster a robust Palauan response to the wider world. Both men were rebels, both were visionaries, and both have made lasting contributions to Palau.

Chapters five through eight by Karin von Strokirch, Robert Rogers, Larry Gerston and Michael Goldsmith, examine the fortunes of five political leaders in and of the Pacific: Gaston Flosse of French Polynesia, Governors Ada and Gutierrez of Guam, President Clinton of the United States and Sir Geoffrey Henry, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands. The authors paint fascinating portraits of these men. We see political astuteness, a genius for timing, sensitivity to the mood of one's constituency, and the ability to achieve important results. Flosse, Gutierrez, Clinton and Henry are shown to be consummate pragmatists. The first showed pragmatism in adapting to the changes in France's nuclear testing policy in ways that benefit the islanders; the second in attempts to revitalise Guam's quest for commonwealth, a new political status for the Territory of Guam; the third in emphasising trade and commerce over military presence in the Pacific; and the fourth in surviving a threat to his leadership.

Goldsmith's examination of the threat to Henry clearly demonstrates the structuring and selection bias of New Zealand media reports on the leadership challenge in the Cook Islands. Goldsmith's final observation has wide applicability: '...news reporting of challenges to political leadership should eschew recourse to easy metaphor and should pay heed to specific institutional features of the political system concerned'.

At the end of his chapter, Gerston provides a number of caveats to his description of the second Clinton administration's emphasis on trade as the foundation stone of its new far Pacific policy. Particularly relevant is his prediction that 'all bets are off with a regional recession of any length'. In 1998 we see the Asian 'tigers' limping, hurt by economic slowdown, bank failure and currency devaluation. These

troubles have hit Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan, and, to a certain extent, Hong Kong. They have resulted in urgent telephone calls between heads of state, a US\$100 billion bail-out scheme by the International Monetary Fund mandating rapid structural changes in the receiving countries, and reassurances from US Defense Secretary, William Cohen during visits to the region, that the United States will stand by its defence cooperation agreements. How all this will affect the Pacific islands and their leaders is not clear at present. Most likely private foreign investment from these nations to the Pacific islands will slow if not stop and tourism, particularly from Japan, will decrease.

Robert Churney's chapter nine examines cultural change in three Pacific island societies: Fiji, American Samoa, and the Republic of Palau. With respect to these polities, Churney argues for tradition, for preserving and strengthening the élitist model, the institution of chieftainship. He holds that the Polynesian chieftainship is a time-tested social mechanism that has made it possible for small-scale, isolated societies to respond effectively to change induced by foreign institutions. Churney argues for maintaining chiefs as important leaders because the chieftainship along with clan and land are the foundation stones of Pacific island culture. In this position, he echoes the theme of Chief Tmetuchl.

Pacific island leaders will likely not welcome the challenge offered by Tim Bruce in the closing chapter of this volume. Political leaders are generally masters of the short-range and usually do not worry about the long range. Bruce charges island political leaders to act heroically, to take on the very hard issues of human history in the 21st century: developing sustainable economies, responding to a wide-scale environmental damage, confronting poverty, cultural homogenisation and a pending energy shortage. Bruce does not hold out much hope that current leaders will be up to the task, constrained as they are by culture and history. These leaders, however, need to set the stage for the heroes of the 21st century, schooling today's youth in the political science of the next millennium, in an unwavering commitment to the common good. The security of island peoples in the next century will be won only through visionary and exceptionally strong and courageous leadership. Bruce contends that 'The 21st century is a new ball game. Run-of-the-mills leaders won't cut it. We need heroes'. And with this challenge, Bruce returns us to the

characteristics of leaders outlined at the beginning of this summary. Future Pacific islands leaders, he argues, and must be heroes, individuals who can take on the really hard issues of human history and turn the tide.

## Reference

Feinberg, Richard, and Watson-Gegeo, K., 1996. *Leadership and Change in the Pacific Islands*, The Athlone Press, Atlantic Highlands, NJ.

# 1

## The *bai* and the chief in Palau

Roman Tmetuchl

*This chapter was presented to the PIPSA conference after Chief Tmetuchl hosted a tour of the Airai traditional bai, the building where, traditionally, Palauan chiefs meet to make decisions.*

You have just seen the traditional *bai*. It is believed that the Airai *bai* is about 150 to 200 years old. This is the only authentic *bai* in Palau that has withstood the adversities of time.

The only time the Airai traditional *bai* ceased to exist (as a whole structure) was during the Second World War when it was partially destroyed. The Japanese military used some of the *bai*'s materials but, as soon as the war ended, the *bai* was rebuilt to its present form. Although certain pieces of the *bai* had to be replaced, it continues to stand—a tribute to the genius of its design. The thatch roof will last about ten to twenty years and then will have to be replaced.

What we have gathered from historical documents is that there used to be another *bai*, supported by one column or stilt, adjacent to this one. There was also a mention of a two-story *bai* existing here in Airai.

You can see newly built traditional *bais* in Aimeliik, Melekeok and Koror, but they were made with modern machinery and have slightly different styles when compared to the Airai *bai*.

Traditionally, each village in Palau had a god. The god of the village of Irrai is named *medechii Belau*, literally 'bringing peace to Palau' or 'bringing harmony into the diversity within Palau'.<sup>1</sup> According to Dr Augustin Kramer, a German anthropologist who studied Palau in the early 1900s, Irrai's god was considered the supreme and strongest god among all Palau's village gods.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Irrai was considered to be the Rome and the Geneva of Palau because it took a neutral and pacifying role in conflict between Koror and Melekeok. When there was occasional unrest, it was the role of Irrai, symbolised by a lady skilled in pacifying feuding factions, to bring about peace and harmony between the conflicting parties. Honouring this role, warriors from both Koror and Melekeok, at different times, would come here to Irrai, spend the night and receive blessings from the Irrai god before they undertook their warfare.

When you visited the traditional *bai* here in Airai, you probably noticed paintings of common animals in Palau: bats, clams, fish and sharks. They all have symbolic meaning for the people who come to use the *bai*. You probably noticed a rooster decorating the sides of the *bai* entrance. The rooster symbolises the responsibility carried by a Palauan chief. If you are a chief you have to wake up very early in the morning when it is quiet, so that you will be able to hear the cries of the poor who need assistance.

You noticed also, perhaps, that the entrance to the *bai* is very low and there is a picture of a bat carved above it. Everyone knows the position of a bat when it is hanging on a tree. It hangs with its head pointing down. So too, the very low entrance with the bat pictured with its head down are symbols reminding those who enter the *bai* to stoop down to show their respect to the elders and chiefs who may be gathered in the *bai*.

You may also have noted the paintings of the giant *tridacna* clam shells around the side of the *bai*. These huge clams look very helpless, passively lying on the lagoon floor. But you have to be very careful in dealing with these seemingly helpless clams because once you carelessly step or reach into one, you will suffer the loss of your foot or hand. The giant clam symbolises the nature of the chiefs. They look very helpless, they look old and passive, but once you offend them you may be subjected to serious consequences.

You may have observed black fish decorating the façade of the *bai*. That type of fish moves in a formation with the leader at the front and the school gradually forming itself into the shape of a large fish. If you

happen to spear the leader, the rest of the fish will scatter and move back to the deep. Then, after a while, they'll come back again with another leader at the head of the school. This behaviour symbolises the council of chiefs which also has a head, a leader. If he dies or becomes incapable of holding office, another one will then be designated to take on the leadership duties.

When looking at the front of the *bai*, towards the top, you will see a figure like a face with some lines running down from it. If you do not pay much attention to this figure, it would look like a circle. It is actually a single face. The face symbolises the idea that even though there are many chiefs, many elders, they have only one voice, one mind, leading toward one action—a united front.

The vacant lot next to the existing traditional *bai* was the site of two other *bais* in times past. One *bai* was for the chiefs-elect, each of whom would assume a chief's position when a vacancy was created. The other *bai* was for visitors who came into the village from elsewhere in Palau.

Strict formalities are observed by the council of chiefs when they are gathered together in the *bai*. Only the chiefs have the prerogative to enter the *bai*. The rest of the community—men, women and children—remain outside and are not allowed in.

Normally within each village in Palau there are ten chiefs. The ten are divided into two groups, following a moiety system, and providing a check and balance arrangement. Then these two groups are further divided into four corners or main *saus* for the village. When a *bai* has to be repaired or another major commitment for the community has to be undertaken, the task is divided among the ten chiefs representing their respective sections of the community.

The role of a chief is not an easy one. A man who becomes a chief has the responsibility of feeding the hungry and looking after the weak and the needy. If offence is committed by a clan member within the village, the chief is responsible for paying the penalty on behalf of the people whom he represents. Chiefs, however, do not receive compensation. We are not on salary, nor do we receive remuneration from some source. I, for example, am working very hard, twelve hours a day, because I have so many people to look after. I do not receive any compensation for this.

The only resources a chief has are what he receives from the members of his clan, particularly from the women of the clan. In Palau we have a concept called *tichiau*. This term or concept refers to the

treasury of a chief. When a new chief is confirmed in his title, the relatives, the senior female members of the clan and the sisters and daughters, will come together and contribute money to the *tichiau* or treasury. This is the wealth the chief uses to meet any clan obligation that falls on him.

Traditionally, the role of the chief required much preparation and education. Consequently, the clans and the chief had to be very careful in the upbringing of their children and in the selection of persons they might marry. If a youth did not marry into the correct clan or married a person from a lower clan, a candidate for a leadership position might not be able to assume the proper role and responsibility within the community. Palauans have a term, *tilorch el redil*, which literally means 'the woman who fell on a slippery place'. This term is used to describe a woman who slid down by marrying into a lower position. The expression also signifies that the male child of that woman may not be suitable to receive the preparation and education necessary to prove himself able to assume the role of chief.

You may be wondering how a chief is chosen in Palau. The *ourrot* (senior female members of the clan) get together and try to decide who among those qualified could be put forward to the council of chiefs. Once the women decide, they present the candidate to the chiefs. If the chiefs accept him, that ratifies the selection and then there is a feast to finalise the decision. When a designated person is ratified as chief, the other chiefs begin to call the new chief 'our friend'. If, however, the chiefs are not satisfied because they know the selected person cannot carry out the responsibilities that go with the position, they will turn back the candidate and request the *ourrot* to present someone else. Thus, the chief is selected from within the clan by the women and ratified by the chiefs. But the system is open to someone outside the clan who can prove himself able. This happened in Angaur where a foreigner, an Englishman, was designated and ratified as chief, and he assumed that position.

The selection of a chief is not made simply from among the male members of the clan. The community is structured so that people move from one group or club or association into the next, and in this process ascend progressively to the position of a chief. Individuals are very carefully observed, and those who are qualified, those who are seen to have leadership abilities, are noted. They then may be designated chief when a vacancy is created.

Being a chief is not an easy task, so in the olden days no one looked

for a chieftainship. Traditionally, the title meant hard work and personal sacrifice. Today, a chief's title is often sought for prestige, whereas in the olden days, people were afraid to be selected as chiefs because of the obligations inherent in the position. One had to be able to go fishing and provide for those who were in need. One had to be able to find medicine or a medicine man for any illness that came along. One had to be brave, with the ability to counteract and oppose an enemy.

Traditionally, when there was a matter to be decided, the village chiefs would get together and talk about it until they arrived at a consensus. Unlike introduced democratic practices, the chiefs did not conduct a vote to determine the majority opinion to follow. Rather, they talked, argued and debated until they reached a consensus. You probably noticed a stone platform in front of the *bai*. This is called Seventy Stone. The stone platform does not have a roof. When there was an important decision to be made, and the ten chiefs were unable to reach a consensus after deliberating in the *bai*, four of the ten chiefs, that is two from each moiety, would come out and sit on the platform and subject themselves to the elements—to the heat of the sun and the cold of the rain. This conference committee would then be forced by the elements, sooner or later, to come to a consensus. I wish decision-making were like this today. If it were, we would have less unrest and divisiveness.

## Questions to Chief Tmetuchl

If there is anything I have said which requires elaboration or some further explanation, we can pause at this point for questions.

Q. What role do the chiefs have in relation to the national government?

A. The Constitution of Palau stipulates that there is to be an advisory council to the President 'on matters concerning traditional laws, customs and their relationship to this Constitution and laws of Palau' (Palau Constitution 1979, Article VIII, section 6). Also, it is required that each state's public lands authority have eight members. One *ex-officio* member is the paramount high chief of the state. He selects three members, subject to the approval of the state's traditional council of chiefs. The state governor is the other *ex-officio* member, and he appoints three members with the consent of the state legislature (*Republic of Palau National Code*, Title 35, section 215, (b)). But as it



exists today, these arrangements are not working very well. It seems that people believe the purpose of community service is to get something rather than to serve and contribute something. Would that answer your question?

Q. Thank you. I also wanted to ask if there were any instances of women becoming chiefs.

A. Yes, it is possible. Women in Palau are the guardians of the title. If there is a vacancy and there is no one who could be designated, a woman would assume that title and chief position. One thing to remember is that it is difficult to have a woman chief because a function of a chief is to stay and sleep in the *bai* and work there. So it would be awkward to have a woman among them. When the chiefs retire, the female chief would have to tie her skirt tightly about her so that there would be no chance of being bothered during the night.

Q. In Palau is the chief's title passed on along hereditary lines?

A. No, it does not happen that way as it does in Japan, for example, or England where the eldest son of the deceased monarch inherits the title. In Palau, a chief is selected from within the mother's clan, that is the élite clan which has a chieftain vacancy. A son of a female in that clan is selected, which is opposite of what we see in Japan or England. However, on some occasions when there is no male in the female line who is deemed fit for the chief's position, then someone from the male line could be appointed to the position. Also, it can happen that a young man in a male line outside the élite clan be adopted into the élite clan for the purpose of filling a future vacancy in a chief position/title. Although a young man is of a male line, he becomes eligible to assume the position through adoption to an élite clan woman who then considers the male as her son.

Q. What is the relationship between the chief and the governor of a state?

A. I am hard put to answer that question because of the influence of the American political system that has been brought into Palau. Traditionally, as a chief one accepts a position to serve. Now, that concept is no longer effectively operative. Now people tend to seek personal gain when taking on a chief's title. It also depends on the state where the vacancy is located and on the provisions of the state constitution. In some states, the chiefs are operating well; in others, they are not operating well because of this confusion of roles.

You are probably aware of the situation of our neighbouring islands of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and beyond.

Severe difficulties have arisen in the FSM because of the depletion of compact funding. I believe that the state governments here in Palau are in a similar situation. If you go to court, you can see case after case where people are warring against each other concerning chief titles in their hamlets, and concerning disputes between the governors and the chiefs in the states.

**Q.** You explained very nicely the position of Irrai between Koror and Melekeok. You described the picture of how Irrai functions as a neutral mediator. However, there are some reports about Irrai having been a centre for espionage, for mystery and for magic. Can you say something about that?

**A.** Yes, you are correct. Irrai had a reputation for that. There was an old man who was known to cast magic on any situation or to perform healing with certain medicines that he knew. So the word got around that Irrai had certain magical powers that superseded all the others in Palau. In the olden days, people believed that whenever there was sickness, it was because of a curse put on them from the gods. As a result, these villagers came to Irrai to contribute their offerings and, in turn, receive some blessings and healing.

This old man was Father Felix's grandfather, who was also my grandfather (father of my mother). He told us that we were never poor because whenever there was any need, people would come to us bringing some offerings, which would be of use to the family and for those in need. Because of his important position, my grandfather had to know about all matters that affected village life. This was the knowledge handed down as coming from the gods. It really was knowledge acquired with the blessing of the gods.

If there are no further questions, I will continue and conclude.

## **Issues facing Palau today**

From 1944 through September 1994—50 years—Palau was under United States administration, and the US government was not very sympathetic to the traditional system of government in Palau. US intentions may have been good but, as the saying goes, 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions'. The American sociopolitical system that was introduced, I believe, is the cause of much of the social unrest, confusion and problems we are facing today. If we had continued to follow the traditional system, I believe we would not

have these problems. All those who are seeking to be in office these days no longer do so to serve, but to be served and to seek personal gain. Palau has a system in place today by which you have to have large sums of money to win an election. A candidate for a major office needs about half a million dollars to be able to feed the people so that they will vote for him. This system does not encourage presenting the facts, talking to people and enlightening them.

My observations are confirmed by Estyn L. Edward who was quoted in the 2 December 1996 issue of *Time Magazine* as saying: 'The issue is not whether the Democrats or the Republicans are more corrupt, it is US politics that is corrupt'.

If we continue to follow the political system we now have in place, we in Palau are heading towards more problems. The poor will become poorer, a small number of rich will become richer and a few will be able to survive.

If we examine the world situation, the US presidential system has been exported to and adopted in many places, as has the British parliamentary system. The presidential system is a product of revolution, whereas the parliamentary system is a result of evolution. In Palau we would have been better off adopting a parliamentary system in 1979 when we wrote our constitution. Regarding this point I noticed another article in the 2 December 1996 issue of *Time* by Walter Anderson of the Pacific News Service. He wrote that

[n]early all the world's democracies...are either presidential systems or parliamentary ones. Presidential systems grew out of revolutionary movements and parliamentary systems out of evolutionary ones...The US Constitution, which became the model for many others, created a strong president to take the place of the king. Although the presidential system has worked reasonably well in the US over 200 years of peaceful transitions through wars, assassinations, resignations and disputed elections—it hasn't exported well (Anderson 1996:8).

These are private views, and they may not have a solid foundation, but I must confess, I believe them.

We in Palau are at a crossroads: we have the challenge of deciding what to do. We cannot return to the past. Even if we could, there is the problem that most of us now are ignorant of the traditional system. At the same time, those who presently hold positions in the government, I believe, are not fully knowledgeable about how the American political system operates. So the challenge upon us now, looking

toward the time when compact funding will be depleted, is that we need to resolve the issue of what form of government we can create to capture both the benefits of the past and the blessings of the present imported system. We need a system which can really serve the people and work here in Palau.

The traditional system was built very much on the principle of the golden rule, 'do unto others what you want done unto you', but that principle is very weak in Palau today. Comparing social systems, the traditional Palauan sociopolitical system was much more group oriented, whereas the US-style social system stresses the individual. The group in a traditional system is more dominant than the individual.

Yet, in the Palauan traditional system, the individual belonged. Each person had a place within the whole society, including his village, lineage, clan, men's association or women's association, and age group within the community. But in modern society the individual is lost in the mass. In the traditional system, built on the dynamics of groups, the stress was on harmony and working together. In the modern system, individual enterprise is admired. In the traditional system, one tries as much as possible to reach a consensus on any important issue, but in the modern system, decisions are made by majority vote. As a result, in the traditional system a basic unity and harmony is established in the community, whereas decision-making by majority vote causes division and unrest. This is a bothersome and persistent situation.

Thank you very much for taking so much of your time to come to Palau for your conference. You must be very hungry. Your minds have been fed, now it is time to feed your bodies. I am very happy to have had this opportunity to meet with you, and I want to wish you farewell because I may not be able to see you all before you finish your conference. My particular greetings to the elders among you, like me. It is the elders to whom we should look for our lessons in life. God's blessings and *bon voyage*.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Irrai is the name of one of the 14 traditional *beluu* (communities) of Palau. The main hamlet among the six hamlets of Irrai was also

called Irrai. In modern usage, Irrai refers to the principal hamlet and Airai refers to the state which is coterminous with the *beluu* of Irrai.

- <sup>2</sup> The Council of Chiefs, Airai (Irrai) State.

# 2

## Palauan women: their involvement in politics

**Juliana M. Anastacio**

### **Historical background**

Palau has always been a matrilineal society. Palauan women held power within their families, clans and communities. This means that they were decision-makers, activity planners and financial contributors to male relatives. They were, and are still, the ones appointing the chiefs to head the clans. By the same token, women hold the titles which correspond to those of the chiefs of the clan.

Palauan women are the foundation of politics in Palau's history. They were the leaders not only of their clans but also their villages. Throughout its history, the women of Palau have been important political actors. For example, Dilewei Direngulbai is remembered for her role in ending war between two villages. She was a sister of a chief of Aimeliik and lost her brother in a war. She began to travel throughout Palau taking revenge by killing those who killed her brother. She stopped in Ngarard which was at war with Ngerchelong. She began to help the people of Ngarard by building a stone wall around Ngarard dock that blocked the people of Ngerchelong from coming into Ngarard. This ended the war. Another example is a woman from a high clan called Ngerurong of the village of Ngeremlengui. When the chief died, there were no mature male

members of the clan to become chief so the woman declared herself chief of the clan. There is also a story about two women from Angaur whose names were Ilecherong and Lalamiotel. There was always war between Peleliu and Angaur in which men from Peleliu overpowered Angaur men. One day, these women decided to climb the coconut trees and watch the sea toward Peleliu. They saw war canoes carrying the first and second chiefs of Peleliu, whose titles were Obakrdelolk and Iderrech. These two most beautiful women asked if they could ride with the two chiefs to Peleliu and the chiefs agreed right away. As soon as they landed in Peleliu, Ilecherong and Lalamiotel announced to the people of Peleliu that they were going to stay as wives of both chiefs. This stopped the war between the two islands.

Palauans in general are people who avoid solitude. They tend to form organisations, with individuals having membership in more than one. These organisations are created within the village by both men and women, and their leaders are always from the first and second ranked clans of the village. Numerically, there are more female organisations than male. For instance, Ngarard state now has four female organisations and two male organisations. The main reason for forming organisations is for members to meet and discuss activities for developing and improving the village. Sometimes these organisations create policies for the whole community to follow, for example, that everyone, both old and young, should take a torch if they are walking at night in order to stop people from stealing betel nuts (which are a main source of money for the villagers). Female organisations are as likely to exert social control over the villages as their male counterparts. Female organisations also undertake work such as cleaning village paths, preparing food for work groups, organising village festivities and many other tasks for the benefit of the village. All this work is done freely with organisation members getting satisfaction from doing what is best for their village. In addition, the organisations provide people with the opportunity to mingle with one another and feel accepted within the group.

In traditional culture, Palauan women exercised their power and influence through both social controls and rights. During the period of colonisation by Spain, Germany, Japan and, lastly, the United States, women's organisations also played a significant role in the political arena. Despite the influences of colonising governments, Palauan

women have continued to carry out their political, economic and social obligations.

One way that Palauan women are powerful in family, clan and community is through their contribution of money to support their male relatives. For example, a sister is responsible for helping her brother buy a house, or to provide land to her brother's children when the brother dies. A woman contributes money to her male cousins so that when her brother needs help, the sisters of her male cousins will come to help him. This kind of assistance works to incorporate more distant relatives, forming closer family ties and uniting clan members more tightly. This process also distinguishes the sister in the top rank within clan and even community.

All the tasks that a woman does for male relatives within traditional systems of leadership and politics are her obligation, whether she likes it or not. The wives of her male relatives (her in-laws) must prepare and provide the best food to her husband and his relatives. This practice of exchanging food and money provides prestige to a female of the clan and at the same time, the members of the female clan honour and respect the husband because they know he is a provider.

In her role as wife, a Palauan woman provides the best food to her husband and his family. She also advises their children, especially daughters, to contribute money to their father's relatives. This practice gets the husband's clan members to accept the children and distinguish their male relative above everyone else. This means that he can then be appointed to hold titles such as leader of the clan. Throughout Palauan history, women were looked up to and respected in their roles of putting their husbands or brothers on top, and the power of women as leaders was recognised by family, clan and community.

## **Women's roles in contemporary Palau**

When the United States took over as administering authority of Palau under the Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations, the US was mandated to develop the island politically, economically and educationally without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion and so on. As a result, Palauan women began to seek good and higher



education (which their mothers had not been allowed to do during the Japanese era) so that they could get good jobs enabling them to support their families

Education in Palau in the early years of US rule required children to be eight years of age in order to enter elementary school which comprised nine grades. By the time they reached the ninth grade, Palauan females were considered mature enough for marriage and there was a strong feeling among Palauan families that a daughter's place was in the home, married, bearing babies and taking care of household chores. In the 1960s, students went abroad for higher education because there were no high schools, let alone colleges, on Palau. Although female students did well on the exams required for entrance to high school, few females went abroad to continue their education because most got married and stayed at home. Students from Palau also went to college on Trust Territory scholarships, but the recipients of these scholarships were mostly male. This was not discrimination against female students. Rather, women completing high school at the time were finding good jobs as teachers which they believed to be good enough. The end result, however, was that as Palau was being drawn into a democratic system, Palauan women were increasingly being shoved aside, behind the scenes, where they were unrecognised by the public.

Nevertheless, there are women who have risked their lives to save Palau from the hands of Palauan opportunists. Here I am thinking of Gabriella Ngirmang, a prominent Palauan who heroically gathered women to march to the court to stop some Palauan politicians from forcing voters to approve the Compact of Free Association in 1988. Her life was threatened and opponents attempted to fire bomb her house. But has she been recognised and honoured for what she did for Palauans? Only a few people, who are mostly writers, recognise her in their writings.

Over the past 52 years since Palau has operated within a democratic system under the United States, only 19 women have served or been elected to high government offices.

- Yosko Ngiraturmerang, first woman elected magistrate of Aimeliik
- Ucheliou Besong, first woman elected legislator representing Aimeliik
- Maria Mereb, second woman elected legislator representing Koror

- Juana Rengulbai, member of the first Palau Constitutional Convention
- Cathy A. Sugiyama, member of the 6th and 7th legislature, first woman elected delegate to the first *Olbiil era Kelulau* (OEK) or Palau National Congress representing Ngardmau
- Viviana Ucherbelau, elected legislator to Koror State Legislature
- Sylvia Tangelbad, elected legislator to Koror State Legislature
- Dilubech Rechebei, elected legislator to Koror State Legislature
- Isabela Sumang, elected legislator to Koror State Legislature
- Naomi Bekurrou, elected legislator to Ngardard State Legislature
- Adelina Isechal, elected legislator to Ngeremlengui State Legislature
- Ayano Baules, elected legislator to Ngeremlengui State Legislature
- Sisinia Ngiraikelau, elected legislator to Ngeremlengui State Legislature
- Julia Franz, elected legislator to Ngeremlengui State Legislature
- Sandra Sumang Pierantozzi, appointed Minister of Administration (cabinet member of President Ngiratkel Etpison), first woman elected senator of the 5th OEK
- Dilmei Olkeriil, appointed Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs (cabinet member of President Ngiratkel Etpison)
- Theodosia Blailles, first woman elected governor of Angaur State
- Tutoud Ngirangeang, elected legislator to Koror State Legislature
- Lorenza Olkeriil, elected legislator to Ngiwal State Legislature

Women in Palau play a major role in politics, particularly during election times. According to First Lady Elong Nakamura, 'it is the women, especially wives of candidates, who go out there and do the hard work of door-to-door campaigning. It is the women who prepare the food for political gatherings and associate with other people to get

their husbands elected'. Since her husband, President Kuniwo Nakamura, began his political career in 1970, Elong Nakamura has played a major role in all of his campaigns. When I interviewed her, she said that the most important thing to remember as a wife of a politician, is that there should be an understanding between the two of them and they should work together as a team. In addition, to help her husband succeed in public life, the wife of a politician must be flexible and able to associate with every member of the community, both old and young.

Elong Nakamura's father, Ngiratecheboet, saw his son-in-law as an ambitious young man who had the ability and knowledge to get to the top in his political career. He told his daughter that her husband's future was in her hands and that when she wanted him to succeed she must do the following. First of all, sell Kuniwo to his relatives, then sell him to her relatives and, last, go out there and sell him to the public. Once both families have accepted him, then from there on they will be his permanent supporters, and it will be easier for the public to trust and accept him. The First Lady believes this advice has helped her husband to reach the top position of President of the Republic of Palau.

Debbie Remengesau, the Second Lady of Palau, told quite a different story. She mostly praised her husband for being the best at getting people to trust and believe in him. Tommy Remengesau began his career in politics in 1984 when he was relatively young. He encountered a lot of problems during his campaign for election to the second OEK. His father, Thomas Remengesau, Sr, was at the peak of his political life and gave his son advice on where, when and how to campaign. The strategy that Tommy and his wife used was going together, house-to-house, meeting and talking to people face-to-face. They learned to get to know people personally and individually, and people got to know them as well. When talking with Debbie, one can see that she and Tommy are compatible people who possess similar natural qualities of vitality, confidence, honesty and loyalty which inspire people, both young and old, to trust them. Debbie also mentioned that she is grateful to her father for helping them financially and to her great mom who is always there to love and take care of the children so they do not feel neglected.

Sandra Sumang Pierantozzi, one of the most active women in politics in Palau, began her political career working at the Congress

with the senators. She was subsequently appointed Minister of Administration in the cabinet of President Ngiratkel Etpison. The first time she ran for an elected office was in 1992 when she ran for vice-president. She lost that election. When I interviewed her, she said that she feels she lost, not because she is female, but because she was new and had such a short time to campaign. The strategy she used was to have supporters doing the work of campaigning for her.

Her defeat in 1992 did not stop her political career. Rather she began to work helping schools and organisations, serving as a member of various government committees and contributing money to students through the Sumang Foundation Scholarships. Consequently, when she began her successful campaign for election to the national senate, she was already well known throughout Koror. Sandra told me that her husband, Marcello Pierantozzi, is so supportive of her political career that he was out there campaigning with her Palauan supporters. When asked how she feels being the only woman in the OEK with a bunch of men, she said, 'first of all, I'm there as a person, a senator, to do the best of my ability to serve the people. I can make a difference as a senator and I can be an asset to balance the senate'. She told me about her speech to one gathering where she told a story about her uncle who loved to sail canoes. She told the crowd that her uncle's small canoe had an outrigger. And the purpose of the outrigger, 'although very small, is balancing the canoe as it sails during windy and rough water'. Sandra said that she wants to be an outrigger of the senate, balancing it so that people will stay on their toes, doing work like they should for the people. She is very outspoken, a quality that is needed at the OEK.

Cathy and Senator Peter Sugiyama were interviewed together. The Senator admitted that while his wife served two terms in the Palau Legislature and one term in the first constitutional government, he did not campaign for her. The only contribution he made was renting a boat to take her to Ngardmau and back. He further claimed that Cathy is politically more knowledgeable than he is, that instead of helping her, she helps him in his campaigns. Interestingly, this couple served together in both houses in the first constitutional government—Cathy as a delegate and Peter as a senator. Peter said he feels there should be more women in congress to represent the interests of women since there are many more, like his wife, who are qualified to be in the OEK. Cathy told me that during one of the joint sessions of congress she was

introduced as Mrs Cathy Sugiyama. This got her to her feet to tell the entire crowd, 'When I'm out somewhere then you can call me Mrs Sugiyama, but when entering this congress building, I am Delegate Sugiyama'.

Another outspoken woman I interviewed was Lorenza Olkeriil, a strong believer in women's liberation. As the only female legislator in the Ngiwal State Legislature, she was told to take the minutes of the meeting. She quickly told her colleagues that she was elected to be a legislator whose duty is to discuss and solve the issues affecting the people of Ngiwal. She also told me that although she was selected to be the speaker of the legislature, one day she went on a field trip and when she returned she found that her colleagues had chosen a man to take over the position of speaker. She thought she was replaced not because she could not do the job, but because she is 'just a female' who should not be in such a position.

### **Issues, concerns and strategies**

Why is it that most women until now have been behind the scenes in Palau? Why is it that only a few are in the front lines while the rest are not heard? Statistics show that there are slightly more females than males in the population of Palau. The women I interviewed suggest that the following issues and concerns should be addressed in order to improve Palauan women's front line political participation.

- According to Lorenza Olkeriil, there is jealousy among Palauan women so that when one woman is running for a top office, other women do their best to block her, thinking 'why her and not me?'
- Julie Tellei thought that 'most voters feel that she is a woman and should not be in a male job although she is more than qualified'.
- Faustina Rechuher thought that there are women capable of being in the OEK, 'but with no money to support them in the campaign, because campaigning to voters in Palau is getting so expensive' they cannot get elected.
- It was also mentioned that it is very complicated for new candidates to compete and win over the incumbent.

The following strategies could be used to overcome some of these issues.

- A female who runs for office should get all female supporters to help campaign for her so that they can convince the female population to trust that she will be there to represent their interests. The candidate's platform should include some issues concerning women. This could help convince women to vote for the female candidate.
- All voters should cast their votes based on the qualifications of the candidates and the issues which the candidate is supporting rather than the gender of the candidate. There is always an assumption that males are physically strong and therefore should hold top political positions. I believe this assumption is wrong. The competition political leaders face is mental not physical.
- The majority of qualified women cannot run for political positions because campaigning is getting to be so expensive for the candidates. Some voters these days expect the candidates to feed them or give them money or other material gifts—and if the candidate does this for one voter she must do it for all. This practice looks like the voters are selling their votes to the candidates. On the other hand, some candidates are so desperate to win that they pay people to vote for them. The OEK should pass laws to prohibit this practice so that people who would like to run for political positions can campaign by selling their qualifications to the voters. Once elected, they would feel good because they had earned rather than bought the voters' trust.
- Everything that each of the incumbents has done while in political office should be published. This information could be disseminated in the newspapers (*Tia Belau*, for example) or on television or radio. This would help the voters to evaluate whether they had chosen the right person to represent them, and whether they should continue to support that person in the next election.

## Conclusion

Ever since Palau entered into a democratic system of government, it seems that women have virtually disappeared from the scene of political leadership. Women are only recognised by male relatives for

their contributions that support them. Otherwise, women are nothing but providers. If the strategies discussed here could be applied, then Palauan women could be recognised as important to the lives of every Palauan, socially, psychologically and economically.

## Note

- <sup>1</sup> This chapter is based primarily on my experience and learning from the elders and practices as I was growing up. I would like to thank the Palauan women who allowed me to interview them about their role in Palauan politics, including Julita Tellei, Tina Rechuher, Cathy Sugiyama, Lorenza Olkeriil and Sandra Pierantozzi. I would also like to thank first lady, Elong Nakamura, and second lady, Debbie Remengesau, whom I interviewed about the roles of politicians' wives, and Senator Peter Sugiyama, Yoshi Adachi, Senator Joshua Koshiba, and newly elected Senator Lucius Malso, male Palauan politicians. Finally, I want to acknowledge a very special person to me, my uncle and historian, Meruk Rengulbai (Dkulachudel) who provided me with much information about women in the history of Palau who were significant political figures.

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# 3

## Political leadership in Palau: the Roman Tmetuchl period

Donald R. Shuster

*We in Palau don't do our thing.  
Even boys talk politics but they don't produce anything.  
They have no business, no house, and therefore  
no social substance. Who are they!?*

Roman Tmetuchl  
27 February 1981

### An independent and outspoken young leader

Builder, visionary, political leader, businessman, these characterise the life and accomplishments of Mr Roman Tmetuchl.

Roman Tmetuchl was born into the *Eloklsumech* clan of Airai in 1926, the same year Japan's *Nanyocho* government established a carpentry apprenticeship training school for islanders. As a boy, Roman spent much of his time in Koror, a thriving Japanese town on Palau prior to the Pacific War. When Roman attended *hoshuka*, the advanced two years of schooling under the Japanese, he lived with his mother's brother, Yaoch. Uncle Yaoch had a talent for reading the



future from natural signs and events. He prepared legal documents as a clerk of court for the Japanese court system of the mandated islands. He was well paid and respected by both Japanese and islanders and many Japanese came to him for help with legal documents such as lease agreements and other court papers. Yaoch discouraged Roman from participating in a seamanship training course offered by the Japanese authorities in Dutch-controlled Indonesia during the war, but he did apparently allow Roman to work for the Japanese military police, the *Kenpeitai*. Although the battles on Peleliu and Angaur were some of the fiercest of the Pacific campaign and Babeldaob was regularly bombed by US airplanes, Roman reports that he actually enjoyed the excitement of the war years.

Some months after the war ended, Roman returned to a severely damaged Koror and went to work for the US military. He was one of the few young Palauan men chosen for teacher training and he eventually worked his way to Guam where, in 1951, he was among the first Micronesians to graduate from George Washington High School. Two of his classmates during those days were Madeleine Bordallo, presently Lt Governor of Guam, and Joe San Agustin, former senator of the 23rd Guam Legislature.

The 1950s and early 1960s were years when Roman exhibited leadership in both the political and business arenas. His college studies in law and social work in the Philippines under a United Nations fellowship opened the door to various positions with the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TT) government: translator, public defender and counselor, administrative assistant to the TT chief justice, and district court judge. Mr Tmetuchl continues to have a reputation for being one Palau's sharpest trial assistants.

In the post-war years, employment with the TT government did not bar one from serving on the local legislature and it was here, as a young man of 30, that Roman succeeded his brother, Toribiong, as *Bedul Olbiil* (president) of the *Olbiil era Kelulau era Belau* (Palau's house of whispered decisions). This body's authority included the powers of issuing resolutions, receiving and administering property, levying taxes and spending tax revenue. Serving as president was a position of great distinction and it meant serving the community. Mr Tmetuchl recalls, 'In the old days, service was very important. We had a saying, "You served your village, and stole your wife". So we served without question.' As the legislature's leader, Roman became involved in the wider Trust Territory affairs through the annual interdistrict

leadership conferences which evolved into the Council of Micronesia, an advisory body to the TT high commissioner. Roman participated in council sessions, particularly the fourth session of 1963, which did the groundwork for the 1965 establishment of the Congress of Micronesia. A US government mission, the Solomon survey commission, described Roman Tmetuchl in a confidential section of its 1965 report as 'extraordinarily quick, articulate, and independent minded...No doubt he can be outspoken, but he has convictions and could be an important leader in Micronesia' (United States 1965:30). The Solomon Commission proved to be correct, and the remainder of this chapter examines some of the key events of Mr Tmetuchl's political career in both the Micronesian and Palauan arenas.

## **Constitutions: Palauan or Micronesian?**

The United Nations Trusteeship Council Visiting Missions of 1970 and 1973 were particularly interested in Micronesia's governmental structure and how it might be modified to achieve a new political status. Both missions suggested that a constitution written by Micronesians themselves 'would play an important part in the Trust Territory's advancement towards self-determination and independence' (United Nations 1973:35). The 1973 Mission noted that although the Congress of Micronesia had proposed holding a constitutional conference in 1972 and again in 1973, action had been deferred both times.

Early in 1974, however, the time was ripe. Senate bill 38, setting out procedures for establishing a Micronesian Constitutional Convention (Micronesian Con-Con), was signed by High Commissioner Edward Johnston as Public Law 5-60.

About this same time, the Fifth Palau Legislature formed a Select Committee on Development, led by Roman Tmetuchl, to determine the most appropriate directions for Palauan political and economic development. Tmetuchl recognised that political power would be shifting away from the American high commissioner towards the individual Micronesian administrative areas (then known as districts)<sup>1</sup> and advocated the principle of loose federation with the other ethnic island areas of Micronesia as the only acceptable way of associating with these areas. In July and August 1973, Select Committee members travelled extensively throughout the Pacific island nations and territories and were greatly impressed by what they saw. Tmetuchl's

separatist position may have been influenced by the long-standing desire of the Mariana Islands for a separate status. Also, he believed that an administration centered in Chuuk (formerly Truk) or Pohnpei (formerly Ponape) would be considerably poorer in quality and less responsive to Palau's needs than the American-dominated administration he had known since the end of the Pacific War. The Liberal Party (Tmetuchl was a leading member) had long maintained that Palauan identity and prerogatives must not be lost in a wider Micronesian association (Meller 1969:263). Tmetuchl advocated separate status talks between Palau and the United States as early as April 1973 (*Tia Belau*, 8 May 1973:2).

Consequently, as Palauans went to the polls on 4 June 1974 to select their representatives to the Micronesian constitutional convention, District Administrator Thomas Remengesau was approving a Tmetuchl-sponsored Palau Legislature bill which enabled Palauans to hold a convention to draft a constitution for themselves.<sup>2</sup> Remengesau had vetoed a similar bill a year earlier on the grounds that Palau was not a sovereign state and therefore did not have the right to form its own government and did not need its own constitution. Tmetuchl and his group got around this veto by passing a resolution directing the Legislature's Select Committee on Development to conduct and organise a constitutional convention, conduct a political education campaign and hold a referendum. Tmetuchl was convinced that the Palauan delegates to the Micronesian Constitutional Convention ought to have a very clear Palauan position to present to their Micronesian colleagues. The law enabling the Palau Constitutional Convention (Palau Con-Con) explicitly stated that if the principles, standards and conditions of the draft Palau Constitution 'shall not be accepted by the Micronesian Con-Con, then the draft constitution or constitutions shall constitute the general basis of the future government of Palau outside the political family of Micronesia' (Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands 1980:29).

Although the 1974 Palau Con-Con members were appointed, an election was held on 4 June 1974 to select delegates to the Micronesian Con-Con. In Palau, 19 candidates vied for five seats. *Tia Belau*, Palau's only newspaper at the time, reported that campaigning in the northern villages of Babeldaob centred more on local gossip than on debate or discussion of issues between candidates and the general public (*Tia Belau*, 2(8), July 1974:13). The election results gave the Progressive Party three seats to the Liberal's two, but the former received only 18

per cent of the vote. This occurred because of a highly irregular districting formula that was clearly undemocratic. Nevertheless, two developments emerged which would be of future importance. First, Johnson Toribiong, son of Toribiong Uchel and nephew of Roman Tmetuchl, ran for the first time and won. With his uncle campaigning for him, he easily finished as the top vote-getter among the 19 candidates. Second, with 35 per cent of the electorate voting for independent candidates, it became apparent that the two dominant political parties were less attractive to voters than in earlier elections.

Despite divisions on the local scene, Palau's delegation to the Micronesian Con-Con presented a united front. With their small population yet intense competitive tendencies, the Palau delegates pressured the convention floor for certain guarantees before they could commit Palau to Micronesian unity. These guarantees were framed as seven non-negotiable terms<sup>3</sup> and were applauded by representatives of small areas in Micronesia but criticised by those from more highly populated areas such as Chuuk and Pohnpei. The Palauan initiative stimulated some compromises that otherwise might not have been made, but it also gave notice that Palau was leaning strongly toward separation. The Palau delegation expounded the Tmetuchl position of separation despite grandiose calls for unity.

### **What status is best?**

On 1 July 1975, just a few days before the beginning of the Micronesian Con-Con, a Trust Territory-wide referendum, sponsored and designed by the Congress of Micronesia, was held to determine people's opinion on the various status options—independence, commonwealth, free association, statehood and status quo—and on the question of Micronesian unity. Voter turnout was generally low throughout the Trust Territory despite efforts by the government's Education for Self-Government program. In Palau, the turnout was less than 50 per cent of the electorate. Certain leaders had spoken out against participation in the referendum, others in favour of it (*Tia Belau* 1975a). The *Tia Belau* newspaper in its July 1975 issue listed 13 reasons why Palauans should not vote in the upcoming referendum. Nearly all the reasons derived from a strong anti-US colonial position that had characterised the Uludong group from the 1970s since its emergence in 1972 (*Tia Belau* 1975b). (The Uludong group was a group of young activists led by Moses Uludong; it controlled *Tia Belau* from

the late 1970s.) Notwithstanding this discouragement in the press, nearly half of the 5,880 registered Palauan voters did go to the polls to register their preference on each of the status options. Statehood and commonwealth were strongly rejected as unattractive political futures. Independence drew mixed but predominantly negative opinion with 455 Palauans voting yes and 869, no. Free association and status quo received equally favourable voter support with yes/no votes counted at 1,120/526 and 1,288/370 respectively. Since the ballot did not ask voters to prioritise their status preferences and given the low voter turnout, the referendum results are of dubious value. What seems clear, however, is that those political options Palauans knew most about—status quo and free association—received the greatest number of affirmative votes and, proportionally, the least number of negative votes vis-à-vis the other status options. It seems *Tia Belau* (1975c) was correct in its pre-referendum analysis that the Palau electorate was not fully aware of the implications of the five status alternatives and therefore people were uncertain as to the best choice. Voter preference on the question of Micronesian unity was clearer. Palauans voted three to one in favor of unity.

Even though voter turnout in Palau was low, Roman Tmetuchl and his supporters (the separatist group) did not find the referendum results of 8 July 1975 encouraging. Prior to this advisory referendum, the Tmetuchl group in the Fifth Palau Legislature had passed resolution 75 (1)-2 creating an eleven-member Palau Political Status Commission (PPSC) (*Tia Belau*, 1 June 1975:1). Its purpose was to establish contacts and conduct negotiations with the United States or any other nation on the future status of Palau and to enter into preliminary status agreements pending final approval of the Palau Legislature and people of Palau.<sup>4</sup>

## **Tmetuchl's momentum**

With solid political support in the Palau Legislature, Tmetuchl began to build momentum in favour of a separate political status. He did this by writing to Ambassador Haydn Williams, inviting the US negotiator to engage in a formal dialogue concerning Palau's future status. Tmetuchl also changed his status preference from independence to one 'similar in nature to that of the Northern Mariana Islands', that is commonwealth (*Tia Belau* 1975d). In an interview with reporter Joan King of the *Pacific Daily News*, Tmetuchl said that a majority of

Palauans were not interested in unity with the other Micronesians and that Palau had nothing to lose by negotiating separately with the United States. Always assertive and astute at seeing advantage, Tmetuchl claimed that since Palau was strong and self-reliant, it was in a good bargaining position for separate talks because of strong US military interests in Palauan land (King 1975).

Characteristic of Tmetuchl's personal style, his unexpected shift on the status question showed skilled deployment of the traditional political strategy *ideuekl chemaidechedui* (lightening quick tactics designed to keep the opposition off balance).<sup>5</sup> Lazarus Salii and the Palauans working in Saipan were completely surprised and confused by Tmetuchl's swift initiative. Salii seemed unaware of the dominating influence Tmetuchl wielded in the Palau Legislature but he quickly recognised a logical connection between Tmetuchl's request for separate status talks based on a commonwealth position and his support for a supertanker port on Palau (King 1975). As events were to show, Salii's analysis was correct.

*Tia Belau* was also surprised by the suddenness of Tmetuchl's change of political direction. Thus, the paper maintained, for the new commission to request separate status talks based on a status similar in nature to that of the Northern Marianas 'is out of tune with the people of Palau and does not represent even a minority of the people' (*Tia Belau* 1975c). Written prior to the 8 July 1975 referendum, *Tia Belau* had correctly sensed that the Palauan mood was more in favour of the status quo than a commonwealth. Although the referendum results were inconclusive, they indicated that Palauans were unattracted by the commonwealth option. 'We are Palauans, not Americans!', said one determined voter.

True to the age-old Palauan political pattern, two forces had emerged: Tmetuchl and his separatist faction dominated the Palau Legislature, while an anti-Tmetuchl coalition group favouring Micronesian unity formed a minority faction. These two groups were to clash numerous times at the ballot box over the next five years.

Recall that the Legislature's Select Committee on Development was charged with the responsibility of carrying out a campaign of political education, a Palau Con-Con and a referendum. With control of both the Select Committee on Development and the Palau Political Status Commission, Tmetuchl could use the mandate of the former to promote the power of the latter. The Palau Con-Con, completed its work on two draft constitutions—alternative I and alternative II—by

May 1975. The two documents were submitted to the Legislature and District Administrator but were never voted on by the Palauan electorate. The historical record is not clear on this point but it seems that the Tmetuchl group concluded some time in mid-1975 that Palau's status and political position (whether to negotiate Palau's future political status with the United States separately from or jointly with the other Micronesian districts) took precedence over the issue of a constitution for Palau. Important and perhaps fundamental to the decision to separate Palau politically from the rest of Micronesia, was the dream of some influential Palauans that the grandiose superport plan would become reality. Another factor important in the decision to push for separate status talks, was the US position allowing the Northern Mariana Islands to separate from the other Micronesian districts and become a commonwealth of the United States when the Trusteeship Agreement ended.

With separation from the other Micronesian districts Tmetuchl's main goal, the Sixth Palau Legislature passed resolution 687 in April 1976 requesting the United States to recognise the desire of the elected and traditional leaders of Palau for a separate political status based on an agreement similar in nature to the Northern Marianas' commonwealth covenant arrangement. Given this bold statement and a previous charge to carry out a referendum, Tmetuchl recognised that the US administration desired one-man, one-vote ballot box decisions and could therefore be persuaded to accept separate talks if the Palauan electorate declared this to be its will.

To determine the will of that electorate, a referendum was held on 24 September 1976 under the exclusive sponsorship of the Sixth Palau Legislature. It was ignored by representatives of the United States, the United Nations and the Trust Territory government (Murphy 1976). The results gave Tmetuchl exactly what he wanted. Some 88 per cent of those Palauans who cast ballots voted in favour of separation. Tmetuchl was enthusiastic over the result: 'We've got a very good mandate from the people' (quoted in Murphy 1976). He also claimed the United States would 'think twice' about trying to force the Palauans to unify with the other Micronesians.

On one level the issue had become emotionally charged because to vote for Micronesian unity (a 'no' vote) was to deny one's Palauan-ness. For Palauans, unity with the rest of Micronesia meant a 'reduction of control over their lives, land, and destiny' (Tmetuchl 1976). That the referendum had become focussed on ethnic identity

rather than on the political issue of unity or separation is evident in results from Guam, Yap and Saipan. Identifying strongly with their culture, Palauans living away from home favoured separation 406 to 18. Thus, the referendum had deep emotional and ethnic overtones which strongly biased people's vote in favour of separation. To vote for unity was to be un-Palauan, and with his keen insight into Palauan psychology, Tmetuchl knew this.

The Tmetuchl opposition, campaigning for unity (a 'no' vote), was weak and disorganised. They believed that a 'yes' vote on separation was a 'yes' vote for the superport proposal. Although initially the supporters of the superport had sought to keep the proposal a secret, in small societies like Palau secrets are next to non-existent—rumours about it circulated throughout the latter half of 1974. The superport became an exciting and persistent public issue after its exposure on the front page of the *Pacific Daily News* on 27 January 1975. *Tia Belau* and a Palauan group of environmentalists came out strongly against the proposed superport. Convinced that the Palau Legislature was 'defaulting in its duty to protect the interests of the Palauan people', the two groups formed the Save Palau Committee in February 1976 for the purpose of fighting the superport (*Tia Belau* 1976a).

Just one month later (15 March 1976), Roman Tmetuchl and Sadang Silmai (speaker of the Sixth Palau Legislature) went to Tehran, Iran to meet with officials of the national Iranian Tanker Company and Nissho-Iwai Co., Ltd., a large Japanese trading conglomerate. The Palauan leaders assured the Iranians and Japanese that they would be able 'to secure lands, reefs, shoals and water area for port purposes' and that 'they had recently petitioned the U.S. for direct Commonwealth status....to assure economic and strategic support and protection of the island group' (United States Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources 1977).

## Youth and tradition ally

Palauan culture traditionally has been characterised by overlapping alliances and shifting coalitions that make for a dynamic factionalism. Although Roman Tmetuchl was the dominant force in Palauan politics from the early 1960s, he never had the political arena exclusively to himself. There always was opposition in one form or another. What changed in the traditional political configuration with the introduction of representative government in 1947, was the size of the arena for



political manoeuvre. With elected government, this arena became much larger than under hereditary rulers, and the new role of elected officials, as in all societies having elected government, has been interpreted in Palau in a manner calculated by office-holders to maintain their authority and maximise their power.

The assertiveness of the Tmetuchl group of elected leaders disturbed many of the hereditary leaders and the Uludong group as well. In a 1968 session of the legislature, the chiefs walked out on the elected leaders. The chiefs boycotted again in 1973 and 1976. In the first instance they were affronted by the elected leaders' refusal to seat the duly elected Ngchesar legislator, Anastacio Ngiraiwelenguul, who had legally won the legislature seat and had the support of the Ngchesar chief. Presenting a petition of secession, Ngirakebou (the chief of Ngchesar) unilaterally abolished the village's seat in the Legislature.

The Ngchesar issue acted as a catalyst that fused an alliance between the chiefs and the Uludong group. The younger, issue-oriented men prepared a discussion paper, Declaration of Concern and Position of the Traditional Hereditary Chiefs of Palau District, that was presented to High Commissioner Edward Johnson during a May 1973 meeting in Saipan.<sup>6</sup> The position paper maintained that the elected leaders had 'deliberately and defiantly excluded the traditional hereditary chiefs from effective deliberation, participation, and active involvement in the work of the Legislature...by reliance on legal technicalities, parliamentary manoeuvres, strategy sessions and specious legal arguments'. Their Declaration proposed that for the chiefs to regain their rightful role in legislative government, the High Commissioner should amend the Legislature's charter to incorporate the following fundamental changes.

1. That section 2, article 1 of the Legislature's charter be clarified as to the locus of authority for determining the legitimacy of a chiefly title. By tradition this authority is vested in the women of the clans concerned and not with elected leaders.
2. Elimination of the election of at-large members of the Palau Legislature (invariably the men elected to these seats favoured the interests of the urban areas over those of the rural-based hereditary leaders).
3. That the legislature be reorganised on a bicameral basis with

an upper house of hereditary chiefs and a lower house of elected members and that certain substantive legislative matters be the legal prerogative of the chiefs.

4. That the chiefs have full voting powers (denied in the 1963 Charter) and be eligible to hold office in the Legislature.
5. That provisions be instituted to ensure public hearings on all proposed laws.
6. That political parties be eliminated by statute or regulated by stringent requirements.
7. That the management and expenditure of public monies be more tightly controlled.

Clearly the Uludong group recognised the tendency toward authoritarian rule that comes with near total political control. The call for a bicameral legislature and full voting rights for the chiefs was a way of giving legislative authority to the chiefs, whose voices so often were ignored after the inception of elected government in Palau. The radical proposal that political parties be abolished or rigidly regulated shows that party activities tended to create more social conflict than competitive cohesion.

## Boycotters

The hereditary leaders were not the only Legislature members to use boycott as a means of political protest. The elected members of the Sixth Palau Legislature (in office October 1975 to December 1979) divided into two factions—the majority Tmetuchl faction and a minority faction which generally allied with Chiefs Ibedul and Reklai. Just three days into the first session of the Sixth Legislature, the 12 minority members boycotted the meetings leaving the Legislature without a quorum. On 24 November 1975, the boycotters, led by John Olbedabel and Tosiwo Nakamura, demanded that they be assigned at least two of the four committee chairmanships. Speaker Sadang Silmai refused to yield on the issue and appealed both to the chiefs and District Administrator Thomas Remengesau, for assistance. In response to this lack of compromise, the boycotters escalated their position by calling for a total reorganisation of the legislature. Silmai reacted by declaring the at-large seats of Olbedabel and Nakamura vacant. Remengesau replied that this solution was inappropriate for the speaker because the problem was an internal political one for

which the Legislature's charter made no provision. Therefore, Remengesau advised that the 'Legislature should resolve the problem itself without turning to the District Administrator, High Commissioner or High Court'.<sup>7</sup> Eventually the problem was resolved, but the minority faction had given notice that it was willing to use boycott to assert its political position. Several years later, this same tactic would be used very effectively in the fight to put the draft Palau Constitution to a referendum.

In March 1976 the chiefs boycotted again during a special session of the Legislature. Ibedul Gibbons had introduced a resolution establishing voting franchise for the chiefs but it was defeated by the elected members, thereby creating a legislative crisis. Recall that the chiefs had traveled to Saipan in 1973 and petitioned High Commissioner Johnson to amend the Legislature's charter in seven specific ways. Soon after, a committee investigated the dispute but no effective action was taken.

Peter T. Coleman, then Deputy High Commissioner, became the intermediary in the rejuvenated dispute between the two leadership groups. After exhaustive meetings with both sides, he issued a new charter in April 1976 establishing a bicameral legislature, containing a House of Elected Members and a House of Chiefs. Despite this change the chiefs still had very little legislative authority.

Under the new charter the chiefs could vote their concurrence or non-concurrence on legislation initiated by the elected members but, in essence, the chiefs had no authority to amend or veto bills authored by the House of Elected Members. All the chiefs could do was initiate resolutions. The new charter, like the old, clearly favoured elected leadership over hereditary leadership. Furthermore, few of the other changes requested in the 1973 petition were incorporated into the new charter.

The chiefs had lost. They sat alone in their own House, separated from the elected members by a chasm of authority and outlook. At least while both types of leaders were on the same floor, the hereditary leaders had, by voice and look, some considerable influence on the doings of the elected members.<sup>8</sup> Sitting apart, this pressure, subtle to be sure, was absent. Under the bicameral legislature the chiefs had devolved to the lowest point on legislative matters since the creation of the Palau Congress in 1947. The establishment of the House of Chiefs was the beginning of the end for the chiefs as effective legislative leaders on the pan-Palau level.

## Superport politics

The boycotts by hereditary and elected leaders in 1973, 1975 and 1976 showed that control of the Palauan political arena by Roman Tmetuchl was going to be actively challenged by one group or another. One such confronting group was the Save Palau Organization. Led by Ibedul Gibbons and Moses Uludong, the group campaigned vigorously throughout Palau against the proposed superport.<sup>9</sup> The efforts of this group raised Palauan consciousness to the potential environmental and social dangers of constructing and operating a gigantic crude oil trans-shipment station on the reef and submerged land in northern Palau. More than anything else, the proposed superport issue dominated events in Palau from 1975 to early 1977.

Tia Belaud (this is our land), a new political party, took a strong stand against the proposed superport in its convention in February 1977. A month later, five Iranians from the national Iranian Tanker Company visited several possible port sites on Palau's barrier reef as guests of the Palau Legislature. The Iranians met with members of the Legislature's port authority to discuss the sites and status of the proposed port project. After the meeting, the Iranian officials travelled with three legislators to Saipan to brief Palauans there on steps being taken in regard to the proposed superport.<sup>10</sup> Some 38 Palauans holding top positions in the Trust Territory administration strongly supported the port concept as evidenced by their letter to Speaker Silmai a year earlier.<sup>11</sup>

In late March 1977, a group of Palauans went to Washington, DC to testify before the US Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Committee chairman Henry Jackson invited both pro and anti-superport groups to attend. Robert Panero, who conceived the ambitious Palau port idea, generally spoke in favour of the concept in his oral testimony. He indicated, however, that as of 1977 Japan had sufficient trans-shipment capacity at its Kagoshima and Okinawa deep water ports to make the Palau port unnecessary. He further indicated that there was ambivalence within the Japanese government on the superport proposal. Panero testified that some government leaders said to him that they thought the idea should be pursued, whereas others said that such a port would disrupt Japan's relationship with the major oil companies (US Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources 1977:6).

Johnson Toribiong, floor leader of the Palau Legislature and

chairman of the Legislature's Port Authority Committee, presented the Legislature's position in the Senate hearing. Toribiong said that Palau's lawmakers were open to the concept as one having economic development potential but that 'environmental impact studies must precede and condition all economic and technical feasibility studies' (US Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources 1977:61-4)

Ibedul Gibbons, Moses Uludong and Father Felix Yaoch, SJ., spoke against the superport concept. Numerous other anti-port people had their testimony entered into the official record as there was not sufficient time for oral presentations. Some people felt that lack of time for the anti-port speakers biased the hearing in favour of the pro-port groups.

Of the anti-port written testimony, Father Yaoch's was especially biting. He rigorously challenged every point of the Palau Legislature's resolution of April 1976, which requested US government assistance 'in reviewing, developing, and if desirable, promoting and executing the energy-industry-complex known as Port Pacific at Palau' (US Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources 1977:74). Father Yaoch stated that the secrecy surrounding the superport made it 'immoral and unjust for the people whose lives would be affected by it' (US Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources 1977:40). He concluded by stating that the people of Palau had registered serious opposition to the port proposal.

The visit of Tmetuchl and Silmai to Iran in March 1976, the Legislature's April resolution and Father Yaoch's critical evaluation of the port concept and Palauan leadership involvement in it, indicated that as of mid-1976, Palau's key political leaders had become fascinated by the superport idea. An August 1976 pre-feasibility study of the superport plan by Van Houten Associates, New York, stated that the 'political and commercial leadership of Palau is favorably disposed towards this type of development' (US Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources 1977:495).

Both of Palau's senators to the Congress of Micronesia, Lazarus Salii and Roman Tmetuchl, had been involved in superport planning meetings with Japanese and Iranian officials. Lazarus Salii withdrew his active participation in May 1975 and Roman Tmetuchl did so about the time of Jimmy Carter's election in November 1976. At that time Bill Brophy, who became Tmetuchl's trusted assistant, persuaded Tmetuchl that the superport concept was incompatible with Palau's political separation from the other Micronesian areas.<sup>12</sup> With keen

political insight, Tmetuchl had decided to fight for Palau's separation from the other Micronesian areas. Also, it seems that in late 1976 or early 1977, Tmetuchl learned from his close contacts in Japan that the Japanese government and the major promoters, Nissho-Iwai Co. Ltd. and the Industrial Bank of Japan, were reluctant to carry the superport plan to implementation.

The major factors in this change on the part of the Japanese seem to have been: (1) opposition to the plan by the major oil companies which controlled most of the world's oil traffic, and (2) opposition by some US congressmen, specifically, Philip Burton, chairman of the Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular affairs. In addition, strong anti-port pressure was exerted by 14 conservation organisations.<sup>13</sup> These groups banded together and hired Dr. Julian Gresser, a Harvard specialist in environmental law, to petition the Japanese Diet. With Gresser's assistance, the Consumer's Union of Japan similarly petitioned six Japanese political parties, the US Congress and the UN Trusteeship Council. The force of the petitions' legal arguments was very compelling (Gresser et al. 1981:355).

In retrospect, available evidence appears to warrant five conclusions concerning the grandiose Palau superport concept.

- The concept was seriously entertained by top business and government leaders in Japan and Palau from mid-1974 to about late 1976.
- Information about the concept was kept secret or restricted until a vigorous protest movement developed.
- Both Lazarus Salii and Roman Tmetuchl were intimately involved in the concept as Palau's coordinators. To their credit, Salii withdrew in May 1975, and Tmetuchl in late 1976. In a letter to the speaker of the Palau Legislature, Itelbang Luii, and Palau's District Administrator, Thomas Remengesau, Salii stated that he was concerned about 'criticism of the whole concept within our population' and 'the fact that very little information is available'.<sup>14</sup> After a 12 to 18 month adventure with the superport idea, Tmetuchl also rejected it. As noted above, he was convinced by Brophy that the idea was incompatible with Palau's political separation. Brophy maintained that the port idea was 'traded' for Palau's separation. Besides this pragmatic reason, Tmetuchl, as a nationalist, realised that a superport financed and built by foreigners would reduce Palauans to a

minority in their own land. A concentration of energy at a port in Palau would certainly be controlled by the US Navy and Japanese industrial interests which would render Tmetuchl, or any other Palauan leader, politically impotent. Tmetuchl made his rejection of the superport concept public in his testimony before the UN Trusteeship Council in May 1978 and on several other occasions.

- The grandiose superport idea, like yeast, inflated Palauans' images of the motivations of individuals involved and the cultural-environmental implications of the port concept. In many ways the idea had become a 'shouting scarecrow'. Long after the Japanese and Iranians had dropped the idea, anti-Tmetuchl and pro-Tmetuchl groups kept the idea alive in newspaper stories and endless debate. Both sides attempted to gain as much political leverage from the issue as possible. A side benefit of all this activity was that the larger community gained a greater understanding of the ambitious port concept and its dangers to Palau's ecology.
- Growing social and political unrest in Iran seemed to have prevented the port concept from gaining serious consideration at the highest levels of the government in that nation. In Japan, however, the port issue became a volatile one. Gresser suggested that the conservative Liberal Democratic Party became concerned that the Palau port idea might become a *cause célèbre* and was therefore politically too risky to pursue (Gresser et al. 1981:368). Apparently this view was transmitted to the port's promoter, Nissho-Iwai and the Industrial Bank of Japan, both of which suddenly lost interest in the concept.

Despite Tmetuchl's rejection of the superport concept, a segment of his supporters continued to pursue the idea. In December 1977 the Palau Legislature, through its Special Committee on the Palau Port Authority, made a last-ditch attempt to save the port concept. Trying to defuse both local and international criticism, the Port Authority committee went on record favouring construction of the superport according to an eight-point plan. Curiously, the plan called for legislative missions to Japan for the purpose of persuading Nissho-Iwai 'to immediately conduct the feasibility studies for the oil facility' (*Micronesian Independent* 1977:7). The Japanese promoters, however, had lost interest.

## Opposing forces

Following the year of the superport's fall, 1978 was an intensely political year in Palau. In late 1976 and early 1977, Roman Tmetuchl acquired several American advisors. Stuart Beck, a New York lawyer, was hired as legal counsel to the Palau Political Status Commission; William Brophy became Tmetuchl's highly trusted political advisor; and Thomas Gladwin, an anthropologist, served as an unpaid consultant. Gladwin had been associated with Tmetuchl while he was a member of the Congress of Micronesia. They developed 'a lasting friendship based on shared trust, respect, and style of humor'. The prestigious name of John Kenneth Galbraith was added to the list of advisors in January 1978 when the Harvard professor of economics and former ambassador to India under President Kennedy, agreed to serve as an unpaid advisor to the Commission. While Galbraith and Gladwin were intermittent advisors, Brophy and Beck, it seems, had considerable influence on Tmetuchl's political plans and activities, especially as regards political status negotiations with the United States. Tmetuchl had high regard for both men, terming Brophy 'a genius'.<sup>15</sup> The two Americans left Palau a short time before Tmetuchl lost his place of political pre-eminence in about 1980 or 1981.<sup>16</sup>

The solidarity and perceived success the anti-superport faction experienced in 1977 was refocussed on building opposition to Tmetuchl through a Micronesian unity campaign. The Save Palau Organization faded away to be replaced by the Concerned Citizens of Palau organisation (a new issue called for a new organisation). The latter was extremely active in promoting opposition to Tmetuchl through a campaign supporting Palau's unification with the other Micronesian districts. This group included John O. Ngiraked and younger Palauans (25–40 years old) who were seeking a political identity outside the Liberal and Progressive parties (United Nations, Trusteeship Council 1978:51). They also sought ground they could call their own in the crowded Palauan political arena.

One of the first steps this group took was to send a letter of protest to the Congress of Micronesia concerning Senator Roman Tmetuchl and Congressman Polycarp Basilius. The 32 concerned citizens expressed their displeasure that the

absence from congressional sessions of the spokesmen for separation is a calculated attempt to weaken the cause of Micronesian Unity. By their absence the Palauan delegation is rendered ineffective in using



the Congress of Micronesia as an appropriate forum from which to achieve the just aspirations of the majority of the Palauan people to unite with their brethren Micronesian people (*Micronesian Independent* 1978a).

Several other petitions were sent to Senate President Nakayama on 20 February 1978. One of these, signed by 99 Palauans, urged the Senate to expel Tmetuchl from his senate seat. It argued that 'Instead of attending Senate sessions he [Tmetuchl] devotes the time trying to persuade people in Palau to go to...political war with our Micronesian brothers and sisters' (*Micronesian Independent* 1978b). Paramount chiefs Ibedul and Reklai cabled their full support for the Senate's pending resolution of censure and expulsion. The chiefs' message in particular had a significant impact on the ten senators because it was a clear statement that the hereditary leaders had no confidence in Tmetuchl's leadership (*Micronesian Independent* 1978c). Given the Micronesian tendency to keep censure private, these petitions must have struck a responsive chord in the senators for, on 25 February 1978, they voted eight to two in favour of Tmetuchl's censure and expulsion from the Senate of the Congress of Micronesia.<sup>17</sup> Tmetuchl had by this time become an ardent separatist, making the vote preordained.

The news of this unprecedented decision made front page copy in Guam's *Pacific Daily News* and the editorial page of the *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, which claimed that Palauans were deeply divided over the question of Micronesian unity. As with the superport issue, Tmetuchl was the centre of attention. But unlike that grandiose vision, which slowly faded away, Tmetuchl's strong separatist position made him a fair target for all his political enemies, many of whom supported unity with the other ethnic areas of Micronesia.

In early 1977, just two months after President Jimmy Carter took office, Tmetuchl had visited Washington, DC with Brophy and a retinue of top Palauan political leaders to pursue the goal of separation with Congressman Philip Burton.<sup>18</sup> At the time Burton was chairman of the House of Representative's Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. The visitors from Palau gave Burton a draft Declaration of Intent which outlined Palau's intentions for pursuing a political status separate from the other Trust Territory districts. After some discussion with the Palauan delegation, Burton announced that Palau's case for separation 'looked all right'.<sup>19</sup> For Burton this new course would be a matter of Palauan self-determination rather than US policy. For the

United States to sanction separation would be unacceptable at the United Nations.

After this important Washington meeting, Tmetuchl, with the assistance of Beck and Brophy, laid the groundwork for the Hilo Principles which Tmetuchl signed six weeks after his expulsion from the Senate of the Congress of Micronesia. The meeting with Burton made Tmetuchl's course clear. According to Burton, Palau's political separation from the other Micronesian districts would be based on Tmetuchl's rejection of the superport and his agreement to seek a separate status with clear links to the United States.<sup>20</sup> As Palau's dominant leader at that time, Tmetuchl was ready and willing to work hard for separation because he passionately believed it was in Palau's best interest.

During 1977 two factions consolidated their positions, thus making the situation bipolar. On one side, the Concerned Citizens group allied with the two paramount chiefs, Ibedul and Reklai, and with the minority of elected leaders. The Tmetuchl group was on the other. Fueling this political opposition was the entanglement of the two factions in a strike at Palau's Continental Hotel on 10 December 1977. John Olbedabel Ngiraked, a legal advisor for the strikers and chairman of Palau's delegation to the 1975 Micronesian Con-Con, claimed that Tmetuchl and Remengesau (Palau's District Administrator) were attempting to muzzle him for his outspoken position supporting Micronesian unity and his assistance to the strikers. Olbedabel further claimed that the two 'bosses' (Tmetuchl and Remengesau) would install a dictatorship once Palau was politically separate from the other five districts of Micronesia (*Micronesian Independent* 1978d).

While Olbedabel was making headlines in the Guam and Majuro newspapers in support of Micronesian unity, Ibedul Gibbons won the March 1978 race for the Koror mayorship against an unusually strong challenge from Santos Olikong, who reportedly had the support of Tmetuchl's Liberal Party.<sup>21</sup> Ibedul, paramount chief of Palau's southern confederation,<sup>22</sup> supported unity both as an anti-Tmetuchl position and as a policy having important long-range political and cultural merit. Testifying before the UN Trusteeship Council on 18 May 1978, Ibedul and Reklai (paramount chief of the northern confederation) announced their support for Micronesian unity and for the Micronesian Constitution (both had been delegates to the 1975 Micronesian Con-Con).<sup>23</sup> While this UN announcement made only

subtle and brief reference to Palau's deep internal feud, the chiefs decided in Guam to make public their often privately expressed fear that Palau's hereditary leaders would 'become mere figureheads in a separate Palau ruled by Roman Tmetuchl and his separatist supporters' (Uludong 1978a). The hereditary leaders, in decline since the early 1960s, were once again attempting to gain ascendancy through opposition to Tmetuchl and the majority faction of elected leaders in the legislature.

## **The Micronesian unity debate and vote**

The quest by the chiefs to regain a voice in the wider arena of Palau's political affairs was not easy because the House of Chiefs, like the House of Elected Members, was a divided house. This was evident in two resolutions the chiefs issued in April 1978.

Ten days after Roman Tmetuchl signed the Statement of Agreed Principles for Free Association in Hilo, Hawaii, with US Ambassador Peter Rosenblatt, the paramount chief faction (those chiefs aligning with Ibedul and Reklai) of the House of Chiefs castigated Tmetuchl for this unilateral action.<sup>24</sup> The chiefs' resolution claimed that Tmetuchl 'acted outside the ambit of his authority and responsibility' and that his act represented 'a violation of good faith and understanding between him and the Palau District Legislature and Leadership of Palau' (Palau Legislature 1978a).

In response, the Tmetuchl supporters in both houses passed a joint resolution five days later which made a bold assertion. The resolution claimed to express 'the will of the people of Palau through their traditional and elected representatives in the Palau Legislature, that they abide by the decision reached on the 24 September 1976 Referendum' (Palau Legislature 1978b).

The results of that referendum showed that 88 per cent of those who voted favoured the position that Palau negotiate separately with the United States on the question of political status rather than jointly with the other five Micronesian districts.<sup>25</sup> As noted above, Tmetuchl's separatist group had succeeded in identifying Micronesian unity with Palauan cultural subordination and separation with Palauan ascendancy, thus, the issue was highly charged. Furthermore, the resolution's main thrust was to claim that separate negotiations with the United States, which began in July 1977, could continue only if Palauans rejected the Micronesian Constitution in a referendum

scheduled for 12 July 1978.<sup>26</sup> Tmetuchl faced a vocal opposition in Palau, which was then campaigning vigorously for Micronesian unity. Many of Palau's 1,300 government workers opposed political separation on the grounds that the United States did not want it and would therefore withdraw its funding support from a separate Palau. People were afraid they would lose their government jobs as a result. Pressure was mounting. The two sides had crystallised their positions. More than any other time in his political career, Tmetuchl's leadership hung in the balance of the 12 July Micronesia-wide referendum.

Nearly all Palauans had a position on the Micronesian Constitution, thus neatly dividing the society into two opposing factions and forcing third parties like Tia Belaud to choose sides.<sup>27</sup> Numerous forces were at work bombarding Palauans with information and petitions to vote one way or the other. The Trust Territory government's Education for Self-Government program was actively explaining the content and meaning of the Micronesian Constitution. The Congress of Micronesia sent a group of traditional leaders to Palau to promote unity and a 'yes' vote on 12 July. This visit stimulated the House of Chiefs joint resolution (discussed above) calling for a 'no' vote. It also stimulated the Palau Legislature to fund an education program which resulted in a profusion of colourful posters, radio and TV programs, rallies and meetings to present reasons to voters for rejecting the Micronesian Constitution and unity.

With his considerable gift for organising people, Moses Uludong gathered the Continental Hotel strikers and their sympathisers to campaign actively for a 'no' vote. For once, Uludong and Tmetuchl sought the same end—defeat of the Micronesian Constitution—but for different reasons. Their talents were mutually reinforcing. Though Uludong was threatened by the unity forces as being a turncoat, his behind-the-scenes organisational work complemented Tmetuchl's determination and financial resources, both personal and through the Legislature. The 'no' group was shuttled around Koror in colourfully decorated pick-up trucks. Although Tmetuchl gave several rousing speeches against Micronesian unity, he generally kept a low profile because he believed there was a groundswell of support for separation.<sup>29</sup> After all, he believed he had a 'mandate' from the 24 September 1976 referendum.

The unity forces were led by Ibedul Gibbons and John Olbedabel.<sup>30</sup> Much to the disappointment of the people supporting unity, Lazarus Salii (a long-time supporter of Micronesian unity and natural leader

for the cause) decided to remain aloof from the hotly contested campaign. As a top official in the High Commissioner's Office, Salii had to remain neutral. There were reports, however, that he campaigned for unity using the High Commissioner's 'hot line' (telephone). 'The issues', Salii claimed, 'are clear to the voters. It is their turn to decide and do so without undue influence by anyone' (*Pacific Daily News* 1978).

The unity workers consisted of Concerned Citizens of Palau who worked in the Department of Education and at Palau High School. To match the Uludong group, they too painted and posted large colourful signs, made radio programs and campaigned house-to-house for unity.

Although the stakes were high and each side was determined to win, the social situation in many ways became carnival-like. Colourfully decorated pick-up trucks sporting huge signs ran up and down Koror's dusty roads as campaigners made last-minute contacts. Both 'yes' and 'no' groups were predicting victory and feeling good about it. By 7 pm on 12 July, over 93 per cent of Palau's registered voters had gone to the polls. Both sides had exhausted their resources, for never before had such a high percentage of voters in Palau cast ballots.<sup>31</sup> Some 55 per cent of the Palau electorate voted for separation (3,339 'no' votes), as against 45 per cent in favour of the Micronesian Constitution and unity (2,720 'yes' votes). Although Tmetuchl had gained a victory, his mandate of 24 September 1976 had been severely diminished and the opposition had given notice of its power and determination.

Given this reasonably close vote, the unity side went to Pohnpei to petition the Congress of Micronesia, the sole judge of the referendum results, to investigate alleged irregularities. Acting High Chief Reklai Termeteet and John Olbedabel charged that the Tmetuchl group had resorted to bribery, intimidation, blackmail and misuse of public funds (Uludong 1978c).

While paramount chiefs Reklai and Ibedul were away in Pohnpei and Guam, the separatist chiefs met unannounced and voted to remove them from the chairmanship positions in the House of Chiefs. Ibedul claimed that separatists in the House of Elected Members had arranged the special session of the House of Chiefs for the sole purpose of discrediting the two paramount chiefs (Perez 1978). In the event, the House did not have a quorum as required by the Legislature's charter and thus the act was illegal. In a letter to the

editor of the *Pacific Daily News*, Ibedul and Reklai characterised the attempted ouster as one inspired by 'some local self-serving and power-hungry politicians who never hesitate to exploit our people and our culture for their selfish ends' (Ibedul and Reklai 1978).

The United Nations had sent a team of referendum observers to Palau and they reported no serious irregularities. Palau's chief of police, an American on leave from his position with the Honolulu Police Department, had taken special precautions to ensure the inviolability of the ballot boxes and absentee ballots.<sup>31</sup> Given that the separatists had an edge in the issue, it seems unlikely they would have engaged in irregular activities because it would have jeopardised their expected victory. The false claims of serious irregularities and the illegal attempt to oust the two paramount chiefs indicates the deeply competitive nature of Palauan society and the intensity of opposition between the two sides.

## **The 1980s and 1990s**

From the moment he became president of the Palau Congress in 1956, Roman Tmetuchl had ridden the high wave of political success and prominence in Palau, but Palau's first presidential election in November 1980 indicated that his wave was cresting. Seeking to climb onto that same wave were several other political competitors whose careers and ambitions were ripening.

Those competitors included Tmetuchl's colleagues from the Congress of Micronesia, Lazarus Salii, David Ramarui and John Olbedabel. In addition, there was Haruo Remeliik, who had not served in the Congress but who was able to move into this select group by virtue of the prestige he gained as president of Palau's popular Constitutional Convention of 1979. With Tmetuchl, these individuals made up the five-man field of candidates for Palau's first presidential election under the Palau Constitution which, finally, had been ratified by the Palau electorate in mid-1980.

Because of his years of political prominence and astuteness, Tmetuchl was seen as the man to beat in the November presidential election. His campaign relied on a loyal group of relatives, friends and business associates for support and strategy. His brochures were few and his roadside billboards were small and simple compared to the large colourful billboards of Remeliik and Salii. Despite Tmetuchl's loss of political prestige and power during the 1979 fight over

ratification of the Palau Constitution, he had a reservoir of support and a vision of an economically vibrant Palau, and these served as a base for a political comeback. Successful in business himself, Tmetuchl's emphasis on economic development was the centrepiece of his *Pacific Daily News* campaign advertisement which, to be sensitive to Palauan mores, was written in the third person. This ad mentioned Professor John K. Galbraith and President John F. Kennedy, as if their renown might suggest a parallel to Tmetuchl's political career. Tmetuchl had been the target of a failed assassination attempt in 1970 after he defeated John Olbedabel in a tight Congress of Micronesia senate race. Although no legal action was taken on the murder attempt, informed sources have alleged that Olbedabel was behind the action. In 1980, Tmetuchl was the only candidate who wore a knife and travelled with a bodyguard on some campaign trips. Despite his prominence, the election results put Tmetuchl unexpectedly second to Remeliik by just 347 votes. Although defeated in the national arena, Tmetuchl turned his attention to state politics, becoming governor of Airai in early 1981.

In the 1984 presidential election, Ibedul Gibbons, one of Palau's two paramount chiefs and Tmetuchl ran against Remeliik but the incumbent had the momentum of office and a well organised campaign machine, which included Lazarus Salii and his associates, to push his candidacy. Tmetuchl, always taking an assertive and bold approach to issues, was perceived as too fast or too unpredictable by some voters. In 1984, his managers attempted to moderate this impression. For example, in his meetings with government employees, Tmetuchl assured them that his election would not mean a reduction in employment. In another campaign meeting, he reminded a group of teachers that Palau Public Law 1-37 protected all government employees by prohibiting removal except for just cause. In addition, he campaigned on his gubernatorial record of sponsoring infrastructure and social development in his home state, Airai. Perceiving Tmetuchl as a fiercely competitive opponent with a deep campaign chest, the Remeliik team redoubled its efforts, defeating the two challengers by taking almost 51 per cent of the vote in the three-man race. Although handlers from the Tmetuchl and Gibbons camps had talked of joining forces several times prior to election day 1984, such a coalition never materialised. Tmetuchl had been shut out of the Palauan presidency for a second successive time.

On 30 June 1985, just six months into his second term, President

Remeliik was shot and brutally killed outside his government quarters in Koror. Eight years later, John Olbedabel, the individual reportedly behind the 1970 attempt on Tmetuchl, was tried, convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for premeditation in aiding and abetting in the murder of Remeliik. However, during the weeks immediately following the murder, Olbedabel successfully cast suspicion on Tmetuchl's eldest son, a nephew and their friend. The three men were tried and convicted but the conviction was reversed on appeal. These circumstances prevented Tmetuchl, then 59, from running for the presidency in a special election held in mid-August 1985. This period was a very trying and frightening time for the entire Tmetuchl family and clan.

The winner of the special election, Lazarus Salii, tragically committed suicide three years later. The Salii presidency was a rough one with numerous charges of corruption, mismanagement and oppressive rule (Shuster 1994). This climate caused a consolidation of political forces from which emerged the Coalition for Open, Honest, and Just Government which, prior to Salii's death, nominated Tmetuchl as its presidential candidate to challenge the embattled incumbent. In a two-man race, Tmetuchl was seen as the obvious favourite. After losses to Remeliik in 1980 and 1984, Tmetuchl's handlers were convinced that 1988 was 'Roman's time'. This perspective, however, was darkened by the sudden and tragic death of Salii. Surprisingly, the presidential race was thrown wide open with six other candidates emerging to compete with Tmetuchl: interim president Thomas Remengesau, Ibedul Gibbons, John Olbedabel Ngiraked, Santos Olikong, Ngiratkel Etpison and Moses Uludong. Again, as in the past, Tmetuchl became the candidate to beat. In the seven-man field, the vote would be fragmented as in 1980. The Tmetuchl handlers attempted to persuade fringe candidates like Uludong to join forces with Tmetuchl. Unfortunately these efforts failed and so did Tmetuchl's third try. He lost to Etpison by just two dozen or so votes. In a two-man race for the vice-presidency, Kuniwo Nakamura, a former member of the Congress of Micronesia who lost to Tmetuchl in the early 1970s, easily defeated Kazuo Asanuma.

This third loss in the 1988 race for the Palau presidency was the bitterest of the three for Tmetuchl. He had come so close. He was then 62 and realised that it was time to retire from races for political office and concentrate his energies on consolidating his business holdings, venturing into new areas and travelling.



As paradoxical as it may seem, Roman Tmetuchl is an un-Palauan Palauan. He has always been unorthodox, a man who goes against the current, a man eager to achieve, completely unafraid of any person or challenge. 'He's international, a businessman *par excellence*. He doesn't chit chat and he's not made for cocktail parties'.<sup>32</sup> Roman Tmetuchl astutely rode the high wave of political success for 25 years as president of the Palau Congress, founder and member of the Congress of Micronesia, driving force behind Palau's political separation movement, joint author of the Hilo principles which established the theoretical basis for Palau's compact of free association relationship, first governor of Airai state and chief author of its first constitution. But Mr Tmetuchl has accomplishments in many other areas as well. His athletic achievements are known throughout Palau and he is, even today, an exemplar for Palau's sportsmen. He has been an ardent proponent of education and builder of the Airai Elementary School and Seventh Day Adventist Academy high school facility. Early in his career, Mr Tmetuchl was the key leader in the movement to seek reparations for Palauan war claims and he was instrumental in the successful effort to persuade the Trust Territory government to return large tracts of land to local control. Finally, Mr Tmetuchl has been enormously successful in business: construction, hotels, restaurants, transportation and investment. What Mr Tmetuchl said to the 1987 graduating class of St John School, Guam, describes his many achievements, 'All these wonders were built by human hands, moved by human resolve and inspired by human dreams' (Tmetuchl 1987).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The districts were Palau, the Northern Mariana Islands, Yap, Truk, Ponape, Kosrae and the Marshall Islands. During the period 1978 to 1980, these areas coalesced into four separate political entities: the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Ponape, Truk, Yap, Kosrae), the Government of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau.
- <sup>2</sup> The Palau Legislature's bill 317 was signed into law as Public Law 5-6-126 (Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands 1980). It called for a constitutional convention of 28 members. Seven were to be appointed by the Palau Legislature from among its membership; four traditional chiefs were to be selected from among the 16 chiefs of Palau; five were to be members of the Palau delegation to the Micronesian Con-Con; two were to be appointed by the District Administrator; two chosen from the Legislature's Select Committee

on Development; and one each chosen to represent the three officially registered political parties: Liberal, Progressive and Unity Action.

- <sup>3</sup> The seven terms were elaborated in a three-page paper, 'Palau Delegation Micronesian Constitutional Convention Outline of Position' (reprinted in Palau Political Status Commission 1976:Appendix H).
- <sup>4</sup> Initially, the Commission members were Roman Tmetuchl (chairman), Dr. Minoru Ueki (vice chairman), Fr. Felix K. Yaoch, SJ, Sadang Silmai, Haruo Remeliik, Kuniwo Nakamura, George Ngirarsaol, Joshua Koshiba, Shiro Kyoto, Tarkong Pedro and Santos Olikong.
- <sup>5</sup> This is perhaps the most effective of the seven traditional Paluan strategies. *Ideuekl chemaidechadui* means literally 'concealment of the lizard'. It refers to tactics that surprise and confuse the opposition by maximising the unexpected.
- <sup>6</sup> This document was located in the files of the Office of Public Affairs, Office of the High Commissioner, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Saipan, Mariana Islands.
- <sup>7</sup> Thomas O. Remengesau, letter to Sadang Silmai, 30 November 1975. This document was located in the files of the Office of Public Affairs, Office of the High Commissioner, Trust territory of the Pacific Islands, Saipan, Mariana Islands.
- <sup>8</sup> Personal interview with Yoichi Singeo in Koror, Palau, 10 January 1981. Mr Singeo was a member of the Sixth Palau Legislature.
- <sup>9</sup> The Save Palau Organization was especially active throughout Palau in 1976 and early 1977. During that time it travelled numerous times to 13 of Palau's 14 rural municipalities. At these meetings the Organization showed films of oil pollution and reef destruction from sedimentation. The young activists talked with villagers who, they found, had no prior understanding of the ambitious superport concept.
- <sup>10</sup> The three legislators were Ngiratkel Etpison (Koror), Masaichi Etiterengil (Ngiwal) and House of Chiefs representative, Emil Ramarui.
- <sup>11</sup> This two and a half page letter of support is dated 19 January 1976. It is reproduced in US Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources 1977:78-81.
- <sup>12</sup> Interview with Bill Brophy, Honolulu, Hawaii, 16 August 1982.
- <sup>13</sup> These organisations were: Save Palau Organization, Tia Belaud, Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, The Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, Friends of the Earth International, Inc., The World Wildlife Fund-United States Appeal, Pacific Science Association, Micronesia Support Committee, National Wildlife Federation and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.
- <sup>14</sup> Letter from Lazarus Salii to Itelbang Luii, Speaker Palau District

- Legislature, and Thomas O. Remengesau, District Administrator, Palau, dated 9 May 1975, Pacific Collection, Hamilton Library, University of Hawaii, Honolulu.
- 15 Concerning his close relationship with Tmetuchl, Brophy characterised his role as being Tmetuchl's voice in English and American political dialogue. 'I was his staff man. I gave him options and research and was good at it. His wife joked that I knew his political positions better than she did because in a real way I was his alter ego' (interview with Bill Brophy, Honolulu, Hawaii, 19 November 1981).
  - 16 Since that time Brophy has become a successful Honolulu real estate businessman and keeps abreast of events happening in Palau. Stuart Beck returned to his law practice in New York City and later became president of the Granite Broadcasting Corporation in New York City.
  - 17 Special Committee Report 7-7 dated 25 February 1978 of the Senate of the Congress of Micronesia found that 'Senator Tmetuchl had neglected his obligations as a member of the Senate by his persistent and continuous failure to attend sessions and by his failure to participate in the work of the Senate during the Seventh Congress thereby dishonoring the Senate and the people of Micronesia' (Congress of Micronesia 1978:484). On the basis of this report the Senate passed resolution 7-5 censuring and expelling Tmetuchl. Senator Kaleb Udui of Palau, a Tmetuchl supporter, and Senator Wilfred Kendall of the Marshall Islands cast the only two negative votes. Senator Kabua of the Marshall Islands was absent from the session.
  - 18 Interview with Bill Brophy, Honolulu, Hawaii, 16 August 1982.
  - 19 Interview with Bill Brophy, Honolulu, Hawaii, 16 August 1982.
  - 20 Bill Brophy had been the seat mate of Philip Burton's younger brother, John Burton, when they were members of the California State Legislature. Brophy therefore knew the older Burton and arranged this important Washington meeting. (Interview with Bill Brophy, Honolulu, Hawaii, 19 November 1981.)
  - 21 As a possible predictor of the outcome of the July 1978 referendum on the Micronesian Constitution and unity, Koror's 1978 mayoral race drew 75 per cent of the town's 3,758 voters to the polls on 30 March. The official count showed Ibedul Gibbons winning with 1,062 votes. Santos Olikong received 812 votes, Itebang Luii followed with 487 votes and Martin Orrukem came last with 341 votes. This outcome was perceived as a victory by the unity forces.
  - 22 The southern (also western) confederation traditionally comprised the following village-complexes: Koror, half of Airai, Ngaremlengui, Aimeliik, Ngatpang, Ngardmau, Peleiu and Angaur.
  - 23 The chiefs' support for unity was delivered in an eloquent speech

- by John Olbedabel Ngiraked (see United Nations, Trusteeship Council 1978:26–37). This trip to the UN by Palau's unity proponents was paid for by the Congress of Micronesia.
- <sup>24</sup> Negotiations concerning the post-trusteeship political status of the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands started in 1969 but were stalled in 1976. The talks resumed in July 1977 when the United States proposed that negotiations be conducted on both multilateral and bilateral tiers to move toward a political status of free association. The eight 'Hilo Principles' defining free association were signed by the heads of the four negotiating parties (the United States, the Marshall Islands, Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia) on 9 April 1978 in Hilo, Hawaii.
  - <sup>25</sup> Tmetuchl claimed that approximately 65–70 per cent of the electorate turned out to vote. This is true only after combining the 2,559 'official' yes votes with the 683 'unofficial' yes votes. This distinction between official and unofficial votes is unusual. Generally, ballots either are valid or invalid. With 5,880 registered voters, the total yes votes represented 55 per cent of the total.
  - <sup>26</sup> This date is Micronesia Day, a public holiday honouring the establishment of the Congress of Micronesia and, by implication, Micronesian unity. The choice of this date for the referendum indicated a bias in favour of the Micronesian constitution.
  - <sup>27</sup> The 1978 referendum caused a deep split in the Tia Belaud party. Moses Uludong and part of the party opposed Micronesian unity and the constitution because they believed that there was no viable pan-Micronesian organisation to sustain and nurture unity. Other Tia Belaud members, fearful of Tmetuchl, felt such an organisation could, in time, be built. Therefore they strongly favoured Micronesian unity.
  - <sup>28</sup> Telephone interview with Victor Vierra, former chief of police in Palau (1977–79), Honolulu, Hawaii, 22 October 1981; Uludong 1978.
  - <sup>29</sup> The Progressive Party also split. Some members such as John Olbedabel favoured unity. Others, like Polycarp Basilius and Jacob Sawaichi supported separation.
  - <sup>30</sup> Of the five other voting areas in the Trust Territory, Kosrae had a turnout of 83 per cent; Truk, 79 per cent; Marshall Islands, 78 per cent; Yap, 76 per cent; and Ponape, 72 per cent.
  - <sup>31</sup> Telephone interview with Victor Vierra, Honolulu, Hawaii, 22 October 1981.
  - <sup>32</sup> Interview with Johnson Toribiong, Koror, Republic of Palau, 27 May 1994. Mr Toribiong is a lawyer and the nephew of Roman Tmetuchl and was an unsuccessful candidate for the presidency of Palau in 1992 and 1996.

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# 4

## William V. Vitarelli: a colonial hero in Micronesia

**Dirk Anthony Ballendorf**

Dr William V. Vitarelli of Micronesia is a man I describe as a successful colonialist and hero. He is a distinctive person, and in the annals of the American presence in Micronesia, unique.

The twentieth century concept of colonialism as a moral evil that should be eradicated represents a response to the colonial/imperial situations of the past three centuries. Colonised by Europeans between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Pacific islands gained self-government or independence by the post-WWII period. The major European colonial powers—Spain, France, Germany, Great Britain and the United States—are all advanced capitalist nations, and with the exception of Spain (whose colonial motivations were religious), all employed economic arguments in the advocacy of their expansionist views and political imposition on the fragile cultures of the Pacific.

Combined with the economic and political factors that contributed to the European and American expansion in the Pacific between 1521 and 1914, were altruism and humanitarianism. Undesirable cultural practices such as cannibalism, infanticide and human sacrifice were obliterated along with much important cultural and societal information. Many colonials sincerely desired to eliminate tribal warfare, to establish law and order, to introduce Christianity and

western education (including modern science and technology), and to raise living standards by promoting trade and commerce. But they tended to justify their benevolence on the basis of concepts like 'the white man's burden', the *mission civilisatrice*, social Darwinism, and pseudo-scientific racist theories which regarded Pacific islanders as biologically or culturally inferior to white people. As a result, western colonialism involved not only domination and exploitation, but also humiliation of island peoples. The legacy of this situation has been a reaction against discrimination, especially since many Islanders had come to accept western ideals about human dignity, freedom, and equity, and western ideas about the rights of men and nations.

Against this background and situation, William Vitarelli entered the scene in Micronesia in 1948, assigned to Palau as a community development and education specialist. He joined a long line of colonials who had served without distinction, but who were important, respected, and actually well-liked by the island people they lived and worked among.<sup>1</sup>

## Political independence/economic independence

When William Vitarelli came to Micronesia in 1948, it had been recently incorporated under the United Nations as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). This status was similar to the preceding League of Nations Mandates System administered by Japan. Following WWII, the United States Navy administered Micronesia, the territory it acquired as the spoils of war. Although the Agreement established a civil authority, the US Navy continued to administer the region until 1951 when the Peace Treaty was signed and Japan renounced all claims to Micronesia. Thereafter a civil authority was instituted in Palau under the US Department of Interior.

Eleven countries were designated as Trusteeships under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Trusteeship Council, which convened annually in New York to review the progress of the emerging nations. The Trusteeship Agreement in Micronesia, however, was designated a 'strategic trusteeship' and, as a result, while the US reported annually to the Trusteeship Council as did the other administering authorities, ultimately Micronesia was under the special jurisdiction of the United Nations Security Council.

For Vitarelli, this strategic designation was not as important as the



ultimate American and United Nations declaration of intent in the case of the many small islands in the western Pacific. His primary focus from the day of his arrival in Palau was to fulfil the American commitments to political development and independence.

Article Six of the Trusteeship Agreement stated that the administering government shall

1. foster the development of such political institutions as are suited to the Trust Territory and shall promote the development of the inhabitants of the Trust Territory toward self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of the trust territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned; and to this end shall give to the inhabitants of the trust territory a progressively increasing share in the administrative services of the territory; shall develop their participation in government; shall give due recognition to the customs of the inhabitants in providing a system of law for the territory; and shall take other appropriate measures toward these ends;
2. promote the economic advancement and self-sufficiency of the inhabitants, and to this end shall regulate the use of natural resources; encourage the development of fisheries, agriculture and industries; protect the inhabitants against the loss of their lands and resources; and improve the means of transportation and communication;
3. promote the social advancement of the inhabitants and to this end shall protect the rights and fundamental freedoms of all elements of the population without discrimination; protect the health of the inhabitants; control the traffic in arms and ammunition, opium and other dangerous drugs, and alcoholic and other spiritous beverages; and institute such other regulations as may be necessary to protect the inhabitants against social abuses; and
4. promote the educational advancement of the inhabitants, and to this end shall take steps toward the establishment of a general system of elementary education; facilitate the vocational and cultural advancement of the population; and shall encourage qualified students to pursue higher education, including training on the professional level (United Nations 1947).

Affectionately known as 'Vit' by his friends, associates and by the Micronesians, Vitarelli contended that political independence depended first upon economic independence. This was no small task as Vit saw it. He also saw that the United States seemed to care little about commitments other than those connected with its military-strategic activities. 'Might makes right', he was fond of proclaiming with regards to American military priorities.

In the interests of economic development in the islands, and especially in Palau, he pursued, implemented and sustained a variety of projects and programs.

Towards the end of 1951, he established the first saw mill at T-dock. Ibedul Ngoriakl was the Palauan sponsor of this project along with Captain Nramore, USN, in Guam. He also initiated the establishment of the first markets to provide fresh produce and food from the large island of Babeldaob to Koror. This project was active from 1951 through 1954 almost exclusively under Vit's direction. Along with this project he established a practical school program in which students learned math and business practices through the practical application of marketing produce, fish and other foodstuff. To encourage the development of handicrafts, cultural activities, and small business, Vit started the first community fair and dance festival with the help and assistance of David Ramarui and Alfonso Oiterong who were local educators. This fair developed into an annual event, and continues today.

Vit initiated a boat-building project resulting in the construction of thirteen fishing boats which were used to provide food for the school dormitories in Palau. The building project lasted from 1951 to 1954, with Ngirakabai, a Palauan, in charge of the project. Under the supervision of Ucherbelau, the boats were used for fishing expeditions three times per week to feed the school. The surplus was sold to the general public to raise funds. This project developed into the Palau Fisheries Cooperative which continues to the present day. To assist the school, a small printing press was purchased to produce instructional materials. Haruo Wilter and Meluat supervised the printing operation.

Vit established a small furniture factory which manufactured tables and chairs for the elementary schools. Some of these tables and chairs still exist and are being used in the schools. Ngirakabai who supervised the boat building, was also the supervisor for this project. The design was so good and so practical, that the Trust Territory government adopted it for furniture manufacture throughout the Trust

Territory. But the government decided to send the specifications to the Philippines for production. Vit did not appreciate this development, because he felt that such an effort should have been directed to the Palauans and the other Micronesians, whom he thought could produce the furniture themselves and get the economic benefits from the effort. However, he was overruled in this matter.<sup>2</sup>

## **A history of rebellion**

Dr William Vitarelli was born in New York City in 1910 and educated in the public schools there. He attended Columbia University Teachers' College and graduated with a doctoral degree in 1953. He specialised in community development and education, and his fertile mind was never at rest. He also studied architecture. In 1954, during the McCarthy era, he was accused of being a subversive and fired from his position in the TTPI. Several others were fired along with Vit, but after explanations and political string-pulling in Washington they were reinstated and returned to their jobs. Only Vit decided to fight the accusation and took the matter to court. Ultimately, his case was brought before the Supreme Court and Dr Vitarelli won his case after more than two years in arbitration and court. He was reinstated with full back pay, and returned to the islands in glorious victory.<sup>3</sup> Hence, Dr Vitarelli's heroism became not only a Micronesian story, but a wider American story as well. In the process of his fight for justice and right, he was offered a number of jobs by the Interior Department if only he would drop his suit. But he refused, and wanted only to be restored to his former position. Thereafter, and until his retirement in 1970, he worked in various capacities and for various TTPI High Commissioners on special assignments throughout the islands.

After retirement, Dr Vitarelli became the Vice President for Research and Development at the University of Guam, and following this, became a special advisor to the Palau Modekngei School, an independent, practically-oriented educational effort which is still strong and is a part of the overall Palau educational system today.<sup>4</sup>

The Trust Territory Government, however, did not always appreciate Dr Vitarelli's contributions, and at times even discouraged him. A case in point concerned the Accelerated Elementary School Program, instituted in 1962 during the administration of President John F. Kennedy. Under this program, some 40 American teachers were hired in the TTPI, and contracts were tendered to construct housing for them,

especially in remote areas. Vit formed a corporation with Roman Tmetuchl, Ngiratkel Etpison, Benjamin Sakuma, and Indelecio Rudimch, to build the houses. Vit served as architect and designed both the houses and some of the new schools which were also to be constructed. Vit believed that the Palauans were quite capable of executing the project and, as over one million US dollars was involved, it would have been a lucrative local project. It would not only teach skills, but also develop the private sector in the economy. But the TTPI government did not think that the Palauans could meet the physical specifications, and they denied them the contract. In the aftermath, Vit, who was then an Assistant District Administrator in Palau, was pulled out of Palau altogether and transferred to the TTPI Headquarters at Saipan. This, Vit considered to be 'limbo'.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout his career in Micronesia, Dr Vitarelli never wavered from his commitment to develop the economic and political independence of the people of Micronesia. He believed that while the American government gave lip service to this concept, they never really promoted it in effective and successful ways. In his happy retirement in Maui, Hawaii, he still believes that Micronesians can overcome outside impediments and develop a healthy and viable economy with their own people in ownership and leadership positions. Palauans and others from far and wide continue to come to see him and to listen to him proclaim the vigour, competence, intelligence and independence of Palau and its people. He has outlived most of his contemporaries, and his voice is still clear and very strong.

Dr Vitarelli's accomplishments during his career in Micronesia certainly earn him a place among the colonial heroes of former eras, and a place of lasting recognition in Palau.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For example, the German-Polish naturalist, Johan Stanislaus Kubary, was the first European to investigate seriously the origins and usage of Palauan money and report on it in the late nineteenth century. While most monographs on this period in Micronesia assign this competent and dedicated scholar a mention in the bibliography, some contemporary researchers have little more than a secondary knowledge of Kubary's contributions. Of course, for English speaking scholars, it must be remembered that Kubary wrote in German, and many of his contributions and brief biographies are found in obscure publications tucked away in

archives of German museums. Kubary, however, was not dull. He was a dedicated scholar, an adventurer, and finally, a tragic figure—in 1896, depressed, he took his own life at Pohnpei (Craig and King 1981:151).

Kubary's life, exploits and adventures are told at length elsewhere. I mention him here in the context of Vitarelli's story because he too was an outstanding colonialist and hero who made lasting contributions and was well-liked and accepted by the people of the islands. During an epidemic of influenza which broke out in Palau in the mid-1880s, he ministered to the Palauans. Living among them, he wore Palauan remnants, tortoise shell spectacles, and chewed betelnut with the best of them (Craig and King 1981:151).

<sup>2</sup> Personal interview with William Vitarelli, July 1996, Maui, Hawaii.

<sup>3</sup> Personal interview with William Vitarelli, July 1996, Maui, Hawaii.

<sup>4</sup> Superintendent of Schools, Palau Ministry of Social Services, Koror, Palau, 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Personal interview with William Vitarelli, July 1996, Maui, Hawaii.

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# 5

## Gaston Flosse: a recipe for longevity in Tahitian politics

**Karin von Strokirch**

Gaston Flosse's tenacious grip on political power in French Polynesia has been unrivalled in the history of the territory. Born in 1932, Flosse is a member of the older generation in Tahitian politics, yet with a reputation as a workaholic, good health and a new young family he shows no signs of flagging. His first venture into political life came with his election as mayor of the urban municipality of Pirae, an office he has held continuously since 1963. Moreover, he has held a seat in the Territorial Assembly since 1967. As leader of the conservative Tahoeraa party, he has presided over the French Polynesian government from 1972 to 1977; 1982 to 1987; and from 1991 to the present. Forays into national politics have included being a deputy to the French National Assembly from 1978 to 1986 and again from 1993 to 1997.<sup>1</sup> He also served as a junior French Minister in his capacity as Secretary of State for the South Pacific from 1986 to 1988. In addition, Flosse has acted on the boards of numerous companies and has accumulated a substantial personal fortune. So what is the key to this man's success? No single factor stands out. Personal style, leadership qualities, astute handling of relations with France and an ability to gauge and respond to populist trends are all necessary ingredients in Flosse's recipe for political longevity.

One contributing factor to Flosse's success in both economic and

political life stems from his ability to capitalise on his origins as a *demi*, that is, a person of mixed French and Tahitian heritage. *Demis* are distinguished by the extent to which they have assimilated French culture and attitudes to education, work and lifestyle and their success in the introduced economic and political system. *Demis* once took pride in emphasising their French origins which were regarded as culturally superior. Since the revival of indigenous Maohi culture in the last two decades, *demis* have found it increasingly advantageous to identify themselves primarily as Maohi.

While the *demis* have internalised French values and culture, being part-Maohi, they are able to bridge the two cultures and profit from their role as an intermediary between the French and Maohi systems. Proficient bilingualism, a high level of education and an aptitude for comprehending both the imported institutions and traditional customs have given *demis* a pivotal function in the life of the territory. Flosse epitomises the successful *demi* who, for political expedience, has in recent years highlighted his Maohi origins and expressed at least a rhetorical commitment to safeguarding and promoting indigenous culture and language. Yet, at the same time, his grasp of French politics and law has significantly enhanced his negotiating position with the powers that be in Paris.

Flosse's experience, and that of other successful politicians, demonstrates that the popularity of individual leaders is of paramount importance in Tahitian politics. The personality of leaders determines whether their party wins a powerbase in municipal politics which in turn is a prerequisite for a party's success in territorial politics. In order to win and maintain support for their party, individual leaders must have popular appeal based on a number of personal qualities including charisma, oratory skills, mastery of Tahitian and a flair for invoking religious and Maohi cultural themes in their speeches. The ability of leaders to project themselves via simple slogans in impassioned speeches on TV, radio and through mass rallies assumes great importance given the low level of literacy among Maohi people and the value they place on oral traditions. Gaston Flosse exudes enormous personal appeal as a result of his skills as a persuasive orator in both Tahitian and French. He has established a personal cult following, first at the level of municipal government, then on the island of Tahiti, and finally territory wide. Apart from his base in Pirae, Flosse exerts particular sway in the

conservative eastern archipelagos which exhibit a pronounced attachment to ties with France.

The rising star of Flosse has been tarnished on occasion. He has been implicated, and indeed charged, in several cases of official corruption. These cases have concerned the way in which he has acquired land for his personal use, allegedly turning a blind eye to the operation of illegal casinos in return for kickbacks to his political party and, most recently, alleged involvement in fraudulent electoral practices. To date, Flosse has succeeded in either winning cases against him, having convictions overturned on appeal or simply ensuring that the cases drag on for years unresolved. Flosse is the ultimate 'teflon' man in the sense that the flak from these allegations of corruption does not stick or at least does not appear to adversely influence the preferences of most voters. A degree of popular tolerance of such behaviour on the part of politicians must also be understood in a context where corruption has been relatively common place in the higher echelons of Tahitian politics.

Flosse has been astute in his assessment that—for the most part—clientilism and pandering to parochial interests count for much more with the majority of the electorate than do elaborate policies, ideological consistency or pursuing issues of territory wide concern. Individuals are thus rewarded with positions of influence while economic benefits in the form of aid, development projects and social services accrue to the municipalities and outer islands which exhibit loyalty to the Tahoeraa party. Of course this approach is not unique to Tahoeraa but the conservative party has developed such electoral tactics into a fine art. Moreover, Tahoeraa's ability to distribute largesse has been facilitated by its frequent incumbency in government, with its ensuing 'virtuous' cycle.

To his credit, Flosse has shaped Tahoeraa into a slick and highly disciplined party machine. The divisions and factionalism that have riven most other major territorial parties have been largely absent in Tahoeraa. The main exception to this rule was in 1987 when a disillusioned section of Tahoeraa defected under the leadership of Alexandre Léontieff. The dissidents set up a rival conservative party which subsequently took government in coalition with other opposition elements. Since this internal coup, which cost Tahoeraa more than three years out of power, Flosse has maintained party loyalty and prevented any further challenges to his leadership.



Léontieff's dissident party has since disappeared without a trace as it lacked the long-established powerbase of its parent party Tahoeraa. Meanwhile, Flosse has cultivated a new heir apparent in the person of Michel Buillard, vice-president of both the party and the current government. Flosse has been cautious to discourage any inclination towards leadership bids on the part of his lieutenant by lending him the necessary support to win high political offices. Notably, with the full backing of the Tahoeraa party and Flosse, Buillard has become Mayor of Papeete (1995) and Deputy to the French National Assembly (1997).

The unity evident in Tahoeraa's ranks stems in part from its relatively simple ideological outlook which emphasises continuing close ties with France and for the rest adopts a pragmatic approach to entrenching its dominance over territorial politics by whatever means necessary. Under Flosse's leadership the Tahoeraa party has shown itself adept at changing its policy platform, at times dramatically, in response to major shifts in grassroots sentiment and corresponding shifts in the French government's own policy towards the territory. At no time was this more evident than in 1980 when Flosse made a complete *volte-face* and presented himself as the foremost advocate of internal autonomy for French Polynesia. Hitherto, for three decades the conservative party's *raison d'être* had been to adamantly oppose the autonomist parties' campaign for internal autonomy. However, after losing the 1977 election to the autonomists, and sensing that Paris had become receptive to claims for greater autonomy, Flosse took the pragmatic route and became a 'super-autonomist'. Tahoeraa won the 1982 elections on this platform and subsequently concluded negotiations with France for a statute of internal autonomy in 1984. In this way Flosse took credit for achieving an objective he had vehemently rejected until only four years earlier.

In accordance with the priority given to pragmatism, Flosse's Tahoeraa party has shown itself to be remarkably flexible when it comes to forging alliances with other parties in order to gain a large enough majority to form government. Illustrative of this tendency has been Flosse's repeated preparedness to form coalitions with the Ai'a Api party of Emile Vernaudeau. The personal enmity between Flosse and Vernaudeau runs deep and their coalitions in 1982 and 1991 lasted only a few months due to clashes between the two men. Nevertheless, in 1995 they once again entered into a 'marriage of convenience' to further their respective political fortunes. Similarly, Flosse's Tahoeraa

formed a coalition with a longstanding and bitter rival party, Here Ai'a, in order to form government in 1991. When Here Ai'a's leader, Jean Juventin, deserted the ruling majority in late 1994, Flosse succeeded in coopting and retaining two leading lights from Here Ai'a in his fold. Although the two defectors, Raymond Van Bastolaer and Tinomana Ebb, ostensibly created a new party of their own, they still lent full support to the Tahoeraa government majority and were rewarded with a ministry and the presidency of the Territorial Assembly respectively. Another of Flosse's political coups in terms of coopting troublesome opposition elements was to garner the support of a longstanding campaigner against French testing, Patrick Howell, who gave up his antinuclear crusade in return for a government ministry.

Throughout his leadership of French Polynesia, Flosse has shown himself to be a master at extracting the maximum level of financial aid from Paris. Apart from continuing recurrent expenditure by the French state on the burgeoning bureaucracy, health and education services, Flosse has obtained a range of additional commitments. These have included emergency aid in the wake of cyclones and also financial assistance to repair the damage caused by destructive riots in 1995. Moreover, Flosse has prevailed upon France to bail the territory out of budgetary deficits, fund long-term development projects and, finally, to provide extensive compensation for the economic havoc wrought by the temporary, and later permanent, closure of the French testing program. Flosse's ability to obtain extraordinary funding tends to be at its lowest ebb when dealing with socialist governments in Paris, whereas pleas for assistance have been much more favourably received by conservative governments. This differential treatment from the national government stems from the fact that Flosse's Tahoeraa party is closely allied with the conservative Rassemblement Pour la République (RPR) party in metropolitan France. Flosse's powers of persuasion reached a peak in 1995 as a result of Jacques Chirac winning the presidential elections which meant that both the national government and presidency were simultaneously held by the RPR which is well disposed to Flosse. The subsequent resumption of French testing in Polynesia provided Flosse with a further window of opportunity for extracting political and economic concessions from the capital.

As long as the nuclear tests were held at Moruroa, Flosse, and to a lesser extent other Tahitian leaders, was able to use the territory's

strategic value to France as an effective form of leverage in negotiations for generous metropolitan funding. For this reason, in contrast to the pro-independence parties, Flosse and Tahoeraa had generally supported the presence of the test program. With the announcement of the final test series, to be followed by a definitive cessation of testing, one may have doubted Flosse's ability to extract further funds from France with this longstanding bargaining chip. However, in the climate of international hostility towards French testing in 1995, and by extension towards its continuing colonial presence in the Pacific, France was desperate to secure the allegiance of the territorial government. Sensing a *quid pro quo* in the offing, Flosse and his government campaigned vigorously in support of the test resumption both in Tahiti and within the region, even though this policy ran counter to public opinion. In return for this loyalty President Chirac promised additional aid to the tune of A\$243 million for another ten years to compensate for the loss of income the territory would incur as a result of the test program's closure. Popular awareness of this assurance of significant French funding to the territory for another decade certainly contributed to the victory of Flosse's Tahoeraa in the May 1996 territorial elections.

Flosse and his government have wasted no time in embarking on an ambitious program of expenditure with the influx of post-nuclear funds from France. These projects are meant to improve infrastructure and social services, create jobs and generally boost the otherwise ailing economy. Initiatives variously include new hospital facilities, additional public housing, a tunnel under the lagoon to connect the capital's airport and sea port, and the establishment of an international airline service. However, there has been some criticism of these projects in so far as they fuel economic growth and jobs in the short term, but are of questionable benefit in building the basis for long-term sustainable development and reducing the territory's dependence on metropolitan funding. Cynics could be pardoned for noting that an obvious outcome of the current 'development' plan is to further the electoral prospects of the incumbent territorial government.

Apart from seeking to ensure a continuous flow of economic aid from Paris, another priority for Gaston Flosse has been to periodically obtain an expansion of the territory's autonomous powers in relation to France. One of his principal pretexts for doing so is to argue that greater autonomy for the territory is the only sure way to undermine

the momentum of the pro-independence movement. Flosse has sought to remove the grey areas of overlapping jurisdiction between the state and the territory which have often given rise to conflict between the two entities. In particular, he has obtained increased territorial powers in the economic domain. Yet Flosse has also sought statutory reforms to expand the scope of the president's own powers. Under changes to the statute in 1996, the president was granted sweeping powers to approve government contracts, public service appointments and to oversee publication of the official journal. Critics voiced concern over the greater opportunities for corruption if too much power was concentrated in the hands of one individual. Another controversial measure removed the limit on the number of ministers the president could appoint to his cabinet. This too was widely perceived as unnecessarily increasing the potential for political patronage.

In his attempts to gain political concessions for the territory, another concern for Flosse has been to obtain largely symbolic rights which serve to reinforce the territory's individual identity and culture. These symbols cater to resurgent nationalist sentiment within the territory and are therefore of considerable electoral value. Such attributions also aim to raise the territory's prestige, and that of its president, among regional Pacific island governments. For example, under the 1984 statute the territory was granted the right to its own flag, coat of arms and anthem while official status was given to the Tahitian language. In addition, Flosse endeavoured to have the territory's name changed to a Tahitian one but this claim was rejected by France. In defiance of French sentiment, Flosse took the unilateral move of making a *de facto* change to the territory's name and since 1993 has adopted the name 'Tahiti Nui' in official correspondence and, most pointedly, in regional forums.

Flosse has had considerable latitude to pursue regional diplomacy in the Pacific on behalf of both the territory and the French republic, first when Jacques Chirac was Prime Minister in the late 1980s, and later when Chirac's presidency coincided with the rule of an RPR government in Paris from 1995 to 1997. At times when France's presence in the region has been least welcome due to its repressive measures in New Caledonia and its intransigence over nuclear testing, Flosse has taken up the role of roving ambassador, visiting neighbouring microstates to both explain French policy and dispense generous aid with a view to deflecting critiques of France. This was a mission Flosse took up with great relish as it earned him valuable

credit in Paris. As a result of powers granted to the territory under modifications to the statute of autonomy, the Tahitian president gained the right to independently negotiate economic and cultural arrangements with regional nations. When invited to do so by the national government, he could also represent France in regional political forums and ceremonies. Flosse was thus present on French delegations in 1996 to sign the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty and to attend the South Pacific Forum meeting for dialogue partners. Flosse's vessel of choice in his endeavours to make his mark in the region has been the Pacific Islands Leaders' conference, the only regional forum in which the territory is entitled to represent itself independently of France. There is no doubt that Flosse's enthusiastic regional diplomacy has contributed to his own aggrandisement, though it is less clear to what extent the territory's population directly benefits from these efforts. In any case, the climate has changed since the victory of the left-wing coalition in French national elections in 1997. The new government has made it clear that Flosse's diplomatic initiatives in the name of France are considered neither appropriate nor welcome.

In conclusion, it is clear that the charisma and dynamism displayed by Flosse in territorial electoral campaigns are legendary and constitute a key factor in explaining his brilliant career in politics to date. His unwavering determination to squeeze high amounts of aid out of France for the territory's small population, even in the wake of the test program's demise, is appreciated by his constituents as no small feat. Moreover, his efforts to promote 'Tahiti Nui' in regional forums have cultivated an independent identity for the territory in the region, following decades of isolation as a relatively closed French colony playing host to nuclear tests. Nevertheless, Flosse's political agenda is inherently conservative and significant changes to the Tahoeraa party platform have only been induced in response to shifts in public opinion which, for electoral reasons, could not be ignored. Even Tahoeraa's demands for territorial autonomy were limited so as not to jeopardise the financial umbilical cord with France. Flosse's reign has thus been marked by conservatism and continuity, exemplified in loyalty to ties with France in general, and to the metropolitan RPR party and President Chirac in particular. Flosse has offered no vision for profound reforms to deal with pressing socioeconomic problems in Tahiti, nor has his government devised a

meaningful plan to alleviate the territory's chronic dependence on France.

From his humble birthplace in rural Rikitea, Gaston Flosse's life-long process of empire building is now virtually complete. His political reach extends far beyond his original municipal fiefdom of Pirae with his grip on the territorial presidency seemingly secure until the year 2001. His party's dominance is reinforced by its control over the prize of municipal government, the capital Papeete, and its retention of one of the two territorial seats in the National Assembly. Successive reforms to the statutory relationship with Paris have, moreover, enabled an expansion of the powers (and privileges) available to the president and his ministers. Construction is currently proceeding on a splendid new *palais* to house the presidential offices, which will remain as a monument to the Flosse era for many years to come. Finally, in 1998, Flosse's sights are fixed on achieving the crowning glory for elder statesmen: a nine year mandate as Tahiti's sole representative to the French Senate.

## Note

- <sup>1</sup> French Polynesia is an overseas territory of France operating under a statute of internal autonomy which allows the territorial government to control socioeconomic policy but not defence, law and order or foreign affairs. In addition to having its own municipal and territorial levels of government, the territory elects representatives to the French national parliament.

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# 6

## Far Pacific policy under the second Clinton administration: opportunities and obstacles

Larry N. Gerston

### Overview

The United States is in the midst of reordering its global priorities. Slowly but surely, three hundred years of linkage with Europe is yielding to the enticements and imperatives of the Pacific Rim. Much like the imperceptible moves of a glacier, the route of the United States toward Far Pacific waters has been tedious and tentative. And just as a glacier is much larger under the surface than above it, the long-term economic impetus for closer US–Far Pacific relations dwarfs the immediate, overt political issues that draw the world’s attention.

More than any recent American regime, the Clinton administration has been at the helm of the new US–Far Pacific connection which, in itself, is a by-product of an evolving international environment. The Reagan administration presided over the end of the Cold War, and the Bush administration stood guard against signs of resurrection. But it is under the direction of the Clinton administration that the United States has alternatively embraced and confronted new domestic and international realities. These changes have internal and external origins. Internally, the United States went through a significant transition with defence downsizing during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Now, with new domestic priorities somewhat better defined,



particularly in light of the 1996 presidential election, the United States is turning full speed toward realignment of its external relationships.

Nowhere has the evolving mind-set of American foreign policy become more evident than at the 1996 18-nation Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), where Mickey Kantor, the US Secretary of Commerce, spoke about the 'Clinton Doctrine' of 'mutually assured prosperity' (*The New York Times* 1996). American interest in the region makes sense given that, as of 1996, it accounts for two-thirds of all global trade conducted by the United States, compared with less than 22 per cent of US trade with Europe.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the Asia-Pacific market now produces a full 50 per cent of the world's gross domestic product, making the region the nucleus for international commerce. As US Undersecretary of Commerce Jeffrey Garten recently stated, 'power and wealth are shifting to the Pacific, and we want to be part of that growth. This is another frontier for the United States' (Garten 1994).

This chapter addresses the changing nature of US–Far Pacific relations in the context of the second Clinton administration. With the military issues associated with the Cold War no longer determining the frameworks of political and economic policies, the Clinton administration is now positioned to pursue trade opportunities worldwide, particularly in the Far Pacific. Yet, among the many uncertainties in the new environment is whether the political conditions in the Far Pacific arena will open the door or stand in the way of mutually advantageous economic ventures.

Of particular importance are relationships with relatively large nations in the Far Pacific area and their impact on the small democracies of the western Pacific. Now, more than any other time in the post-World War II period, the United States has the opportunity to solidify East–West linkages on both the political and economic levels. This opening notwithstanding, four questions remain

- whether the United States has long-term interest in the region,
- what obstacles, if any, lie in the way of such efforts
- what effects such changes will have on the less powerful, but nonetheless vital, island nations in the area
- what events might alter what seems to have become a worthwhile arrangement for most nations in the Far Pacific.

## Changes in the international environment

With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union, the United States has gradually shifted its foreign policy emphasis from the European theatre to other parts of the world. The shift has been both purposive and tactical. Most of all, the move away from disproportionate attention to Europe has been permitted because of the termination of competition with the Soviet Union. The new direction, however, has also met with resistance from traditionalists who maintain that the United States has natural affinities with Europe that transcend conflict.<sup>2</sup> This ongoing debate notwithstanding, most observers conclude that the shift is in the making.<sup>3</sup>

To be sure, the United States has not abandoned European ties altogether. Historical relationships are too intertwined and deep for such a switch to occur. The effort by President Bush in 1991 to lead more than 30 nations (many of them European) in the Persian Gulf War against Iraq represented a US-mobilised campaign to stabilise the availability of petroleum in Europe as well as the United States. More recently, the commitment by President Clinton to dispatch US troops to trouble spots such as Bosnia underscored America's involvement with areas of the world because of shared strategic or cultural ties.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, the emergence of the United States as the world's only military superpower has required American public policymakers to position the United States away from its lopsided European orientation and move towards a global perspective as rivalries, notably economic competition, take centre stage. As Phil Williams observes, the 'changed agenda facing the United States...[now] takes the form that traditional security issues are no longer preeminent, and that economic and trade issues have come to the fore' (Williams 1996:294). The manifestations of this development range from less reliance on any permanent set of military imperatives and alliances to the emergence of multinational corporate battles in place of strategic governmental alliances. It is this fundamental change that now presents the opportunity for the United States to focus squarely on the Far Pacific, in both governmental and economic contexts.

## US directions in the Far Pacific

Growing American involvement in Asia-Pacific affairs stems from two needs. First, with the Cold War no longer a mainstay of American

foreign policy, the United States has assumed the role as the world's 'policeman'. As such, military threats, either directly against the United States or, more likely, between two or more nations in the region, are considered not only harmful to American interests. They are also seen as reasons for American intervention upon evidence of regional turmoil or, at minimum, disruption of equilibrium. To be sure, the United States does not take this role lightly. If nothing else, the exigencies of isolationist-oriented American public opinion place restraints on cavalier presidential dispatches of military personnel, including the seventh fleet.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, US leaders once again operate in the Pacific as in the past: as if it is an 'American lake'.

The second area of US interest in the Far Pacific relates to a domestic audience. The Clinton administration views increased trade in the area as an opportunity to create wealth on both sides of the Pacific. At the 1994 APEC conference, Clinton acknowledged this relationship by noting that two million high-paying American jobs are directly connected to the exports from the United States to Asia-Pacific nations alone. As the president noted, 'by opening other markets, our products and services become more competitive, and more sales abroad create more high-wage jobs at home' (Clinton 1994). With military challenges no longer responsible for the direction of US foreign policy, the economic arena has assumed centre stage. Nevertheless, the Clinton administration has tied trade to certain political imperatives. To this extent, the administration has continued the foreign policy approach of previous presidents,<sup>6</sup> although how far the president or any other American leader may use issues unrelated to commerce to determine the conditions of trade remains questionable.

## **Political stability**

The Far Pacific is a region full of risk and opportunity. The opportunity lies with an area of the world with rapidly emerging economies which, until recently have been experiencing exponential increases in production and consumption. Until now, however, the opportunity has been limited by political and military uncertainty. Much of the risk lies in the hostilities among nations in the immediate area, such as North Korea/South Korea, China/Taiwan, Russia/Japan, and China/Japan. Disagreements among these nations centre on a host of issues including border boundaries, illegal immigration, ethnic

and cultural conflicts and longstanding ideological battles. Some long-standing issues, however, are approaching resolution as if to reinforce the new quiet in the region;<sup>7</sup> others, such as the tension between North Korea and South Korea are almost daily stories.

The disputes not only threaten the immediate areas but also spill over to island territories in ways ranging from the control of major sea lanes to ownership of land parcels which, while insignificant in size, may offer economic value. Thus the Spratly Islands, under the control of Indonesia, are contested by Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Japan and Russia remain at odds over the Kurile Islands, seized by the then government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the end of World War II and retained under Russian control for what the government claims are 'strategic' purposes (Poulson 1995:310–11).

In addition to the strife between nations, examples of intra-national dispute abound. Indonesia's struggle with its Chinese minority, the Bougainville secessionist movement in Papua New Guinea, and the 'on-again, off-again' Muslim insurgency in the Philippines illustrate the agony of long-standing disputes with ethnic, religious and/or racial overtones (*US News and World Report* 1996). In many cases, such divisions act as magnets for attention from allies outside the immediate area of dispute, providing the opportunity to expand the scope of conflict.

The United States also has its share of political and military problems in the Far Pacific. Some, such as bases in the Philippines, have been resolved through the departure of the US military. Other base issues, such as the American presence in Okinawa, have been inflamed by US insensitivity and lawbreaking, and only now show signs of improvement through American redeployment elsewhere (*The New York Times* 1996). Most problematic have been lingering human rights concerns regarding China and Singapore, as well as the threat of nuclear proliferation in North Korea, and environmental degradation.

On another level, the United States has serious problems with developing nations, many of them in the Far Pacific, on a number of environmental issues including the ruination of coral reefs and rain forests. Solving these problems is not easy, for in many cases, relatively poor nations such as the Philippines are 'plagued with old dirty technologies and have fewer resources to make needed changes in industrial, agricultural, and conservation activities than their wealthier neighbors' (Bryner 1994:123). Thus, whereas American

consumers may appreciate the value of inexpensive products, the government has difficulty with the conditions under which some of those products are made available, a contradiction causing considerable consternation in the United States.

Whether indirect or direct in nature, to the extent that regional issues threaten the area's political equilibrium, they also are perceived as threats to US foreign policy. Accordingly, American military strategists see the United States contributing to regional security in the Far Pacific 'by acting as a balancing force [to] prevent emergence of a vacuum or a regional hegemony' (US Department of Defense 1992). And comparatively speaking, the political issues in the region, while always a concern, are less threatening to the area's general welfare today than at any time since the end of World War II.

## **Increasing trade**

With relationships between the United States and other mature markets well defined, the challenge for commercial growth must focus on cultivating opportunities with emerging nations. Indeed, many of the new possibilities exist in the Far Pacific, where burgeoning markets and developing nations go hand-in-hand. However, the decision by the United States to pursue trade often is subordinated to a political framework that incorporates US values on issues like human rights. Whether the utilisation of such standards is right or wrong remains a legitimate political question. That they have been conditions of doing business is a political reality.

A study by the US Department of Commerce in 1993, for example, found that the Chinese Economic Area (defined for political purposes as the Peoples Republic of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong), Indonesia and South Korea represented three of the ten most important markets defined by Commerce as Big Emerging Markets (BEMs). As developing nations, however, these countries often are at odds with the United States in serious problem areas such as human rights, workers rights, intellectual property issues, and nuclear non-proliferation treaty violations. 'In these cases,' notes Jeffrey Garten, US Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade, '[American] commercial interests are often complicated and set back because we are compelled to pressure these governments in ways that aggravate our overall relationships' (Garten 1994).

The trade difficulty has centred, in part, on creative ways used by

Asia-Pacific countries to keep US products out. In an economic version of 'hand-to-hand' combat, however, the United States has pried open some markets, especially in closed nations such as Japan which, has the greatest surplus with the United States. Spurred on by the imbalance, US negotiators have opened markets in service industries (American Express), retail outlets (Toys-R-Us, Blockbuster Video) and manufacturing (American automobiles).

But doors can open and close in both directions. Thus, during the push by the United States for open markets in Japan, trade negotiators from Japan complained about closed US markets, notably American domination of air routes (*The New York Times* 1995). This and other issues remain without permanent resolution. Nevertheless, agreements such as the 1994 APEC decision to drop all barriers by 2020 and the 1994 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade by 124 nations to cut all tariffs by 40 per cent point to the likelihood of greatly increased trade (*Wall Street Journal* 1994). Much of the recent success stems from the fact that military and diplomatic concerns are no longer important enough to prevent economic pressures for change (*Wall Street Journal* 1993).

Similar to previous leaders, President Clinton views trade as a vehicle for reducing human rights problems, albeit in an indirect manner. This view is based on two assumptions. First, the administration argues that increased trade between the United States and nations with questionable political and social policies fosters economic growth which, in turn opens the way for democratisation. Second, the increased presence of American business places alternative life styles within sight of disadvantaged populations. It is precisely this attitude that led the Clinton administration to renew China's most favoured nation trading status in 1996 and the president to pursue the same themes with Chinese President Jiang Zemin at the 1996 APEC conference.

Despite the American perception that trade begets liberal democracy, several Far Pacific nations have been slow to move in this direction. China looms as the largest example, with little indication of change in its human rights policy, contrary to Clinton's pleas at the 1996 APEC conference and the agreement of the president and Zemin to exchange state visits. Singapore also stands out as a nation that has grown closer to the United States from an economic standpoint, but has not altered its official cultural values. There is no certainty that trade opens doors to new behaviour or cultural attitudes. In fact, it

may be, that the United States may have to learn to accept norms different from the American framework, threats and cajoling notwithstanding, because of new economic vitality in the Far Pacific. One long-time observer of the region notes

even as increasing contact between the United States and Asia opens the door to a greater awareness of each others' cultures, economic interdependence is leading to a political confidence that allows Asian countries, many of them former colonial territories, to stand up to Western pressure...without apology... (Gerstenzang 1996).

Such lessons may become increasingly common to American traders and political leaders.

### **Correcting the balance of payments deficit**

Despite the economic benefits from trade, such gains are dramatically reduced when the transfer of goods is one-sided. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the US relationship with Japan. Although in the mid-1990s America's second largest trading partner, Japan leaves the United States with a trading deficit of more than US\$60 billion annually. Even more disconcerting to the United States is its trade deficit with China which, at over US\$30 billion, has been growing at a rate sure to eclipse that with Japan. US negotiators have been working hard to open up what they term 'closed markets' in China due to hidden tariffs and discriminatory regulations. In May 1996, US-Chinese disputes regarding piracy, intellectual property rights and counterfeiting deteriorated to the point where the United States threatened to impose 100 percent tariffs on US\$2 billion worth of Chinese goods. For their part the Chinese promised similar sanctions. However, negotiators overcame the impasse with a new set of procedures addressing a number of US issues (*Wall Street Journal* 1996).

As a result of these efforts, the trade imbalance between the United States and several Asia-Pacific nations shows signs of improvement. To this end, Commerce Secretary Mickey Kantor reported in 1996 that, for the first time, in 1995 US exports to China grew at a faster rate (27 per cent) than imports from China (17 per cent).<sup>8</sup> This trend, if it continues, is likely to bode well for future US-Chinese relations (*Los Angeles Times*, 1996b). The Commerce Department also noted a dramatic drop in the deficit with Japan, with US exports increasing four times as fast as imports, according to Kantor.

## Americans as arms traders

One export from the United States that has both flourished and drawn considerable criticism has been the sale of arms to other nations. In 1994, for example, the United States sold US\$12 billion worth of conventional weapons to other nations, 50 per cent more than the rest of the world combined. Many of those weapons went to Asia. Thus, hundreds of millions of dollars of weapons were sold to India and Pakistan, two nations which have not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, allowing inspection of their nuclear plants. Large sales of tanks and air defence radar systems went to Taiwan. In 1996, the United States entered into a new round of negotiations with South Korea because of growing concerns by the latter of an increasingly military muscle-flexing posture taken by the North Korean government.

A 1995 study by *Arms Control Today* revealed that the Clinton administration had sold arms to other nations—many in the Pacific arena—at rates exceeding those of the Reagan and Bush administrations. According to the report, the Clinton administration ‘has actively assisted [the arms] industry by subsidising marketing activities, lobbying foreign officials to “buy American” and financing several billions of dollars worth of arms sales’ (*Arms Control Today* 1995). Although such transfers are often justified in the spirit of creating balances of power and building up the deterrent capabilities of US allies, the line between defence and sales is sometimes difficult to see.

Such criticisms have emerged not only of US arms sales to allies but, perhaps more alarmingly, arms transfers to historically unfriendly nations. Thus, referring to the rash of eased US exports under the Clinton administration, Kenneth Timmerman (1994:A8) recently wrote that ‘the proliferation of such technologies—and the avidity to acquire them of dictators like [North Korea’s] Kim Il Sung—has created an international security environment that bears many similarities to the Cold War’.

Clearly, these sales help to dampen the US balance of payments deficit. At the same time, it would seem that the proliferation of weapons among nations in troubled areas of the world not only works against long-term US interests but invites the United States to take the policeman role more often than otherwise would be required.



## **Impact on Pacific island nations**

For centuries, the Pacific islands have been at the mercy of major powers. Japan, China, and the United States currently are more active in the Pacific islands than most other major powers, although a half dozen others have been just as prominent in the past. Because of their size and isolation, small Pacific Island nations have been able to do little more than accept the cards dealt to them—from the battlegrounds of World War II to their use as nuclear testing areas. With relative peace currently in place among the larger players in the Far Pacific, the governments and peoples of the islands are in position to gain as well.

Not all issues are settled. For example, disagreements over human rights, deforestation, fishing arrangements and countless other social and economic questions can erupt with little encouragement, quickly placing disputants in combative positions. Also, the fragile nuclear arrangements and balance of arms currently in place can fall apart, with nations assuming belligerent positions. Nuclear testing by the French drew objection in the South Pacific, not so much from the perspective of war-mongering but because of grave environmental concerns. Despite the possibility of these and other disruptions, the times are such that most nations in the Far Pacific are not willing to disturb the relative tranquillity and risk the loss of sustained economic growth.

Most governments of Pacific island nations are associated economically with one or more larger nations such as the United States, Japan, Australia or New Zealand. In addition, cultural or ethnic ties, for example, among Chinese or Japanese migrants, transcend national borders, adding yet another level of linkage. Thus, to the extent that trade blooms generally in the Far Pacific region, so shall it be that—some relatively minor or isolated issues notwithstanding—the Pacific islands likely will benefit from the bloom as well. What remains uncertain, however, is the extent to which other sources of division, notably disputes over resources, will continue to plague the region.

## **Conclusions**

Are the next 100 years destined to be 'the Pacific century?' If so, the new configuration of power will surely include the United States as a

pillar of such an arrangement. Militarily and politically, it appears that the Clinton administration will continue the US effort to discourage competition from other nations, including those in the Far Pacific. Yet, on the commerce front, other nations are sure to become serious players in the battle for economic domination. What we can expect in the near term? Here are a few possibilities.

- Assuming continuation of the status quo, we can expect the Far Pacific region to be dominated by trade, rather than military aggression. With so much potential for growth, most of the region may prosper until demand slows down to the low single digits found in other parts of the world. The Clinton administration will be vigilant in attempting to remove tariffs and other trade barriers in the name of 'free trade'.
- The United States will remain the world's superpower for the foreseeable future, although regional military powers such as Japan, China and India will make themselves heard. As long as nations are willing (or forced) to accept this arrangement, their loss of military prowess will be more than offset by economic gains.
- Should global or regional recession of any length beset the region, all bets are off with respect to the two major conclusions stated above. Under such conditions, nations with less clout than the United States may not be willing to accept trade or any other arrangements as defined and promoted by the United States.
- Much of the region's destiny may be controlled by the extent to which the Clinton administration manages (or fails to manage) the proliferation of weapons. The more arms and technology become available on a widespread basis, the more the region, and indeed the world, will face a new set of circumstances. Whether the balance of power becomes an 'imbalance of terror' remains to be seen.
- In a world where commerce increasingly is the means to clout, if not the domination of others, weaponry alone no longer carries the club of omnipotence. If true, despite being the world's only remaining military superpower, this reality may force the United States to concede that trade and other activities of commerce may not always be fair or 'politically correct' in terms of American standards.

Historically, concepts such as 'superpower' or 'global policeman' have had a distinctly pejorative tone. Historically, military competition has sparked indirect wars fuelled by foreign aid and arms sales. With the end of the Cold War, the paradigm defining competition may well move from military to economic terms. To the extent that the United States remains the active and dominant partner in this new environment, nations may actually benefit from such an arrangement. Nevertheless, military hegemony aside, the United States under Clinton, or anyone else, is no longer likely to be in a position to dictate the conditions of commerce. These new realities may not be particularly democratic or appreciated from an American standpoint, but they may be part of the framework of the 'Pacific Century' nonetheless.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Remarks by John Wolf, US Coordinator for APEC, 1 November 1996, Washington, DC.
- <sup>2</sup> For example, John Hillen argues that American security depends on the security of Europe, a condition best defended by the continuation and expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). He says that 'NATO is needed to provide general economic and political stability in Europe, which is vitally important to the US economy' (Hillen 1996). In a recently published work certain to challenge assumptions underlying the 'Pacific Century', Samuel Huntington (1997) argues that the United States and Europe are likely to become long-term and political enemies of a China-dominated Far East.
- <sup>3</sup> Among many Americans, the issue is not whether the United States is shifting its priorities, but whether such a shift is truly in the best interest of the nation (see Feulner 1996; Schwartz 1996).
- <sup>4</sup> Noting the crucial role the United States still plays in Europe as an agent of stability, President Clinton stated as his defence for sending troops to Bosnia: 'There are times and places where our [American] leadership can mean the difference between peace and war...If we're not there [as a peacemaking contingent in Bosnia], NATO will not be there' (quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, 28 November 1995:A1, A8).
- <sup>5</sup> During their second televised presidential debate on 26 October 1996, Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole accused President Clinton of dispatching US troops on more than 50 missions; the president ignored the accusation and the question of military campaigns failed to arouse public concern at that or any other point of the presidential campaign.

- <sup>6</sup> The 'imperatives' have changed with each president. Thus Jimmy Carter attached American foreign policy initiatives to human rights; Ronald Reagan, however, related it to strategic military objectives; George Bush, the last of the Cold War presidents, associated US foreign policy with strong European political ties (see Kellerman and Barilleaux 1991).
- <sup>7</sup> As a sign of growing pragmatism in the region, India and China reached agreement on the boundaries of the Himalayan frontier in November 1996 ('China, India sign agreement to ease border dispute', *CNN Interactive*, 30 November 1996).
- <sup>8</sup> Statement of Ambassador Michael Kantor before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs and the House International Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific and International Economic Policy and Trade, 7 March 1996.

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# 7

## Requiem for a quest: the failure of Guam's leaders to secure fundamental political change

**Robert F. Rogers**

In the process of decolonisation in the twentieth century, it was the colonial powers that usually delayed resolution while leaders of the colonies pressed impatiently for expansion of local autonomy. Such was the history of the transformation of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in Micronesia into three republics (the Federated States of Micronesia—FSM, the Marshall Islands and Palau) and one US commonwealth (the Northern Marianas). Such has not been the case, however, with Guam, the geopolitical centre of Micronesia.

While all other entities in American Micronesia came to agreement with the United States on new political statuses, Guam remains stuck in the status quo as an unincorporated US territory. Guam is locally self-governing under US federal law, namely the 1950 *Organic Act*, that ensures American citizenship, democratic political processes and a private enterprise economy. But Guam possesses none of the sovereign attributes of the FSM, the Marshalls and Palau, nor the internal governing powers of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

To move Guam out of this neocolonial limbo, the island's people voted in 1982 to seek a status similar to the CNMI. The Guamanians, however, pushed the status envelope for greater local authority: in 1987 they approved a draft Commonwealth Act that would give

Guam greater powers than those of the CNMI (or any other US territory) in indigenous Chamorro self-determination, mutuality in defense matters and foreign relations.

Since 1989, negotiations between Guam's Commission on Self-Determination and US federal authorities over the draft act have dragged on without resolution. Throughout the years of talks, Guam's leaders placated the island's people with repeated upbeat but empty comments such as that of Governor Carl Gutierrez, 'we anticipate substantive action in the near future' (Gutierrez 1995) and Senator Mark Forbes, 'we have made great progress' (Forbes 1996).<sup>1</sup> As for the delay of 14 frustrating years since the quest began, Guam's leaders simply blame it all on obduracy by federal bureaucrats. In actuality, Guam may be further than ever from commonwealth status as long as the US Congress is controlled by Republicans.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter, a kind of informal requiem for Guam's quest, argues that the delay in changing the island's political status is due primarily to wrong decisions by Guam's leaders rather than just federal obstruction, and that commonwealth status is still attainable, but only through serious compromises by Guam.

## **Guam's wrong turns**

### **A change in purpose**

An original goal of Guam's commonwealth was that the island would join in political union with the United States. The words 'Union' and 'in concert' in the draft act's Preamble characterised a relationship based on the precedent of the US Covenant with the Northern Mariana Islands. Political union was endorsed in 1983 at a Guam-US bipartisan conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and later by key members of the territorial committees<sup>3</sup> in consultations with Governor Ricardo J. Bordallo when the Guam act was being drafted from 1984 through 1986.

Commonwealth was seen at that time as moving Guam closer to the United States. That concept made commonwealth distinct from free association, by which the FSM, Marshalls and Palau formed partnerships with the United States with shared sovereign powers for specific periods until full independence.

After Governor Joseph F. Ada succeeded Bordallo in 1987, he changed Guam's purpose from 'union' with the United States to

'partnership'. In Ada's view, 'The partnership of mutuality calls for the removal of the US government's unilateral control over Guam's affairs and replacing it with a mutual decision-making process' (Ada 1996).

Federal response to the changed purpose was sharply negative, as expressed by Ron de Lugo. He said what Guam really wants is 'free association with a commonwealth label slapped on it' (*Pacific Daily News*, 11 March 1991:1). In the federal view, partnership as defined by Ada implied a sharing of US sovereign powers with its non-sovereign territories.

It seemed to Washington that Governor Ada wanted to move Guam further away from the United States, not closer to it. The change in Guam's purpose began to sour the previously friendly attitudes in Congress toward Guam's quest.

### An 'all or nothing at all' approach

When Governor Bordallo took office in 1983, he said of commonwealth, 'We will sit down with the United States, not as adversaries, but as friends' (Bordallo 1983). Under this concept, called the 'Spirit of Albuquerque' by Bordallo, Guam could ask for 'the kitchen sink', but it was understood that each side would be prepared to make substantive compromises. Nevertheless, by early 1989 when it became clear Congress would not accept the entire act as drafted, Governor Ada's approach hardened against accommodation.

Ada declared, 'What we cannot allow them [Congress] to do is to make us change [the act]' (Ada 1989). He said he must follow the wishes of the people of Guam who had approved the act, and that he was not empowered to change any major provisions, even if the text was a draft.

Ada, a canny politician, was also playing to local political pressures. From the 1970s into the 1990s Guam witnessed a strong upwelling of indigenous Chamorro consciousness in cultural and political activities. Angel L.G. Santos, leader of the *Chamoru Nacion* and soon to be senator, led activists in climbing fences at the US Naval Air Station and blocking roads at Andersen Air Force Base to protest military land policies. Norbert Perez, the self-proclaimed 'President of the Republic of Guahan', who favours independence, threatened to picket tourists at the airport. Governor Ada himself participated in a well-publicised anti-military demonstration at naval headquarters on Nimitz Hill.



These activities were non-violent and often mere posturing, but one effect was to further alienate military and congressional officials already angry over anti-US rhetoric on Guam and by Chamorros in United Nations forums (Ada led one group to the UN). Governor Ada did not get commonwealth, but he was re-elected to a second term in 1990, and was eligible to run again in the future.

In June 1989 a federal executive review of the act presented what Washington wanted changed, which was considerable, and federal officials asked for 'give-and-take discussions', as is normal in getting any legislation through the US Congress.<sup>4</sup> Governor Ada angrily rejected Washington's request as 'an outmoded colonial philosophy' and 'myopic'.<sup>5</sup>

Now, when you are negotiating with an 800-pound gorilla, if you call it bad names you quickly end up in a no-win situation. This is what happened to Guam. By the time of the first, and so far only, congressional committee hearings on the draft act, chaired by Ron de Lugo in Honolulu in December 1989, Guam had assumed an adversarial position. To Ada's uncompromising stance, de Lugo warned, 'That road map is...designed for disaster, designed for failure...we have to be able to confer and compromise' (*Pacific Daily News*, 11 March 1991:1).

De Lugo then bestowed Washington's kiss of death on Guam: he referred the whole issue to a federal task force. The Bush Administration Task Force on Guam (called BATFOG by Guamanians), was made up of representatives of numerous federal executive departments. It was led by a tough Republican politician, Stella Guerra, head of the Interior Office of Territories and International Affairs. She did not look like an 800-pound gorilla, but she 'man'handled Team Guam (as the Commission on Self-Determination was now called) like one.

In negotiations with Team Guam, BATFOG repeatedly pressed for compromises on major issues. Guam steadfastly refused, and agreement was reached only on lesser questions (Governor Ada did agree to many changes in the text, despite his earlier statements that he would not do so). It did not matter. At the end of the BATFOG talks, just before President Clinton assumed office in early 1993, the federal task force unexpectedly and brutally reneged on every point of agreement made over the previous two years. The Bush administration decided that if compromise could not be reached on

the major substantive provisions, then the process was at a dead end.

Bitter at such treatment, Governor Ada asked President Clinton to name 'a direct and personal representative to conduct future discussions with Guam' (Ada 1994:8). This reliance on a sort of US Ambassador to Guam was another wrong turn, one on which Guam is still spinning its wheels.

### **The executive track**

When the quest for commonwealth started in the early 1980s, Guam's leaders assumed they would negotiate with a representative of the federal executive branch, as occurred with the Northern Marianas. A congressional delegation to Guam in 1983 persuaded Guam's Commission on Self-Determination to go directly to the US Congress in order to bypass preliminary screening of the draft act by executive agencies, mainly Defense, Interior and Labor, that defend the status quo.

The process on the congressional track called for the views of federal agencies and the Guamanians to be presented separately in hearings, then compromises between the Guam Commission on Self-Determination and the committees (not necessarily with executive agencies) and floor votes and a plebiscite on Guam to approve or disapprove the final act. In consultations with Bordallo in the mid-1980s, key Congressmen informally agreed on most of the act's language, but not on mutuality and Chamorro self-determination. Despite those differences, the Congressmen remained supportive of Guam's quest, and went ahead with hearings in Honolulu in 1989.

The outcome of the Honolulu hearings, where Governor Ada refused to compromise, was that Guam lost the invaluable bipartisan congressional support it formerly enjoyed.<sup>6</sup> In retrospect, Guam had a rare window of opportunity from 1983 through 1989 to get the commonwealth act passed by direct submission to, and compromises with, sympathetic Congresses under Democratic majorities, thereby bypassing executive agency obstructionism. As noted above, negotiations after Honolulu were with executive branch officials in BATFOG, thereby switching Guam's quest, perhaps unwittingly on the part of Governor Ada, from a congressional track to an executive track. This resulted in almost complete failure by early 1993. When Governor Ada then requested a White House representative as an intermediary, he made Guam's quest even more dependent on an

official representing the views of unsympathetic federal agencies.

What followed over the next three years was a parade of transient federal intermediaries. Each was greeted by Guam's leaders as almost a saviour who would somehow be of tremendous help, only to have them disappear in short order.

Partial agreement on mutuality (Section 103 whereby the act would not be changed without Guam's consent) was reached in 1994 with the federal negotiator at the time, I. Michael Heyman. This non-binding understanding was applauded as a breakthrough, even though it came ten years after key congressional players in the 1980s informally had come to the same agreement with Bordallo (since that provision was in the CNMI covenant).

No agreement was reached on two stumbling blocks: Section 102 by which Congress would explicitly recognise the right of Chamorro self-determination (an eventual Chamorro-only vote on a Guam Constitution to implement the new status), and Section 302 concerning consultations by Washington with Guam on military and foreign relations issues. Washington took the position that Chamorro-only rights were based on race and thus unconstitutional. Military officials in particular frowned on Section 302; one CINCPAC (the admiral in command of the Pacific) said Guam wishes a 'quasi-independence status'.<sup>7</sup>

By the time Carl T.C. Gutierrez succeeded Joe Ada as governor in 1995, commonwealth was already something of a near-dead albatross around the neck of Guam's governor. To his credit, Gutierrez altered Guam's approach: he vigorously raised funds for the national Democratic Party and he relaxed Guam's adversarial stance toward Washington. While still seeking mutuality, he said his goal was a US 'contract with Guam' (Gutierrez 1995:64).

In raising substantial campaign money for the Clinton administration, Governor Gutierrez gained direct access to the president and other high officials to argue Guam's case.<sup>8</sup> He kept discussions with federal officials behind closed doors, reducing the glare of publicity that hampered Bordallo and Ada.

Governor Gutierrez also dropped the doctrinaire 'all or nothing at all' stance of Ada that froze Guam's commonwealth quest from 1989 to 1994. Gutierrez assumed, unlike Ada, that the Commission on Self-Determination is empowered to negotiate compromises on major provisions since the act is only a draft, not a final document.

Gutierrez has also directed his administration away from

dependence by Guam on a change of status. His 'Vision 2001', a long-term development plan for Guam, does not mention political status. The plan's focus is on economic growth, not political transformation, and is designed for implementation whether or not commonwealth is attained. In effect, Gutierrez is following a kind of Realpolitik in Guam's relations with the United States.

By July 1996 negotiations between Guam and the current federal intermediary, John Garamendi, reached tentative agreement on Section 102 (the right of Chamorro self-determination) and on other new wording in the act. Members of the Guam Commission on Self-Determination agreed to a rewrite of section 102 whereby Congress, 'would expressly recognize the unique history of the "native inhabitants" of the Commonwealth of Guam, namely the "Chamorro"'.<sup>9</sup>

This convoluted language avoided the term 'self-determination' and any explicit recognition of Chamorro rights. Subsequently, after first signing off on the new language, several Guam Senators who are members of the commission (and who were up for re-election) reneged, so the matter of Chamorro self-determination continued to be unresolved, as did Section 302 on mutuality.

Any watering-down of the original draft act's provision on self-determination is likely to provoke sharp criticism from Chamorros. All politicians on Guam the past 20 years have had to protect their flanks from attack by highly visible indigenous activists, even though the latter comprise a small minority of Chamorros, who themselves constitute only a plurality of Guam's population (but a majority of the electorate).

Political pressures from this cultural-ethnic Right on the Guam political spectrum, as well as genuine outrage against past colonial injustices against Chamorros, were major factors in the inflexible approach of Guam's leaders on questions of political status. This legitimate grassroots Chamorro populism was perhaps underestimated in Washington, and has served, ironically, to delay partial redress of Chamorro grievances through commonwealth status.

The Gutierrez administration has suggested a public education program on changes in the act to clarify whether or not the majority of Guamanians are now willing to accept major compromises despite objections by Chamorro rights diehards.<sup>10</sup>

Even if agreement were reached with executive agencies and the Democrats of the Clinton administration on new language in the act,

and the people of Guam approve the changes, those would be only partial steps, albeit major ones, toward congressional approval. Congress, particularly a Republican Congress, is not bound to new language in the negotiated draft act, and Guam has to present its case all over again in hearings. Passage of even a compromise act is most unsure. Representative Elton Gallegly, Republican chair of the key subcommittee for territories, is on record against mutual consent and greater autonomy for territories.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, major changes in executive officials are likely in early 1997 under the new Clinton administration, including John Garamendi's departure. A new Team Fed will need to be educated on Guam's quest, with consequent delays again in Washington. And the poor example of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas in its exploitive and corrupt handling of immigration, labour and law enforcement makes Washington, as a whole, far less responsive to commonwealth status than in the past.<sup>12</sup>

Above all, the re-emergence of the political status issue in Puerto Rico (there is a Puerto Rico status bill pending in Congress) is once more taking precedence in territorial matters because of the large number of Puerto Rican voters on the mainland.<sup>13</sup> Guam may now have to wait on resolution of Puerto Rico's status, a process that could take years.

### **Lesson learned: argue publicly, compromise privately**

Governor Ada's strategy was to demand the whole commonwealth cake—local control and participation by Guam in regional and international US matters—in one fell swoop, but it is now amply clear that Guam cannot get it all, even if the people of the island are justified in their local aims. Moreover, it was Governor Ada and the demands of Chamorro activists themselves who delayed the quest through their inflexibility, lack of foresight and poor strategy when the need for compromise became evident after the 1989 Honolulu hearings. Of course, federal obduracy is also to blame, but in negotiating with an 800-pound gorilla, anyone smaller must do most of the compromising or fail.

In analysing colonialism, it is useful to distinguish between purpose and function, which are not synonymous. The purpose of the United States on Guam is geopolitical in nature: to use the island for strategic needs unrelated to local civic concerns, or even to the

domestic civic ideals of the colonial power. To be successful, efforts to end colonialism must address the colonial power's national interests with respect to a locality, and not be based just on local concerns or normative appeals for justice.

Since regional and international geopolitical concerns cannot be deflected locally without resort to rebellion, leaders of small powerless communities like Guam must compromise with those concerns or be ignored. This is why the analogy of negotiating with a gorilla is apt—it must be done carefully with sensitivity to the gorilla's perceptions, right or wrong.

Guam's policymakers have not done that. In their attempts to increase local autonomy, they have focussed on function, the sometimes repressive oversight of the island by military and other federal US functionaries. Chamorro appeals have been for dramatic reform of the colonial system's local functions, while almost ignoring how that reform would affect US strategic purposes in the Asia-Pacific region.

Guam is demanding that the United States compromise on key issues—mutuality in US defense and foreign matters, and self-determination for Chamorros to decide the island's political destiny—that could eventually give Guamanians a role in determining not only American strategic purposes on Guam, but also in the Western Pacific. Yet, the use of Guam by B-52s in the Persian Gulf War, the island's role as a safehaven for Kurdish refugees and mounting pressures in Okinawa to roll back some US military bases to Guam, are examples of the ongoing strategic value of Guam to the United States despite military downsizing and apart from any local considerations.

That is why the United States, through BATFOG and various intermediaries, has made it clear it is not prepared either to relinquish its geopolitical use of the island or make Guam's leaders participants, no matter how indirectly, in determining US national security policies through a commonwealth, which, unlike that of the CNMI, would give them that power.

Therefore, despite Governor Gutierrez's realism, Guam's quest is on the verge of death as long as Team Guam demands are viewed by Washington as possibly jeopardising US strategic interests. This near-comatose condition of commonwealth was acknowledged by the usually upbeat Gutierrez at a conference on Guam in November 1996. For the first time in public, he said Guam is 'still very far from the prize', and if no closure on the draft act is reached on the executive

track by mid-1997, Guam must rethink its whole status effort (Gutierrez 1996). Guam's Delegate to Congress, Robert A. Underwood, concurred with that assessment, and indicated that a return to the congressional track might be in order (Underwood 1996).

If the people of Guam want commonwealth, they shall have to accept an act without some of the original provisions, and they shall have to seek self-determination through other means, such as in a local constitution and in the courts, one step at a time.

This conclusion will anger those Chamorros who view compromise on self-determination and mutuality as a betrayal.<sup>14</sup> They should keep in mind that all government is based on compromise and all politics is unfair to someone.

It is still too early to hold a formal requiem on Guam's quest for commonwealth, but it may take place in the not too distant future unless Guam's leaders have the courage to moderate their demands, and the wisdom to persuade the island's people to accept the compromises.

## **Postscript update**

The preceding analysis was presented in December 1996. Since then the second congressional hearing on Guam's draft Commonwealth Act was held in Washington, DC on 30 October 1997. John Garamendi, speaking for the Clinton Administration, flatly rejected the basic provisions of the draft. Governor Gutierrez and other Chamorros at the hearing (notably Joe Ada who is again running for governor in the 1998 elections) demanded once more that the Act be accepted without compromise on its core elements. The congress was non-committal, and no other hearings have been scheduled.

Meanwhile, the Guam legislature created a new Commission on Decolonization to hold a vote at the November 1998 elections. Once more voters will consider political status, but Commonwealth will not be an option. The vote will be restricted to Chamorros only. No Chamorro leader has the courage to admit it openly, but Guam's quest for Commonwealth appears dead as of early 1998. The sad irony is that it was predominantly those same Chamorro leaders who killed the quest by their own inept leadership.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For more realistic assessments of commonwealth chances than those of Guam officials see Loriega 1996a and 1996b.
- <sup>2</sup> The biggest steps toward self-government for Guam occurred when Democrats controlled the Congress (*Organic Act*, 1950; *Elective Governor Act*, 1968; commonwealth status negotiations initiated, 1983).
- <sup>3</sup> These members were congressmen Morris Udall (Democrat, Arizona, and Chair of the powerful Interior Committee), Manuel Lujan (Republican, New Mexico, and Interior Vice Chair) and Ron de Lugo (Democrat, Virgin Islands).
- <sup>4</sup> Timothy Glidden, counsel to Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan, letter of 28 June 1989, to Governor Joe Ada.
- <sup>5</sup> Joseph F. Ada, letter to Secretary of Interior Manuel Lujan, 29 June 1989.
- <sup>6</sup> Republican Vicente (Ben) Blas replaced Democrat Antonio Won Pat as Guam's Delegate to Congress in 1984 with consequent weakening of Guam's influence in Democratic Congresses. Blas was critical of the draft act as 'fatally flawed'. He advised compromise by Guam, advice that was ignored.
- <sup>7</sup> CINCPAC memorandum of February 1988 quoted in Wyttenbach-Santos 1995:6.
- <sup>8</sup> Gutierrez reportedly raised over US\$450,000 for the Democratic National Party, and US\$30,000 for the Democratic Governor's Conference, all of which made him one of largest fund-raisers for the Clinton-Gore 1996 campaign (see 'Guam plays big time politics', *The Washington Pacific Report*, 1 September:1-3).
- <sup>9</sup> Quote from draft Section 102 signed off by the Commission on Self-Determination on June 26, 1996. This text was not released to the public, but is in the files of the senatorial members of the commission and was made available to the author.
- <sup>10</sup> Public support for Chamorro self-determination appears to be waning somewhat. One dedicated Chamorro rights advocate, Senator Hope Cristobal, lost her seat in the November 1996 legislative election, and other advocates, such as Senator Angel Santos, toned down their anti-US rhetoric during the election campaign.
- <sup>11</sup> 'Status: Gallegly frowns on "mutual consent"', *Pacific Daily News*, 4 February 1995:4.
- <sup>12</sup> An example of tougher federal stance on territories is the abolition in August 1996 of Puerto Rico's Section 936 tax break (a hallmark of commonwealth status there) to firms that set up in Puerto Rico (see 'Puerto Rico loses tax incentive', *The Washington Times*, 22 August 1996:6).



- <sup>13</sup> See 'New political considerations cloud Guam status hopes', *The Washington Pacific Report*, 18 September 1996:6–8.
- <sup>14</sup> For example, Joseph Ada, said Guam must 'stay the course' with its demands, a course he was largely responsible for delaying (Ada 1996b).

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## 'Kremlinology' and the Cooks: analysing leadership change and continuity from a distance

**Michael Goldsmith**

According to Robert Conquest's definition in the *Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, 'Kremlinology' is

[s]trictly, the study of Soviet politics at the higher levels, i.e. of the struggle for power and over policy between the leading members of the POLITBURO, who normally meet in the Kremlin in Moscow; loosely, any study of Soviet affairs. It implies deduction of what is or has been going on from such clues as emerge from behind the conventional facade of 'monolithic unity' among the leadership (Conquest 1977:336).

Here I use a broader alternate notion of 'kremlinology' to refer to any attempt to understand a political system from a distance or from 'outside'. This pursuit necessarily involves a political hermeneutic of reading between the lines, often with highly selective information. Notwithstanding the term's original reference, the practice as I have defined it is widespread.<sup>1</sup> Arguably, it applies to a number of situations in the Pacific, especially from the perspective of commentators based in the metropole.

Some modifications to Conquest's definition are called for. First, I suspect that the form of inference kremlinologists initially apply is abduction rather than deduction (Gallie 1952:98). That is, it has a hypothetical quality, it displays a 'what if' kind of reasoning, as

opposed to inference from rules of conduct. Second, I think Conquest's definition lays too much emphasis on 'monolithic unity'. The clues which he says emerge 'from behind the...facade' are often *cracks* in the facade itself. Even the most 'closed' systems occasionally open up to outside scrutiny and the degree of closure is always relative. Hence similar problems of interpretation apply to most bureaucracies and inner circles—in Washington and Wellington, as well as in Moscow. Third, kremlinology not only charts everyday processes of government but also attempts what is more difficult: to follow power struggles, to discover whose star is waning and whose is waxing. These fluctuations in fortune provide many of the vital scraps of information off which kremlinologists feed.

I cite as an example my only venture into Kremlinology in Conquest's strict sense. Though never more than a lay observer of the former Soviet regime, like many people I have been struck by the symbolism of its system of power. Several days before Mikhail Gorbachev's elevation to leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was officially announced in 1984, I rashly predicted to a class of third-year students that he would assume control. The clue I chose to highlight was the choice of Gorbachev to oversee Andropov's funeral arrangements. Luckily, I guessed right. Not wanting to spoil my 100 per cent success rate, I then retired from the field. Or so I thought.

In March 1996, media sources in New Zealand reported clear suggestions from Rarotonga that the leadership of long-serving Cook Islands Prime Minister, Sir Geoffrey Henry, was under threat from within his own party. The reading of political entrails—a kind of 'kremlinology' as I am calling it—swung into action. Now, I hastily add that politics in the Cook Islands is only partially comparable to those practised in the former Soviet Union. The existence of a freer press is an immediate difference. On the other hand, the leader's relations with some news media was reportedly tense and it was clear that he disliked having cracks appear in the facade of party and even cultural unity.

For various reasons the New Zealand media were particularly interested in this story and gave it much more attention than most rumours of leadership change in the Pacific islands. There is no question that much of that attention was unwelcome in the Cook Islands but in a curious way it need not have bothered. While a dearth of news reporting may serve to disguise what is going on,

paradoxically an abundance of ill-digested stories may have the same effect. New Zealanders waiting for the outcome of the interminable coalition negotiations after the first election in late 1996 will know what I mean. There was intense media scrutiny of the process, but the question of whether the centrist New Zealand First Party would form a government with either Labour or National was reduced at times to interpretations of the body language of the major players and minutely detailed attention of their off-the-cuff comments. In the end, the decision to go with National confounded most of the pundits.

There is a hermetic side to the hermeneutic. The public wants to read signs and portents so the media draw on 'experts' and other commentators to lend authority to guesswork. The resulting news stories must always be couched in terms that make sense to the audience. Rumours of sudden leadership changes lend themselves easily to a variety of potentially misleading discursive frameworks, from sports betting to detective fiction to conspiracy theory.<sup>2</sup> As a result, media sources may misrepresent matters in ways that annoy politicians who are the targets of their scrutiny. But they can also be used by skilled politicians for their own ends. To put it another way, the media can become part of the process by which the façade of politics is constructed—as much a way of shoring up the walls of the Kremlin as an instrument for seeing what goes on behind them.

## **The Cook Islands leadership crisis**

The bare bones of the Cook Islands story are well known. In late 1995 and early 1996, a simmering Cook Islands fiscal crisis came to a head. Several factors had combined to bring this about. The government had undertaken massive borrowing for a number of ventures, including the stalled and hugely expensive Sheraton Hotel project. Tourist numbers were down, lowering public and private revenues from the main industry. An official New Zealand Commission of Inquiry into matters of taxation (the 'Winebox Inquiry') had focussed attention on some questionable practices by financial authorities in the Cooks in relation to some of New Zealand's slickest business corporations. There had also been a rather murky and potentially scandalous Letters of Guarantee scheme. The unwelcome publicity generated by these developments not only led to a drying up of customers for the services of the Cooks' Off-shore Financial Centre operations but also provoked a backlash among some New Zealand National Party

parliamentarians, who called for reductions in, and greater accountability in the use of, budgetary assistance to the Cooks. The Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand, Don McKinnon, made paternalistic comments about the duty to impose 'tough love' and indicated that there would be no bailout by Wellington.

Troubleshooters from the Asian Development Bank arrived in Rarotonga to impose a structural adjustment package—a kind of intervention to which the island economy was extremely vulnerable, given the high proportion of people working in the public sector. In late February 1996, Sir Geoffrey, the Cook Islands Prime Minister, was forced to publicly announce a 15 per cent cut in the pay of government employees and other measures. Some two years before, he had led the Cook Islands Party (CIP) to a massive election win (20 out of 25 seats). Now he seemed to be an electoral liability and the knives were out. Or so it seemed.

On Friday 1 March a crack appeared in the facade of the Cook Islands government after a meeting of what was variously reported as either the CIP caucus or the party executive.<sup>3</sup> Eleven of the twenty members present apparently 'asked in writing for Sir Geoffrey's early retirement, the first time this has ever happened', according to Radio New Zealand's Martin Henderson (National Radio, 4 March 1996). Tom Marsters, the Minister of Works and CIP Secretary, reported the figure after the meeting and said he believed that Sir Geoffrey's time had come. First to announce this bombshell was a local newspaper, the *Cook Islands Press*, whose relationship with the Prime Minister had been especially rocky. It has to be said that, when interviewed for Radio New Zealand on the question of Sir Geoffrey's future, Jason Brown of the *Press* found it hard to keep a note of jubilation out of his voice. Nor was he the only one. Opposition Democrat leader Robert Woonton said he thought that Sir Geoffrey would be rolled, and he branded as 'naive' suggestions to the contrary by the Cook's Deputy PM, Inatio Akururu (National Radio, 4 March 1996).

Over the weekend, speculation about the Prime Minister's future was understandably intense. There was to be a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday at which, according to some commentators, he was certain to be deposed. Late on Monday afternoon, Martin Gibson, a researcher for Morning Report, National Radio's flagship news breakfast program, rang to ask me to comment on the issue the next day. I was caught off balance, to say the least. Like all media machines, National Radio has a list of preferred commentators on various matters. On the

fiscal crisis story, it had called on Jason Brown and Barbara Dreaver, co-editors of the *Cook Islands Press*, and had also run at least one lengthy interview with Ron Crocombe, then at the Australian National University, a recognised authority on affairs in the Cooks. I claimed no expertise and suggested a number of other names but Gibson replied that no one else was available. From a mixture of motives—including curiosity about some crucial issues—I agreed.

I had given low-key radio interviews on a few previous occasions but this time I soon became aware that the stakes were higher and the process rather different. For a start, the researcher sent me a storm of backgrounder faxes which rolled off my machine until about 9.30 that night. This fax attack was, for me, striking confirmation of a phenomenon which media analysts have frequently alleged: the self-referentiality of media operations and the circularity of news construction. The source relays information which the so-called experts then feed back to the audience via the medium.

As it turned out, my first (and probably last) intervention on Morning Report was brief, even if not to the point. A second Jerusalem bombing in two days led the programmers to delay my segment till near the end of the show. In an earlier segment, however, former Cooks Prime Minister and political opponent of the Henry dynasty, Sir Tom Davis, argued that Sir Geoffrey's chances of political survival were low. When my turn came round, it soon became clear that I was expected to frame my answers in terms of the background information sent the evening before. On the future of Sir Geoffrey's leadership, which was raised only at the end, the interviewer asked me to provide a snappy prediction. That was something I was reluctant to do but the question did allow me a small window of opportunity. I have referred to the curiosity that lay behind my decision to participate in the program. What I wanted to do was publicly air my scepticism over the leadership crisis, a scepticism which was based on some obvious questions I had concerning the political mechanisms required to dump a leader. Here is the relevant extract from the interview.

Presenter (Mike Hosking): What's your pick: will Geoffrey Henry still be prime minister this time next week?

Goldsmith: I think he will still be prime minister for the next few days. Whether or not he goes by next week depends very much on the decision of the parliamentary caucus. We hear that 11 of the 20 members signed a written statement asking him to go. But I don't

think the meeting this afternoon will actually decide things because that's only a meeting of Cabinet which is not a majority of the caucus. And we'll have to ask what's in it for him to actually go? Does he take early retirement? If so, what are the inducements being offered to him? The only other way that they could effect a change in leadership is to propose an alternative candidate and people seem remarkably uncommitted about standing.

Presenter: Well, we'll watch and see.<sup>4</sup>

At the time I thought that I had given a reasonably cautious and nuanced interpretation of the leadership issue. One important piece of information from the weekend's news that did not fit the accepted interpretation of events, for example, was Tom Marsters' clear retreat from his earlier revelations about the letter. Whether or not he had originally intended to mount a challenge to Sir Geoffrey, he now seemed reluctant to get offside with his leader. Jason Brown reported a fascinating encounter with Sir Geoffrey, Mr Marsters and another Cabinet Minister, Dr Joe Williams, at the Rarotonga Golf Club on Saturday, 2 March, the day after Marsters had gone public. Despite Brown's attempt to get confirmation of the letter, the prime minister was exuding confidence.

Sir Geoffrey questioned the loyalty of one of his ministers [Marsters]...while warming up for the first match of the season. He stated in front of Dr Joe Williams: 'If the position is that he is part of the move then he will have to take responsibility for that'. *Cook Islands Press*: Is that the position? Dr Joe Williams: 'No. No, that's not the position'. Sir Geoffrey, out near hole number one, challenged Marsters to a three man interview with himself and Dr Williams. 'We'll see who's lying'. Less than 100 metres away, Marsters declined. 'I've got nothing more to say. I've said all I want to say'. Told of Marsters' response, Henry said, 'That's interesting, You draw your own conclusions'. He went on to abuse *Cook Islands Press* before concluding: 'The whole thing is very clandestine'. It was the first time Henry has spoken directly to *Cook Islands Press* since [the newspaper was] banned from the press conference over the Letters of Guarantee scandal (Brown 1996).

That exchange was an indication that Cabinet solidarity (or at least its public face) had been restored. It should have immediately raised doubts about whether the upcoming Tuesday meeting would press the leadership issue. Moreover, as I pointed out on Morning Report, no one seemed even to be asking whether a negative vote in that forum *could* topple Sir Geoffrey, given that in Westminster-style



parliamentary systems party leadership is usually a caucus matter. If correct, the story that a majority of caucus had signed a letter asking the Prime Minister to take 'early retirement' *was* significant, but equally so was his refusal to go. And if it was only the party executive who had expressed their concerns, then he had even less to be worried about in the short term. In short, there was no obvious alternative candidate, no particular reason for Sir Geoffrey to resign (since no election needed to be held for three years), and very little chance that he would resign, unless he felt like it.

Unfortunately, the qualified and hesitant maunderings of an academic do not make ideal copy. On the 11.00 a.m. news bulletin later that morning, the Radio New Zealand news team decided to put a much more definite spin on my response—despite replaying precisely that part of the interview where I had voiced my scepticism.

News reader: Prime Minister, Sir Geoffrey Henry's political future is uncertain after he sparked a crisis last week by cutting state employees' wages by 15 per cent. Waikato University lecturer, Dr Michael Goldsmith, says Sir Geoffrey's downfall [sic!] was the joint venture in the failed \$70 million Sheraton Hotel. He says Sir Geoffrey will probably last a few more days, but he may be gone by next week.

Dr Michael Goldsmith (Waikato University lecturer): I don't think that the meeting this afternoon will actually decide things...[etc.]

My scepticism about the 'crisis' and my questioning of the process by which it could occur now sounded like a listing of the conditions under which Henry could and probably would be induced to step down.

Over the next few days, newsgatherers (local and international) hovered like vultures outside Sir Geoffrey's house as various meetings were held. But no one in the Cook Islands Party was willing to talk and no new challenges emerged. The media gradually turned their attention to other matters.

## **Metropolitan media coverage of Pacific politics**

Whether I 'got it right' may be a matter of debate. Nevertheless, I believe that the media (especially, the *Cook Islands Press*, who were there on the ground, and the New Zealand news organisations that picked up the *Press* story) did not. On Morning Report, Wednesday 5 March, Jason Brown cheerfully admitted as such: 'good old media,

they always get it wrong', or words to that effect. The question is 'why?' By Brown's own account, he had endured a certain amount of flak from Sir Geoffrey and so a degree of wishful thinking probably entered the equation. But the episode also revealed that the standards by which events in the Cooks are reported by New Zealand media seem to fall short even of those in the sphere of domestic politics (which are low enough). In the rest of this chapter, I advance some possible reasons for this.

To begin with, since the 1987 events in Fiji, I have detected a much greater tendency on the part of New Zealand (and international) media to treat changes of government and leadership in the Pacific from a one-dimensional framework of 'coups'. The coup is not only 'thinkable' now, it has become a standard metaphor for political change and leadership succession in the region. A 'coup' for these purposes is any political change or leadership succession which, or the outcome of which, cannot be foreseen—in short, any sudden or, more importantly, unexpected change. There is a temptation to regard any dramatic or disorderly regime/leadership change as a coup, and clearly this may be important but it is not a necessary criterion. On a world scale, there have been coups which were extremely orderly and even predictable.

Metaphors often work best as figures against a ground. The coup metaphor derives its force partly from a taken-for-granted prior stasis out of which change springs unexpectedly and arbitrarily. A period in the Pacific of marked political change and experimentation from about the mid-60s to mid-70s (when most transitions to independence took place and secessionism was intermittently successful) was followed by a longer period marked by an apparent stability of regimes and leadership in Pacific states. This period lasted from about 1965 to 1987, depending on the state concerned. The dates are only approximate and blurred for the Pacific as a whole, but in specific states one can draw quite firm boundaries between the first phase of change (or transition) and the second phase of comparative stability. The latter includes Taufa'ahau Topou IV's first two decades on the Tongan throne, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara's parliamentary leadership in Fiji, Sir Albert Henry's premiership of the Cooks and Sir Robert Rex's in Niue, Hammer de Robert's and Ieremia Tabai's lengthy presidential administrations in Nauru and Kiribati respectively, Father Walter Lini's Vanuaaku Pati government in Vanuatu, and so on. Their heyday was also the heyday of 'Pacific Way' rhetoric in regional fora, with its

emphasis on consensus, harmony and stability. But from the time of the 1987 Fiji coups onwards, news reporting of the Pacific in New Zealand media has taken on a much more jaundiced air. And since 1987, leadership changes have lent themselves to the new model, aided no doubt by what seems to be an acceleration in the speed of such changes.

Does this have anything to do with the reporting of only 'spectacular' incidents, with the crudeness of thresholds for the reporting of political activity in the Pacific, with a general lack of sustained media coverage? In New Zealand and most other 'developed' societies, leadership changes or the potential for them are the subject of intensive media attention. An important factor in the 'coup' framework proposed here, then, is the intermittent nature of media coverage and the related issue of high reporting 'thresholds' (Galtung and Ruge 1973). In short there is a lack of ongoing coverage to monitor minor fluctuations in political fortunes and what coverage there is therefore treats change as unexpected, as 'newsworthy', as the only news in town.

This is not to say that there is a lack of media coverage in the Cook Islands themselves. There are two newspapers, radio stations, plus incoming TVNZ news programs. But in New Zealand there is very irregular coverage of the Cooks and in recent times it has been dominated by the atmosphere of scandal and corruption surrounding the Winebox Inquiry (Wishart 1995). The Cook Islands have come to be pilloried as the 'Crook' Islands. I should point out that the term is doubly meaningful in Kiwi argot. Not only is a 'crook' a criminal but to *be* 'crook' is to be ill. Discussions of the fiscal and political crisis have carried more than a whiff of the latter connotation. Much has been made of the fact that as the harsh medicine of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) comes into play and public sector jobs dry up, more and more Cooks residents may contemplate exercising their citizenship rights and move to New Zealand to escape an ailing economy. A metropolitan economist not noted either for his pessimism or for favouring structural adjustment packages has questioned whether Cook Islanders would have thrived even without the ADB intervention: '[T]he uneasy message that the numbers suggest is that the Cooks' economy may not be viable given its current population size...Perhaps the Cook Islands Maori will become a people with a land, but with hardly anyone living there' (Easton 1996:53).

## Structuring and selecting news

It is worthwhile to quickly review Galtung and Ruge's (1973) classic explanation of why reporting of events in developing countries is so inadequate and seemingly arbitrary. We can summarise their argument in the form of the following theses.

1. An event is more likely to be reported if it corresponds to the frequency of the news medium (very short-term events and very long-term processes therefore are both unlikely to be reported by daily newspapers, broadcasts and telecasts.
2. The 'bigger' the event the more likely it is to be reported.
3. 'The less ambiguity the more the event will be noticed' (Galtung and Ruge 1973:64).
4. The event is more likely to be reported if it corresponds to notions of meaningfulness and/or relevance in the listeners', watchers', readers' cultures.
5. The event is more likely to be reported if it corresponds to predictions or desires of the audience ('consonance').
6. Within the domain of the meaningful and consonant, the unexpected (or rare) is more likely to be reported.
7. An existing or pre-existing signal is more likely to be listened to repeatedly: 'once something has hit the headlines and been defined as "news", then it will *continue* to be defined as news for some time even if the amplitude is drastically reduced. The channel has been opened and stays open partly to justify its being opened in the first place, partly because of inertia in the system and partly because what was unexpected has now also become familiar' (Galtung and Ruge 1973:65).
8. Less newsworthy close-to-home items are more likely to be reported (have a lower 'threshold value') as opposed to more newsworthy but 'distant' items, partly as a result of that threshold and partly as a result of news editors' wishes to balance different kinds of stories.

These eight factors, say Galtung and Ruge, remain fairly constant and stable (they are common-sense 'universals', we might say), both across cultures and within them.

There are four other factors that specifically characterise coverage by 'developed' (or as they put it 'élite' countries) of 'less developed

ones': events are more likely to become news if they (9) concern élite nations; (10) concern élite people; (11) are more capable of being seen 'in personal terms, as due to the action of specific individuals' (1973:66); and (12) are more negative in their consequences.

I have tried to avoid Galtung and Ruge's rather confusing 'signal' metaphor as far as I can and my glosses may not correspond exactly to theirs. I also think they do not take sufficient account of the material and institutional realities pertaining to media coverage (the presence or absence of media contacts, reporters, camera operators, satellite dishes, etc.) but those factors may be implied in their list of ways that news is filtered. Overall, however, their framework, subject to some modifications, makes enormous sense of the mediated relationship between the Cook Islands and New Zealand. The only major elaboration I would suggest pertains particularly to their fourth point, 'cultural meaningfulness and relevance'. It is true that some news stories make sense because of their concrete cultural familiarity. Others, however, make sense precisely because they can be labelled as 'exotic' and therefore not ruled by 'our' notions of rationality or behaviour. In the latter case, the cultural meaningfulness dimension relates to the sharing of assumptions between metropolitan newsmakers and their taken-for-granted audience.

## **Electoral mechanisms and leadership change**

A last point: complicating the picture for news organisations is the Pacific region's considerable and misunderstood variety in constitutional systems for choosing leaders and determining the length of their tenure in office. In Westminster-style systems, as we all know, the issue of leadership is already more fluid than in presidential systems because state leaders may be changed by processes internal to parties. Also, elections may be held earlier than they absolutely need to be because parliamentary terms are for a maximum period only. Of the Pacific states, at least nine have constitutions which make these provisions perfectly clear. Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu specify that the legislature must be dissolved and new elections must be held after a certain term 'unless sooner dissolved', while the Cook Islands, Niue, and Western Samoa use the phrase 'if it has not been sooner dissolved'.

Unfortunately, the New Zealand media seem to give less weight to

these constitutional niceties in countries like the Cooks than they do in more 'developed' polities.

## Conclusions

The factors that lie behind the kind of overheated media speculation that I have recounted in relation to the Cooks leadership episode can be summarised as follows

- too great a readiness to resort to terms like 'crisis' and 'coup' in media language
- inattention to the specific features of Westminster-style parliamentary systems, both in relation to non-fixed election schedules and the crucial importance of caucus votes on leadership
- in general, the sorts of blinkers outlined in the framework pioneered by Galtung and Ruge in their analysis of the reporting of news concerning the 'Third World'.

None of my criticism should be taken to deny the occurrence of coups or to downplay their significance when they do happen. Nor do I deny that the Cooks' economic woes probably generated a great deal of genuine dissatisfaction with Sir Geoffrey Henry from within the ranks of his own party. But news reporting of challenges to political leadership should eschew recourse to easy metaphor and should pay heed to specific institutional features of the political system concerned.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Hence the use of lower case for 'kremlinology' in the broad sense, reserving the capitalised form to refer to the study of power in the Kremlin itself.
- <sup>2</sup> Or sometimes the mirror image of conspiracy theory: kremlinology thrives where information is scarce and the forces at work generally remain hidden; on the other hand, conspiracy theory thrives where there is an excess of information that does not satisfy theorists' need for mystery.
- <sup>3</sup> One radio report said both and it is remotely possible that caucus and executive are one and the same, though this would be an unusual mode of party organisation. The fact that twenty people were said to be present points to a caucus gathering. On the other hand, that may just have been a coincidence, since another report implied that it was indeed at a meeting of the CIP executive on

Thursday evening that the letter was tabled. The organisational details were crucial but badly reported.

- <sup>4</sup> All transcript extracts cited in this chapter were produced by a professional service, Newztel News Agency Ltd, Wellington.

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# 9

## Political culture and political process: Fiji, American Samoa and Palau

Robert Churney

Over the past several decades, much of the political analysis of Pacific island nations has been preoccupied with evaluating political change and development through the application of culture-bound normative values from Euro-American political philosophical orientations. This has spawned a set of dichotomies which must be questioned. These dichotomies include traditional versus modern, traditional versus democratic, traditional versus legal-rational and élitist versus pluralist.

Traditional has been placed in opposition to modern as if traditional political cultures cannot adapt and have not adapted to current political needs, as if modern is not always a combination of the old and the new, or the old dressed up in new clothes. Traditional has also been placed in opposition to democratic as if traditional political cultures are absolutely not democratic. There are, however, many democratic elements within traditional Pacific island political cultures. There is considerable consultation and consensus-building by chiefs, councils and clans, and hereditary chiefs must be responsive to the needs of their people. In the Samoan *matai* (extended family chief) system the extended family or *aiga* has the power to choose and to dismiss the *matai*. The *matai*, therefore, must be responsive to the needs of the *aiga*. Furthermore, there is a strong sense of responsibility



for the extended family among the *matai* and a strong sense of respect for the *matai* among the members of the *aiga*.

There are, of course, examples of chiefs who abuse their power, and some scholars have used these cases to argue that there is a correlation between traditional Pacific island political systems and corruption. The research on this, however, has been inconclusive and findings are skewed by culture-bound definitions of corruption. At what point does the chiefly prerogative to have 'a little more' become corruption and abuse of power? Is looking after the welfare of the clan by procuring jobs and opportunities for relatives nepotism, or is it fulfillment of responsibility? It is doubtful that there is a higher degree of abuse of power and bending of the rules by traditional chiefs than by elected leaders in other polities such as the United States, Australia or New Zealand. There seems to be a corruptible side of human nature that is universal.

Traditional has been placed in opposition to legal-rational as if a traditional system is neither legal nor rational. However, there is a high degree of legitimacy in traditional systems, and they are quite rational. Although they may be short on written law, there is an abundance of unwritten law. A traditional system grounded in the hereditary chief, the clan, the land and centuries of tradition is a rational, well tuned and integrated social and political system.

The élitism of traditional political cultures has been placed in opposition to pluralism as if pluralism is always and everywhere a better, more effective system. There is much to be said in favour of the élitism of titled chiefs and high clans or the ethnic élitism of indigenous people's rights over immigrant populations. While pluralism no doubt effectively addresses some of the realities of the ethnic makeup of some Pacific island societies, it can also lead to indigenous people handing over control to immigrants and foreigners. Significant social, economic, political and cultural concessions have been made in the Pacific in the name of Euro-American style democracy and pluralism.

The pluralism versus élitism debate is particularly relevant to some Pacific island nations where immigrant populations have come to be powerful blocs in opposition to the indigenous people's political power, land tenure rights and cultural values. In some instances, immigrant populations have become strong agents for Westernisation because they benefit from the distribution of power brought by Euro-American style pluralist democracy.

Pluralism (with its concomitant notion of equity) can be analysed as a culture-bound ideology. It has flourished in the American context as an ideology of immigrant settlers facing a situation where the accommodation of diverse racial, ethnic and linguistic groups was and remains an absolute necessity for the smooth and harmonious operation of society. This ideology did not serve the needs of indigenous North American peoples who barely survived the genocidal 'manifest destiny' of the European settlers. It may be that an indigenous island people's political ideology must be different from pluralism if it is to protect their control of their land, their culture and their future from the diluting effects of imported pluralist political systems.

### **Case studies in traditional versus 'modern' political systems**

#### **Fiji**

After the 1987 coups in Fiji, some of the region's press was strongly influenced by their own culture-bound ideologies and by members of the Fiji-Indian dominated political coalition of the National Federation and Labour Parties which had successfully contested the election that year. There were dramatic reports that the situation in Fiji was apartheid. 'Apartheid in the Pacific' and other ominous headlines abounded. This may have sounded good to Fiji Indians, to assorted Labour Party sympathisers in the region and to the unwary students of Fiji-Indian university professors teaching abroad, but to the great majority of Fijians this characterisation was not only completely inaccurate and unfair, it was also an insult to many years of Fijian patience and accommodation to the Indian immigrants. Furthermore, whereas in South Africa, 3 million whites oppressed 25 million black indigenous people through absolute control over political, economic and social resources. In Fiji, 350,000 indigenous Fijians were trying to retain control of their country and overcome the threat of 350,000 non-indigenous Indians. Although Indians in Fiji cannot own land rightfully belonging to Fijian clans, and cannot dominate national life, they nevertheless have many opportunities within most sectors of Fijian society—a situation quite different from that of South African blacks. Indian immigrants have made a large contribution to the development of Fiji and most Fijians acknowledge and appreciate this.

Much has been written about the coups and the subsequent constitution which guarantees Fijians an advantage in their own land.

Much has been exaggeration. The decision to give Fijians this advantage was not based on racial prejudice and discrimination. Rather, it was based on the philosophical premise that Fijians, as indigenous people, deserve at least a slight hegemony in their own land, especially with regard to ownership of the land. Here the political idea of ethnic pluralism is starkly opposed to the political idea of indigenous people's rights.

The Fijian approach demonstrates the strong case for Pacific island political systems to have built-in features that protect indigenous people. Many Pacific island nations, particularly smaller ones like Palau and other Micronesian nations, are vulnerable to the dilution of the indigenous people's power and control over their land, national life and culture through the workings of democratic pluralism. Fiji provides a good lesson for other Pacific island nations experiencing rapid growth in immigrant populations. That lesson is to not allow a Fiji-type of racial or ethnic-based political problem to develop if it can be prevented.

Another important issue to consider in an analysis of Pacific island political cultures is the opposition between titled élitism and the Western model of social egalitarianism. In the egalitarian model, more emphasis is placed on the quantity of people voting than on the quality of the cohesion of the community, the quality of leadership and the quality of 'followership'—that is, the degree to which people view their leaders as legitimate and the degree to which they follow their lead.

Many people have come to accept unquestioningly the ideological tenet that egalitarian democracy is inherently better than titled élitism as a method of choosing leaders. This is what the American experience was all about—getting away from the titled nobility and the rigid class society of Europe. There is little doubt that a more egalitarian democracy does free up the creative energies of many people who might otherwise be constrained by a rigid class structure. But it is necessary to question the assumption that egalitarian democracy is inherently better than a more hierarchical system with a titled élite and established social class structure.

Is it better to have the quantity of wider participation (or many times only the semblance of wider participation), even when the quality of leadership and the quality of followership is lacking? Democracy is sometimes a chaotic and ineffective type of government where everyone thinks their opinions are of equal value and where

nothing gets done to address real problems. All issues are not created equal, all ideas about solutions are not created equal and all leaders and followers are not created equal.

An élitist system may produce a higher quality of leadership and followership through a well groomed élite class of leaders and a populace socialised to follow them and accept their leadership. Historically, this kind of system has worked effectively in some societies and today throughout the world there are many nations where such models exist and function well. Within the Asia-Pacific region there are examples of traditional and more autocratic political systems successfully meeting the challenges of national social and economic development.

### American Samoa

In the islands of Samoa traditional political culture continues to be viable and functional. In both American Samoa and Western Samoa the underlying *matai* system and the *faasamoa* [the Samoan way of life] are controlling social institutions. The *matai* system of extended-family management provides a high degree of integration to society and meaning to individual Samoans. Under this system, the *matai*, or extended family chief, controls the land and through extensive consultation with the family provides guidance and management. In Samoan society everybody has a clearly defined position and one's privileges and responsibilities are equally well defined.

In American Samoa there is an American-style bicameral legislature called a *fono*, a governor as chief executive and a cabinet of directors for the various administrative branches of the government bureaucracy. By both written law and unwritten custom, it is the class of titled *matai* or members from *matai* families who dominate most areas of national life, including politics and government administration.

A useful cross-cultural analytical tool for explaining the Samoan system is the idea of surface culture versus deep culture. For example, someone traveling to American Samoa or Palau for the first time would take a look around them and see a surface culture which appears 'American'. They would see American-type structures of government and American-type lifestyles and behaviours. They might think that everything works according to American cultural logic. But if they stay a little longer they may become confused and frustrated that things actually do not work according to an American cultural

logic. If they do not move along the continuum of cross-cultural understanding but instead enter the realm of culture shock, they may become bitter, disillusioned and highly critical. They have not entered the 'twilight zone', but have unwittingly stumbled upon the difference between surface and deep culture. Below the superficial veneer of Americanism, the Samoan and Palauan cultural logics still control and direct the thinking and behaviour of the people.

In American Samoa the *matai* system has been integrated into the American-style superstructure of government thus guaranteeing its continuing existence. For example, in the bicameral American Samoa *fono* or legislature, members of the Senate must be titled *matais* from the various counties. And although the other house does not have this requirement, usually (with some exceptions), titled *matai* or members of *matai* families are elected. The same can be said of the position of governor and the positions of the governor's cabinet. The titled *matai* and members of *matai* families in Samoan political culture retain a high degree of legitimacy and the people respect and follow them.

The *matais* are an élite class of people who, together with their families get a little larger share of what there is to be gotten in terms of wealth, power and prestige. For example, in American Samoa it is the sons and daughters of *matai* families who get a slightly larger share of government-sponsored scholarships and in this way could be seen as being groomed for future leadership. They also tend to get a larger share of government-sponsored loans and other programs which support economic development. At the same time, there is evidence of egalitarian/merit-based benefits going to individuals of non-titled families. American Samoa is not simply a rigid caste society where the élite oppress the commoners. Rather, titled élitism is legitimate in the eyes of the people and functional in their societies. There is coexistence between traditional élitism and more democratic egalitarianism with its pluralistic distribution of status, power and wealth based upon notions of merit and performance.

## Palau

It should be pointed out that Palauan society is a little less stratified and hierarchical than Fijian or Samoan society. And although there is still a degree of high clan élitism in Palau, since the end of World War II there has been room for individualistic merit-based achievement and climbing up the social ladder. Examples of this include various

prominent politicians and businessmen from Peleliu and Angaur including the current President, Mr Kuniwo Nakamura, and two former ones, Lazarus Salii and Haruo Remeliik. Many observers have pointed out that Palauans tend to be more individualistic than some of their Micronesian neighbours.

Opportunities and competition for status, wealth, power and prestige in Palau have expanded over the years and will likely expand more dramatically until 2002, while the compact money continues to flow. The stakes were high in the first post-independence/post-compact election of November 1996. The election to fill 30 national congress seats, the presidency and vice-presidency, was lively and intensely competitive, but also friendly. Although there were some heated exchanges between the incumbent, President Kuniwo Nakamura, and opposition figure, Senator Joshua Koshiha, all the candidates exercised restraint and good taste during their campaigns. Candidates campaigned on issues, ideas and their individual track records, but in the background there were many family and clan alliances and the resultant dynamics at work as well. Also at work were non-clan based alliances forged at the workplace or through business and commercial activities. Campaigns were well organised by committees of family, friends and supporters and were well funded. It was a celebration of democracy as well as a celebration of clan and family. It was characterised by an exuberant post-independence optimism as well as some trepidation and anxiety over the task of trying to increase Palau's political and economic self-sufficiency and deal with the consequences of the recent collapse of the huge bridge connecting Koror town to Palau's big island, Babeldaob.

The election brought to mind certain cultural generalisations which have been heard before: Palauans are aggressive and impetuous; they are competitive and prone to factionalism; they are opportunistic and quick to seize the day even if it means reversals in the support of candidates and issues. Palauans, however, are as much masters of compromise and cooperation as they are masters of intrigue and manoeuvring. They are wary of any one individual or faction gaining too much power and they are efficient at shifting or adjusting the balances of power. Although the operations of much of the government decision-making structures are open and transparent, the opaque and hidden traditional Palauan house-of-whispers approach

to decision-making is still practiced.

Some observers have referred to the Palauan decision-making and leadership style as indecisive, opportunistic or prone to sudden reversals of stands on candidates, policies and issues. However, some of this, as well as some of the factionalism, may be part of the consensus development and maintenance process. For example, a decision might be made on an issue and then afterwards there is, for one reason or another, dissatisfaction by an individual or group causing ripples which lead to changes and even reversals in order to accommodate and reach a new consensus. Alternatively, even though a consensual style normally prevails, leaders are sometimes autocratic and impulsive and a decision may be made without what is perceived as wide enough consultation. Dissatisfaction might then arise causing pressure to adjust or reverse the decision to accommodate a broader consensus. This process may also be the result of a certain mismatch between a slower more consensual traditional Palauan decision-making style and the demands of today's bureaucratic administration for a more decisive and faster style of response. Some factionalism may also be explained in this manner, especially when a decision is not changed to suit the dissatisfied. In addition, some factionalism may be part of the balance of power or leveling process. When there is dissatisfaction over a decision, or when an individual or group is perceived as being too powerful, alliances and factions form, shift and rearrange until a satisfactory decision or balance emerges. All societies have such balance of power and levelling mechanisms to challenge decisions or level or balance the power or ego of individuals and groups. Factionalism, shifting alliances and reversals may also be the result of pure opportunism, where individuals are simply seeking to promote their own or their group's agenda.

Palau's 1996 campaign exhibited some increase in American-style campaign practices, characterised by increased use of candidate communications via television, radio, posters and rallies. It also saw the increased prominence of candidate images and appeals to a new generation of young, idealistic and somewhat malleable voters. The increased role of money in the campaign was also a significant trend. Many candidates found themselves compelled to spend more money on the campaign because their opponents were spending more. This entailed increased spending on a whole range of campaign activities from campaign communications to travelling off-island to campaign among Palauan voters living in Saipan, Guam, Hawaii and California.

With regard to the legitimacy of Palauan leaders and the characteristics which Palauans feel that the ideal leader should possess, I have been told by many Palauans that in general they value middle of the road leaders who are neither too rich nor too poor, too powerful or too weak, who are respectful and not too egotistical and self-promoting, and who support customs and families in need. It has been said that a family will never forget a politician that shows true concern for its welfare, especially in times of real need like during an important custom. In Palau it is important for a politician to attend and lend support to family customs, even those of non-relatives. In fact, during the year prior to the election, many Palauan politicians stepped up their attendance of customs in order to ensure that they would be in the good graces of key families and clans. With regard to wealth, there are of course prominent Palauan politicians who have considerable wealth, however other elements of their overall style and persona have offset negative perceptions of them as exhibiting the arrogance of the wealthy. Their wealth did not prevent them from being respectful in a Palauan way.

The same tension and competition between traditional and imported political cultures seen in Fiji and American Samoa is evident in Palau. In Palau, as in much of the Pacific, traditional political culture consists of three main elements—chief, clan and land. These three elements are tightly interwoven and changes in one can often bring about changes in the others. A decrease in the power of the chief can lead to a weakening in power of the clan and its ability to control its land. Weak chiefs and weak clans often lead to changes in land tenure laws—to the benefit of non-indigenous foreign immigrants or to new classes of indigenous people.

However, there can also be another pattern whereby change in one element does not affect the other two. For example, the institution of chieftainship may weaken and even disappear, while the clan remains the primary social, political and economic group and still retains control of the land. The roles and functions of chiefs may diminish and be replaced by the roles and functions of imported government and administrative apparatus. Configurations of clans may make up a ruling class of indigenous people but utilise imported forms of government and administration, while chieftainship is relegated to the museum and the history books as a quaint but no longer relevant institution. Some Palauans fear that this may be the direction that Palau is headed unless the institution of the Palauan chief is



strengthened and further integrated into government administration.

Throughout the last decade and a half we have witnessed the competition between the Palauan chief and American-style national government—between rule by chiefs and their councils and rule by elected officials, regulation, litigation and bureaucracy. We have seen how the implementation of a constitutional and bureaucratic form of government and administration (at both local and national levels) has eroded some of the power of traditional chiefs. We have also seen efforts by Palauan chiefs to retain elements of their traditional powers.

## Conclusion

Most people would agree that with regards to society and culture, the only real constant is change. The ways we view this change and the values we place upon this change, however, are important issues. There is nothing intrinsically and universally good about modernism, just as there is nothing intrinsically and universally good about tradition.

Both modernists and traditionalists can miss two important points: 1) societies must remain integrated one way or another, and 2) societies must remain functional one way or another. Sometimes elements of traditional culture and/or elements of imported culture can assist societies in remaining integrated and functional. There is no universally correct way to achieve and maintain integration and functionality. Human societies are capable of the most diverse and highly creative cultural responses to the same basic human and social needs.

Over the years I have heard many non-Pacific islander expatriates promoting a disparaging and unfair 'bad chief' stereotype where chiefly systems are judged ineffective due to a belief that all chiefs are prone to greed, corruption and abuse of power. It is highly unlikely, however, that there are more bad hereditary chiefs in traditional political cultures than there are bad elected leaders in Euro-American democratic ones. Analysts of Pacific political systems should not dismiss entire traditional systems because in some instances individual chiefs indulge in greed, corruption and abuse of power.

Although social, political and cultural change is inevitable, it may be important for the purposes of integration and functionality that the people of a society retain a certain degree of control or direction over some of this change—this is what many Pacific island societies have

been trying to do. Fiji and American Samoa are somewhat more rooted in their traditional culture than Palau, and somewhat more settled in their integration of elements of traditional political culture into their current system of politics and government administration. In these two countries there is a considerable degree of coexistence between, and synthesis of, the traditional and the imported Euro-American models.

Palau is in the midst of rapid social and cultural change and it may be too early to predict which way things will go. The Palauan clan remains a viable social, political and economic unit. Clans, clan alliances and loyalty to relatives are major determining factors in Palauan politics, and chiefs continue to be greatly respected. Imported American-style democracy and government administrative practices, however, may be taking a toll on the institution of Palauan chieftainship. The country's two high chiefs, Ibedul and Reklai, as well as other Palauan clan chiefs, retain considerable authority and influence. They are nevertheless well aware of the competition between themselves and various institutions of the national government and are striving to preserve and integrate their power with it.

The patterns of social and cultural change taking place in the Pacific are no different than those anywhere else throughout human history. Cultural diffusion and invasion, acceptance and rejection, replacement and synthesis are all part of the dynamic by which human societies remain vibrant and relevant. But the valuation of cultural change is an important issue for social scientists, journalists and other analysts who interpret and record the events.

# 10

## A time for heroes: leadership and political change in the Pacific

**Tim Bruce**

The 21st century brings the Pacific islands unwelcome currents. Global economic integration will strip Pacific islands of trade preferences. Radical weather change, reef damage and sea-level rise will push natural resources toward extinction. To buck the tide, we do not need business-as-usual leaders. We need mould-breaking, heroic leadership. Education is key. We had better start teaching our kids political science from the cradle.

In the next century, social ills rooted in economic injustice and flourishing in ethnic and religious strife, will continue to generate desperation in the world's poverty pockets. Instead of stirring clouds of human rights allegations, we must learn to live with the migrants and refugees fleeing to our shores.

Television, the great leveller, homogenises cultural values in every corner of the world. Indigenous language erodes. Island cultures are swamped. The heroic leader will need both a worldly education and a 'bend-your-back for others' apprenticeship in traditional island service.

Big league leaders fail to implement desirable policies. They cannot end the reliance on food imports that threatens community security. Like us, they talk until they are blue in the face to local business about the need for import substitution. Sophisticated governments cannot

make water catchment mandatory. Governments with massive resources do not have the political will to switch from foreign oil to solar power. Should we expect more from our island leaders?

We have no choice. It is heroic leadership or the ashcan. For the Pacific islands the survival policies for the 21st century are not only desirable, they are a matter of life and death. When the islands need nimble-footed leaders, they have instead, leaders hamstrung by cultural barriers. Getting to the high ground of safety in the Pacific islands means negotiating not only the customary shoals of democratic process, but also passing through a thicket of cultural barriers and leadership traditions unheard of in most mainland jurisdictions.

### **Major future trends and challenges to island security**

#### **Economy: Global economic integration will reduce trade barriers and strip Pacific islands of trade preferences**

Reduction in tariff barriers provided by international trade agreements (e.g. GATT) will take advantage from Pacific island trade preferences and remove the islands' competitive edge with the result that traditional exports will wither or die. At the same time, budget constraints and donor disenchantment will reduce overseas financial assistance. Caught in the squeeze, Pacific islands will turn full attention to developing a private sector, liberalising their economies and encouraging investment for manufacturing and tourism.

#### **Environment: Nature will suffer under pressure from worldwide development—radical weather change, reef damage and sea-level rise threaten**

The 'greenhouse effect' (global warming from atmospheric pollution) will cause sea-level rise and inundate low-lying islands. Coral reefs will continue to undergo heavy damage from pollution. Ozone degeneration will continue to affect the oceans' phytoplankton which provides 40 to 60 per cent of the planet's oxygen. Sustainable yields from forests and fisheries will finally be achieved after near extinction of some natural resources in the first part of the 21st century.

**Population: The gulf between the world's haves and have nots will widen as migrants and refugees hit the road**

Refugees from environmental and social disaster will spread across the globe in search of food, jobs and safety and will press against Pacific island shores. Within the islands themselves, the problem will be either too many local people for resources (migrants rejected), too few people to sustain economies of scale (foreign workers accepted) or an unwelcome exodus of local people for opportunities abroad (cultural extinction).

**Communication: Satellite networks will bring television's 'megaculture' to every corner of the world, swamping island cultures and eroding indigenous languages**

Indigenous languages, the backbone of Pacific island cultures, will break under the weight of television's cultural imperialism dominated by Western values and the English language. But, at the same time, island education will be revolutionised by access to a global network of information in island classrooms and libraries. As instantaneous global telecommunications overthrow the ancient tyrannies of time and space, Pacific islands will become home to free-floating information workers who live in electronic cottages.

**Energy: Oil will no longer be the source of energy security—Pacific islands will make a virtue of necessity by turning to renewable energy sources**

Island economies vulnerable to oil shocks and prolonged high petroleum prices will see budgets gobbled to pay fuel bills. Early investment in solar thermal or other renewable energy security will pay off for far-sighted energy planners.

**Security: The world will suffer a chronic low-level 'security fever'—supplies and trade sometimes disrupted, tourism periodically chilled**

Social ills rooted in resource scarcity, overcrowding, social and economic injustice, ethnic and religious strife, will ignite brush fires of violence in the world's poverty pockets.

## **Barriers and traditions?**

### **Blood is thicker than water**

On most Pacific islands entire populations can be related by blood. Demands for loyalty to one's clan can be every bit as strong as the demands for loyalty to the democratic process. Most frequently it is the islands' skein of family ties that handcuffs public policy. Answering the call of clan loyalty often means ignoring the voice of the majority. Rapid transit would defeat traffic snarls. But how does the policymaker snatch profits from the clan owners of auto dealerships? Similarly, labour law violations are difficult to enforce against cousins—even if the wrath of the US Congress is the result. In the vicious currents of the 21st century, public policy guided by clan loyalty will put Pacific islands on the rocks. The heroic leader must not only put the greater good first, the hero must have the eloquence to convince the clan that it is in their self-interest to do so.

### **Limits on public debate**

Cultural constraints against public confrontation with one's opponents sometimes limits the debate necessary to form consensus and implement policy. The confrontational style—often a valuable asset to public education in the West—is not, generally, culturally acceptable in the islands.

### **Traditional leadership system**

Chiefly prerogatives often operate alongside democratic institutions. Elected leaders may know that stronger vocational education provides the talent needed for self-sufficiency: electricians, plumbers, medical technicians. But a traditional chief may favour a generation of business graduates. It is a political risk for the elected representative of a small island to advance a major shift in education policy in opposition to a traditional authority figure.

### **Ethnic divisions**

Sometimes deep ethnic divisions, often a legacy of colonial history, complicate the policy process, create pressures for discrimination and unbalance policy.

## **Key local advisors missing**

Many times there is a lack of local talent in key disciplines. More indigenous economists, for example, are needed to advise the leaders. The Pacific islands are full of people with vision, with strength, with courage. But heroes have not yet emerged. Nothing less than heroic leadership is needed to turn global trends to island advantage. Can heroes be created? Yes. Education in political science is the answer.

## **Creation of heroic leadership**

### **Children: political science taught early and often**

Political science, a course normally reserved for college, should be introduced in elementary school or kindergarten. An understanding of the limits of Pacific island political power, presently a back room topic for the local practitioners of the political arts, should be brought into the light of the classroom. The political science principles of consensus, compromise, the greatest good for the greatest number, together with the 'listening ear' and honour for political commitment, must become as basic to the students' early education as the principles of reading, writing and arithmetic. In fact, the basics should become readin', writin' and politics. Furthermore, political science cannot be taught separately from economics and statistics. As surely as water and air are essential elements of planet earth, economics and statistics are essential to political education.

### **Local leaders: college and village pathways linked**

It will not suffice to send the islands' best and brightest to fine educational institutions and expect this to be sufficient preparation to lead at home. To lead at home, island leaders will need a home education in practical community service. To overcome the obstacles to implementation of policies necessary for island security in the 21st century, the heroic island leaders will need a dual education and dual skills. Leaders will need both a modern 'Western-style' education and a traditional apprenticeship in island service which teaches respect for ancestral custom.

### **Community: more input on the crucial issues**

In the past, Pacific islands have seen extensive public education programs as the prelude to crucial political status votes. Programs of

like intensity, properly funded, should now become commonplace to provide villages with education programs to guide policy decisions on a variety of issues beyond those of political status. For example, if the community plans to diversify its economy with factories requiring the importation of foreign labour, the burden of a large non-indigenous worker population on government services and culture must be appreciated. If water security indicates the need for mandatory water catchment for all homes, then the unbending prerogative of property ownership should be debated against the unalterable fact of water scarcity.

## **Finding the path to the high ground**

Pacific island peoples can appreciate as well as any others the trends that confront their security. Most island leaders do not need a social scientist to tell them the 21st century brings unwelcome currents. Leaders see the islands as extremely vulnerable to high energy prices, economic drought, climate change and a host of threats carried on the rising tide of the next century. The signs are clear—Pacific island peoples had better find the path to the high ground or be swept away. Heroic leadership is needed. Consultants have been bombarding island leaders for decades with suggestions on how to cope. Island leaders know they should become self-sufficient in food and encourage import substitution. They know water scarcity calls for mandatory water catchment. They know they should switch to solar power and end reliance on foreign oil. But how to do it? Old habits are hard to break. Powerful lobbies stand in the way.

Providing security to Pacific island peoples in the next century will require a broader role for education and a new leadership mandate. Given the unique cultural restraints on leadership, the Pacific islands need visionary, exceptionally strong and courageous leadership. Pacific island security in the next century will require a break with the unique cultural restraints that have hobbled our leaders. Education—political science taught from the cradle to the grave—can help create courageous leadership. The 21st century is a new ball game. Run-of-the-mill leaders won't cut it. We need heroes.



# Appendix

## Report on and extracts from the 17th Island Conference on Public Administration: the Guam commonwealth<sup>1</sup>

Richard H.J. Wyttenbach-Santos

Following two plebiscites in 1982, Guam's non-partisan Commission on Self-Determination drafted a proposed Commonwealth Act to change fundamentally the political relationship between Guam and the United States.

Currently, Guam is an organised, unincorporated, non-self governing territory of the United States. The government of Guam was organised by the *Organic Act* passed in 1950 by the US Congress and signed by President Truman. It provided for civilian government and American citizenship for the people of Guam and has been amended several times.

Under the 1996 version of the law, the US Congress may void or modify, at any time, for any reason, any law passed by the locally elected Guam Legislature and signed by the locally elected Guam Governor. The US Federal government also may apply federal laws, rules, and regulations to Guam without Guam's approval. The US has eminent domain authority over Guam and controls immigration, customs and telecommunications policies, and foreign and military affairs. For some areas, such as immigration, Guam is treated as domestic while, for other areas, such as customs, Guam is treated as foreign.

The United States reports to the United Nations each year on what

it, as the 'administering power' is doing to lead Guam toward 'self-government or independence'. The United States government therefore agrees that Guam is 'non-self governing,' that is, a colony.

The preamble of the Draft Commonwealth Act states that the 'Act articulates the people of Guam's aspirations for greater self-government, as a Commonwealth within a continuing and improved relationship with the United States'. It provides for American citizenship with the greatest possible autonomy for the people of Guam. Its 12 articles cover the political relationship; applicability of federal law; foreign affairs and defence; courts; trade; taxation; immigration; labour; transportation and telecommunications; land, natural resources and utilities; US financial assistance; and technical amendments and interpretation.

The draft act provides for a partnership relationship between Guam and the United States. It has 'mutual consent' as a cornerstone—once approved, any change to any part of the act would have to be by mutual consent of both parties. It does not provide for self-government since the United Nations system only recognises independence, complete integration into another nation, or free-association as fulfilling the criteria for self-government. Commonwealth status for Guam is therefore recognised in the act as an interim step with the final step being a future act of self-determination by the indigenous Chamorro people.

The draft act also provides for preferential rights and programs for Chamorros: Article 1 contains preferential rights for self-determination, land, culture, economic, social, economic, and training, and a Chamorro Land Trust is specifically provided for by name.

During the drafting of the Commonwealth Act, the Guam Commission on Self-Determination was chaired by Democratic Governor Ricardo (Ricky) J. Bordallo. In January 1987, the Republican candidate, Joseph (Joe) F. Ada, defeated the incumbent, Bordallo. The new Governor determined that the work accomplished by the Bordallo administration could not be improved upon and accepted it whole-heartedly. In the fall of 1987, it was put before the people, non-Chamorros and Chamorros, after an extensive educational campaign. The first plebiscite approved all but two articles: one on Chamorro preferential rights and one giving Guam control over immigration. Those two articles were slightly modified, in a stronger 'pro-Chamorro' direction, and a second plebiscite overwhelmingly approved them.

The approved draft act was submitted to the US Congress in February 1988. Under the US Constitution, the Congress has full plenary authority over territories. Additionally, the 1899 Treaty of Paris, which ceded Guam to the United States, states that the Congress shall determine the 'civil rights and political status of the native inhabitants'.

In 1989, the US House of Representatives' sub-committee with oversight of territories held a hearing on the draft act in Honolulu. After this public hearing, the Chairman of the House Sub-Committee on Insular and Territorial Affairs, the Honorable Ron de Lugo (the delegate from the non-self governing territory of the US Virgin Islands), instructed the Commission and the US Department of Interior's Office of Territorial and International Affairs (OTIA) to evaluate, discuss and develop positions and agreements, on the provisions of the Act, for the Congress to consider.

While Dr. Robert F. Rogers, the Executive Director of the Commission under Governor Bordallo, said that Governor Bordallo believed that serious and substantial negotiations on the preferential Chamorro items would be part of the 'game plan', Governor Ada took a strong 'no negotiations, no compromises' stance during his first term.<sup>2</sup> Governor Ada, however, changed his position on negotiations in 1990. Since that year, the Commission has taken the position that its emphasis would be on the results that Guam desired and not necessarily on the exact language of the draft Commonwealth Act. Mr Leland Bettis, the Executive Director of the Commission in 1996,<sup>3</sup> stated at the Island Conference on Public Administration in 1996 (ICPA 96) that, 'The Commission, since 1990 has adopted a posture and (sic) it was the *intent of a particular section not its particular wording* that formed the basis of an agreeable document with the US Government' (italics in original).

Between 1990 and 1992 many agreements were reached between the Bush Administration Task Force on Guam (BATFOG) and the Commission. Many of the compromises maintained the intent of the draft act's provisions, covering preferential rights for Chamorros for cultural preservation and land usage, immigration and mutual consent, among others. On the very last day of the Bush administration (January of 1993), however, BATFOG released an inch-thick report which 'pulled the rug' from under the compromise agreements the Bush administration had signed with the Commission. The report forthrightly stated that the agreements had been negotiated

and signed, but on second thought they were renounced as being 'unconstitutional'.

The Clinton Administration disbanded OTIA and has used presidential appointees to head the negotiations with the Guam Commission. Unfortunately, it took years to appoint the first appointee, and then he left the job, to be replaced by another who also soon left. A third dropped from consideration before the official appointment and by 1996 Guam was working with the fourth Presidential representative in three years, Mr John Garamendi, the Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

## Negotiations in 1996

Work progressed throughout 1996. At first, a June deadline established for drafting an acceptable document for presentation to the Congress was supported by both the Executive Branch and the Guam Commission on Self-Determination. This deadline was designed, according to Leland Bettis, 'to get the bureaucracy moving and beyond its almost century-old colonial view of Guam'. Mr Garamendi also got the White House to appoint a deputy to assist him. Mr Mark Mulvey (a career State Department employee) was in charge of the day-to-day process and pressed the Executive Branch departments and agencies for comment and input.

Pressuring the bureaucrats did not work. Resentment developed and according to Leland Bettis, 'the aggravation existed because the bureaucracy is (1) used to controlling the Guam issues, [and] (2) used to doing nothing very slowly'.

The process did, however, produce some results. In meetings in Washington, DC, in late April, several of the basic issues (Chamorro self-determination, immigration control, effect of federal laws, mutual consent and Guam's self-governance) were discussed. As a result of these discussions, an agreeable compromise on Chamorro self-determination was achieved at a June meeting.

Governor Carl T.C. Gutierrez spoke with pride of this compromise at ICPA 96, but he did not reveal the exact wording.

Let me give you an example of a flexible response using Chamorro self-determination. For years we have tried to hash this out but could not reach agreement because the US Justice Department could not support a government-sponsored election that allowed only indigenous peoples to vote. For us, however, the right of the

Chamorro, people, the *I Taotao Tano*, to determine the ultimate political status of Guam, is simply not negotiable.

Using 'innovation', we added language that referenced the international legal standards which provide for the right of self-determination in the decolonization process. We also used existing US legal authorities which recognize the Chamorro people. Following that, we inserted language that made the US Congress call for the Chamorros to express their desire for the ultimate political status for Guam. In a nutshell we avoided the issue of a government-sponsored election by simply not referencing it. But what we added were supplementary agreements in which the US government recognizes the role of the United Nations in supervising this process. So, among other things, we have elevated the issue of Chamorro self-determination to where it belongs, in the orbit of an internationally sanctioned process.

Using innovation, we overcame an obstacle, and reached our goal. This will not always work of course. But as long as we are trying to establish a partnership with the United States, we have to come to terms with the fact that a partnership requires meeting all legal and political concerns both of the US and Guam. That is the art of negotiation.

A second issue I want to re-emphasize, is that Commonwealth is not Guam's ultimate political status. Commonwealth is a transitional status that will be followed by an exercise of Chamorro self-determination.

Leland Bettis, also described these negotiations to ICPA 96.

Following a round of heated (and often animated) discussions on Chamorro self-determination during the April meetings, the Commission and Mr Garamendi began to reach closure on the issue. After hearing agency comments—particularly the Department of Justice—Mr Garamendi and the Commission did some reverse engineering with the question, 'What is intended to be accomplished by the act of Chamorro self-determination?'

Having established that the intent of an act of Chamorro self-determination was an expression of the view of the Chamorro people on their internationally recognized right to decolonize their homeland, and in view of the Department of Justice view that a *government sanctioned* vote on this process would be unconstitutional, a process to accomplish Guam's purpose, but which kept the government's role silent, was hammered out.

In the end, agreement was reached on language which recognized the US obligations under the U.N. Charter and other international treaties to Guam and to the Chamorro people. Congress' power over Guam with respect to a political status process, and which further provided for Congress calling on the Chamorro people to express their desire for

a future political status of the island. Added to that, the Commission requested a side letter from the Special Representative noting that this process was intended to meet the US government's international obligation to promote Guam's decolonization. Additionally, the definition of Chamorro was significantly tightened up, with its benchmark set in the 1899 Treaty of Paris at the time when the US assumed responsibility for Guam's 'native inhabitants.

Did the agreement satisfy everyone? No. The Department of Justice thought it went to (sic) far. Some members of the Commission thought that the United States' powers under the territorial closure should not be part of the basis for Congressional action on Chamorro self-determination and that the United States should assume a more direct responsibility in relation to the vote.

What did come out of the agreement was a US expression of its obligations and powers to execute its obligations with respect to Guam's decolonization by the Chamorro people. The mechanism to execute the vote, however, is to be left to an act of Guam, and the implementation of an act of self-determination is to be determined by the political processes that flow from the act of the people of Guam.

There is an old axiom in negotiations that goes something to the effect 'if neither side is fully satisfied, then you probably have a good agreement'. If I (and probably most members of the Commission) had their ideal language agreed to by the US government, we would want the US to admit to its past failures and get the United States government to agree to implement a Chamorro self-determination decision, whether it were statehood, free association or independence. However, the process of negotiations, requires a recognition that more than one party has to agree. On the issue of Chamorro self-determination, Mr Garamendi oversaw a process which reflected the US responsibilities with respect to the Chamorro people and Guam's decolonization without rubbing the insult of history in the face of the US government. More importantly, the agreement on Chamorro self-determination would implement US obligations to Guam in a process which provides for the international rights of the Chamorro people to Guam's decolonization.

Despite these lengthy descriptions of the draft agreement, the Guam Commission on Self-Government did not reveal the negotiated language, stating that it was a 'work in progress,' and must be seen in its entirety to evaluate the success (or otherwise) of the Commission. Contrary to Commission policy, however, the section on Self-Determination was released to the media by Senator and Commission member Hope Cristobal. In her analysis, the language 'cleverly eliminate[d] the Chamorro right to self-determination'.

By 1996 two other compromises had been negotiated and recorded

in the public domain. Mr I. Michael Hyman, the Presidential negotiator in 1994, had signed a letter addressed to Governor Ada containing compromise language on 'mutual consent,' dated 17 October 1994. The compromise language contained in that letter is as follows.

The Congress, acting to the extent constitutionally permissible, in the exercise of its plenary authority under Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2 of the Constitution, and the people of Guam agree that no provision of this covenant may be altered, amended, or repealed without the mutual consent of the Government of Guam and the United States Congress.<sup>4</sup>

This language was hailed by the Ada Administration as a significant achievement. Reportedly, the US Department of Justice agreed to it only after the insertion of the phrase 'acting to the extent constitutionally permissible' since it still believed that mutual consent is unconstitutional in that one Congress may not constitutionally bind a future Congress. It is not known if this language was used in 1996 although apparently 'mutual consent' was discussed at an April 1996 session described as 'heated'.

The second area of compromise which was somewhat revealed to the public pertained to the applicability of federal laws to Guam. Governor Guterrez told ICPA 96 that

One of the most critical areas that we have reached agreement on, in principle, is applicability of federal laws to Guam. Mr Garamendi and the Commission have reached consensus on the creation of a five member Joint Commission to include three cabinet level federal officials and two appointees by the Governor of Guam. The commission would have ultimate power to determine whether particular federal regulations are appropriate to apply to Guam. Despite significant opposition by some bureaucrats, this recommendation is being made to President Clinton.

Compare this language with that of the draft act, voted by the people of Guam.

Except as otherwise intended by this Act, no federal laws, rules or regulations passed after the date of this Act shall apply to the Commonwealth of Guam unless mutually consented to by the United States and the government of the Commonwealth of Guam.

203. Joint Commission.

(a)(I) There is hereby created a Joint Commission on the Applicability of Federal Law (hereinafter 'Commission') to be composed of seven (7) members: three (3) members and their successors appointed by the

President of the United States and four (4) members and their successors appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Guam...

In late June 1996, the Commission, Mr Garamendi and representatives of all agencies affected met for two days. Those two days of meetings provided, in Leland Bettis' words,

the return of the bureaucracy to the helm of the status negotiations...Mid-level representatives of agencies openly disagreed with the approach Mr Garamendi had undertaken and were less than subtle in their remarks, suggesting that Mr Garamendi— notwithstanding his portfolio as US Special Representative—would not direct the policy of their individual agencies. Mr Garamendi did bring some players back to the table on the immigration issue—Justice (INS), Labor and State—and we did move through most all of the Commonwealth Act addressing issues of concern of the Department of Justice. However, from July on—in view of the elections and the natural bureaucratic entrenchment (and inelasticity) that occurs as government approaches the 'unknown'—the issues of immigration and land would be the only ones which were proactively pursued. Discussion of other issues became muddled, and the focus would largely be on damage control—to prevent us from having to play too much 'catch-up' later in the process. While we did work through many tough immigration matters, in the case of land the US government position slipped backwards representing the worst in bureaucratic meddling in an issue of larger national interests.

At ICPA 96, Governor Gutierrez listed the unresolved issues requiring direct guidance by the president as follows.

1. the return of excess military land to Guam and a process for reviewing what lands the military really requires
2. some portions, important portions, of the immigration package, as they relate to a continuing US interest in Guam immigration issues
3. environmental clean-up of property and the future applicability of US environmental laws of Guam
4. the trading relationship between the customs areas of Guam and the US.

Gutierrez also decribed how presidential guidance was pursued.

At a meeting between Mr Garamendi and Governor Gutierrez in mid-July in Salt Lake City, the Governor, according to Leland Bettis, 'laid out what he believed was the necessity of a [sic] moving beyond agency-by-agency 'policy' and the need for the U.S. government to address its interests in Guam holistically. Mr Garamendi, having been the witness to (and subject of) the ascendancy of agency policy over national policy agreed with the Governor's assessment. Governor



Gutierrez, Mr Garamendi and Congressman Underwood all began to focus on meeting with Mr Panetta—the White House Chief of Staff—to make a case for a Presidential directive or Cabinet-level understanding that a national policy for Guam (and not an agency's 'policy' view of Guam) would set the framework for US negotiations with Guam.

By the time Governor Gutierrez and Congressman Underwood had the formal meeting with Mr Panetta in early September, the election was barely around the corner. Clearly Mr Panetta's advisors were uncomfortable with the notion of a sweeping policy statement for Guam (which would be resisted in many quarters of the government) at a time so close to the election...Mr Panetta, however, made it clear that he personally would assure progress was made, suggested that if the President were to visit Guam [to or from APEC conference in Manila in November] it would help the process (something long espoused by the Governor), and asked for patience until after the election, while encouraging us to continue to make all the progress that was possible. There was a quiet assurance that Guam's concerns would be addressed at the highest levels. For example, Mr Panetta, in discussing one of the areas that had not been resolved—that of Guam land return—openly expressed support for the idea of Guam being at the head of the line when property was returned. The meeting with Mr Panetta, in a nutshell, extended real hope along with a request that Guam patiently wait through the elections.

In comments made to a group of students at the University of Guam in late October, Governor Guterrez stated that 'we are only a couple of items away from completion' and that a very important federal official would probably be visiting Guam in a week or two to wrap them up. He also stated that he hoped for word that the President would be visiting Guam in November and he would have a very important announcement to make regarding the conclusion of the negotiations. In fact, no important official came to Guam and the President by-passed Guam to play golf in Australia—in spite of the US\$600,000 donated by the Democrats of Guam to his re-election campaign.

Mr Garamendi declined an invitation to speak (or send a presentation) to ICPA 96, but his letter to the conference organisers, dated 30 October 1996, said

As my staff indicated to your [sic] earlier this month, scheduling conflicts will prevent me from being in Guam at the time of the conference. Nevertheless, I had tentatively planned to submit a written report in the interest of public discussion of this issue.

Since that time, the United States and Guam have entered into a critical juncture in the Commonwealth discussions. The sensitivity of

the issues now under deliberation preclude a public report on the substance of the negotiations. While I regret the inconvenience this will cause, I request your understanding of this sensitive situation. With continued goodwill and perseverance on both sides, I remain hopeful that Guam's long quest for Commonwealth can be resolved in the near future.

Leland Bettis concluded his presentation ICPA with the following assessment and summary of Guam-US negotiations during 1996.

Both hope and patience were tested before the elections were even conducted. In late September, as a Guam Land Return provision was being advanced in the House and the Senate, the General Counsel of the Department of Defense wrote to Congressman Young (Chair, House Natural Resources Committee), in opposition to Guam being first in line to receive excess property. The General Counsel's letter went so far as to say that the Department of Defense wanted the option of giving lands to other federal agencies instead of returning land to Guam.

Thus, on one of the major issues yet to be agreed to, the bureaucrats in the Department concerned, dug in, and through the expression of their views, made movement toward a position in support of Guam more difficult. This approach was taken by the Department of Defense notwithstanding the view expressed by the Chief of Staff to the President.

To recapture the momentum of the earlier process, and to send unsettled issues—like that of land return—to an area of final resolution (either up or down), it is our understanding that the White House has received a series of recommendations from Mr Garamendi on how the Clinton Administration should proceed. As he promised to the Governor last December [1995] he is apparently attempting to bring the issues of the Guam Commonwealth Act to closure...

At this juncture, it remains to be seen whether the hope that was put into this process at the beginning of 1996 is a valid or vain one. Hope springs eternal and a lot is riding on the intentions and judgement [sic] of the man from Hope—President Clinton.

Clearly, we are at a cross roads in the Commonwealth process. The next few months should indicate to us whether the road of hope is clear or is a dead end. IF the road is clear, we will have much more work to do in the Congress. If the road is a dead end, then our community will be faced with a new challenge of building a new road to the 21st century for Guam and the Chamorro people.

## The future

The six weeks following ICPA 96 saw Mr Panetta, the President's

Chief of Staff, and his deputy, Mr Harold Ickes, leaving their positions. The Guam Team could not help but wonder whether Mr Garamendi would also leave as part of the cabinet and sub-cabinet shake-up.

As to recommendations and forecasts on the future from the perspective of late 1996, the three most popular political leaders on Guam: Congressman Robert Underwood, Governor Carl Gutierrez, and former Governor Joe Ada all gave their views to ICPA 96.

Former Governor Joe Ada took a firm stance, eloquently advocating that the Commonwealth course be maintained.

When it comes to what Guam should do with respect to its quest for achieving Commonwealth status...I have three simple words of advice. Stay the course.

It's that simple. Stay the course. No matter what obstacles may be placed before us...stay the course. No matter how uncooperative federal officials may seem...stay the course. No matter how frustrated we are with the bureaucracy...stay the course. Even when it seems most hopeless...when we feel most ignored...stay the course.

The path I describe is not the easy one. Sometimes sticking to your guns is the hardest thing to do. Sometimes it's hard to resist the urge to abandon ship and desperately try anything new.

Forget it. That's what the federal bureaucracy is counting on. They hope and pray we will lose heart...panic even...and change the question...Thus relieving them of the responsibility to say definitively either yes or no.

Don't let them off the hook. Stay the course.

Whether our local administration is Democrat or Republican...Whether our legislative majority is Democrat or Republican...it doesn't matter. We must remain united and stay the course.

Why? Why must we stay the course? Well there are primarily two reasons. First,...what is the alternative to Commonwealth status for Guam?...[He then went through all of the possible political status alternatives, describing why Commonwealth is the best one for Guam.]

The second reason we should stay the course is also simple. Is there anything in the Commonwealth Act we don't want? Is there anything wrong with what we are asking for? [He then discussed the issues contained in the draft Commonwealth Act.]

Why should we be shocked they drag their feet on a new political status? It took the Federated States of Micronesia seventeen years to work out their status with the feds.

But remember, please that in all their frustrating, and sometimes

double-dealing lack of action, there is one thing the feds have never told us. And that one thing is no. There must be some reason for that. And in that reason lies our strength. You see they really can't say no. It's embarrassing to deny self-government to your own colonies when you are the world's greatest democracy. It's important that they show good faith, to show that they are engaged in a process for change. What they are hoping and praying is that we will get tired and stop asking, thus relieving them of the unwelcome burden of saying yes or no. They want to make it so that if we don't achieve self-government, it's our fault...not theirs. They hope that those among us who don't want commonwealth will become pre-eminent in Guam, that their counsel of scrapping the process will hold sway. They hope we'll get tired and quit...

We must stay the course and continue to negotiate with President Clinton. We must take advantage of the fact that a Republican majority in Congress now seems a long term feature and develop a deep rapport with Republican Congressional leaders.

And more than anything else, we must stay united in our goals here at home. We must stay strong and lasting. We must stay true. It will take time, but if we persist, we will win.

Contrast these words with those of Governor Carl Gutierrez. At the Conference, he voiced his sense that time is running out. He declared,

Our efforts, and the culmination of years of work by the Commission, have brought us to the absolute precipice of our relationship with the United States...[The issues in the Commonwealth Act] are issues which will define whether we will control Guam's destiny, or whether we'll be manipulated by 'colonial remote-control'...We were long overdue in drawing the roadmap for decolonization. And the simple truth is, our concerns cannot go unanswered any longer. In another decade without some kind of immigration control, the Chamorro people will become more alienated in our homeland, the situation more volatile...We can't wait on Washington forever...

To be sure, with or without the blessing of Uncle Sam, we, the people of Guam, must be ready to advance our own interests as an island people in the Asia-Pacific region...For the long-term Guam-US relationship to be workable, it must be based on mutual interests. If, however, we are unable to convince the US government of the value of a partnership of interests, we must be ready to look at new models and new approaches for our island's future.

As we enter the 21st century, we cannot allow our children's and grandchildren's lives to be held hostage to the flawed designs of a 19th century colonialism in its 20th century clothing.

It is our firm belief that if the Administration does not provide clear policy direction for Guam in the near future, that we cannot wait out

this process forever...So while our projection—to finish the negotiations by 30 June—has not held, we have moved this process toward closure. By closure I mean a clear statement, from the highest levels in the US Government of either a 'Yes' or a 'No.' If the answer is 'Yes', then we will proceed to wrap up negotiations quickly. If the answer is 'No' then we must do some soul-searching in Guam about the real value of our relationship with the US. I should add that a 'Yes' will move the Commonwealth Act to the Congress, and a completely new ball-game...

Regardless of the difficulties, one thing is clear. We will continue to move forward one way or another. Our island's colonial status can no longer be permitted to continue. Our people's right for self-determination can no longer be denied. Our children's future must not be sacrificed to indifference, neglect, or bureaucracy...We fought hard under Republican Administrations, we fought hard under Democrat Administrations and we have reached the end of the line. We have done everything we can to say 'Listen to us, we have rights that have not been granted'. Having done everything we can at some point we have to stand up and say 'It's time our interests come first'...

My dear people of Guam, whatever course we choose at this critical turning point, even if it means venturing into uncharted waters, I promise you, that there will be nothing to fear because it will be a course that we will choose together.

Congressman Robert Underwood, Guam's elected delegate to the US Congress, also took the 'time is running out' view. He stated many times on many occasions during October and November 1996 that the next two or three months would be the turning point for the current process. He said that if the Clinton Administration did not wrap up the negotiations for an acceptable document to be submitted to Congress, then Guam would have to take a different road.

Congressman Underwood reiterated these warnings.

There is not a more pressing political issue for our island than a political status change. We need to continue our quest for Commonwealth. But we should remember that anything worth having is going to take some time to achieve.

Frankly, we are frustrated and with good reason...But what we need to be at this time is not to be patient or frustrated. Rather we need to be analytical and realistic about the process of Commonwealth while we remain motivated by the benefits of Commonwealth. We have to establish some benchmarks for success and attempt to bring the process to closure and success...

Just as clearly as we have a consensus about the political status we seek, we are losing our consensus about the process we have selected to achieve it...The process we are now in is known as the executive (or administrative) route to Congress or Commonwealth. It involves a process of negotiation and discussion with the Administration. Once this process is complete, the draft act is taken up in Congress as legislation which would presumably receive uniform and coordinated Administration review. Moreover, the process should receive Administration support and assistance...I want to state unequivocally that the administrative approach makes the most sense...However, we must be willing to recognize when this approach may not be working...

I think we are seeing some clear signs of frustration that are growing among us. The dangerous part of this frustration is that it has no real effect on moving the process along. The frustration with the process is not threatening the process. Instead the frustration is sapping the strength of our commitment to Commonwealth...

In my estimation we have only a few months left to make progress on the track we are on...I believe that in the current political climate in Washington, as reflected in the election just completed there is very little mood for dramatic change in the country...Commonwealth faces an uncertain political context...

Given this political mood and given the fact that our people are clearly frustrated with the lack of progress in the existing process, we must act. We must set our own agenda. We must decide whether the prize is worth pursuing and whether we are ready to strike out in new ways to achieve Commonwealth.

The Administration negotiations cannot go on indefinitely and should move us towards Congressional hearings within the first session (1997) of the 105th Congress. If the negotiations are delayed beyond the spring of next year, I think it is clear that we must end the negotiations, bring the process back home to the people, and in a very public way discuss our alternatives. It is conceivable that at that time we simply move to Congress and take our chances with a Congressional approach. It is also conceivable that we will reconsider the political status options altogether. But it must be clear to us that by the spring of next year if we have not completed these negotiations, then we are clearly spinning our wheels.

We must also consider how to create an environment which will draw attention to our quest for political status change. We must consider old alternatives...In Guam history, events may call upon us to be catalysts and utilize the federal legislative process to attract attention in creative ways.

## Conclusions: a personal view

What creative ways are possible? Congressman Underwood has mentioned two. The first one was contained in his conference paper. That one would be to consider submitting legislation admitting Guam as a state or allowing Guam to assert its sovereignty (independence), or even both. This might bring attention to Guam's quest for Commonwealth and be a catalyst for change.

His second idea is to look for opportune moments for Guam to say 'No' to a federal government desire. For example, Guam could say 'No' to the movement of 5,000 Marines to Guam from Okinawa. While the United States has full rights to move any military personnel it desires to Guam, the days of the 'blank check' are over. An uproar from Guam would definitely bring national attention to the plight of the people of Guam. Can America maintain a military structure on Guam against the will of more than 150,000 civilians? She has the legal right to do so. However, the long-term security of the military's interests on Guam will only be really possible if those civilians are relatively, and peacefully, accepting of the presence of that structure on their island.

Many astute observers on Guam feel that something drastic and dramatic will take place to bring attention and impetus to the quest for Commonwealth Status. Congressman Underwood has already tipped his thinking in this regard. He even mentioned the Boston Tea Party as an example of a catalyst for change. The 'drastic and dramatic' act will be non-violent for obvious reasons. Guam wants to gain the sympathy of the American people, not their animosity. How about a lesson from history?

When the federal government was not paying attention to the people of Guam in 1949, the elected Guam House of Assembly, the lower house of the Guam Congress, walked out. The House of Assembly, unanimously adjourned, 'not to reconvene until such time as this body receives a reply or the action of the Congress of the United States relative to the *Organic Act* for Guam as passed by both Houses of the Guam Congress'. The upper house, the Council, voted a week later to recess until resolution of the Assembly walkout. Since the military controlled everything on Guam at that time and almost all of the elected officials were also employees of the local naval government, this walkout was the most courageous act of political will since the last battle of Chamorros against the Spanish in July 1695. The

walkout had its desired impact: revitalising the passage of the *Organic Act*, bringing American citizenship.

What would be the impact of the Guam Legislature 'walking out' in reaction to a failure of the federal government to take into account Guam's political aspirations? Would a walk-out of our Legislature bring attention to our lingering state of non-self-government—of colonialism? The Legislature could merely state: 'We are non-self-governing. This is all a charade. We will not participate any longer in the "house of cards." We will refuse to operate as a legislature until the Congress passes the Commonwealth Act'.

Guam would need an incident to trigger such an action—an incident demonstrating that Guam is non-self-governing. In 1949 the incident was the refusal of a statesider Navy clerk, Abe Goldstein, to respect a subpoena from the Guam Assembly to account for his possession of a business licence when, under the law at that time, a person had to have lived on Guam for at least five years to get a business licence. This, in fact, was a preferential program for the Chamorros, initiated by the naval government. Mr Goldstein was violating this legal requirement.

Guam almost had such a triggering incident in December of 1994. When a reporter asked the President's National Security Advisor, Tony Lake, and his principal economic advisor if the Federal Government would support Guam's entrance into APEC, the two officials laughed. In reaction, Leland Bettis and members of the Organization of People for Indigenous Rights spontaneously blocked the entrance to the headquarters of the Commander, Naval Forces Marianas. This occurred during the morning rush hour. The police arrested the demonstrators.

When this news was mentioned on the morning talk radio, the Governor, Joe Ada, rushed to the scene and used his official vehicle—and himself—to block the entrance. He ordered the police to release the arrested demonstrators and erase any record of their arrests. He further ordered the police to not interfere with any demonstrators. When the governor-elect, Carl Gutierrez, heard of this on the radio, he also rushed to the scene to join Joe Ada and the other protesters. Joe Ada continued the blockade the next day at the entrance to the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station. Congressman Underwood contacted Tony Lake in Singapore and obtained a quasi apology, sufficient to halt the demonstrations. That incident could have been heightened into a 'Boston Tea Party' if Congressman



Underwood had taken a different tack. Next time, he probably will.

In 1997 the incident could be when America announces plans to relocate thousands of Marines from Okinawa to Guam, having the Japanese government fund the base infrastructure for them—while providing no concomitant impact aid for the civilian community. There may be other incidents waiting to happen. Will elected politicians in the Guam Legislature have the character, determination, and political will to match that of their predecessors in 1949?

I think our Governor and Congressman would welcome another Boston Tea Party to help gain Commonwealth status for Guam.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> All quotations in this appendix are from papers presented at the 17th Island Conference on Public Administration: the Guam Commonwealth (ICPA 96).
- <sup>2</sup> As a side note to this history, Governor (Ricky) Bordallo's widow, the current Lieutenant Governor, recently differed from Dr. Rogers, stating that her husband would not have negotiated on what she terms the three cornerstones of the draft act. At ICPA 96 she stated that

Over the years when the Commission on Self-Determination was working to formulate the Draft Guam Commonwealth Act, much time was spent discussing and deliberating what would be the guiding principles for Guam's new political relationship with the United States. Some very astute minds contributed many ideas, much time and a great deal of energy to the formulation of a document which would embody the desires of the people of Guam and the rights of the indigenous Chamorros in an organic and dynamic document which could stand the test of time.

As a builder Ricky envisioned Guam's Commonwealth Act as a fundamentally strong and inviolate foundation upon which political, economic and social institutions could be built, improved, and expanded for the betterment of the standard of living and quality of life for the people of Guam. In this vein, I think that discussions of Ricky's vision and purpose must touch upon what he considered the three most critical aspects of the Draft Guam Commonwealth Act. These three cornerstones are: 1) the right of the people of Guam to full self-government in the island's internal affairs, 2) in the absence of full voting rights in both houses of the US Congress, the right of the people of Guam to mutual consent on proposed federal laws which would substantively and

substantially affect their political-economic and social interests and security, and 3) the God-given right of the indigenous people of Guam to self-determination...

Though Ricky always held that all twelve articles of the Commonwealth Act were important and critical to the political, economic, and social development of Guam, he felt that these three cornerstones were critical and would determine the success of every other provision of the Act. In this sense, the principles of full-self government, mutual consent and self-determination were non-negotiable and can never be compromised.

Whether Governor Bordallo would have compromised on these 'cornerstones', we will never know.

<sup>3</sup> Leland Bettis has held this position since 1989, working under Governors Ada and Gutierrez.

<sup>4</sup> Compare this with Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2, of the US Constitution, the 'territorial clause,' which states: 'The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States, and nothing in this Constitution shall be so construed as to Prejudice any Claims of the United States, or of any particular State'.







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## **Micronesian Area Research Center**

The Richard F. Taitano Micronesian Area Research Centre (MARC) at the University of Guam has a threefold mission which includes resource collection development, research and service. Since its establishment in 1957, MARC has developed a major collection of Micronesian and Pacific area materials. The Collection contains an especially strong holding of Spanish materials, reflecting the lengthy presence of Spain in Micronesia. In addition to written materials, the MARC collection contains photographs, slides, films, video cassettes and musical scores relating to the cultural and historical heritage of the area.

The research program at MARC is closely integrated with the Collection. MARC research faculty produce transcriptions, translations and analytic bibliographic listings of important Spanish, German, French, Japanese and other foreign language documents. MARC faculty have conducted research in the fields of anthropology, archaeology, history, education, political science and sociology. The service role of MARC includes its program of publishing, teaching, public lectures and coordinating University of Guam campus events relating to Guam and the Pacific. MARC faculty and staff also provide community services through consultation and cooperation with many government agencies and community organisations.

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'Leadership is an elusive property difficult to pin down. Pursuing its meaning enlarges our understanding of the dynamics of social change and the nature of culture'.

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The contributors to *Leadership in the Pacific islands* provide a wide range of academic and pragmatic viewpoints for considering both the history and the future of Pacific island leadership. Particularly significant, is the perspective of Palauan Paramount Chief, Roman Tmetuchl, who continues to struggle to find a place for Palau, and Palauan traditional leadership, in the contemporary geopolitical context.

*Leadership in the Pacific islands* grew out of the 1996 meeting of the Pacific Islands Political Studies Association, and received support from Chief Tmetuchl and the Micronesian Area Research Center at the University of Guam.

