

POLITICS OF FAITH:  
INVESTIGATING ETHNOGRAPHIES ABOUT *MODEKNGEI*

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

PACIFIC ISLANDS STUDIES

MAY 1998

By

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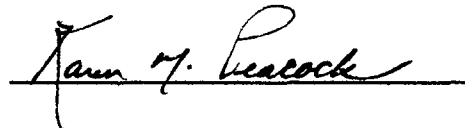
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people provided me with generous support, constructive criticisms and valuable information. Dr. Arthur J. Vidich and Dr. Machiko Aoyagi, despite their busy schedules and the nature of my thesis, kindly responded to my numerous questions through their correspondence. Without their cooperation, I would have had no access to their rich experiences during their fieldwork in Palau. I would like to express my particular appreciation to Dr. Vidich who shared with me his personal memories in a twenty-two-page hand-written letter and also in several additional letters and copies of his personal writings.

Dr. Kiyonori Kanasaka, a professor at Kyoto University, was extremely generous in providing me with a large amount of Japanese material, which otherwise I would have been unable to obtain. He also offered me invaluable information, acquired through his wide network with other Japanese scholars.

Throughout the course of my research, members of my thesis committee, Dr. Suzanne Falgout, Dr. David Hanlon and Dr. Karen Peacock, indicated their warm support for my project and provided me with valuable criticisms and information.

My teachers at the Center for the Pacific Islands Studies, Dr. Vilsoni Hereniko, Dr. Robert C. Kiste and Dr. Terence Wesley-Smith inspired me to engage in this project.

Without their support, my thesis would have never materialized.

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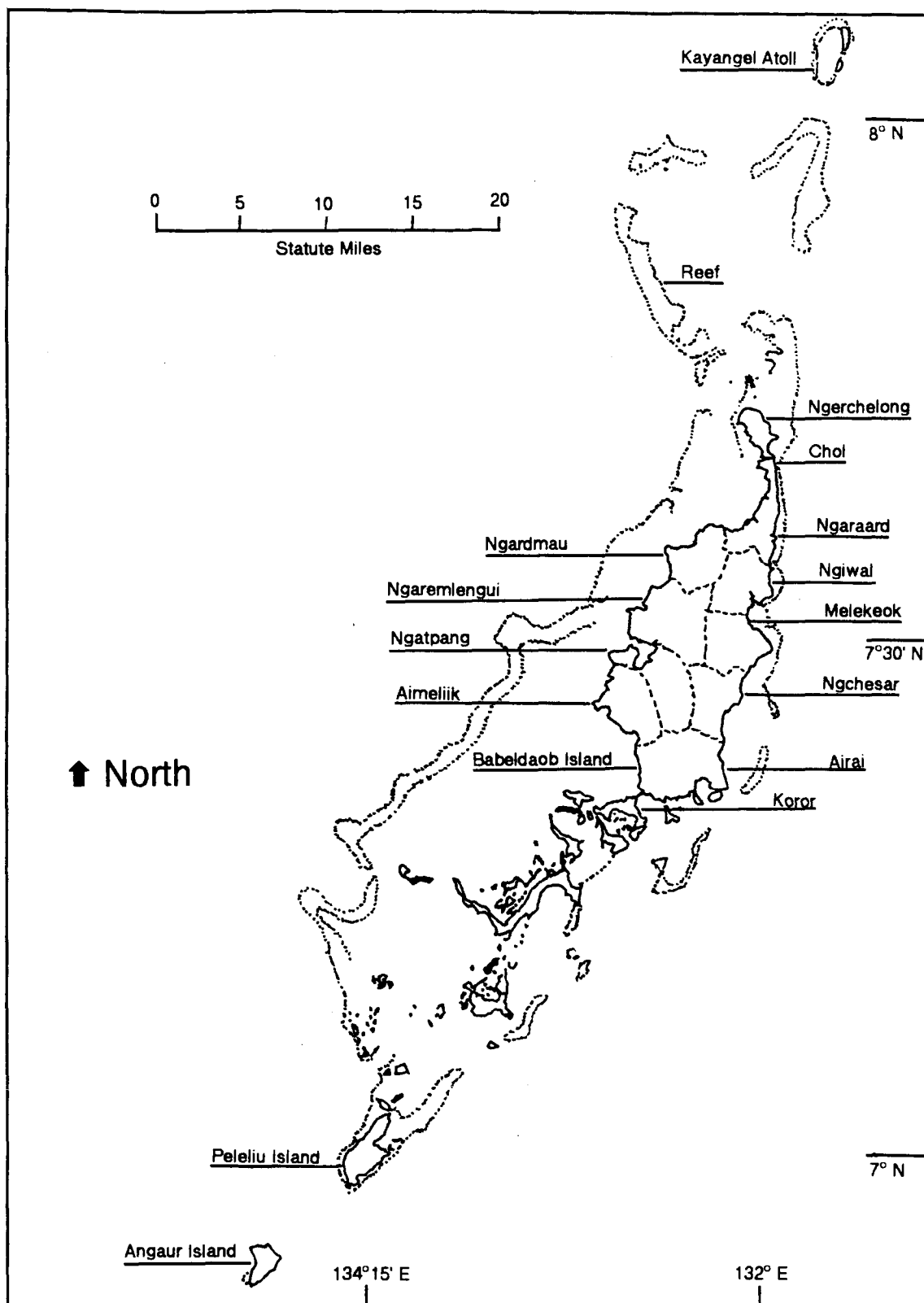
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Map 1. Map of Palau

## PLACE NAMES OF PALAU

There are several spellings for Palauan place names. I below listed state names in Palau. Several village names which I employed in this thesis are also listed under the state names. More than one spelling of a place appear in the thesis, because of various spellings used by authors whom I cited.

### Belau / Palau

#### Ngerchelongs / Ngarchelongs / Ngerechelongs

Ngcheangel / Kayangel

Ngebei

Ngeriungs

Ollei

Orak

#### Ngerards / Ngaraards / Ngarards

Chol / Choll

Ngebuked

Ngeklau

Ulimang

#### Ngerdemaus / Ngardemaus

Ngiual / Ngiwal

Ngeremlengui

Melekeok

#### Ngetbangs / Ngatpangs

Ibobang

Ngchesar

Imeliik / Aimeliik

Irrai / Airai

Oreor / Koror

Beliliou / Peleliu

Ngerchol

Ngerdelolek

Ngeaur / Angaur

Sungesol / Sonsorol

Hatachobei / Hatahobei

## Introduction

"Even the best ethnographic texts---serious, true fictions---are systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control" (James Clifford).<sup>1</sup>

My first encounter with *Modekngei* was in the summer of 1995 when I was introduced by my professor at the Center for the Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai'i, to an ethnographic monograph, written by a Japanese anthropologist, Machiko Aoyagi.<sup>2</sup> Being a Japanese woman, and a student who is interested in Belau/Palau,<sup>3</sup> it was an exciting invitation for me to learn about Japanese ethnographic work, which, until then, I had not had a chance to study closely. In her book, Aoyagi describes *Modekngei* as a new religion, started by a shaman name Temedad from Chol village in Palau, that emerged around 1914 when the Japanese naval forces occupied the islands, formerly under the German administration. She mentions that there is an alternative interpretation

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<sup>1</sup> James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus, (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London : University of California Press, 1986), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Machiko Aoyagi, *Modekupei: Mikuroneshia Parao no Shin-Shūkyō [Modekngei: New Religion in Palau, Micronesia]*, (Tokyo : Shinsensha, 1985). This book is in a process of translation from Japanese to English. The best summary of her work, currently available in English, is id., "Gods of the Modekngei Religion in Belau," in Cultural Uniformity and Diversity in Micronesia, ed. by Iwao Ushijima and Kenichi Sudō, *Senri Ethnological Studies*, no. 21, (Osaka : National Museum of Ethnology, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Both Belau and Palau are used as names of the nation. Following the official employment of "Palau" in the English version of the Constitution of the Republic of Palau, I choose to use Palau, not Belau, in this thesis.

made by an American anthropologist, Arthur J. Vidich, who characterizes *Modekngei* as an anti-Japanese political movement.<sup>4</sup> Her discussion of Vidich's account is brief (about five pages in Chapter 8: *Teikou Undō to Shite no Modekugei* [*Modekngei* as a Resistant Movement]),<sup>5</sup> but it comes quite clear that she strongly disagrees with Vidich's perspective on *Modekngei*.

Aoyagi argues that Vidich's research was conducted right after World War II, in an atmosphere where all Japanese were considered as criminals of war.<sup>6</sup> She speculates, therefore, that Palauan people provided the American ethnographer with what he wanted to hear and that Vidich himself could have selectively emphasized the anti-Japanese aspects of the movement.<sup>7</sup> With this criticism in mind, Aoyagi began her eleven-year research on *Modekngei* in 1973. From 1973 to 1984, she conducted her fieldwork in Palau with seven visits ranging in time from one to four months.<sup>8</sup> She points out that during her fieldwork, all her informants, both *Modekngei* followers and former policemen

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<sup>4</sup> Arthur J. Vidich, Political Factionalism in Palau: Its Rise and Development, CIMA Report, no.23, (Washington : Pacific Science Board, National Research Council, 1949); and id., "The Political Impact of Colonial Administration," Thesis (Ph.D.), Harvard University, 1952. Microfilm 1650, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i.

<sup>5</sup> Translation by Aoyagi, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, Appendix (2).

<sup>6</sup> Vidich worked as a researcher for the CIMA (Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology) in 1948. See Chapter 2 for more information.

<sup>7</sup> Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 219-220.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 6. There are discrepancies in information concerning Aoyagi's first entry in Palau. Although Aoyagi in her monograph states that her first visit to Palau was in 1973, the introduction of a book, *Mikuronesia no Bunka Jinruigakuteki Kenkyū* [Cultural Anthropological Research in Micronesia], in which one of Aoyagi's article is compiled, reports that she was in Palau in 1972 for about four months. I choose to stay with the information provided by Aoyagi herself.

during the Japanese administration, testified to her that *Modekngei* was never an anti-Japanese movement.<sup>9</sup> By contrasting the statements of these Palauan people, she refutes Vidich's argument about the anti-Japanese nature of *Modekngei*.

Aoyagi's account was intriguing to me in two ways; I sensed "something" strongly appealing to me about the nature of *Modekngei*, and at the same time, the discrepancies in interpretations and representations of a history of a social phenomenon, made by two scholars from two different nations, grabbed my interest. I eagerly read Vidich's account, which is precise and convincing in his argument and description of *Modekngei* as an anti-Japanese movement, and I was left with a ceaseless feeling of wonder. Why is it that Vidich's account is almost entirely absent of description of *Modekngei*'s religious aspects? Why does Aoyagi discuss very little about the political nature of *Modekngei*? What was it that "actually" happened? Did Aoyagi inadvertently try to defend Japanese colonialism? Is Vidich a part of a typical "Japan bashing" discourse? Were Palauan people selective in giving information to Vidich as Aoyagi speculates? How about to Aoyagi? Why? In my mind, the entire issue was soon connected to assumptions that I was learning at that time in seminars: knowledge is power; all knowledge is political.

Debates in the seminars concerned long held assumptions in the western scientific traditions. Search for the objective truth was one of them. Is there such thing as objective truth? One day, my teacher made us write a 2 to 3-page description of what had happened in the previous session. Seven people wrote about a heated discussion which all of us attended a week ago. Seven

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 211.

accounts, exchanged and read, were seven different stories of our shared experience. Although certain things were similar, all accounts had different foci, emphases, points to make, styles, and tones; they indicated our different understandings of the same event and the unique individualities that were reflected in them. I learned that numerous truths exist and that they are all subjective and partial truths.

Another scientific assumption being examined was the neutrality of a scholar who represents cultures that are other than her own. This was directly tied to the assumption discussed above. My learned awareness was that it is impossible for a person to be completely neutral no matter how hard she tries to be. First, a language, that divides and defines the world for us in order to have meaningful understanding, already contains a cultural bias.<sup>10</sup> We think by using our language; and we must rely on the language to make any descriptions. Things can be thought and said only in our terms.

Second, theories, which provide scholars empirical tools to analyze social phenomena, are based on an epistemology developed during the seventeenth century in the Europe.<sup>11</sup> They reflect European or western social, political and economic nature, western modes of thinking, and their views of non-western

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<sup>10</sup> For example, some languages require us constantly to make gender distinctions. In the case of English, when talking about a third person, we can barely escape mentioning the gender of the person being discussed. This practice habitually enforces an awareness of difference between genders and how they need to be distinguished from one another. This is not a universal practice. In some languages, the third person can be discussed in gender-free terms, such as a human being or a person. I perceive that this is one example of numerous ways that a language can shape our perceptions.

<sup>11</sup> See, Paul Rabinow, "Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology," In Writing Culture, 234-261.



peoples within certain historical context. Their function is to guide scholars on how to divide phenomena and pay particular attention to selecting several discrete aspects of the whole, in order then to create an understandable explanation of the unknown to a western audience.<sup>12</sup> Theories are designed to help produce focused or biased narratives of observed events.

Third, closely aligned with the above two points, the cultural learning which accompanies an ethnographer into the field makes it impossible for anyone to be completely neutral. The ways that we observe events, divide space and time, what we see and do not see, our understandings of the data, our ways of categorizing things, and how we give meanings, depend on perceptions that we take with us to the field. An ethnographer enters the field with her own preconceptions and expectations. Like myself, a person usually learns about an area and the people of the area, not from shared experiences with them, but from reading existing knowledge, before going to the field. Then, how we analyze the data and how we select and put it into an argument require another level of cultural (academic) training. All the data is filtered through the medium of an ethnographer, who is made of cultural assumptions, and is projected into an account. In short, things can be understood and expressed only with our cultural assumptions.

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<sup>12</sup> Theories, developed and utilized, by Japanese scholars must contain Japanese biases. The functions of such theories should have been similar to the functions of theories in the west. The influence of western scientific discourses on the development of modern Japanese science has been profound; I recognize, however, several characteristics that are unique to Japanese anthropological tradition. The discussion of a history of modern Japanese science is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Fourth, circumstances in the field need scrutinization. An ethnographer cannot be an "invisible" man or woman. Like any other communication, people place an interviewer in a certain cognitive place, then define the person, and then reveal their (often personal) information accordingly. They select what is to be told to an American or to a Japanese, because of their knowledge of the countries he or she comes from and the types of influence the country has on them. The global political and economic circumstances, which have directly affected people's daily lives, situate an ethnographer in a certain cognitive space within the people's eyes. Local political scenes also influence the availability of data to an ethnographer. Language barriers and different natures of communication hamper smooth conversations; this situation offers plenty of room for an informant or interpreter to provide certain types of information that would accommodate their interests. Besides, every member of the society under a scholar's study has different involvements and understandings of certain issues and events.

Marty Zelenietz and Hisafumi Saito discuss an interviewer effect or what is called a "dialectical process" between an interviewer and interviewee, in the context of fieldwork. They compared the different research outcomes of their separate interviews with the same group of people in New Britain. Zelenietz and Saito write,

Narrative, especially when dealing with recent events and the known past, reflects a dialectical process between the storyteller and the listener. The teller can try to provide the listener with what the listener wants to hear, or at least what the teller *thinks* the listener wants to hear.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Marty Zelenietz and Hisafumi Saito, "Kilenge and the War: An Observer Effect on Stories from the Past," in The Pacific Theater: Island Representations of

This can be characterized as more of a "courtesy" rather than the politics of people being interviewed. By recognizing types of questions being asked and the reactions of an interviewer to certain types of answers, people usually sense what the interviewer wants to hear and what is the interest of the interviewer. Or, simply being courteous, people might avoid making comments that would possibly offend an interviewer.

In my opinion, the invalidity of assumed scientific neutrality and the search for objective truth, thus, can be assessed without much difficulty. More critical inquiries into the process of academic knowledge construction and dissemination have been made by scholars inclined toward a philosophy called post-modernism. The prime concern of post-modernism is relationships between power and knowledge. Post-modern critiques have derived from the analyses of the relationships among history, politics and culture, with a focus on how certain knowledge became more widely accepted, and thus gains power over our perceptions and moralities. Post-modernism elaborates as to why is it highly problematic for a scholar to articulate "objective truth" in a neutral guise. In his discussion on relationships between truth and power, a French philosopher Michel Foucault states,

'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements.

'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth.<sup>14</sup>

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World War II, PIMS, no.8, ed. by Geoffrey White and Lamont Lindstrom, (Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 1989), 181.

<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977, ed. by Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, et al., (New

What I understand from Foucault is that there are various competing knowledge or discourses (multiple historical trends of thoughts attributing certain meanings/definitions to an event or idea) that exist at each different locus of power. However, certain knowledge has come to gain more authority than others, during certain points in history, and becomes truth. This is due to the direct connection of power and knowledge. Knowledge is a formidable political weapon of the dominating group, in order to establish the kind of order desired to regulate others. Certain types of knowledge that gain authority perpetuate themselves further, because it is the mechanism of domination which appreciates and bestows legitimacy to this knowledge and encourages its growth. Other types of knowledge or discourses suffer decline because they become less significant to the people who accept the authority of a discourse, affirmed by a powerful ruling body. Predominant knowledge or alledged truth is, thus, a mechanism to perpetuate, through disguise, dominant power.

For example, the concept of women or the definition of women has gone through several shifting discourses. Suppose, in ancient times, a notion that a woman is a source of power giving life into the world, was the dominant definition of a woman. Under this categorization, she would be treated with respect. At one point in history, a man desired to become a ruler, and the then accepted definition of women hampered him in achieving his goal. An alternative definition was needed to become dominant, or, as he became dominant, he gave another definition to his authority. The new dominant definition would be that a woman is inferior and thus she should become under his control. He would proclaim that her role should be confined to a private domain, never in a domain of politics.

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York : Pantheon Books, 1980), 133.

The more he succeeds, the more the definition gains authority through a means of institutionalization. Now, a new definition predominates and women are confined in a certain boundary, physically and ideologically.

Another scholar who discusses the role of knowledge as a weapon of domination is Edward W. Said. His attention is directed particularly at the western domination of others as they exercised colonialism, and critical roles of scholarly or literary representations within the processes of western political and physical domination in the world.<sup>15</sup> In his monograph, Orientalism, Said delineates several characteristics of western dominant discourse in the representing of "the Other," or in his term "the Orient:" 1) The Orient appears in western discourse as fundamentally and systematically different from the west, where the west is characterized as normal, superior, rational, and humane; 2) the Orient is described in abstractions (discussed within a certain paradigm) more than through the use of actual experiences of people in the Orient; and 3) the Orient is seen as passive, unable to speak for itself and uniform, culturally, historically, and geographically, and containing a definite "essence" that is an antithesis of the west.<sup>16</sup>

He asserts that these characteristics attest that the westerners' Orient is nothing more than a western creation of myths that are reflective of themselves. Creation of these myths was essential for the west, since they define the Orient, in their familiar concepts and terminology, in order for them to dominate it. According to Said, the myths, even though they are obviously false myths,

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<sup>15</sup> Said places Japan on the side of "the Other" but I think Japan is at the boundary, belonging to both sides. Japan, in the Micronesian context, is clearly on the side of oppressor not the oppressed.

<sup>16</sup> Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (New York : Vintage Books, 1979) 300-301.

cannot be easily dismissed because they are aligned with political and economic forces as well as the self-perpetuating "Orientalistic" discourse in dominant western science; Said calls it cultural hegemony.<sup>17</sup> It is these political and economic circumstances where knowledge has been constructed and applied in the practice of domination that Said is most critical of.

The western knowledge of the other has been developed as a critical part of western expansionism or imperialism. This scholarly knowledge gave validation to the west's dominance of others. It was how the ethnographic tradition was nurtured and established, and today's scholar is in the extension of the same tradition. According to Said, all scholars who make any statement about the Orient had/have to first acknowledge the existence of the western institution of Orientalism, its vocabulary and ideology, and discuss the "truth" within the intellectual context. Because of assumed neutrality and objectivity, self-reflecting and distorted western myths of others have been claimed as "objective truth" with scientific authority. It has been proclaimed that science is separate from the realms of politics and economics, because of the assumption that scholars' pursuit is neutral and their search is for the objective truth. Said argues that it is pernicious when the created and maintained western "objective truth" is used for the purpose of political and cultural dominance of one group over the other, as it has been in practice.

An American historian of anthropology and a post-modernist, James Clifford, suggests that "the ability of a text to make sense in a coherent way

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<sup>17</sup> Said states that this is the very reason that the discourse, that itself is essentially "the doctrinal antithesis of development," continues to be dominant for "it is in the logic of myths . . . exactly to welcome radical antitheses" (Ibid., 307 and 312).

depends less on the willed intentions of an originating author than on the creative activity of a reader."<sup>18</sup> Faced with the post-modern criticism of the western dominant ethnographic discourse discussed above, and as a student whose interest lies in Palau and *Modekngei*, I decided that my first task is to study the existing texts about *Modekngei* and the circumstances in which the knowledge of this social movement as presented in the texts, was constructed. A discourse analysis on the literature regarding *Modekngei* is thus offered. This thesis is intended to provide an alternative form of a literature review that departs from convention.

*Modekngei* has been under study by several ethnographers and Oceanianist historians, for nearly seventy years. Among them, texts by the above mentioned two anthropologists, Arthur Vidich and Machiko Aoyagi, stand as the most prominent studies on *Modekngei*. The former emphasizes the anti-Japanese and political aspects of *Modekngei*, and the latter characterizes it as a religion. My main focus is placed on the works of Aoyagi and Vidich. The following four chapters are my attempt to analyze three main aspects involved in the processes of knowledge construction and dissemination of the two works.

In Chapter 1, I will delineate competing *Modekngei* discourses. There are at least two *Modekngei* discourses observable among about thirty authors who studied or briefly mentioned *Modekngei*. Vidich and Aoyagi champion the two discourses. In the chapter, I call one the Vidich discourse and the other, the Aoyagi discourse. These discourses sometimes merge with each other, but the different foci placed in their discussions of *Modekngei* keep the two discourses

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<sup>18</sup> James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art, (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1988), 52.

distinctive from each other. The analysis of such discourses is aimed at illustrating the process of how forms of knowledge, originally constructed by two individuals, have been disseminated widely and how they gained power to become "truth(s)."<sup>19</sup>

Chapter 2 and 3 are my inquiry into the political and economic circumstances under which Aoyagi and Vidich conducted their fieldwork in Palau. Colonial and neo-colonial involvements of Japan and the US in Palau are highlighted. My particular concern is how these colonial and neo-colonial forces affected the types of data given by Palauan people to Aoyagi and Vidich. Both scholars indicate that their interpretations are based on statements made to them by people of Palau. It can be surmised that the Palauans have been cautious and tactful in their dealings with these outside researchers. Thus, my focus is how politics, at both global and local levels, and the economic circumstances of Palau, in their relation with Japan and the US, had effects on the processes of knowledge construction by Aoyagi and Vidich. Chapter 2 concerns the field contexts in which Vidich conducted his research; Chapter 3 is about Aoyagi's fieldwork.

Chapter 4 contains a brief profile of Vidich and Aoyagi, a discussion of the scholarly orientations of the two, and my critique on representations made by both scholars. My critique is mainly centered around two issues. One is the profound influence of the theoretical orientations of the above scholars, that are reflected in their interpretations of *Modekngei*. This is more evident in the work of Vidich than in Aoyagi's text. The other issue of concern is the tactics that

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<sup>19</sup> It seems that Vidich's knowledge has become "truth" among the English speaking population, while Aoyagi's information has been accepted as "truth" by Japanese speaking audiences.



seem to have been employed by both scholars to present cohesive and convincing narratives of *Modekngei*. The purpose of this chapter is to discern how constructed representations of others profoundly reflect authors' and their western scientific orientations rather than the experiences of individual *Modekngei* members, and how tactics were employed by scholars to reinforce scientific authority of their knowledge.

In Chapter 4, I discuss how my entire thesis project is a reflection of my own self, my place in a global political and economic circumstances, and my scholarly orientations. Also, some reflective thoughts concerning this thesis are inserted.

My study is about the American and Japanese anthropological cultures surrounding *Modekngei*. It should illuminate the dynamic nature involved in the process of knowledge construction and its intended and unintended consequences. Through the study of the processes involved in the construction of knowledge, I hope to clearly depict that knowledge is political because of its assumed power and because it inescapably reflects the global political and economic context in which it is constructed.

Before entering the main text, I need to discuss limitations that are contained in my pursuit. A part of this thesis is designed to problematize the uncritical use of existing knowledge; I could not, however, make serious inquiries into the background of most knowledge I employed in my thesis. In my critique, particularly of Aoyagi's work, I also used existing theories and interpretations of resistance to counter-argue her definition of resistance. In addition, in several places in the following text, I generalized cultural attributes of Palau, Japan or the US. Hence, readers will find contradictions between my indicated purpose and my methodology applied in this thesis.

Finally, I would like to mention the artificial nature of my understanding of Palau. Palau to me is located on a map, in books, videos, and conversations with people who lived or visited there. I have never visited the islands and I have only one Palauan acquaintance. I do not understand the Palauan language. Things I know about Palau, its people, history and their cultures are learned from books mostly written by non-Palauan people who studied them, not from sharing experiences with the people of Palau. It is my hope to be there someday in the near future.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The following text contains the term tradition or traditional. This term has been used to describe some features of the past that are fixed and unchanged. Tradition, however, changes over time, transforming itself by incorporating new values and discarding some of the old customs. It is flexible and in a constant process of growth from the past to the future. In the following text, both traditional and "traditional" can be found. When presented with quotation marks at both ends of the term, I mean to refer to the old definition, that assumes tradition is a fixed characteristic of the past. When used without quotation marks, I refer to the flexible notion of the term.

## Chapter 1

### A History of Histories about *Modekngei*<sup>1</sup>

Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have values for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents. (Michel Foucault)<sup>2</sup>

#### I. Introduction

For over seventy years, nearly thirty scholars and students wrote about *Modekngei* and presented their views of *Modekngei* in academic writings, an official report, a magazine article, a teachers' handbook, dictionaries, and an encyclopedia. How have they captured and represented *Modekngei*? In this chapter, I will discuss twenty-four such documents, with particular attention paid to their discussions of the nature on *Modekngei* between 1914 and 1945. Some of them devote a considerable number of pages to their descriptions of *Modekngei*, while others briefly mention the phenomenon. It is my hope to provide multiple, rather than single and rigid, images of *Modekngei* in the following text.

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<sup>1</sup> Following chapters contain information that is drawn from works by Japanese scholars and journalists. I do not understand the Palauan language. When a phrase, "my translation," appears in footnotes, it is always my translation from Japanese to English.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Rabinow (ed.), The Foucault Reader, (New York : Pantheon Books, 1984), 81.

The primal focus of this chapter, however, is to delineate competing *Modekngei* discourses. Lamont Lindstrom,<sup>3</sup> inspired by the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, analyzes a process of construction and deconstruction of what he calls "cargoism." Beginning with colonial documents, he traces a genealogy (using Foucault's definition, quoted above) of western writings of over fifty years concerning Melanesian movements, typically called "cargo cult." In his work, Lindstrom illustrates how scholarly writings successively essentialized the complex social phenomena through categorization and theorization, and thus created western myths of cargo cult. Lindstrom's work also delineates how the essentialized myths, with its bestowed scholarly authority, have been widely distributed through its appearance in literature, music, movies, TV programs, newspapers, magazines, tourist brochures, etc.<sup>4</sup> My analysis of *Modekngei* discourses is of a similar deconstructive nature but on a smaller scale.

As discussed in the introduction, Vidich and Aoyagi's interpretations constitute the two principal discourses on *Modekngei*; the former asserts that *Modekngei* was an anti-Japanese political movement and the latter negates such a claim and declares that *Modekngei* has been a religion. Spheres of their influence go beyond the western world and Japan, and have reached Micronesia. In the following chapter, a genealogy of *Modekngei* representations

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<sup>3</sup> See, Lamont Lindstrom, Cargo Cult: Strange Stories of Desire From Melanesia and Beyond, SSBS, no. 4, (Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Lindstrom's work also includes his analysis of the reason behind the wide acceptance and utilization of the invented myth of cargo cult among people of the west. I do not follow his approach in this aspect.

I have some problems with Lindstrom's work. In my opinion, he overtly essentializes the west, which contradicts his criticism toward "cargoists"; and he elaborates a discussion of the existing "truth," which he attempts to defeat through his study of "cargoism."

is traced largely in chronological order. Writings of Japanese colonialists who were present at the time of the early *Modekngei* development will be presented first; the early American research conducted soon after World War II will be examined next; the Vidich discourse apparent in writings of scholars and students are traced chronologically in the next section; Aoyagi's work and its discourse will be placed in the following section; and finally a voice of a Palauan concerning *Modekngei* will be presented. The terms and phrases highlighted in the bold print are what I perceive as some of the most significant information about *Modekngei* that are represented by each author, examined below.

Through analysis of the *Modekngei* discourses, I will scrutinize how knowledge presented in previous works concerning *Modekngei* has been critically or uncritically employed by scholars and students who followed suit. A main focus of this chapter is to delineate the process by which certain knowledge gains the power to become "truth" through its repeated use by subsequent writers and through a wide network of knowledge dissemination.

## II. The Witnesses

*"hyakubun wa ikken ni shikazu* [Seeing is believing]" (a Japanese proverb).

In this section, I introduce accounts written by three Japanese individuals who were in Palau, and interacted with or heard about *Modekngei* members during the Japanese administration period; they are Hisakatsu Hijikata, Kenichi

Sugiura<sup>5</sup> and Otoji Ishikawa. The three men with varying personal orientations and intentions interpreted and represented *Modekngei* differently, although the latter two, Sugiura and Ishikawa, shared one important view concerning the nature of the movement. A historian, Sachiko Hatanaka joined the Sugiura-Ishikawa discourse, later in the 1970's. For the convenience of my discussion, I include her understanding and description of *Modekngei* at the end of this section. I start with Hijikata since his account seems to have significant influence on the work of a later scholar; the section of Hijikata is longer than others, because he presented the most information among the three colonists who wrote or mentioned about *Modekngei*.

#### 1. A Precursor

Between 1929 and 1931, an artist/self-taught anthropologist, Hisakatsu Hijikata studied *Ngaramodekngei*.<sup>6</sup> He acquainted himself with a prominent *Ngaramodekngei* leader, Ongesi, and "relied on his [Ongesi's] guidance and assistance for most of my [his] research" on *Ngaramodekngei*.<sup>7</sup> Hijikata's article

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<sup>5</sup> The pronounsation of his first name is Ken'ichi (or Ken-ichi).

<sup>6</sup> According to Hijikata, "*Ngara* means 'existence' and 'in.' For a long time, *ngara* has often been prefixed to the word *cheldebechel* (association), so it may also be a generic word for 'organisation.' *Modekngei* means 'solidarity'." See, Hisakatsu Hijikata, *Gods and Religion in Palau*, CWHH, vol. 3, trans. Hirokazu Miyazaki, (Tokyo : The Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 1993), 216. His original spelling is *Garamedekugei* (if expressed with *Rōma-ji* [Roman letters]. *Rōma-ji* is used to convert the Japanese writing system into spelling with English alphabets).

<sup>7</sup> Hijikata, *Gods and Religion*, 216. Ongesi is identified as *Kodeb*. *Kodeb* or *Kodep* is a title of the second ranking chief (shaman) in Chol village, whose lineage god is *Chomkuul*. See, Machiko Aoyagi, "*Bitang ma Bitang* (*Futatsu no Hanbun*) *Eual Saus* (*Yottu no Kado*) *oyobi Kinouteki Konran* [*Bitang Ma Bitang* (Two Halves), *Eual Saus* (Four Corners) and Mechanical Confusion in Palauan

details the names (people, places, gods), religious doctrine (presenting a number of *kesekes* --*Ngaramodekngei*'s chant/hymn), rituals, medical practices, and religious objects of *Ngaramodekngei*. The following is a brief summary of his representation.

*Ngaramodekngei* for Hijikata is a **"transitional movement"**<sup>8</sup> to reform **Palauan religions which syncretizes all Palauan and Christian/Buddhist religions**; it emerged from the necessity in a **rapidly changing Palauan society**.<sup>9</sup> He states that **"traditional" Palauan religions were banned by the Germans** and at the same time the new ways of life were introduced to Palau.<sup>10</sup>

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Socio-Plitical Organization]," in Cultural Anthropological Research on the Folk Culture in the Western Caroline Islands of Micronesia, Mikuronesia Kenkyū linkai ed., (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1986), 247.

Hijikata also mentions a name of another *Ngaramodekngei* leader, Techeltoech, from Ngchemesed village in Ngeremlungui. He was reported to be arrested and sent to live on Pulu Ana Island by the Japanese, at the time of Hijikata's *Ngaramodekngei* research (1929-1931) (Gods and Religion, 216). Hijikata praises the extensive and in-depth knowledge of Ongesi concerning Palauan religions and ancient religious objects (mostly about carved stones, used for religious worship in the past but most people then no longer knew the significance of them). Having special knowledge was/is apparently a source of respect.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>9</sup> Hijikata explains *Ngaramodekngei*, by using the example of Japanese incorporation of Buddhism into Shintoism, as a reconciliation of two different religions, resulting in the production of the unique form of new religion.

<sup>10</sup> Hijikata's view that *Ngaramodekngei* appealed to people due to the rapidly changing social condition, resulting from their foreign contacts, resembles the interpretation made by Aoyagi, discussed below. Hijikata states,

One reason for their situation is the different cultures that have been introduced into Palau. They have observed the lifestyles of foreigners (which were unimaginable within the context of their traditional way of living), and realized that such lifestyles are possible. . .

As a result, Palauans came to desire a new form of religion, which is more **compatible to the new social conditions**.<sup>11</sup> This unification or syncretization of Palauan religions is attributed to the people's exposure to Christian concepts. The founder, **Temedad**, began his religious movement **during the German administration period**. **Kesekes**<sup>12</sup> function to provide the legitimacy of

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As a result of these rapid changes and the control exercised over their traditional customs, the Palauans were forced to transform their outward, physical lifestyle, while, simultaneously, their spiritual lives were unavoidably being affected. Productive labour has come to replace the battles they waged among themselves, even their gathering to dance and feast. (Gods and Religion, 212)

Hijikata, however, does not stress a sense of deprivation or powerlessness among the people of Palau, as reported by Aoyagi and other researchers. He emphasizes that foreigner's breaking of taboos and how its consequences had shaken the foundation of Palauan religious belief, where deities' power existed "as a product of those taboos" (Ibid., 212).

<sup>11</sup> The objectives of *Ngaramodekngei*, according to Hijikata, were to attain spiritual happiness, through praying for the gods, thanking for the blessings, and having faith in salvation. He stresses the change in Palauan religious orientation, as a result of syncretism. He states, "Their religious attitude has thus changed from a negative belief in *medakt* (fear) to a positive faith in salvation, whereby people give thanks for good luck (*ngeltengat*), pray (*meluluch*), observe good etiquette, and glorify (*oldanges*) great virtues" (Gods and Religion, 225). Yet, Hijikata adds descriptions of how older religious practices and beliefs have prominence in the characteristics of the religion.

<sup>12</sup> Through the study of *kesekes* and various versions of oral traditions, Hijikata delineates in detail how leaders adjusted oral traditions (i.e. a god transforms himself into another god), by following culturally acceptable ways, in order to spiritually unite Palau. See, Ibid., 217-218 & 221-222; for more detail, see, Hisakatsu Hijikata, Myths and Legends of Palau, CWHH, vol. 3, trans. Yoko Fujita, (Tokyo : The Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 1996), 10-11, 27-28, 34, 42-43, & 80-81. *Ngrirchomkuul*, the house god of the first leader, Temedad, was raised to the position of four of the highest divinities for the entire Palau. In *kesekes*, *Ngrirchomkuul* was treated identically with Christ, and called *Ngrirchomkuul Esu Kristo* (Hijikata, Gods and Religion, 220).



*Ngaramodekngei* (with descriptions of "adjusted" oral traditions) as well as to convey meanings associated with their new deities. Feasts, called *milil*, are held to give collective offerings or expressions of appreciation to divinities through rituals, food offerings, and chanting of *keseke*s, which in turn foster solidarity among *Ngaramodekngei* members.<sup>13</sup> The **welfare of free medical practices, conducted by benevolent leaders**, helps expand the religion.<sup>14</sup> He reports that the **mutual assistance** is an essential aspect of *Ngaramodekngei*. Hijikata witnessed followers' donating **Japanese money** for a person in need, regardless of their social relationship to him/her.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The word, *milil*, apparently has the meaning of "not working, playing". Hijikata states that *Ngaramodekngei* members set Sunday aside as a day of *milil*, that is to be devoted to the gods, which he attributes to the influence of Christian concept. Other feasts, held by the followers in any day of the week, however, was also called *milil* (Ibid., 225). Hijikata attended at least two large *milil*, one of which was a gathering of about 100 people (with a constable's presence). He describes a well defined seating arrangement at the meeting. Meanings associated with upper and lower areas as well as right and left, apparently had/have significance to *Ngaramodekngei*. Hijikata also attended smaller *milil* where people gathered to boil a variety of herbs to make holy, boiled water. The water is used to purify body from both outside and inside. Elaborate body gestures, worship of stones, circulation of "dolls" (carved figures of a man and a woman) during the ritual, food offerings, and chanting of *keseke*s are also mentioned. See *ibid.*, 223-230. Hijikata also identifies spears and carved and painted doves as important religious symbols of *Ngaramodekngei*. He states, however, that people did not show him their spears which were the target of confiscation by the police. Hijikata describes how strong the faith of *Ngaramodekngei* followers are and how the religion is an integrated part of their everyday life.

<sup>14</sup> Apparently Hijikata was informed that "They [*Ngaramodekngei* leaders] visit the sick, dispense free medicine, and teach their medical remedies openly and without receiving remuneration" (Hijikata, *Gods and Religion*, 231). He witnessed miraculous curing power of *Modekngei* through one of his Palauan friend's case.

<sup>15</sup> Palau has had unique traditional currency and practice of exchange. Their currency does not correspond to the western notion of currency. Best source to

As an anti-government bureaucrat, who was more of a romanticist, Hijikata is highly critical of the Japanese suppression of *Ngaramodekngei*. Hijikata expresses his anger toward the Japanese police who do not know anything about *Ngaramodekngei*, but are misled by "rumors" and harshly suppress the movement.<sup>16</sup> He summarizes the bases of accusation against *Ngaramodekngei* used by *Nan'yō-chō*, the South Sea Bureau, as follows: 1) "perplexing good citizens by prophesying and rumoring;" 2) avoiding labor assigned by the government; 3) neglecting work as a result of extravagant feasts being held in the name of gods, which last all night long; 4) "abusing women in the name of the gods;" and 5) the extortion of money and other articles by *Ngaramodekngei* leaders in the name of gods.<sup>17</sup> Hijikata argues that if indeed *Ngaramodekngei* leaders practiced such misconducts and if followers of the movement did not gain anything from joining the movement, *Ngaramodekngei* would have never spread the way it has been; it is because of the religious significance at the critical time of social change and benefits the followers obtain, the movement has been so popular among the people of Palauan.

Thus, persecutions against *Ngaramodekngei* (or **traditionalists**), according to Hijikata, are mistakes committed by the Japanese government; they

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learn about the Palauan currency is Karen L. Nero, "*A Cherechar a Lokelii: Beads of History of Koror, Palau, 1783-1983*," Thesis (Ph.D.), the University of California, Berkeley, 1987, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i. See also, Robert E. Ritzenthaler, *Native Money of Palau*, CIMA Report, no. 27, (Washington : Pacific Science Board, National Research Council, 1949).

<sup>16</sup> Hijikata repeatedly mentions the wide-spread "rumors," that were associated with *Ngaramodekngei* and that resulted in its followers' arrests, but he does not specify what those rumors were.

<sup>17</sup> Hijikata, *Gods and Religion*, 26-27 and 237.

are misled by the radical progressive segments of Palauans, whose prime interest is their personal gain.<sup>18</sup> According to Okaya, who read Hijikata's fieldnotes,<sup>19</sup> Hijikata perceived that *Ngaramodekngei* emerged and developed as a religious movement, but **due to suppression** by the Japanese government, it went underground and the **followers became alarmed toward the Japanese** in general. Hijikata's account of *Ngaramodekngei* does not contain the phrase "anti-Japanese" at all.

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<sup>18</sup> I would like to point to a mistranslation, on the sixth line in page 237 of Gods and Religion (vol. 2). The English text states, "cases are caused by friction between patrolmen and people from the radical sect." In the Japanese text, Hijikata states, "cases are caused by friction between [*Ngaramodekngei* members] and people of the radical progressive faction, especially constables."

The abuse of authority, attributed to the police, both islander and Japanese, is well depicted through an incident he observed.

One day, a patrolman [Palauan police] came up to an old man, who was a good friend of mine, and asked him to lend him some money, but the old man did not accede to his request because he had no money. Then, the old man told me, "Look, soon the god is going to be prosecuted." As expected, when the resident constable [Japanese police] came around on patrol, he questioned the old man with tiresome iteration on trifling matters, and beat him once or twice. Because I was present, he did not accuse the old man of any more crimes. (Ibid., 237)

This incident illustrates how "collaborators" with the Japanese government were able to exercise their influence not only on Palauans who did not take their orders, but also on their Japanese boss because they could take advantage of his role.

Similar episodes, personal interests heavily involved in the police business, is presented in Vidich's account in his description of the post-war Palau. See, Vidich, "Political Impact."

<sup>19</sup> Hijikata kept a journal every single day from his youth to the day he died. More than hundred of them are kept in the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, Japan.

Perhaps the most unique contribution of Hijikata is a *keseke*, describing syncretism of Palauan and Buddhist religions. It goes as follows.

Our mother *Hotokesama* [Buddha] stands amongst the blossoms of trees, and she is above all of us. She stays next to the sun and knows every happiness. Let us pray for the name of this great mother god. Goddess *Hotokesama* was incarnated and was born as the goddess *Chuab*.<sup>20</sup> In the beginning, she stayed in the depth of the sea, but she left and built the house of Ngetelkou.

And she ate the food of Ngebeanged; after eating, she had grown big. Because of that, she gave happiness to people. And we are happy here.<sup>21</sup>

Hijikata is the only person who collected the *keseke*s about Buddha and the circumstances in which it was recorded are unknown.<sup>22</sup> Hijikata apparently

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<sup>20</sup> *Chuab* is the most important creation goddess of Palau. According to oral tradition, the islands of Palau were made from her body collapsing into the ocean. See, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*; Nero, "Beads of History;" also, Richard Parmentier, *The Sacred Remains: Myth, History, and Polity in Belau*, (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

<sup>21</sup> Hijikata, *Gods and Religion*, 223.

<sup>22</sup> Another recorded *keseke*s, in regards to racial difference, is titled as *keseke el kirel a Uchelachelid*.

When the great father god *Uchelachelid* went to Ngerengel with great uncle god *lechademgel*, he shaved the tree of *blacheos* into a circle and made the sun, and thereafter the days have become bright.

When this sun fell from Ngerengel, the top side of the tree went to the west (foreign country), and they [Westerners--foreigners] have the blossoms of beautiful trees. They are white in colour, and their goods are truly good; they are the blossoms of beautiful trees.

And we have the root of Ngerengel. Then those white people and we, black people, have been created . . . (Ibid., 224)

Hijikata interprets this *keseke*s as *Modekugei* members identifying humans, both white and black, as different parts of one tree, therefore, essentially the same.

perceived that *Ngaramodekngei* derived and developed in response to a need to adjust Palauan old religions to their new social realities in which newly introduced values discredited some critical aspects of their old religious beliefs. "*Kako ni Okeru Parao-jin no Shūkyō to Shinkō* [Palauan Religious Beliefs of the Past]," published originally in 1941, contains the above information; the article is compiled in volume two of the Collective Work of Hisakatsu Hijikata, titled *Parao no Kami to Shinko* [Gods and Religion in Palau].<sup>23</sup>

Hijikata left Japan because he was tired of "corrupted civilization." He was to "discover" his "noble savage" in the islands of the South Sea. In fact, he was disillusioned by Palau because of the presence of many Japanese immigrants and left for Satawal in 1931, where he spent seven years with minimum interactions with the people outside of Satawal until his return to Palau. His writings attest to his naiveté and arrogance, believing in the "innocence" of Micronesian minds. Hijikata disliked most officials of *Nan'yō-chō* for their insolence and ignorance toward indigenous people and their ways of life; he was not completely cut off, however, since he occasionally worked for the government who needed information about indigenous populations.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> I do not have access to the original article. The translation of this article is found in, Hijikata, *Gods and Religion*, 212-238.

<sup>24</sup> Hijikata, inspired by Gauguin, left for Micronesia in 1929 and lived there until 1941. In his writings (especially in his essays), he expresses his admiration and sensitivity, although his tone is inescapably paternalistic, toward islanders and their cultures. Perhaps due to his relatively anti-government stance, his displayed skills of art, and his attitude toward Palauan people and culture, he appears to have gained unusual trust, as a Japanese at the time, among large portions of the Palauan population. See, Francis X. Hezel, S.J., *Strangers in Their Own Land: A Century of Colonial Rule in the Caroline and Marshall Islands*, PIMS, no. 13, (Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 212; Koji Okaya, *Nankai Hyōhaku: Hijikata Hisakatsu Den* [Roaming Through the South Sea: A Biography of Hisakatsu Hijikata], (Tokyo : Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1990); also,

To Ongesi, Hijikata might have appeared as the perfect agent who would represent the "true nature" of *Ngaramodekngei* to the increasingly intrusive Japanese. My best guess is that Ongesi cleverly used Hijikata for the sake of *Ngaramodekngei*. Hijikata, on the other hand, appears to have believed that *Ngaramodekngei* helped people adjust to rapid cultural transformation well and there was no reason for *Nan'yō-chō* to suppress the movement. Hijikata's account indicates that his story about *Ngaramodekngei* was written with a clear intention to prove the innocence of *Ngaramodekngei* from criminal charges alleged by the Japanese administration.

## 2. The Sugiura-Ishikawa Discourse

In the same year, another article, "*Minzokugaku to Nan'yō Guntō Tōchi* [Ethnology and Native Administration in Micronesia]" (1941), came out.<sup>25</sup> This

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Mark Peattie, *Nan'yō: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945*, PIMS, no. 4, (Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 1988), 192-195. According to Okaya, Palauan people saw Hijikata as trust-worthy, particularly after he became associated himself with one of the *Ngaramodekngei* leaders (*Nankai Hyōhaku*, 91-92). Hijikata was responsible for the transformation of Palauan traditional *bai* carving into the storyboard. See, Palau Community Action Agency (PCAA), *A History of Palau. Volume three: Japanese Administration, U.S. Naval Military Government*, (Koror : The Agency, 1978), 499-504.

<sup>25</sup> Kenichi Sugiura, "*Minzokugaku to Nan'yō Guntō Tōchi* [Ethnology and Native Administration in Micronesia]," in *Dai Nan'yō: Bunka to Nougyo* [Great Pacific: Its Culture and Its Soil], ed. by *Taiheiyō Kyōkai, Gakujutsu linkai* [The Institute of the Pacific, Section of Sciences], (Tokyo : Kawade Shobō, 1941), pp. 175-218.

For his other works concerning Palau, see, 1938a "*Parao Tōmin no Shūkyō: Fujutsuteki Shisaisha wo Chūshin to shite* [Palauan Religion: A Study on Shamanistic Priests]," 1938a, *Minzokugaku Nenpō* 1: 107-154; and "*Parao Tōmin no Shakai Soshiki* [Palauan Social Structure]," 1938b. *Minzokugaku Kenkyū* 4(1): 49-71. He published more works concerning Palau but I do not have access to them.

time, the author is a pro-government and well-trained anthropologist from Tokyo University. His name is Kenichi Sugiura. He conducted his fieldwork between 1938 and 1941,<sup>26</sup> as a government anthropologist for *Nan'yō-chō*. His article contains less than a page long description of a new religious movement in Palau.<sup>27</sup>

The following is a summary of his story of *Modekngei*: A new religion was founded by an **ambitious local shaman** of Chol village and he declared his house god, *Ngirachomkuul*, to be the monotheistic god for all Palau. The concept of monotheism was **hinted at from Christianity**. Oral traditions have been manipulated. Sugiura estimates that **eighty percent** of the indigenous population throughout Palau have become followers of this religion, because the **doctrine places importance on Palauan tradition** and thus it appeals to their faith. According to Sugiura, around **1938**, the followers were found to be **singing songs, implying an anti-Japanese meaning** and they were immediately investigated by the police. Thus, a potential disaster was prevented from happening. Sugiura interprets that a **new native religion such as this, either consciously or unconsciously, functions to trigger anti-colonial upheaval**. He compares *Modekngei* with other religious movements that were observed in colonial situations. He states that the Ghost Dance of the Native

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<sup>26</sup> Sugiura spent a half year, at a time, conducting fieldwork in Palau, Yap, Pohnpei, and Chuuk, and returned to Tokyo for six months. Sugiura and Hijikata met in Japan, and worked together for *Nan'yō-chō* in Palau during the time of Sugiura's stay.

<sup>27</sup> Although Sugiura does not name, *Modekngei*, it is obvious that he is talking about it from his description, including the god's name, *Ngirachomkuul*. His entire description of *Modekngei* is written in a way that he did not observe any of the events that he describes but he heard about them from someone else.

Americans, harmless in its outlook, had spread like wild fire throughout the Prairie Indians as an anti-American government movement, and this troubled the US government.<sup>28</sup>

Sugiura's and Hijikata's descriptions of *Modekngei* match in several areas, such as the syncretic nature of religion and their utilization of a house god, *Ngirchomkuul*, their use of oral traditions and the importance placed on Palauan customs. However, Sugiura's interpretation of *Modekngei* marks a clear contrast with Hijikata's. Sugiura perceives *Modekngei* as an anti-Japanese resistance movement or at least potentially so in its orientation.<sup>29</sup> This is the first document that reported the songs implying anti-Japanese meanings that were allegedly sung by *Modekngei* members. He seemingly fails to perceive the anti-*Modekngei* segment of Palauans and their roles, and he does not know this (the

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<sup>28</sup> As the title of his article indicates, Sugiura is interested in applied anthropology and has been exposed to several European and American anthropological literature, dealing with administrations of "native" populations in colonial settings. See, bibliography of Sugiura, "*Minzokugaku*". His comparison of *Modekngei* with the Ghost Dance indicates his familiarity with "colonial problems". In fact, the tone of Sugiura's writing, in my opinion, resembles highly ethnocentric colonial officials' writings\*. The entire article is written with an intention to provide the Japanese government with information (with emphasis on the indigenous land ownership) that is useful to carry out efficient colonial administration in Palau. \*In conclusion, Sugiura states, "It is appropriate enough for them [Palauans] to become economically self-sufficient by devoting their labor to us, Civilized men" (my translation, *ibid.*, 45-46).

<sup>29</sup> Giving consideration to the fact that the Japanese, Okinawan, Korean, and Taiwanese immigrant population increased by over 21,000 from 1930 to 1940, the difference in opinions between Hijikata and Sugiura might reflect the different degrees of intensity in the *Modekngei* movement. See also discussions by Vidich and Aoyagi below. For the population figures, see Planning Micronesia's Future: A Summary of the United States Commercial Company's Economic Survey of Micronesia, 1946, ed. by Douglas L. Oliver, (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1951), 31.



1938 arrest) was one of *Nan'yō-chō*'s numerous arrests of *Modekngei* leaders and followers.<sup>30</sup>

Another source, somewhat in line with Sugiura, is a statement of Otoji Ishikawa, who was the retired chief judge of the South Sea Government Supreme Court.<sup>31</sup> A small booklet with the title, *Nan'yō Guntō ni Okeru Tōmin o Taishō to suru Shihō Keisatsu ni Tsuite (Ishikawa Otoji Jutsu)* [Concerning the Judicial Court, Handling Islanders' Cases in the South Sea Islands (Interview with Otoji Ishikawa)], published by *Nan'yō Keizai Kenkyūjo* [the South Sea Economic Research Center] in 1944, contains an interview with Ishikawa. In his discussion of "**occult religion**"<sup>32</sup> (about a page-long), which apparently the Japanese press widely reported to the Japanese public, he states that "**the islanders' ill-will against Japanese is the center of the religion.**"<sup>33</sup> He

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<sup>30</sup> The 1938 arrest was the fourth arrest (at least) of *Modekngei* leaders. See, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*; PCAA, *History of Palau*, Vol. 3; and Vidich, *Political Factionalism*.

<sup>31</sup> Ishikawa worked as a judge in Micronesia about ten years and indicates intimate knowledge about indigenous customs. The tone of his voice can be characterized as paternalistic and compassionate toward Micronesians.

<sup>32</sup> Ishikawa does not name *Modekngei* or Palau and indicates his hesitation to discuss the case. Since there were no other reported serious incidents regarding religion in Micronesia at that time, I think it is fair to assume "occult religion" as *Modekngei*.

<sup>33</sup> My translation, *Nan'yo Keizai Kenkyujo* [the South Sea Economic Research Center], *Nan'yō Guntō ni Okeru Tōmin o Taishō to suru Shihō Keisatsu ni Tsuite (Ishikawa Otoji Jutsu)* [Concerning the Judicial Court, Handling Islanders' Cases in the South Sea Islands (Interview with Otoji Ishikawa)]. (Tokyo : Aitō Insatsu, 1944), 21. Ishikawa's first name could be Ototsugi instead of Otoji (an adapted form of Chinese characters used in the Japanese writing system, that is also applied to names, leaves a reader in a position to guess from several potential ways of pronunciation, unless specified).

mentions songs indicating (*Modekngei*) followers' **hope for Japanese failure** or predicting an arrival of a heavenly army who will rescue them. He expresses his criticism toward the leaders for perplexing others by composing such songs.

Ishikawa perceives that the popularity of the religion among islanders is only the natural **result of the huge influx of Japanese immigrants**, which threatened the life conditions and well-being of islanders. The religion **appeals to their psychological insecurity**. He is critical of the administration for "making islanders compete on equal ground with Japanese while the islanders are inferior in their levels of knowledge, ability and demographic numbers at this moment."<sup>34</sup> He believes that the administration should provide special protection for the welfare of islanders. His comments, throughout the book, suggest frequent conflicts between the administration and the judiciary, because, according to Ishikawa, the administrators' prime concern is to gain points for themselves from higher officials by simply maintaining "peace" and not by respecting islanders' customary laws (*shūkan* in Japanese), which he was assigned to exercise in the court.<sup>35</sup> He comments about the rather **"unreasonable"**<sup>36</sup> **nature of police conduct**, attempting to remove anything that is reported as unusual, targeting islanders in particular.

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<sup>34</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 21.

<sup>35</sup> A law applied to the indigenous population will be discussed later. The Japanese word, *shūkan* (custom), is adapted into the Palauan language, spelling *shukang* or *siukang*. The potential plea, through the use of this concept, made by *Modekngei* leaders to protect themselves during their trials will be also discussed near the end of this chapter.

<sup>36</sup> My translation, *Nan'yō Keizai Kenkyūjo*, [*Interview with Otoji Ishikawa*], 2 & 8.

Like Sugiura, Ishikawa regards *Modekngei* as anti-Japanese in its orientation. His interpretation of *Modekngei* as a religion, which attracts people due to their psychological insecurity because of the presence of large numbers of Japanese and their influence on Palauan lives, is new so far. His description of the administration echoes Hijikata's criticism against the police.<sup>37</sup>

A historian, Sachiko Hatanaka, follows their suit. Her writings on *Modekngei* appear in two different sources. One is a report, "Culture Change in Micronesia Under the Japanese Administration" (n.d.), she submitted to the UNESCO, after her engagement in a "program of UNESCO carried out with the participation of the Japanese government." She conducted a three-month field study in the six Micronesian districts under U.S. administration.<sup>38</sup> Another source, "Micronesia under the Japanese Mandate, 1914-1945," is an introduction inserted to A Bibliography of Micronesia Compiled from Japanese Publication

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<sup>37</sup> Although Hijikata, Sugiura and Ishikawa do not mention in their texts, it is noteworthy that about the same period as *Modekngei*'s emergence and development, there were active "cultic" movements (*Daihon-kyō*, *Kurozumi-kyō*, etc.) in Japan that asserted anti-foreign/anti-"civilization." Their aim was to restore idealized "old traditions" of Japan. These movements were started by the economically most depressed (large) segments of the Japanese population. Their activities were suppressed by the police in such manners as burning their temples, arresting followers, and eventually the elimination of the entire cult activities (by the late 1930s).

<sup>38</sup> In her introduction, she mentions that she interviewed about one hundred people and she "was able to communicate perfectly in Japanese with them," Sachiko Hatanaka, "Culture Change in Micronesia Under the Japanese Administration (Programme of Participation 1973/74 no. 4273)," n.d., 1. A reprint of a report made to the UNESCO, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i.

Her other article is "Micronesia Under the Japanese Mandate, 1914-1945," in A Bibliography of Micronesia Compiled from Japanese Publication 1915-1945, ed. by Sachiko Hatanaka, Occasional Papers no.8, pp.1-16. (Tokyo : *Gakushūin Daigaku Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo* [Gakushūin University, the Oriental Culture Research Center], 1979).

1915-1945. (1979). In both, she spares one paragraph for the discussion of *Modekngei* and the content is exactly the same except the latter mentions a source she used. This listed source is Ishikawa's 1944 interview.<sup>39</sup>

Her description about *Modekngei* is very **similar to Ishikawa's** comments of 1944, except several sentences in the paragraph contain additional information. One sentence states, "The Japanese population had grown extremely large in 1938 when a type of cult sprang up, based on opposition to the Japanese."<sup>40</sup> The notion, that *Modekngei* is a cult that opposes the Japanese and that emerged due to the population pressure of the Japanese immigrants, is the same as Ishikawa's view, but her statement is slightly more **definitive about the "oppositional" nature of *Modekngei***. What is new is the specific year, 1938, mentioned as the year of *Modekngei*'s emergence. I suspect, although I am not entirely certain, that this idea was derived from her **reading of Sugiura**.

Here, we observe a manifestation of the Sugiura-Ishikawa discourse on *Modekngei*, in a report that was submitted to an international organization called the United Nations.

Among the first three Japanese witnesses of *Modekngei* between the late 1920's and around 1940, discrepancies are evident in their expressed opinions. Three people with different backgrounds and different interests viewed the same

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<sup>39</sup> Hatanaka misspelled his name as "Usgujawa," because, I believe, her right hand on the keyboard being one position off to the left. No other possible source on the year about *Modekngei* is available to me.

<sup>40</sup> My translation, Hatanaka, Bibliography, 13-14.

phenomenon in three different ways. From reading his essays and poems concerning peoples of Palau, I assume that Hijikata would have had a difficult time even imagining that the Palauan people would have conspire against the Japanese. His strong interests in Palauan religions also might prompted him to look into the religious aspects of *Modekngei* rather than the "rumors" which he thought were the basis of Japanese allegations against *Modekngei*.

Sugiura, although his information is written in a form of second-hand information, interprets *Modekngei* from his scholarly knowledge about the similar types of movements that occurred in other places under the colonial circumstances. An administration-oriented anthropologist's mind seems to be reflected in his representation of *Modekngei*. The judge Ishikawa perceived *Modekngei*, or an occult religion, from his judicial perspective. He points out the "ill will" toward the Japanese behind the religion. Unlike Sugiura, Ishikawa mainly criticizes the Japanese administration of island people and the extreme population increase due to the immigrants that caused deprivation among indigenous people which, in turn, resulted in the emergence and development of the religion that is anti-Japanese in its political orientation. The proverb, "seeing is believing," would need a re-evaluation of its meanings.

### III. CIMA or Cacophony of Information from *Modekngei* Allegations

"Social analysis must now grapple with the realization that its objects of analysis are also analyzing subjects who critically interrogate ethnographers--their writings, their ethics, and their politics" (Renato Rosaldo).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Renato Rosaldo, Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis, 2nd ed., (Boston : Beacon Press, 1993), 21.

Seven American scholars conducted their field studies in Palau between 1947 and 1949 for the project called the Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology. The project's aim was to foster the better understanding of the indigenous population in the newly acquired territory in Micronesia, to foster more effective administration.<sup>42</sup> Four researchers wrote or mentioned *Modekngei* in their final reports; John Useem, Homer G. Barnett, Arthur J. Vidich, and Robert Ritzenthaler. The first three provide substantial information concerning *Modekngei*, while Ritzenthaler briefly mentions the name and do not discuss the movement. This section introduces the findings of three CIMA researchers, Useem, Barnett and Vidich, some of which have casted powerful influence on later scholars.

#### 1. Lieutenant Useem

John Useem entered Micronesia as military personnel in 1944.<sup>43</sup> Beside his CIMA report, titled Report on Palau (1949), he published at least four other articles (1945, 1946a, 1947, & 1948) and two reports (1946b & 1946c) on matters concerning the early American administration in Micronesia. His discussion of *Modekngei* first appears in his 1946b and 1946c reports, then in the 1947<sup>44</sup> and 1948 articles, and finally in the CIMA report of 1949. Despite the considerable time span, Useem's view on *Modekngei* remains fairly consistent.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For more information about the CIMA project, see the following chapter.

<sup>43</sup> John Useem, "The American Pattern of Military Government in Micronesia," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 1945, 51 (2), 93.

<sup>44</sup> This article reveals that Kenichi Sugiura's article "Ethnology and Native Administration in Micronesia" (1947 [1941]) was translated by Harry Uyehara and was available to the CIMA researchers, prior to their research. See, Useem,

According to Useem, **Modekngei**<sup>46</sup> is a **nativistic religious movement**, which seeks to **bring cohesion** among Palauans by their sharing certain values. "The **preservation of native customs** is stressed, but at the same time it is recognized that Palau children **must learn foreign ways**."<sup>47</sup> It is an "**admixture of indigenous beliefs and Christianity**" and conforms to a "**puritanical moral code**."<sup>48</sup> There is no official "ecclesiastical organization"<sup>49</sup> but several leaders are recognized. "It is **not anti-foreign**."<sup>50</sup> The *Modekngei* leaders' practice of **prophecy, sorcery**, rituals, **healing** including curing **women's sterility**, and their values (including the importance of **Palauan money**) are briefly mentioned.

According to Useem, "*Modekngei* was a relatively **small cult** during the **German and Japanese period**."<sup>51</sup> However, during the war, most people in

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1947 "Applied Anthropology in Micronesia," *Applied Anthropology: Problems of Human Organization*, Fall, 1947, 6 (4), 13.

<sup>45</sup> In his CIMA report, Useem does not elaborate his discussion on *Modekngei*. He suggests his 1946b report, produced for the U.S. Commercial Company Economic Survey, for more information concerning *Modekngei*.

<sup>46</sup> Useem is the first writer who uses an alphabetic spelling, M-o-d-e-k-n-g-e-i. He comments, the term means "to bring them together" In Useem, Report on Yap and Palau, (Honolulu : The U.S. Commercial Company, Economic Survey, 1946b), 76.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 77. Incorporation of a Christian concept, Trinity, a deity, Jesus Christ, and a symbolic object, sacred wine cup, are mentioned by Useem (Ibid., 77).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>50</sup> Useem, "Applied Anthropology," 6; and id., "Institutions of Micronesia," *Far Eastern Survey*, Jan., 1948, 28: p24. In his 1946b report, Useem states, "There is no reason why the Americans should continue the Japanese policy of suppressing the modekngei" (77).

<sup>51</sup> Useem, "Applied Anthropology," 6.

Palau became *Modekngei* followers because of the "**social vacuum**" created by the "sudden collapse of a nation they deemed imperishable and a way of life that was the model for the acculturated populations."<sup>52</sup> As "a new cultural model [American] . . . set in once more, *Modekngei* lost much of its following . . . **without any direct actions of the administrations.**"<sup>53</sup> In a report (1946b), he mentions *Modekngei* members' uncertainty showed toward "what stand America will take."<sup>54</sup> To Useem, *Modekngei* members seem to have testified to its harmless nature (with regard to the administration) by stressing such aspects as conformity to Christian ethics, willingness toward "modernization," and a non anti-foreign orientation, of *Modekngei*.

## 2. Doctor Barnett

Another CIMA researcher, Homer G. Barnett, from the University of Oregon, joined the CIMA project and conducted his fieldwork in Palau from August 1947 to May 1948. His research was mostly conducted in Ulimang village in Ngaraard; Ngaraard is an area that *Modekngei* was started and later became an alleged center for *Modekngei* activities. Two of his publications, the CIMA report, Palauan Society (1949) and a monograph, Being A Palauan (1970),<sup>55</sup> contain his understanding of *Modekne* (or *Ngaramodekne*).<sup>56</sup> The

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>54</sup> Useem, Yap and Palau, 76.

<sup>55</sup> Homer G. Barnett, Palauan Society: A Study of Contemporary Native Life in Palauan Islands, CIMA Report no.20. (Eugene : University of Oregon Publications, 1949.); and id., Being a Palauan, (New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979). In his CIMA report, Barnett's discussion of *Modekne* appears in



discussion of *Modekne* in the 1970 monograph presents a summary of the 1949 version and no additional information or alteration of the contents is made.

Barnett characterized *Modekne* as a **typical phenomenon** observed at the "frontiers of Christianity,"<sup>57</sup> where local prophets establish new religions that are **"intermingling of native and Christian** forms of belief and practice."<sup>58</sup> Often, this type of phenomena arises "under conditions of **deprivation and despair**."<sup>59</sup> It **started as a religion in 1912** by a man of Chol village in Ngaraard, Temedad,<sup>60</sup> who renounced all but three Palauan gods, claiming they were evil. The stories about Temedad's being possessed,<sup>61</sup> **breaking taboos** without being punished by gods, **causing a miracle** (he raised the dead), and making **predictions**, spread and people began following him. Under Temedad,

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## Chapter VII: Religion.

<sup>56</sup> Barnett's way of spelling. He comments that the meaning of the term, *Ngaramodekne* is "it is bound together" (*Palauan Society*, 217).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 213. Barnett reports that Temedad adopted the Cross as a symbol of *Modekne*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>60</sup> Barnett mentions that Temedad was a policeman under the German administration and was able to read and write. Temedad had some (German?) religious books and studied them (*Ibid.*, 215-216). Barnett spells his name, Temudad.

<sup>61</sup> Barnett depicts how a god descended down to Temedad and started to act "strange," which, in his explanation, is a proper way for a person to be identified as a shaman in the Palauan society. Aoyagi, discussed below, provides similar stories of a god's descending down to Temedad. Vidich, also discussed later, states that Temedad had two seizures and upon recovery, "he established contact with a god," (Vidich, *Political Factionalism*, 85).

*Modekne* had a **stronger Christian flavor**,<sup>62</sup> and **equality of all people** was declared as opposed to the traditional hierarchy. Temedad was **"progressive"** in his ways of **accepting foreign ideas** and materials, and **"he was not, it seems, opposed to foreign control."**<sup>63</sup> Temedad, joined by Ongesi, conducted the **curing practice** in exchange for money.

After Temedad's death in 1928, under Ongesi, "the real leader,"<sup>64</sup> *Modekne* gained an anti-foreign flavor. In contrast to Useem's estimation, according to Barnett, the **"fundamental distinction between Palauans and all foreigners"**<sup>65</sup> was allegedly declared by Ongesi.

He [Ongesi] preached that the dark skinned Palauans were a different kind of men from the light skinned people and that their destinies must be different. He said that the white men, including the Japanese, walked along one road while the Palauans walked along another, and the two ways could never meet. Consequently, there were two heavens, one for the Palauans and another for foreigners. Palauans could not "go with Jesus." He said that the

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<sup>62</sup> According to Barnett, Temedad declared adultery, lying, stealing and murder as sins, and drinking, smoking, and betel-chewing were prohibited (*Palauan Society*, 217). He also states, the ban on betel-chewing was soon lifted because "after the Japanese began to persecute cult members . . . the authorities suspected any native [sic] who was not a betel-chewer" (*Ibid.*, 217).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 216. Barnett states, as compared with Temedad that, Ongesi was with "different background, different ambitions, and a different personality." Barnett was informed that Ongesi's father had been an indigenous "missionary for his local god, Ngiramukul [*Ngirchomkuul*]" in Ngaraard. According to Barnett, Ongesi's father claimed the superiority of his deity, made shrines build for his god in other villages, and provided curing practices in return for money. Barnett believes that Ongesi followed his father's path. See *ibid.*, 216-217. No other researchers confirms this information.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

spirit of Temudad had communicated this to him, having discovered it after his death.<sup>66</sup>

The movement acquired stronger nativistic characteristics and Ongesi banned foreign food, a variety of goods, and songs.<sup>67</sup> Ongesi composed numerous **songs** that were sung at **elaborate feasts** which "lasted all night and were continued for several days."<sup>68</sup>

Barnett writes that Ongesi was more interested in gaining **power through the accumulation of money**. Ongesi told his followers that the money obtained through intrigue, deception or conspiracy, was the source of illnesses and needed to be given to him in order to appease the gods' anger. Traditional exchange systems, involving donations of money, were abused by Ongesi. Ongesi went around all villages in Palau, collected money and food that were alleged to appease *Modekne* gods and conducted healing practices. As a result of these activities, Ongesi became an extremely wealthy man.<sup>69</sup>

Japanese suppression of *Modekne* began before Temedad's death. "They [the Japanese] became **alarmed over its popularity**, and because they **sensed something subversive in its appeals to native tradition and its rejection of the foreigner**."<sup>70</sup> According to Barnett, the Japanese saw that *Modekne* was

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 220. This information suggests that Ongesi was anti-Christian while Temedad was not. It can also be read as Temedad did not have strong anti-"white" sentiments as Ongesi appears to have had.

<sup>67</sup> Barnett states, "These nativistic elements, although they became magnified after Temedad's death, existed even before that time in the thinking of Ongesi." (Ibid., 220).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 220. Barnett lists two other reasons behind the Japanese suppression

**demoralizing.** *Modekne* leaders were perceived to be **impoverishing** good people through charging fees for false medical practice and prophecy, and through holding feasts, which made their followers "waste their time **away from productive labor.**"<sup>71</sup> The Japanese had the support of "**some important chiefs**" who felt a threat from Temedad's **teaching of equality** and the increasing power/material wealth of *Modekne* leaders.<sup>72</sup>

Barnett is the first author (along with Vidich, discussed below) who connects *Modekne* with a prophet, name **Rdiall**.<sup>73</sup> According to Barnett, Rdiall began prophesying before the arrival of the German administration. Rdiall was from Ngaraard, the same district where Temedad and Ongesi came from, located near the northern end of the island of Babeldaob. Rdiall made numerous predictions, many implying that the western style of life would come to Palau. He wore western style clothing, invented a writing method, and placed flagpoles in numerous locations. Barnett also studied older forms of Palauan religions and discusses the unique position of religious specialists, unequalled to any other

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of *Modekne*. He states that the Japanese administration perceived *Modekne*'s healing practice as "unscientific" and "unhygienic." The "widely circulated and exaggerated reports" about the power of Temedad also alarmed the Japanese administration. In *ibid.*, 221.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>72</sup> This information presented in the Barnett account is in the sharp contrast with Vidich's understandings of chiefs' close ties with *Modekne*. Vidich's view will be discussed below.

<sup>73</sup> Barnett spells Rdiall as "Ardial," and Aoyagi renders the name as "Rudiall." Rdiall is a spelling used by Vidich and the PCAA. Although it might need re-examination, all these authors agree that Rdiall's movement had a "progressive," not anti-foreign flavor. There are discrepancies in opinions about whether Rdiall was arrested by the Germans or not.

status in Palau, for their status could be acquired from **non-heredity channels** and their **political power** could precede many high ranking chiefs.

In his CIMA report, Barnett indicates his difficulty in conducting research about *Modekne*. He notes that the US administration banned *Modekne's healing practice*<sup>74</sup> as a result of a court case brought by a navy doctor, who opposed their healing practice for his hygienic concerns. Since then, the *Modekne* movement went underground and people were extremely reluctant to talk about it.<sup>75</sup> Some *Modekne* informants told Barnett that "they cannot understand why it should be suppressed."<sup>76</sup> Barnett also comments that *Modekne* people obviously attempted to impress him with the religion's similarity or synonymy to Christianity. In his retrospective essay, Barnett discusses that the people in Ulimang village, where he conducted most of his research, initially kept their distance from him, because "prior to our [sic] arrival, a rumor circulated to the effect that the district chief would be accompanied by 'Doctor Somebody' on his next visit."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Barnett, *Palauan Society*, 215.

<sup>75</sup> Barnett states, "Since this element [healing practice] has become the core of cult activities, and the principal interest of its members, the prohibition has amounted to a virtual ban upon the cult itself" (Ibid., 215).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 222. For more discussion on the ban placed on *Modeknegei* healing practices, see Chapter 2.

<sup>77</sup> Barnett, "Learning About Culture: Reconstruction, Participation, Administration, 1934-1954," in *Observers Observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*, History of Anthropology, vol. 1, ed. by George W. Stocking, Jr., (Madison : The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 161.

### 3. Author Vidich

The last entry among the CIMA researchers is Arthur J. Vidich. From Wisconsin, Vidich, then a MA student in Social Anthropology, traveled across the earth to Palau. He stayed in Palau about six months between January and July in 1948. Vidich's research was conducted mostly in Melekeok and Koror and he was on a research team led by Useem.<sup>78</sup> Two of his publications based on the CIMA fieldwork contain information about *Modeknge*.<sup>79</sup> One is the CIMA report, Political Factionalism in Palau, its Rise and Development (1949) and the other is his Ph.D. dissertation, titled "The Political Impact of Colonial Administration" (1952).<sup>80</sup> The information about *Modeknge* in both works is almost identical except the latter contains two "songs" and Vidich's interpretations of them.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Arthur J. Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997. Concerning his research conditions, see the following chapter. Vidich completed his MA except for the thesis defense, and was accepted for the Ph.D. program at Harvard at the time of his CIMA research.

<sup>79</sup> Vidich's spelling. His account on *Modeknge* appears in Chapter IV: Historical and Contemporary Factions in Palau.

<sup>80</sup> Vidich's dissertation was published as a monograph, under the same title, from Arno Press, New York, in 1980.

<sup>81</sup> The following are the anti-Japanese "songs" collected by Vidich.

1. Gods make our hearts to [sic] one, but our hearts do not become one. This is because tedeb I ngot (the chief god) has been chopped up and divided. Now the bones and sinews of our god are gradually coming together. When they get together, the people of Palau will all become one. Those who do not believe will gradually come to believe in Modeknge.

We shall make a tour around Palau and pray. Then we shall come out from the first buoy in East passage and climb to the middle of the road. Now our legs and arms have become strong and we are able to stand up. Now we can go to the highest hill on the highest mountain. We are waiting for the battleship.

Several sentences and a few quotes are also added and some minor changes in text are made. His study of *Modekngie* is a part of his larger frame of analysis, aiming at discerning the **political factionalism** in Palau.

Vidich characterizes *Modekngie* as "**a well crystallized ... religio-politico movement.**"<sup>82</sup> Two essential factors underlying *Modekngie* ideological

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2. The body of our god is a stone and lives in the bai. We will go to see him, but we will get nothing to eat. It has already been eaten.

The stone of his body has been broken into twice seven [sic] and are at badl smar' (the Japanese pier). These stones are the body of our god. (Italics not provided by Vidich, in "Political Impact," 239-240)

Vidich states that the first "song" expresses *Modekngie*'s lament for the fragmentation of their society, which was perceived as a result of Japanese intrusions on Palau. To restore unity in Palau, the battleship, which Vidich interprets as German, would come and expel the Japanese.

The second "song," according to Vidich, depicts the conditions of resource deprivation in Palau due to Japanese exploitation. It also indicates their resentment toward the Japanese use of stones in the construction of a pier, which were believed to be the transformed bodies of their gods. See, *ibid.*, 240.

<sup>82</sup> Vidich, *Political Factionalism*, 84. Vidich recognizes some religious aspects of *Modekngie*. He briefly mentions the power of curing, associated with *Modekngie* leaders, and a presence of *Modekngie* medium. These characteristics of *Modekngie* are discussed as some of the reasons which the *Modekngie* movement attracted many Palauan followers at the initial stage of *Modekngie* development. See, *ibid.*, 85 & 87.

One miraculous occasion reported by Vidich is:

In 1926 an opportunity presented itself and Ongesii quickly identified himself with an apparent miracle. A Peliliou [sic] woman's son had died. Since the boy had been fond of a harmonica, it was placed as an offspring in the *eldeng* after his death. One night it was heard to play of its own volition and this fact was interpreted as certain evidence of the return of the boy's spirit. Ongesii appeared on the scene and established the old woman as a medium in *Modekngie* with occult powers for curing. It was after this incident that the movement once again gained momentum.

structure are delineated. First, the movement valued "a **return to the real** or romanticized conception of the ***ancienne regime***."<sup>83</sup> Second is a "**removal of the Japanese from Palau**."<sup>84</sup> The "two aspects of *Modeknge* are at once part of a larger theme — the anti Japanese sentiments being evoked by **rapid changes in both the social structure and patterned status and role relationships** which, in turn, tended to make the old order an appealing focus for a **lost security**."<sup>85</sup> According to Vidich, although the *Modeknge* leaders' reference to the past was selective, the movement appealed to "**native ethnocentrism**" that was threatened by the **overwhelming number of Japanese immigrants** "who by many standards (production capacity, luxuries, technology, etc.) were superior, and by the availability of world news."<sup>86</sup> The following quotations are the two famous passages presented by Vidich to convey the "essence" of *Modeknge* ideology.

1. Palau will always be for the Palauans. The Palau people should never take over the foreigner's religion and life. We are

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(Ibid., 87)

Vidich also notes that a religious "vacuum" created by Spanish and German suppressions of Palauan religions resulted in fostering *Modeknge*'s success since "Modeknge, as a partially religious movement, served to fulfill certain needs for religious expression of the people" (Ibid., 119).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 90. According to Vidich, "Modeknge adopted red as its color and the specific use of the red loincloth symbolized the opposition to foreign -- i.e. Japanese -- ways." (Ibid., 89) An alternative interpretation concerning the red cloth is presented by Aoyagi, discussed below.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 89.



black and our god is black. The foreigner is white and his gods are white, so their gods and our gods can never come together.<sup>87</sup>

2. A life of ease is not in itself sufficient. Life must also be stable, well ordered and harmonious. These qualities have been disrupted. All aspects of the old way - the gods and the people united in oneness with the soil and sea - must be brought together again. To disembowel the earth for aluminum ore and bauxite has scattered the gods and the people. Large scale fishing and lumbering operations without regard for traditional and sacred land usage and fishing rights patterns have torn asunder the relationship between the people and the natural world. The unity of life has been destroyed by the compartmentalization of functions - education, government, law, business, money, religion. Of what necessity are written codes? Why is it necessary to buy rice? Why does Palau need ice cream cones? In short, foreign ways do not fit. People do not require rules, orders and codes in order to live at peace with themselves. The ways of life are implicitly accepted, beyond scrutiny, and "given" in their totality by a heritage which has already solved all problems of life. The destroyed stability and harmony must be reached.<sup>88</sup>

The passage-1 above echoes Ongesi's speech as collected by Barnett.

According to Vidich, *Modeknge* members employed "a type of **rear-guard non-violent opposition** to Japanese policy and authority" due to their "inferior numbers and technology," instead of making a "declaration of civil war."<sup>89</sup> Thus, largely with indirect manner, *Modeknge* members **opposed Japanese religion, schools, hospitals, the conscription of labor, and the reforms of Palauan money, land distribution and exchange customs.**

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<sup>87</sup> A statement made by a Palauan, name Rudim, cited in Vidich, "Political Impact," 239.

<sup>88</sup> A source not listed. In Vidich, Political Factionalism, 89 & "Political Impact," 238.

<sup>89</sup> Vidich, Political Factionalism, 90.

Vidich's description about the composition of *Modekngei* members further confirms his argument. He points out that the majority of the followers were the **ones who lost their political status and power under the Japanese administration**. These include chiefs and women, who least benefited from the presence of the Japanese. The *Modekngei* population concentrated in the northern, western, and southern Palauan districts that were **remote from the Japanese settlements**.<sup>90</sup> In contrast, the Palauans who were Christians, who were part of the Japanese economic structure, who worked for the Japanese government,<sup>91</sup> and/or who visited Japan were not members of *Modekngei*. **Omang** of Koror and **Tellie** of Melekeok, constables under the Japanese, are mentioned as individuals who were most responsible for the instigation of *Modekngei* suppression. **Checks and balances** is a key concept throughout his writing to describe the division and competition in Palauan culture and politics.

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<sup>90</sup> These areas are specified by Vidich as following: "Kayangel, Nger'elong [Ngerchelongs], Ngarard, Ngardmau, Ngeremiengui [Ngeremlengui], Ngetbang, Aimeliik, and Peliliou. . . Anguar [Angaur]" (Ibid., 90). The excluded areas are Koror, Melekeok, Airai, Ngchesar, and Ngiwal.

Koror was the center of Japanese settlements and activities. Patrick Tellei, discussed later, adds information that people in eastern districts then were mostly Christians. See, Patric Tellei, "Modekngei: What Is It, Can It Survive? View of a Non-Modekngei Palauan," 1988. Unpublished paper, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i.

<sup>91</sup> Vidich emphasizes that particularly men between the ages of 20 and 40 who, previously had scarce chances to achieve higher status in society are the components of the group. Men from lower ranking families and/or men of higher ranking through patrilineal lines are included into this category by Vidich. Through their participation in the capitalistic-oriented economy during the Japanese administration, there were new means and avenues opened up for them to be socially successful. Vidich characterizes members of the all non-*Modekngei* groups as "collaborators" to the Japanese administration. See, Vidich, *Political Factionalism*, 94-104.

Vidich discusses the historical development of *Modekngie* chronologically, sometimes with specific dates.<sup>92</sup> Vidich's descriptions about the sequence of leadership<sup>93</sup> and reasons for Temedad's initial success roughly follow the story collected by Barnett. The striking difference between the two accounts is, in Vidich's report, Temedad is depicted as a strong anti-Japanese agent who ordered the **destruction of a Japanese school** in Ngaraard, who ordered **women to divorce their husbands if they worked for the Japanese**, and who declared "all Palau money had become contaminated by the presence of the Japanese and required purification."<sup>94</sup> A more cunning image of Temedad, as compared with the "progressive and ethical" picture provided by Barnett, comes out clearly from Vidich's account. He too, along with Ongesi, was a power hungry individual who abused his status for the accumulation of money. According to Vidich, *Modekngie*, was formally **acknowledged by the**

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<sup>92</sup> Vidich says that the information is drawn "primarily from the personal diaries of two informants kept over the last 25 or 30 years" (Ibid., 85). He does not mention whether these two individuals are *Modekngie* members or not.

<sup>93</sup> Two other names of *Modekngie* leaders, Wasii/Wasisang and Rnguul and characteristics of Rnguul's rule during the absence of Temedad and Ongesi (due to their imprisonment) are also discussed.

According to Vidich, all four leaders were former constables who worked under the German administration. Furthermore, Vidich points out that the German administration "was romanticized in songs and whose return was predicted throughout the Japanese era" (Political Factionalism, 122).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 85. Vidich points out, however, that the "crystallization of anti-Japanese sentiment" among *Modekngie* members took place during the 1930s when they realized that materialization of their aim to return to the idealized Palauan past became increasingly grim. According to Vidich, it was from this period *Modekngie* began taking direct actions against the Japanese sanctions. Persecutions against their activities, thus, became intensified. See, ibid., 121.

congregation of "all the village and district **chiefs** of Palau"<sup>95</sup> in their meeting in Chol, in **1918**.

The description of Ongesi by Vidich is similar to the one by Barnett. Additional information in Vidich's account states *Modekngie* assumed new and expanded roles under Ongesi in the following four ways: 1) each district and village established their representatives. 2) *Modekngie* headquarters with a hospital, dormitories, and offices was built on the island of Orak and the place became "a heaven for young men who wished to avoid the Japanese labor conscription."<sup>96</sup> 3) Medical personnel were trained. 4) The movement "assumed an aspect of rationality."<sup>97</sup> Vidich adds that allegedly "Ongesii was seducing all female patients as a cure or preventive for venereal disease."<sup>98</sup> Under Ongesi, *Modekngie* had become solidly established by 1937, to the extent that "every district and village chief in Palau was a member of Modekngie."<sup>99</sup> However, after the arrest of Ongesi in 1939 and the harsher measures taken by the Japanese, the movement declined until its resurgence toward the end of World War II. Vidich notes, near the end of war, the movement became "aggressively anti-Japanese, even interfering in the Japanese efforts to secure native labor."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>100</sup> Vidich, "Political Impact," 246.

Vidich briefly discusses *Modeknjie* under the US administration.

According to him, chiefs, now receiving full support from the new administration no longer needed *Modeknjie* for their security, and thus, attempted to undermine the power enjoyed by *Modeknjie* leaders. As reported by Barnett, American medical practitioners disapproved of *Modeknjie*'s curing practices and attempted to eliminate their medical function.<sup>101</sup> Such measures led to a "situation [that] defined **Modeknjie as a religion**, exclusively, a basis upon which it **could not function**."<sup>102</sup>

As mentioned above, Vidich's *Modeknjie* study is a part of his larger analytical frame, that is the political factionalism in Palau. He focuses on two main aspects; one is the nature and type of colonial policies imposed on Palau by four different colonizing nations, and the other is the nature of Palauan society at the times of four different contacts.<sup>103</sup> According to his analysis, the entire Palauan social structure has been based on principles of competition and reciprocity. Divided groups have constantly competed against each other, but with a mechanism of checks and balances which functions to prevent one party from monopolizing power and wealth. Colonial intrusions disturbed the existing balance and prompted new types of factions to emerge. True to their tradition, two factions had developed during the Japanese administration period; *Modeknjie*, opposed to the Japanese rule and supported by people who suffered

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<sup>101</sup> See, *ibid.*, 299-301.

<sup>102</sup> Vidich, Political Factionalism, 117.

<sup>103</sup> Vidich states that nature of Palauan society includes "the institutional structure (statuses and roles), the cultural tradition, and motivational factors and mechanisms" (*ibid.*, 114).

for the decline of their power and status, and "collaborators" who worked for the Japanese, and were composed of people who otherwise enjoyed lesser degree of power and status.

Vidich's representation of *Modekngie* is the most plausible one among those produced by the three CIMA researchers. One reason is the above discussed analytical frame that provides a clear and logical explanation of *Modekngie* in a larger cultural and historical context of Palau. Vidich's definitive tones in his narrative, as compared with Barnett who emphasizes the fact that information about *Modekne* was hidden from him, functions to give authority to his information. Vidich's indication about his utilization of two diaries kept by his Palauan interviewees and his naming of Palauans who gave him information further add credibility to his representation of *Modekngie*.<sup>104</sup> The chronologically ordered information with specific dates works to give an impression that his account tells the truth about the *Modekngie* history. The above attributes make Vidich's work appear most trustworthy among the three CIMA accounts.

In the introduction, Vidich states that in his construct of the text, the author "must not . . . select only those materials which are logically consistent with later conclusions."<sup>105</sup> However, there are, at least to me, definite selective strategies observable in Vidich's description of *Modekngie*. First, and the most apparent characteristic of his *Modekngie* story, is the de-emphasis placed on the religious nature of *Modekngie*. In fact, the term religion is used only a few times

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<sup>104</sup> Vidich introduces his Palauan informants' names more and inserts direct quotes of their comments in his dissertation, "Political Impact" than in his CIMA report.

<sup>105</sup> Vidich, "Political Impact," 28.

in his description of *Modeknge*. Rather, the nature of *Modeknge* is illustrated with political terms, such as "organization," "program," or "movement."

Secondly, sustaining this type of representation, the description of religious practices is peculiarly scarce. Vidich writes that *Modeknge*'s curing practices, "songs," rituals, and feasts were all devised by leaders to disseminate and substantiate the anti-foreign scheme, which in turn, empowered their status. In his dealing with "songs," that some other scholars regard as texts conveying religious doctrine, Vidich selects two that he thought had specifically anti-Japanese innuendoes. This is done despite the fact that his account confirms that Vidich had access to more than the two songs he presented in his text. In other words, it seems, that he perceives if anything were religious in character in the movement, it was a clever cover that the leaders employed to legitimate and facilitate the essentially political character of this movement.

Thirdly, Vidich leaves out the depiction of syncretism that is said by other researchers to be the basic component of *Modeknge*. I can speculate on three reasons for this treatment. One reason would be, as stated above, the description of syncretic elements of *Modeknge* was considered by Vidich to blur the clear image of *Modeknge* as a political movement, which he intended to present. Secondly, Vidich might have sought to attach the influence of Christianity solely to the anti-*Modeknge* faction in Palau. Vidich draws a clear line between "progressive" and "traditional" characteristics of the two groups. Thus, he could not afford to state that the foreign (therefore "progressive") concept of Christianity was embraced at least in part by the assumed staunch "traditionalists," the *Modeknge*.<sup>106</sup> Thirdly, Vidich apparently learned that the

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<sup>106</sup> The first two reasons seems to have a strong connection with his theoretical orientation, thus, a secular bias.

third leader, Wasisang, attempted to impress Americans with an image of *Modekngei* that is almost identical to Christianity, and therefore, the movement should not be suppressed by the new authorities. As a result, information which associates Christianity to *Modekngei* was simply dismissed by default by Vidich. Although I perceive the secular biases, mentioned above, influencing his representation, Vidich depicts Palauan people as active agents, rather than passive victims, of their own history and adamant proponents of their own living culture.<sup>107</sup>

In sum, the three CIMA researchers present two dominant images of *Modekngei*. One is its close tie to Christianity, and the other is its anti-Japanese (and anti-foreign to a lesser degree) nature. It is not difficult to surmise that these two images are more likely to reflect *Modekngei* followers concern toward the new administrators and their policies regarding its activities. However, the CIMA researchers interviewed not only *Modekngei* members but also members of "progressive" factions who often acted against *Modekngei*. The circumstances under which the CIMA research were conducted, and their potential influence on the types of data given to them by Palauan informants, will be closely analyzed in the following chapter. Nevertheless, I believe that it is important to note that the CIMA research was conducted soon after the devastating war and under a new colonial situation in which the Palauan people did not possess complete authority to govern themselves; their lives, both

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<sup>107</sup> Another CIMA researcher worked in Palau, Robert Ritzenthaler, inserts one sentence concerning *Modekngei*: "Niramdop [Mr. *Kodep*], a leader of the *modekne* movement obtained his wealth largely from his converts by his 'curative' abilities" (*Native Money of Palau*, 15).



political and economic, were under the strong influence of the course desired by the US Navy administration.

#### IV. The Vidich Discourse and Its Offshoots

"... the possibilities for work present in the culture to a great and original mind are never unlimited, just as it is also true that a great talent has a very healthy respect for what others have done before it and for what the field already contains" (Edward W. Said).<sup>108</sup>

After the publication of the CIMA reports in 1949, there have been at least nineteen publications and unpublished papers (not counting articles published by Aoyagi), accessible to the public, discussing the history of *Modekngei*.<sup>109</sup> Some concentrate exclusively on the topic itself, while others more briefly mention *Modekngei* in parts of their writings. Discourses initiated by Vidich and Aoyagi compose the two most visible competing forces. For the convenience of this discussion, I call one, the Vidich discourse, and the other, the Aoyagi discourse. As I am tracing the genealogy of *Modekngei* discourses roughly in a chronological order, the Vidich discourse will be examined first. When possible, I

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<sup>108</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 202.

<sup>109</sup> I am sure that there are many others writing about *Modekngei*, or mentioning it in their books, articles, papers, and dissertations. Patric Tellei discusses a paper written by a Palauan student, Faustina Rechucher, titled, "Modekngei: Belau's Religio-Political Nativistic Movement" (1987). Also, Don Rubenstein at the Micronesia Area Research Center informed me about an unpublished paper written by Lucy DuPertius, "Religious Abstinence Styles and Cultural Identity in Micronesia," prepared for Annual Meeting of Kettil Bruun Society in Berkley, California, 5-11 June 1988. I do not have access to these works.

illustrate the processes of knowledge dissemination at the end of brief discussion of each examined work.

### 1. The 70's

In 1972, in a magazine called *Micronesian Reporter*, a two-page article dealing with *Modekngei* appears. It is titled, "Modekngei: the Palauan Religion."<sup>110</sup> The writer's name is not listed. At the beginning, the writer indicates that the content of the article is mainly drawn from Vidich's report of 1949. Then, he or she quotes Vidich's passage-1, cited above, and adds a phrase, "a **tenet** of the Modekngei religion,"<sup>111</sup> at the bottom of the quote. Then, the rest of the pages are occupied with the **summary of Arthur Vidich**, except the last four paragraphs where the writer presents a summary of interviews s/he conducted in Palau. Those paragraphs briefly mention the powerful political influence of *Modekngei* on the national elections, *Modekngei*'s retail ventures in Palau and Guam, and state that the American administration, by acknowledging the indigenous system, saved itself from being an "object of attack."<sup>112</sup> The Vidich discourse began circulating among the readers of *Micronesian Reporter*, probably mostly in Micronesia and Hawaii.

Next in line is an article, "**Nativistic Movement**," by Karen Peacock (n.d.), in a booklet titled, 1/3 of the World...Articles about the Islands in the Pacific. This was put out by the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council (PAAC), co-

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<sup>110</sup> From here on, the spelling, M-o-d-e-k-n-g-e-i becomes "official," probably due to the standardization of Palauan spelling.

<sup>111</sup> "Modekngei: the Palauan Religion," *Micronesian Reporter*, 1972, 20 (1), 9.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 10.

sponsored by the Pacific Islands Program of the University of Hawaii. According to the opening letter by the executive director of the PAAC, this publication was a part of "outreach effort" intended to "provide high school and college teachers" in Hawai'i with the material regarding the Pacific islands, and thus "designed to be suitable as supplementary reading for high school level students."<sup>113</sup>

Peacock's article again provides a **summary of Arthur Vidich's 1949 report** in detail. This time, Vidich's passage-2, cited above, is quoted as a **philosophy of *Modekngei***. In the last one and a half pages, Peacock provides information about *Modekngei* under the US administration, its revival in the later 1960's (based on the information collected through her interviews and from Guam and Palau newspapers), and her concluding assessment of *Modekngei*.

In this last section, Peacock states that the "whole *Modekngei* experience may be viewed as a **search for stability in a rapidly changing world.**" The first leader Temedad is assessed by Peacock as a man who "offered his people pride in a life style which had upheld Palau over the centuries." She perceives that the "Palau movement emphasizes the **past as applicable to be [sic] present**" and contemporary *Modekngei* "offers its followers a value system and a **pride** in what they are, as well as a vision of a future in which **cherished cultural identity** is maintained."<sup>114</sup> Peacock is the first writer who explicitly

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<sup>113</sup> Pacific Asian Affairs Council, 1/3 of the World: Articles about the Islands in the Pacific, n.d., personal collection of Karen Peacock, a curator of the Pacific Collection in the University of Hawai'i. p.4.

<sup>114</sup> Karen Peacock, "Nativistic Movement," in *ibid*, 13. Although her description of *Modekngei* history during the Japanese administration period is mostly drawn from Vidich's account, Peacock also lists accounts by Barnett and Roland and Maryanne Force in her bibliography. Both accounts seem to have contributed to her description of Palauan culture. See, Barnett, Being a Palauan; and Roland W. Force and Maryanne Force, Just One House: A Description and Analysis of Kinship in the Palau Islands, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 235, (Honolulu :

connects the *Modekngei* movement with Palauan cultural identity. Through her contribution to this handbook, the Vidich discourse has become more accessible to some Hawaiian youth.

A three-volume series, A History of Palau (1976, 1977 & 1978), authored by Palau Community Action Agency (PCAA), provides a historical account of Palau, covering a span of one hundred and sixty-four years (1783-1947). The PCAA was created and funded through a US federal program, which had political influence on communities throughout Micronesia.<sup>115</sup> The publication was funded by the Community Services Administration in California which "oversees"<sup>116</sup> the PCAA. In their writing of history, members of the PCAA "relied on accounts written by non-Palauans."<sup>117</sup>

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Bishop Museum Press, 1972).

Force & Force present a brief description of post-war *Modekngei* activities in the above monograph. They discuss the strong presence of *Modekngei* during the 1950s in Palau, particularly in political scenes. Their religious nature is depicted as following: "Abstemious, reserved, dedicated to principles of the past, utterly sincere, the members of the church help each other and focus on the old gods syncretizing them with Christian features." Their definition of the term, *modekngei*, is "to reunite" (Force & Force, Just One House, 114). Peacock also lists another monograph by Roland Force, Leadership and Cultural Change in Palau. I could not find information concerning *Modekngei* in this account.

<sup>115</sup> The project to compile a history of Palau by the PCAA was directed by a Palauan anthropologist, Katherine Kesolei (the head of the PCAA). I was informed that other staff who participated in this project were largely non-Palauan individuals. As a part of the same project, the PCAA collected Palauan oral traditions from older people of Palau and published accounts, separate from the above mentioned three-volume series, titled A History of Palau.

<sup>116</sup> PCAA, A History of Palau. Volume one: Traditional Palau, The First Europeans, (Koror : The Agency, 1976), v.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., iii.

A brief description of *Modekngei* is found in volume three (1978), subtitled Japanese Administration U.S. Naval Military Government. The account is again close to a **summary of Vidich's** 1949 account and in fact lists his work as a sole source for the section of *Modekngei*.<sup>118</sup> *Modekngei* is described here as a religious society. A few corrections are made to Vidich's information about people's and place names. The most significant difference between the PCAA account from Vidich's account is that the PCAA does not mention the term, anti-Japanese or anti-foreign, at all in their description of *Modekngei*. Yet, it mentions the destruction of the Japanese school and the leader's persistence in wearing loin cloths instead of Japanese style clothing which according to Vidich, implies the anti-Japanese nature of *Modekngei*. *Modekngei* leaders are also depicted as less guilty of their abuse of power and a description of their **religious characteristics** takes up more pages than political aspects. Another difference from Vidich's account is that the PCAA suggests a strong **influence of Rdiall's movement** on the emergence of *Modekngei*. In sum, the PCAA represents *Modekngei* as being not as aggressively anti-foreign as Vidich puts it. Now, the Vidich discourse kicks into the history of Palau written by a group of people including Palauans themselves.

A Japanese undergraduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Machiko Kodama, wrote two history papers, "Resistance and Collaboration in Micronesia (1668 - c.1945)" and "Japanese in Micronesia (1922-1937): Impact on the Native Population," in 1975. Her brief descriptions of *Modekngei* in both papers are almost identical and she cites solely **Arthur Vidich's CIMA report** of

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<sup>118</sup> "Modekngei (derived from the verb *modekngei*, to bring together)" (PCAA 1978, 383).

1949. There is no new information added or alterations made in the information contained in Vidich's report. Because she lists several Japanese sources in her bibliography, including annual reports prepared by *Nan'yō-chō*, a reader might assume that there would be some comparative analysis made on her descriptions of *Modekngei*.<sup>119</sup> This seems to be a false assumption. This is the first time the Vidich discourse entered into the writings of a Japanese student. Her works are readily available in Hamilton Library at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa for anyone interested in the Japanese mandate in Micronesia and "resistance."

An article written by a linguist, Anne P. Leonard, locates itself at the margin of the Vidich discourse. It is called, "Spirit Mediums in Palau: Transformations in a Traditional System," and is found in a book, Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change, published in 1973. The editor of the book is Erika Bourguignon, who directed the cross-cultural study of dissociational state with a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. Leonard was one of eight researchers participating in the research project and conducted her field research in Palau in 1966. The main focus of Leonard's study is on "traditional religions" of Palau which, in her assessment, does not include *Modekngei*, due to its relatively new emergence and its deviation from the "traditional" religions of Palau. However, because of the significant presence of *Modekngei* in Palau at the time of her research, she incorporates it into her discussion.

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<sup>119</sup> *Nan'yō-chō* appears to have completely suppressed any information about *Modekngei* from appearing in its formal reports. It seems to me that *Nan'yō-chō* more likely simply ignored its existence. Or, at least, I was unable to find one among limited available sources I have inspected.

She relies on the CIMA reports of **Barnett** and **Vidich** in her description of *Modekngei* history, and *Modekngei* is depicted as an **anti-Japanese movement** during the time of Japanese administration. However, probably due to the influence of Barnett and the focus of her research, she discusses the religious nature of *Modekngei*, including the **syncretic blending** of the **Christian and Palauan religions**, more than Vidich does. The syncretic nature of *Modekngei*, with some degree of emphasis on the religious aspects of its movement, thus reemerges in literature, after twenty-five years of absence. Some new information concerning the pre-World War II history of *Modekngei* is added by Leonard. She portrays the **religious battles** fought between *Modekngei* leaders and traditional Palauan shamans. According to her, the shamans, faced with circumstances threatening their existence, due mainly to the increasing power of *Modekngei*, used "black magic"<sup>120</sup> against *Modekngei* leaders. Leonard notes that the most severe deterioration of traditional religions is observed in the areas where *Modekngei*'s influence was dominant.

Concerning post-war *Modekngei* activities, Leonard states, "Much secrecy surrounds this religion, however, it is not possible to get much information about present-day practices and beliefs."<sup>121</sup> One piece of information she managed to obtain was about a famous female ***Modekngei* medium** in Ngetbang who communicates with spirits of the deceased and with gods of *Modekngei*. One such communication by the medium was observed by a Palauan man, a

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<sup>120</sup> Anne Leonard, "Spirit Mediums in Palau: Transformations in a Traditional System," in *Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change*, ed. by Erika Bourguignon, (Columbus : Ohio State University Press, 1973),162.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 163.

Protestant, in 1961, who believed the authenticity of her ability because she revealed much personal information about his family to him through communicating with the spirit of his dead sister.<sup>122</sup> Another *Modekngei* medium, who was able to stop typhoons, was reported to be in Kayangel.

Leonard's account also reveals some new information about Rdiall during the German administration in Palau.<sup>123</sup> Her writing is more aligned with the Aoyagi discourse, discussed below. Probably due to the difficulty in locating this article, as far as I know, no one who wrote about *Modekngei* after the publication of this book, refers to her work, including Aoyagi.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>123</sup> See *ibid.*, 166.

<sup>124</sup> Only with the help of Don Rubenstein, I was able to identify Leonard's article.

During the 1970's, two American graduate students who conducted their fieldwork in Palau briefly mention *Modekngei* in their dissertations. Gary Allen Klee, a geography major at the University of Oregon, was one of them. His dissertation is titled, "The Cyclic Realities of Man and Nature in a Palauan Village." His description of *Modekngei* contains two sentences, stating, "*Modekne*, Palau's indigenous religion, is the most followed of types of religion that can be found in Ngermetengel. *Modekne* services are held within one of the private houses of the village." In, Gary Allen Klee, "The Cyclic Realities of Man and Nature in a Palauan Village," 1972, Dissertation (Ph.D.), University of Oregon, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, p. 64. Here, *Modekngei* is depicted as a religion, and no political nature of the movement is mentioned. His bibliography lists the Barnett and Useem's CIMA reports, but not Vidich. Although he does not indicate the source he used for his description of *Modekngei*, the spelling, *Modekne*, was Barnett's invention. Perhaps, he should be classified as being part of the Barnett discourse.

Another person, an anthropologist from Bryn Mawr College, DeVerne Reed Smith, also briefly mentions *Modekngei* in her dissertation, "Ties That Bind: Exchange and Transactions Among Kinsmen in Palau." She states, "the *Modekngei* Movement, a 'Palau for Palauans' religious movement, has succeeded in having many members relinquish their valuables to them in order to be 'cured' of an illness." In DeVerne Reed Smith, "Ties That Bind: Exchange and Transactions Among Kinsmen in Palau," 1977, Dissertation (Ph.D.), Bryn Mawr College, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, p. 152. Although she



## 2. The 80's

If you have heard of *Modekngei* from somewhere and wanted to know, not in detail but roughly, what it is all about, the quickest and laziest way is to go to a library and check Historical Dictionary of Oceania (1981), edited by Robert Craig and Frank King. Under section "M," there it is, *Modekngei*. The writer of the *Modekngei* section is Dirk Anthony Ballendorf. He lists **Arthur J. Vidich, CIMA report no.23**, published in 1949 as a source. In addition, his information derives from an interview with John Sadao **Tarkong**, a relative of Temedad.

According to the dictionary, "**Modekngei began as a political movement as well as a religious doctrine. It was always antiforeign.**"<sup>125</sup> The method of the destruction of a Japanese school, ordered by Temedad, is now specified as **arson**. Temedad began his preaching **before the arrival of the Japanese**. The aim of *Modekngei* was to **restore the old order** of Palau, which the Japanese wished to change. Temedad is depicted as if he were the "Godfather" of the movement. The ending clause says, "The history of the movement has indicated a remarkable **adaptability** to issues of the day, and its influence is still felt at election time."<sup>126</sup> The dictionary is published both in the United States

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describes *Modekngei* as a religion and discusses its medical and accompanying money making practices, her insertion of "Palau for Palauans" and the term, "movement," imply the political nature of *Modekngei*. She listed CIMA reports by Barnett, Useem and Vidich. She does not provide her source of information for her *Modekngei* description, but I speculate it is a combination of all CIMA works. Smith published her dissertation in 1983 under the title, Palauan Social Structure. (New Brunswick : Rutgers University Press). Her description of *Modekngei* remains exactly the same as cited above.

<sup>125</sup> Dirk Anthony Ballendorf, "Modekngei," in Historical Dictionary of Oceania, ed. by Robert D. Craig and Frank P. King, (Westport & London : Greenwood Press, 1981), 192.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 193.

and in Great Britain. The authoritative Vidich discourse now expands its territory abroad to a variety of English speaking countries.

What follows next are three Ph.D. dissertations, written by Donald Shuster from the University of Hawai'i, Karen Nero from the University of California, Berkeley, and Richard Parmentier from the University of Chicago.

In his dissertation, "Islands of Change in Palau: Church, School, and Elected Government, 1891-1981" (1982), Shuster gives more than twenty pages to a discussion of the history and contemporary activities of *Modekngei*. He cites **Barnett**, Useem, **Vidich**, **Aoyagi**, Harry Denny, Charly Gibbons, Fr. Edwin McManus, Fr. Felix **Yaoch** and reports made by the U.S. Navy<sup>127</sup> as sources of information about *Modekngei*.

Shuster calls *Modekngei* a "Palau's early 20th century **revitalization movement**."<sup>128</sup> Most of his description about the history of *Modekngei* derives

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<sup>127</sup> Shuster cites Machiko Aoyagi's unpublished paper in the late 1970s (available in Hamilton Library) titled, "Transformation of Traditional Religion Under the Influence of Christianity" (n.d.) as a source. Harry Denny is described as a Jehovah Witness missionary, and one of Shuster's interviewees. Charlie Gibbons was also interviewed by Shuster. He provided information on *Modekngei* as well as other aspects of Palauan history. He was a respected *rubak* (a Palauan term for a chief and an elder) and a famous Palauan artist, who worked with the Belau National Museum. Fr. Edwin McManus was a Jesuit priest, who worked in post-war Palau until 1969. His commentary in "The Palau Press," no. 32 (June 1951), about *Modekngei* is cited by Shuster. The Palau Press, according to Shuster, is a private newsletter, located in the Sacred Heart Church rectory records, Koror, Palau. Fr. Felix Yoach is a respected Palauan Jesuit priest in Palau. Shuster interviewed him and also lists his publication, "A Reflection on *Modekngei*: The Palauan Pagan Religion," TS, (Woodstock, Maryland : Woodstock College, 1966). "Monthly Report" by U.S. Navy, Palau District Military Government Unit, is a personal collection of Dr. Leonard Mason. None of the above sources (except Aoyagi' paper) is accessible to me.

<sup>128</sup> Donald Shuster, "Islands of Change in Palau: Church, School, and Elected Government, 1891-1981," 1982, thesis (Ph.D.), University of Hawai'i at Manoa,

from the **Vidich's 1949 report**, and although less frequently, Barnett is also quoted. However, he inserts a new hypothesis which posits that during the six years between 1915, when German Catholic missions were expelled by the Japanese from Palau, and 1921, the year the Catholic missionaries were again permitted their entry to Palau, "Palau's indigenous religion underwent a fascinating **transformation which synthesized the old with the new** into a cultural construction."<sup>129</sup> Along with his description of the anti-Japanese political nature of *Modekngei*, thus, Shuster's account places slightly more emphasis on the religious nature of the movement. Some other new information about personal names and years of marked events are added, probably stemming from Fr. Yaoch and his interviews. **Cultural identity** issues concerning *Modekngei*, discussed by Peacock, also are mentioned.

In his discussion of post-war *Modekngei*, Shuster presents some interesting insights. First, Shuster cites Fr. Yaoch who commented, "Many say *Modekngei* and Catholicism are the same, except that Catholicism is for the foreigners and *Modekngei* for the natives."<sup>130</sup> Another piece of information, drawn from an interview with a Jehovah Witness missionary, Harry Denny, states, "*Modekngei* agree that they believe in Jesus Christ but remind the missionaries that it was white people who killed Jesus and brought the Pacific war to Palau."<sup>131</sup> Second, Shuster provides evidence that the navy

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in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, 49.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 71. This opinion might reflect Shuster's reading of Aoyagi's paper mentioned above.

<sup>130</sup> Yaoch, "A Reflection on *Modekngei*," 13, cited in Shuster, "Islands of Change," 126.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 136.

administration experienced some sort of resistance from *Modekngei*,<sup>132</sup> and newly emerged Palauan elites, particularly high ranking chiefs, helped the administration to undermine the influence of *Modekngei*.<sup>133</sup> And third, Shuster talks about the political power of *Modekngei* over elections held between the 1960s and 1980s. According to Shuster, *Modekngei* members (about a third population of Palau in the 1960s) follow the gods' decision on the choice of candidates and they were responsible for the election of Haruo Remeliik, the first president of Palau, as well as other numerous congressmen.

Karen Nero's dissertation is titled, "A *Cherechar a Lokelii*: Beads of History of Koror, Palau 1783-1983" (1987). Her discussion on *Modekngei* is limited to a small paragraph and she suggests readers see **Shuster** (1982) for more information. She states, "one **locus of opposition**, which attracted heavy suppression by the Japanese administration, was the **syncretic Palauan--Christian *Modekngei* religion**."<sup>134</sup> She depicts *Modekngei* as a "**counterbalance**"<sup>135</sup> to the existing political power, as was always the case of religion in Palauan society throughout its history. This reminds me of the checks and balances function of Palauan society, argued by Vidich.

Both scholars indicate their association with numerous Palauan individuals. Although their assessments of *Modekngei*, particularly the one by

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<sup>132</sup> For more discussion of *Modekngei* under the US administration, see the following chapter.

<sup>133</sup> For more information, see Vidich, "Political Impact." There are some discussion on this issue in the next chapter.

<sup>134</sup> Nero, "Beads of History," 339.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 339.

Shuster, seem to be based on his interviews as well as CIMA and other accounts, Shuster and Nero, in my opinion, further the Vidich discourse.<sup>136</sup> Their interpretations of the *Modekngei* history appear to be Vidich-oriented. However, both place more weight on religious aspects than does Vidich, especially, the syncretic nature of *Modekngei* religion, largely ignored by Vidich, is apparent in both writings.

Richard Parmentier's work, The Sacred Remains: Myth, History, and Polity in Belau, originally appeared as a Ph.D. dissertation in 1982 and then, was published as a monograph in 1987. Again, the discussion about *Modekngei*<sup>137</sup> is very brief. He characterizes *Modekngei* clearly as "anti-Japanese,"<sup>138</sup> and states that the "local religious movement"<sup>139</sup> stressed indigenous medicine, education, religion and authority, as opposed to the Japanese. He adds, "The Japanese persecution of *Modekngei* leaders only accelerated its growth"<sup>140</sup>

Parmentier's comments on *Modekngei* apparently reflect information given from Palauan people with whom he associated himself during his fieldwork; I think, however, Vidich's account has also influenced his representation of

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<sup>136</sup> As indicated above, Shuster conducted interviews on the *Modekngei* history during the Japanese administration period (1914-1945) mostly with Christian priests. Both Fr. Yoach and Charlie Gibbons worked for the Japanese administration and I do not think they were *Modekngei* followers during the period. Shuster presents *Modekngei* members' comments concerning contemporary *Modekngei*.

<sup>137</sup> According to Parmentier, the word *Modekngei* means "Let Us Go Forth Together" (49).

<sup>138</sup> Parmentier, Sacred Remains, 50.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 49.

*Modekngei*. The CIMA report by **Arthur Vidich** is the only listed reference for his discussion of *Modekngei*. All three scholars are now professors, Shuster at the University of Guam, Nero at Auckland University in New Zealand, and Parmentier at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts; they are engaged in an occupation to disseminate knowledge, especially about the place they know the most, the Republic of Palau. The Vidich discourse would be circulated by academic authorities in Guam, Auckland and Massachusetts.

The last entry of the Vidich discourse in the 1980s is *Nan'yō: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945* (1988), by a historian, Mark R. Peattie. Once again, *Modekngei* enjoys only a small amount of attention from the author. In fact, Peattie describes *Modekngei* as "**scarcely a whisper of resistance**."<sup>141</sup> Also, he states "a **nonviolent cult, *Modekngei***" was the only "**shadowy center of opposition to Japanese rule**,"<sup>142</sup> in all of Micronesia under the mandate. Because Peattie is a Japanese historian and able to read Japanese, this time, not only the account by **Arthur Vidich** (1980 [1952]) but also one by **Machiko Aoyagi** (1985) were used as sources by the author. However, his assessment of these works obviously favors the former.

Peattie states that his account is focused on the Japanese activities in the former mandate, not on Micronesian peoples; *Nan'yō*, however, is regarded by many as the most comprehensive work regarding the history of the Japanese mandate in Micronesia. It is most likely the first choice among librarians to recommend for people searching information concerning the topic, and thus,

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<sup>141</sup> Peattie, *Nan'yō*, 77.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 78.

further accessibility of the Vidich discourse to scholars, students and the general public.

### 3. The 90's

An Oceanianist historian, David Hanlon, writes one paragraph about *Modekngei* in a chapter, titled "Patterns of Colonial Rule in Micronesia," in Tides of History (1994), edited by K.R. Howe, Robert Kiste, and Brij V. Lal. The paragraph begins with a sentence, "The ***Modekngei* proved a highly visible, sometimes more formidable, form of resistance to Japanese rule in Belau.**"<sup>143</sup> The paragraph is a highly condensed version of the Vidich's 1949 report, and the volume three of History of Palau (1978) by Palau Community Action Agency is also cited as a source. The new information regarding how the Japanese perceived *Modekngei*, is placed at the end of the paragraph. Referring to the information provided in Micronesia Under the Japanese Administration: Interviews with Former South Sea Bureau and Military Officials (1987), edited by Wakako Higuchi,<sup>144</sup> Hanlon states that *Modekngei* was not seen as a serious threat from the Japanese who assumed islanders were less developed intellectually and culturally.

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<sup>143</sup> David Hanlon, "Patterns of Colonial Rule in Micronesia," in Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century, ed. by K.R. Howe, Robert Kiste, and Brij Lal, (Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 101.

<sup>144</sup> Wakako Higuchi is a historian who works for the Micronesia Area Research Center at the University of Guam. Higuchi's brief description of *Modekngei* is drawn from Aoyagi's 1985 monograph, Modekugei. See, Micronesia Under the Japanese Administration: Interviews with Former South Sea Bureau and Military Officials, ed. by Wakako Higuchi, (Agana : Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam, 1987) 124-125.

The last entry in what I call the Vidich discourse is a monograph, Strangers in Their Own Land (1995), by Fr. Francis X. Hezel, SJ. Again, his description of *Modekngei* is closely aligned with **Vidich**. Vidich's passage-2 is presented as the ***Modekngei credo***. In addition, Hezel notes **Barnett** and **Shuster** as the sources for his discussion of *Modekngei*. Perhaps more insight into Catholic followers' attitudes toward *Modekngei* is given. According to Hezel, *Modekngei* is one of an "old **reactionary movement** [which] was revived in new dress."<sup>145</sup> **Factionalism**, or in Hezel's word, polarization, is stressed as Palauan tradition that "was the necessary environment in which the competition that Palauans valued highly could thrive."<sup>146</sup> Roles played by two Palauan constables, Omang and Tellei, are depicted with more lucidity. These two historians, Hanlon and Hezel are Micronesian specialists with a considerable degree of authority attached to their work. Hezel, particularly, has lived in Micronesia as a Jesuit priest and a teacher since 1969, and enjoys high esteem from Micronesian people as well as in scholarly circles.

Many scholars and students who joined the Vidich discourse illustrate multiple images of *Modekngei*. Characterizations of the movement vary from the anti-foreign, anti-Japanese, nativistic, revivalistic, reactionary, and resistance movement to the both religious transformation and the political movement at once. Intermingling of other discourses into the Vidich discourse is also visible. Several of the above authors incorporated information from Barnett's account and created new offshoots of the Vidich discourse, or vise

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<sup>145</sup> Hezel, Strangers, 163.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 165.



versa. The religious nature of *Modekngei* has been acknowledged more by researchers who actually conducted fieldwork in Palau than the others who solely relied on existed written sources.

Selected aspects of *Modekngei*, introduced by many of the above writers, appear to reflect purposes of their writings. I observe that most of the authors did not attempt to provide the picture of *Modekngei* as a whole, but they introduced certain characteristics of the movement that are relevant to the rest of their texts. Authors' creativity in their reading and utilization of Vidich's text seems to have produced varying representations of *Modekngei* with distinctive individual tastes.

However, the essence of *Modekngei* that was crystallized by Vidich as the anti-Japanese or anti-foreign political movement, has been passed down by all of the above authors. Several writers directly quoted Vidich's two passages and introduced to their readers as a philosophy or credo of *Modekngei* movement. For nearly fifty years after Vidich's fieldwork in Palau, his information about *Modekngei* has been the prime source for the almost all authors who wrote about the movement. I perceive that their use of Vidich's work has functioned to bring an enduring core image of *Modekngei*, as a political movement, regardless of the difference that are evident in the others' interpretations of *Modekngei*. With these authorities' definitive tones, repeated appearances in literature and the help of a sophisticated dissemination process, the essentialized image of *Modekngei*, once presented by one researcher, has gained a ground to become the "truth" about *Modekngei* in the western world and beyond.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> A seemingly more permanent and influential discourse that Vidich established was the notion of political factionalism in Palau. Many scholars and students who wrote about Palau, after Vidich, apparently captured the Palauan social and political scenes with the perspective of factionalism and treat it as the essence of

I perceive that the ways that Vidich's information about *Modengei* has been "appropriated" and circulated by the numerous others, made Vidich an "author" in Foucault's sense. In his discussion in "What is an Author," Foucault states that authors have made possible the creation of "not only a certain number of analogies, but also (and equally important) a certain number of differences. They have created a possibility for something other than their discourse yet something belonging to what they founded."<sup>148</sup>

## V. A Non-Violent Resistance Movement

"To indulge in nostalgic desire for 'authentic resistance' might blind us to the multiple, mobile points of potential resistance moving through any regime of power" (Dorine K. Kondo).<sup>149</sup>

### 1. A Prophet of Rebellion

Has anyone dared to challenge Arthur Vidich and his descendants? Yes, a women anthropologist from Japan has. Her name is Machiko Aoyagi. Aoyagi indicates that her skepticism toward Vidich's work motivated her to undertake

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Palauan culture. This is not to say that the factionalism has no historical relevance in Palau's politics and society; however, the impact of Vidich's work on their works seems profound. The best such examples are found in Shuster, "Islands of Change," and Hezel, *Strangers*. As is obvious in following chapters, my writing is a part of the Vidich discourse on this issue.

<sup>148</sup> Rabinow (ed.), *Foucault Reader*, 114. For his discussion of "What Is an Author," see *ibid.*, 101-120.

<sup>149</sup> Dorine K. Kondo, *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourse of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*, (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1990), 225.

her own study of *Modekngei*.<sup>150</sup> She read the article in *Micronesian Reporter*, mentioned above, during her first fieldwork in Micronesia in 1973. She states the article surprised her because, during her stay in Palau, many Palauan people had told her, apparently in the Japanese language, how they liked Japanese times better than American times.<sup>151</sup> She speculates that the circumstances under which Vidich conducted his research in Palau might have affected his findings and interpretations about *Modekngei*. Thus, from the outset of her research, Aoyagi has been consciously aware of Vidich's work and had reservations in accepting his representation of *Modekngei*.

Aoyagi has published at least four articles (1979a, 1980c, 1982b & 1987) in English concerning Palau and/or *Modekngei* and at least 10 articles in Japanese (1977a, 1977b, 1979b, 1979c, 1980a, 1980b, 1982a, 1983, 1986 & 1992), besides her monograph, on the topic. Her unpublished paper on *Modekngei* is also located in the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.<sup>152</sup> Aoyagi conducted fieldwork seven times from 1973 to 1984, with a duration ranging from one to four months at a time, before the publication of her monograph, *Modekugei: Mikuronesia Parao no Shin-Shūkyō* [*Modekngei: New*

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<sup>150</sup> Aoyagi uses an Japanese expression, "*doro kusai mono ga nukete iru*" which literally means, "lacking a muddy smell" as one of her criticisms toward Vidich's representation of *Modekngei*, (my translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 2). In other words, she claims Vidich's work is too clear-cut as a description of human beings and their activities, which usually includes contradiction and ambiguity.

<sup>151</sup> For more information, see Chapter 3.

<sup>152</sup> There is another article by Aoyagi, "*Parao ni Okeru Kyōdai to Shimai—Oraoru no Baai* [Brother-Sister Relationship in Palau—A Case of Ocherao], " *Etonosu*, 1976, 5: 46-52. I do not have access to this article.

Religion in Palau, Micronesia] (1985).<sup>153</sup> Her book covers about a two-hundred-year period contact history of Palau, a variety of aspects about Palauan culture (with emphasis on religion, oral tradition and social structure), and *Modekngei* from its emergence to 1984.<sup>154</sup> I will discuss mainly her description of the *Modekngei* history and her counter argument against Vidich's interpretation. The contents of Aoyagi's articles often are used as bases of chapters in her monograph, therefore, I will concentrate on dealing with her book with some exceptions.

Aoyagi's foci in her *Modekngei* analysis remind me of the work of Hisakatsu Hijikata, mentioned above.<sup>155</sup> She asserts that *Modekngei*<sup>156</sup> is and

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<sup>153</sup> According to a source, Aoyagi was back in Palau, conducting her research on *Modekngei* in 1996.

<sup>154</sup> Aoyagi bases her description of *Modekngei* history almost solely on field data she collected in Palau. No information from the CIMA reports are cited in her description of *Modekngei* but Useem and Vidich's works appear in her discussion on *Modekngei*.

<sup>155</sup> Aoyagi contributed her essay for an afterword of a Japanese version of Hijikata's book, *Parao no Kami to Shinkō* [Gods and Religion in Palau], *Hijikata Hisakatsu Chosaku-shū* [The Collective Work of Hijikata Hisakatsu], vol. 2, (Tokyo : San'ichi Shobō, 1991). At the end of the essay, Aoyagi mentions that she visited Hijikata briefly for the purpose of her *Modekngei* research. Hijikata indicated his willingness to cooperate with her research. She expresses her regret, however, that he passed away in early 1977 before she had a chance to learn his *Modekngei* knowledge in detail. I do not know whether Aoyagi inspected Hijikata's fieldnotes or not.

I also sense Barnett's influence on Aoyagi's work, although this might not be the case. Aoyagi's account does not criticize (or mention) Barnett's representation of *Modekngei*, which describes that the *Modekngei* started as a "progressive" religion but later acquired an anti-Japanese flavor under the leadership of Ongesi due mainly to the Japanese suppression of their activities.

<sup>156</sup> "The name, *Modekngei*, was derived from [Palauan] terms, *dokngei* 'getting together' and *dmak* 'staying together.' People generally understand the meaning as "everyone being together for the matters about the gods" (Aoyagi, *Modekugei*,

has been a **syncretic religion**<sup>157</sup> of Palau. Like Hijikata, she delineates **medical practice**,<sup>158</sup> **religious doctrine**<sup>159</sup> (through the study of the contents

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127-8, my translation).

<sup>157</sup> Many *keseke*s, *Modekngei* hymns/chants, collected by Aoyagi contain stories of Jesus Christ, and *Ngirchomkuul Esukristo* who is one of the highest *Modekngei* gods. The following is one such *keseke*s, explaining *Ngirchomkuul Esukristo*'s arrival in Palau and his association with Christianity (incorporation of the cross, a sense of sin/debt, a concept of trinity, etc.).

*Ngirchomkuul Esukristong ral kot el ngara Dois el mei, e ng mle ra ked er obichang, ng mle ra ked er Obichang, llengerull rar uchel e omiich a klungiaolel Belau, ng omiich a klungiaolel Belau, e mo misur e mer e mitekii e mer Chomkuul kingelel, me Chomkuul kingelel. Me ked milsang cholengchelel kerus el mla ra Tangelbaad, kerus el ngara Tangelbad, leng kingellel a delad ma demad ma Ngirchomkuul Esukristong. Teual bulis a mlo mkelii, me ng uchula belsel Belau, ng uchula belsel Belau, me chelechae te blals ar chad, ng uchule te blals ar chad, me kera bel metel meriou e tira mo medengei kirir. (Kodep of Chol, Ngaraard)*

Ngirchomkuul Eskristo once lived in Germany and came here later. He came to a grassy hill (*ked*) in Obiang, came to the grassy hill in Obiang. The hill is the place where *uchel* (god) rests and shifts good things about Belau. There he makes a turn, and goes to his seat in Chomkuul. As evidence we saw the cross which was in Tangelbad, the cross which is in Tangelbad. This is the place for our mother, father and Ngirchomkuul Eskristo. Four policemen threw down the cross. It is the cause of the debt of Belau. It is the cause of the debt of Belau. This is why today people are in debt. This is the cause of the debt of the people. Therefore, when he descends to earth, people become aware of their own debt. (English translation by Aoyagi, in Aoyagi, "Gods of the Modekngei," 349)

Aoyagi writes that "It is more likely that 'four policemen' are a symbol of the harsh suppression of the Modekngei religion by the Japanese authorities." (Aoyagi, "Gods of the Modekngei," 349)

Despite the observable syncretism of Palauan and Christian religions in *Modekngei* doctrine, there are, however, *keseke*s criticizing Christians. Aoyagi points out two *keseke*s explicitly criticizing Palauan Christians and Christian

of *kesekes*<sup>160</sup>), *deities*,<sup>161</sup> *prophecy*,<sup>162</sup> *religious symbols*,<sup>163</sup> *rituals*<sup>164</sup> and other practices of *Modekngei*, but this time with much detail. Aoyagi's basic

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priests who do not follow the Law of *Modekngei* gods. (Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 167)

Aoyagi states that the language of *kesekes* is classic Palauan and she relied on the help of her Palauan teacher, Mr. Subris of Ngebuked village in Ngaraard for the translation of *kesekes*. (Ibid., 7)

<sup>158</sup> In the appendix of her monograph, *Modekugei*, Aoyagi presents one-hundred twenty-eight verses of *kesekes* she collected in numerous places in Palau. Among them, twenty-four *kesekes* discusses the effects and/or uses of various types of Palauan indigenous medicines. Medical practices were obviously an important aspect of *Modekngei* activities. See, *ibid.*, 152 & (14)-(44).

<sup>159</sup> According to Aoyagi, the most repeated *Modekngei* teaching is to be *kedung*, which by a dictionary definition, "well-behaved, vitreous, lawabiding" (Ibid., 176). Aoyagi believes that the moral aspect of *Modekngei* religion is an addition or alteration made by the third leader Runguul (Ibid., 262). I perceive that *Modekngei* also places a high value on courage or courageous actions, which repeatedly appear in *kesekes*. See, Chapter 4.

<sup>160</sup> *Modekngei* hymns/chants.

<sup>161</sup> The study of *Modekngei* deities is one of the foci of Aoyagi's research. Extensive research scrutinizing the nature of four main gods of *Modekngei* and tracing their roots through the study of oral tradition was conducted. For detail, see, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 151-172; also "Gods of the Modekngei."

<sup>162</sup> Aoyagi mentions four famous predictions (two of them are in a form of *kesekes*) made by *Modekngei* leaders. Three of them are related to World War II. The Japanese defeat, the time when war would end, and how long the war would last, were predicted by the leaders. Another prediction was made about a missing ship, *Midori-maru*. Ongesi correctly predicted where the ship would be found. Aoyagi presents an anecdote about Runguul's accurately predicting John Useem's address, telephone number in the US, and numbers and genders of his children, when Useem first came to meet Runguul for his research on *Modekngei*. See, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 142-144 & 178-179.

<sup>163</sup> Aoyagi identifies the following objects/symbols which have religious significance to *Modekngei*; the cross, a cane (*skors*), used by Temedad, spears (*lild*), red cloth (*kingall*), stone (*bad*), dove (*belochel*), water (*ralm*), and banks and ashtray to be used to raise money. See, *ibid.*, 187-191.

According to the information presented by Aoyagi, the cane and red cloth were used by *doktang*, a person who was assigned by Temedad to chase off old

premise is that *Modekngei*, at least at the time of its emergence and in the early period, was **not anti-Japanese** in nature, but rather had a strong religious orientation. She attributes **internal rivalry** within Palauan society as the main causes of *Modekngei* arrests.<sup>165</sup> The Japanese persecuted the followers in a

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village gods. *Doktang* went around each house in villages at evening or night, knocking the house with the cane from outside, and swinging the red cloth at the same time. The two religious objects contained the "words" of Temedad and were very powerful. While doing this, *doktang* also chanted, "*Mtobed a mekngit le chelid el choridemi tiangl blai. E ng diak kimchedeiu lekemama chedal la Ngirabeleliu.* [Malicious gods, leave the house and go off. We are not your associates. We are the associates of *Ngirabeleliu*.]" In, *ibid.*, 135-136, my English translation of Aoyagi's Japanese text, in which she translated Palauan into Japanese. The point Aoyagi makes with the above description is that those symbols, especially the red cloth, was not associated with anti-Japanese sentiments but with religious significance of *Modekngei*. \*The god, *Ngirabeleliu*, will be briefly discussed later.

<sup>164</sup> The main ritual, discussed by Aoyagi, is *uldars*, offering of foods to *Modekngei* gods. Specific types of foods are cooked according to the well defined (although varying in different locations) manner and offered to the gods on certain shapes of dishes. The prayers, singing of *keseke*s, drinking of various herbal (medicine) water, cleansing of the ritual objects (the cross, spears, and a figured dove) by the use of herbal water, applying coconut oil (perceived as a medical practice) to their bodies, and raising of money, are described as important rituals. As mentioned by Hijikata, Aoyagi's account suggests that seating arrangements, associated with meanings of upper, lower, left and right, have significance to *Modekngei* members. See, *ibid.*, 189-203. Many *keseke*s, collected by Aoyagi discuss "the (proper) seat" or indicate concepts, associated with the four directions. A similar, but less detailed, description of *Modekngei* rituals was reported by Hijikata in 1941. See, Hijikata, *Gods and Religion*, 225-230.

<sup>165</sup> The earliest Japanese *Modekngei* allegations, according to Aoyagi, was a result of a complaint brought by a Palauan, Omang, to the Japanese navy. The story goes as following:

In July, 1917, a dying man from Airai was brought to Temedad and Ongesi. Temedad and Ongesi yelled at the patient, "Rise, rise," and told his family members that he would become well on the third day. They went home but soon after they arrived at Airai, the sick man died. Because his family members had

rather random manner and some or many were ordered to provide free labor before their release.<sup>166</sup> A gradual and mutual antagonism between *Modekngei* members and Japanese administrators might have resulted in a shift in the emphasis in orientation of *Modekngei* from religious to more political. *Modekngei*, as a religion, mainly functioned to provide the Palauan people a psychological refuge from the social anomie<sup>167</sup> caused by culturally destructive and successive colonial intrusions.<sup>168</sup>

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already paid fees to the two [Temedad and Ongesi], they were extremely unhappy about the situation. . . Omang, who was already critical of Palauans' refusal of Japanese hospitals and their willingness of being treated in Chol, reported this Airai incidence to Japanese navy. (Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 129-130, my translation)

Aoyagi states, "Because the Japanese administration was tolerant about religious matters [of Palauan people], until the Omang's complaint, they [*Modekngei* members] freely conducted their religious activities." (Ibid., 259, my translation) Omang was identified as the patient's uncle by some Palauan people, and others said that he was not related to the patient. Omang worked under the German administration and later for the Japanese administration. (Ibid., 129-130) Vidich identifies Omang as well as Tellei as the chief instigators of *Modekngei* arrests. (See, Vidich, *Political Factionalism*, 86)

<sup>166</sup> Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 206.

<sup>167</sup> The term, anomie, is coined by a French sociologist, Emile Durkheim. Durkheim defines anomie as a condition of relative normlessness, where social regulations controlling members of a society or a group are disintegrated by some causes. See, Durkheim, *Suicide*, (New York : The Free Press, 1951), 209 and everywhere.

Three main causes of social anomie during the "Japanese times," specified by Aoyagi, are 1) Palauan people's anxiety toward the presence of a large number of Japanese immigrants, 2) persecutions of *Modekngei* by the Japanese, and 3) war (Ibid., 255). The above leading causes of anomie might potentially explain the wide-spread development of the *Modekngei* movement in the later times of the Japanese administration period, however, I do not think they explain the emergence of *Modekngei*. Concerning the first factor, the population of immigrants from Japan and other places was not significant around the time of the *Modekngei* emergence, but it occurred later.

About the second point, Aoyagi emphasizes that many *Modekngei* arrests



Aoyagi highlights six successful "strategies" utilized by *Modekngei* leaders to attract many followers. Those are "a) healing of the sick, b) prophecy, c) money-making, d) abolishment of food taboos and banishment of old gods, e) incorporation of various local gods, and f) introduction of Christian elements."<sup>169</sup> According to Aoyagi, the factors a), c) and d) functioned to validate the ability or power of *Modekngei* gods and leaders. The factor b), the prophecy, was desired by many people who were suffering in the anomie. The last two factors helped to ease the process of religious transformation and appealed to people who began to have faith in Christianity but also had not given up their own religions.

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seem to have taken place after a war between China and Japan broke out near the end of 1930s. She states that this was because the ultra-nationalism in Japan began being heightened around this time period, and Japanese officials became highly sensitive about any subversive conduct in colonies and occupied areas, then under the Japanese rule. This factor again does not correspond to the time frame of the emergence of *Modekngei* movement. According to Aoyagi, this was the reason that *Modekngei* persecutions became harsher and, as a result, *Modekngei*'s resentment toward the Japanese might have gradually emerged. Here, Aoyagi identifies Japanese persecution as a cause of both anti-Japanese sentiments and social anomie. Yet, this still does not explain the anomie which Aoyagi states was the reason behind the emergence of *Modekngei* religion. The third cause of anomie, the war, occurred near the end of the Japanese colonial administration.

Aoyagi argues that it was the social anomie that triggered the emergence and fostered people's acceptance of *Modekngei*. However, all of the three causes of anomie, mentioned by Aoyagi, are features that took place later in the historical period. Yet, Aoyagi states, from the very early period (around the time of chiefly assembly in 1918?), *Modekngei* religion had spread widely throughout Palau except for the eastern coastal areas in Palau, namely Ngchesar, Melekeok, and Ngiwal (Ibid., 263).

<sup>168</sup> Aoyagi identifies that *Modekngei* leaders were former constables worked for German administration. In her assessment, these people who experienced loss of their social status turned themselves to religion, not a resistance.

<sup>169</sup> Aoyagi, "Gods of the *Modekngei*," 343. For more detail, see *ibid.*, 343-346; also Aoyagi, *Modekngei*, 133-150.

In the conclusion of her monograph, Aoyagi provides her categorization, dividing peoples' "responses" toward rapid social changes, not exclusively caused by foreign intrusions, into four groups. First she divides responses into two groups; one with a new religion and the other without. Those two groups are further divided into two; one positively accepts imposed changes and the other negatively rejects the changes. Each of the four groups are named as following; a) "a type which prepares for a change" (a group with a new religion that willingly accepts the change); b) "**a redemption type**" (a group with a new religion that seeks redemption or salvation);<sup>170</sup> c) "a non-resistant type" (a group without a new religion that remains at the similar cultural state before the imposed change);<sup>171</sup> and d) "an armed revolt type" (a group without a new religion that resists in arms against the imposers of change).<sup>172</sup> According to Aoyagi, most

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<sup>170</sup> Aoyagi states,

the common characteristics of the type a and b is a factor that [both types] deal with rapid social change through unrealistic and irrational [conceptual] sphere and provide solutions within the framework. Religion oriented solutions would soften people's negative attitudes toward the change, alter their expressions [of the negative attitudes], and prevent an uprising of radical armed resistance. (Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 267, my translation)

<sup>171</sup> Aoyagi categorizes Yap as an example of the type-c. I believe that simply maintaining the similar social or cultural state in its face of invading hegemony takes a significant degree of effort to resist against imposed changes, as was the case for Yap during the consecutive foreign administrations.

<sup>172</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 266. She also takes the following six factors into consideration in her examination of various "responses" toward imposed social changes: 1) Intensity (of imposition), 2) speed (of social change), 3) social organization (its characteristics such as flexibility, strength, etc.), 4) scale (of population being affected by the change), 5) value orientation (if people are willing to accept change or not, etc.), and 6) cultural distance between the aggressors and receivers, (Ibid., 265).

new religions, emerge during a time of rapid social changes and including *Modekngei*, can be classified into the type-b.<sup>173</sup>

Aoyagi incorporates religious movements that occurred prior to *Modekngei* in Palau into the same category (type-b). These are the movements, as Aoyagi describes, led by four anti-white prophets<sup>174</sup> who "in their attempt to pacify people's mind, made an unrealistic prediction that the white people would never come to Palau again."<sup>175</sup> Aoyagi argues that the difference between the previous religious movements and *Modekngei* are as following: "*Modekngei* did not negate [imposed] changes as strongly as the other movements did; but rather *Modekngei* embodied their **negation to the changes in more than one**

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<sup>173</sup> Aoyagi provides a chart positioning the four groups into four different boxes. This chart is very similar to one provided by David F. Aberle who classifies indigenous "responses" into four groups. See, Aberle, *The Peyote Religion Among the Navaho*, 2nd ed., (Chicago & London : University of Chicago Press, 1982), 316.

<sup>174</sup> For information about German suppression of Palauan shamans and their anti-colonial campaigns, see, Palau Community Action Agency, *A History of Palau, Volume Two: Traders and Whalers, Spanish Administration, German Administration*, (Koror : The Agency, 1977), 230-233; Hezel, *Strangers*, 117-120; Shuster, "Islands of Change," 61-70; also, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 108-116.

Aoyagi identifies names of five Palauan religious specialists. They are Ngiraibai (the second highest title holder of Ngerecheluuk village, Ngiwal); Ngircholeuul (a healer of Ngebei village, Ngerchelong); Arboi (a man of Airai); and Ngirangau (a healer of Ollei village, Ngerchelong); and Rdiall (a phrophet (*omlaoch*) of Ngeklau, Ngaraard). All of the above movements, except for Arboi of Airai, took place in the northern part of Babeldaob, where *Modekngei* later emerged.

Aoyagi distinguishes Rdiall's movement from the rest. As mentioned above, Rdiall's movement is seen as more "progressive," expressing his willingness to accept social changes brought through foreign contacts. Aoyagi seems to connect the nature of Rdiall's movement to that of *Modekngei*.

<sup>175</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 267.

**dimensional expressions.** And thus, [*Modekngei* members] appeared [to Aoyagi] even **welcomed change** occasionally or at least being indifferent [about the change]."<sup>176</sup> Aoyagi clearly distinguishes numerous millenarian movements that occurred in colonial circumstances in various places from *Modekngei* by stating that "[*Modekngei*] **does not possess hardly any characteristics of millenarian movements.**"<sup>177</sup>

The sequence of historical events concerning *Modekngei*, described by Aoyagi, is not so far apart from those cited by Vidich and others. The difference is her exclusiveness in presenting *Modekngei*'s history as a history of a religion and the absence of political aspects in the movement. For example, Aoyagi collected quite a few oral traditions/histories which testify to Temedad's outstanding ability to cure illnesses through the use of traditional medicine combined with his religious power. This art of Temedad soon became well known among the people throughout Palau and attracted patients. Her description is particularly vivid in forms of several episodes concerning a god's descendant to Temedad and the emergence of the *Modekngei* religion that

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<sup>176</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 267. If I understand the above statement correctly, Aoyagi acknowledges more than simply the prevalent feelings of deprivation among the Palauans, but also their sentiments of opposition toward imposed changes. Although Aoyagi states that those sentiments were expressed in more than one ways, I do not think Aoyagi discusses them in her monograph, unless she means that most of her discussion of *Modekngei* implicitly depicts their rejection to changes imposed by colonial forces. I assume Aoyagi regards *Modekngei*'s incorporation of Christian concepts as an evidence that they "welcomed" imposed change. My opinion about this issue is discussed in Chapter 4. Her comments about *Modekngei* members being indifferent about the imposed change seem to contradict her theory about the feelings of deprivation caused by the imposed changes as the main reason of *Modekngei* emergence and growth.

<sup>177</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 267.

followed.<sup>178</sup> In her discussion of the most prominent *Modekngei* god, *Ngirchomkuul*,<sup>179</sup> she traces his origin to a village of Ngeredelolek in Peleliu Island,<sup>180</sup> and indicates that the concept of ascension, although unique in Palauan belief, has always been associated with that particular deity.<sup>181</sup> She argues that this belief and Temedad's exposure to Christian concepts at a German church in Melekeok were syncretized and resulted in an adaptation of a deity, *Ngirchomkuul Eskinisto*.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Aoyagi's key informants include *Ngirameketii*, a brother of Temedad, and Delbirt, a son of Runguul.

<sup>179</sup> *Ngirchomkuul* is a feared god of war of Chol village (or a god of Chomkuul lineage, second highest ranking lineage in Chol) which leaders of *Modekngei* belonged to. *Kodep* is the title of highest ranking *rubak* in the Chomkuul lineage. Temedad and Ongesi held the title, *kodep*. According to Aoyagi, Ongesi married Temedad's sister, Sismelen, and became *kodep*. Runguul, another leader, was a friend of Temedad who worked for the German administration. See, *ibid.*, 117-126.

<sup>180</sup> It is important to note a close tie between peoples of Chol village and the island of Peleliu in regard to *Modekngei*. According to oral traditions collected by Aoyagi, the village of Chol was originally settled by a group of immigrants from Uet, a place in Ngerchol village in Peleliu. There was a land, titled *Chomkuul*, in Uet and a deity, *Ngirchomkuul* (Mr. *Chomkuul*) resided there. As his followers migrated from Uet, *Ngirchomkuul* too resettled in Chol. See *ibid.*, 117-120.

<sup>181</sup> The deity is identified as *Ngirabeleliu*, who appeared in the above cited phrases that was chanted to repel old gods. According to Aoyagi, people of Peleliu, when introduced to *Modekngei*, perceived that *Ngirchomkuul* is a return of *Ngirabeleliu*, with a new name, who ascended earlier with his farewell promise of his future return to Peleliu. Aoyagi mentions another deity of Peleliu, *Demad er Chelid* (meaning Heavenly Father or Father God) as a brother of *Ngirabeleliu* or possibly the same deity with two different names. *Ngirchomkuul* is more commonly identified with *Demand er Chelid*. Aoyagi reports that there are several interpretations of these deities. See, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 153-159; also, Aoyagi, "Gods of the Modekngei," 353-356.

<sup>182</sup> According to Aoyagi, in the very early period of *Modekngei* development, Temedad and Ongesi erected a large cross (about 24 feet in height and 6 feet in width), one of the religious symbols of *Modekngei*, on the mountain of Tangel

Ongesi and Runguul's conduct in collecting money from *Modekngei* followers are depicted as "matter-of-course"<sup>183</sup> for the religious specialists. In fact, she states that circulation of a large amount of money, on which Palauan people traditionally place a high value, has always been associated with religious activities. Aoyagi suggests that *Modekngei* leaders introduced a new concept, a deity's patronage for affluence and prosperity, to attract more people into *Modekngei* religion.<sup>184</sup> Although she collected information about leaders' abuses of their status in collecting money, she perceives that it is an economic activity rather than a political one.<sup>185</sup>

Concerning the leaders' association with women, Aoyagi's interviewees testified that leaders and sometimes followers themselves enjoyed considerable sexual freedom under the name of god or a claim for "unity." According to her

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bad (Tangelbad). See, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 133.

<sup>183</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 144.

<sup>184</sup> A new practice, *megedaol*, according to Aoyagi, was for leaders to say prayers to money, collected from *Modekngei* followers, to receive deities' power to give a prolific effect to those currencies. See, *ibid.*, 146. If this is a new invention as Aoyagi suggests, it appears to have been hinted at the similar ideas associated with deities of the Japanese.

An account by Hezel referring to the German Official, Arno Senfft (1906), writes, during the German administration, "People were known to gather all the Palauan money in their house--beads, small acres or chinaware and burnt clay--and dump it into a pot of boiling water to make a broth that they served their children in the belief that this would make them rich" (*Strangers*, 112). It does not refer to the power of god to make prolific effect, but this statement indicates that there was a concept that certain acts would attribute to the accumulation of wealth.

<sup>185</sup> A frequent and large scale *ocheraol* and *omeluchel*, a feast accompanied by money raising of a host (in my extremely crude definition), was reported to be held by *Modekngei* leaders. *Ocheraol* is held usually for house-building occasions.

account, women were not always solicited by the *Modekngei* leaders (Ongesi and Runguul) for sexual favors; many voluntarily associated themselves with them.<sup>186</sup> Nevertheless, according to Aoyagi, this activity caused some serious friction within Palauan society and resulted in the involvement of the Japanese police.

The strategy employed by Aoyagi in her representation of *Modekngei* is her frequent use of oral histories and oral traditions. Although not usually direct quotations, Palauan people's statements, both consentient and contradicting opinions, often with their names and their relationships with *Modekngei*, are presented with her overall assessment at the end of each discussion. The high degree of specificity in the information that she provides helps to give a reader an impression that her work is credible.

As one of her tactics to defeat the legitimacy of Vidich's information, Aoyagi points out some factual errors observed in his accounts.<sup>187</sup> Then, she

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<sup>186</sup> Aoyagi reports that between February and July in 1941, while Ongesi was imprisoned and waited for the court decision, many female followers visited him with foods and cried for him every single day. *Nan'yō-chō* officials did not know what to do with them (Ibid., 209). She also reports that usually about five women spent the night with Ongesi, because he told them that was god's will and their sickness would heal through their association with Ongesi (Ibid., 139).

The *Modekngei* leaders seem to have used their religious power sometimes to coarsely take their favorite women as their wives. One such case was a beautiful married woman, Bedebii, who began to hear her deceased son's words and tunes from his harmonica (identical to the episode presented by Vidich above). Runguul, hoping to obtain her, paid Ongesi and both told her that it was a god's order for her to become Runguul's wife. She became a wife of Runguul and later was also associated with Ongesi. She told her uncle in tears that she resented their orders, but could not resist due to her fear of gods. (See, *ibid.*, 141)

<sup>187</sup> According to Vidich, Temedad "was one of the first to enroll in the carpentry course in the Japanese school at Korrer in 1914 and left in 1915" (Political

lists several aspects Vidich provides as evidence of the anti-Japanese nature of *Modekngei*. These includes the following: 1) Palauan money was seen as contaminated by the presence of the Japanese; 2) Temedad ordered the destruction of a Japanese school; 3) Temedad ordered divorce for women married to men working for the Japanese; 4) *Modekngei* headquarters was built on Orak island which was the center of religious and medical activities as well as the gathering place for men wishing to avoid the Japanese labor conscription; and 5) *Modekngei* members opposed the Japanese hospital. Aoyagi, then, presents her counter-argument to these aspects.

Writing about the Palauan money, Aoyagi examines the meaning of a Palauan term, *mengedaol*, that is used in "purification" practices by *Modekngei* leaders. She states the term mainly means "blessing" rather than "purification." The word also has a connotation of purification but should never be used for the purpose of purification of something contaminated. She argues that it was a newly devised *Modekngei* strategy to give money blessing which, in return, was believed to bring a prolific effect. In addition, Aoyagi provides information that Temedad once worked for the Japanese and thus, it is less likely to be the case that Temedad considered Japanese money as contaminated.

On the destruction of the school in the village of Ulimang in Ngaraard, Aoyagi states that every single person in the village she asked about the

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Factionalism, 84). Aoyagi points out that the carpentry school was built in 1926, and if Temedad attended the school, it was about ten years after his founding of *Modekngei*. Also, Vidich states the headquarters were built on the island of Orak (Ibid., 87), but Aoyagi states "a house of Ongesi" was built on Ngeriungs Island, a remote inhabited island off Kayangel, because of the persistent persecution of Ongesi by the Japanese authorities. Her information about the name of island is identical with the one presented in History of Palau, Vol.3 by the PCAA, p.384.



incident, told her that was a fire caused by an accident and had nothing to do with Temedad. They suggested that the accident was probably wrongly remembered by someone who did not know about the cause of the fire. On the issue of divorce, she definitively states that Vidich's information is incorrect. Considering the leaders' relationships with women, she states, it is highly possible that leaders urged their female followers to divorce their husbands. Yet, allegedly, divorce was suggested to them regardless of their husbands' occupations or their association with the Japanese. About the headquarters, Aoyagi simply dismisses the validity of Vidich's information as factual error.<sup>188</sup> Concerning opposition to the Japanese hospital, Aoyagi states that the reputation of the *Modekngei* leaders as excellent medical practitioners was the most significant way to attract people to the religion, as well as a way to obtain money, therefore the leaders might have told followers to stay away from the Japanese hospital.

Two anti-Japanese "songs" presented by Vidich also are re-examined by Aoyagi. Aoyagi argues that Vidich's interpretations reflect his adamant intention to prove that they are anti-Japanese songs. In her opinion, Vidich's interpretations are unnaturally strenuous and far-fetched. As a replacement, she offers her interpretations, which are based on her analysis of the collection of

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<sup>188</sup> Aoyagi does mention that many Palauan people gathered on Ngeriungs Island where Ongesi's house was located for various occasions. She states that the location was chosen because Ongesi's family owned land there and he viewed that the place, due to its healthy natural environment, was good for the cure of sickness. Upon a completion of the construction of his house on Ngeriungs, a huge feast, *ocheraol*, mentioned above, was held. A party in which *Modekngei* followers enjoyed much sexual freedom is also reported to Aoyagi. Aoyagi also reports that people of Kayangel visited the island at night and spent their time singing *keseke*s. Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 140, 145.

*kesekes* and information drawn from oral traditions.<sup>189</sup> About Vidich's passage-1,<sup>190</sup> which Aoyagi (mis)understands as a *kesekes*, she comments that she was

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 218.

Concerning the anti-Japanese *kesekes*-1 presented by Vidich, Aoyagi states that this *kesekes* is regarded as a famous prediction, made by a *Modekngei* leader, about World War II being fought in Palau. Although Vidich identifies *tebeb l ngot* as the chief god of *Modekngei*, it does not appear to be the case. *Tebeb el ngot*, according to Aoyagi, is a god of Ngermelech village in Melekeok, who very rarely appears in the *Modekngei kesekes*. See, *kesekes*, no. 81, in Aoyagi, *ibid.*, (33) and 179. This *kesekes* is discussed briefly in Chapter 4, below.

For the second *kesekes*, introduced as another anti-Japanese song by Vidich, Aoyagi simply states that "many *kesekes* express followers' laments about the bodies of gods (for example a deity, *Chosecheluib ra Delbong*), being divided and turned into stones. This is a main theme that repeatedly appears in *kesekes*. I believe that Vidich's identifying this as an anti-Japanese song is a quite strenuous interpretation." (*Ibid.*, 218, my translation) One example of many *kesekes* containing the divided bodies of deities is:

*Loburech Chosecheluib ra mekesong, me longedaol medesong me longedaol ma ulebii ma mlo Rengrill, ma ulebid ra medala lild, ma ngilash mora btuch re bab, ngilash mora btuch re bab, e kesekesongel ra ruchel, kesekesongel ra ruchel. E di chetiko Mengedecheduch, ele chural, ele chural a lengiluu ra Kerradel, me ng meketeketang lmedechel ra lbetikla demad, lbetikl. A demad a betik ra rengud a ngaruchei, betik ra rengud. Chural obekud el di ngara lbetikle a lobetikle, ng mo omritela Madedengiil, e ng mo melkakla beluu, lomritele ng me melkakla beluu, lblekengela uchel re bab. Betokl diberida bedengel albo longudla, delad ma demad e ng no mechudle ng mengedecheduch, ng di rasecha chural ma ngerel, aike uigelel medechel ra Meteet, engii a kot er bab, maikal beluu a di budel, e diak lodenge rchelid ma rchad. (Ngirameketii of Chol, Ngaraard)*

When Chosecheluib was stabbed with a spear in *mekesong* (environ [sic] of house), his body was blessed in *mekesong* and broken into pieces. Part of his body went to Rengrill, yet another part remained at the tip of the spear, and still another part goes up to a star in heaven, goes up to a star in heaven. *Uchel* praises it. *Uchel* praises it. He becomes reluctant to speak. His tongue, his tongue is pulled out in Kerradel (a place in Chelab Village). It has

not able to confirm the existence of such *kesekes*. But, if it existed, it would be extraordinarily unique as a *kesekes*. She states that the passage-1 would imply anti-Christian meanings, rather than expressing anti-Japanese sentiments.<sup>191</sup>

Aoyagi presents opinions of contemporary *Modekngei* followers and people who worked as policemen under the Japanese about the anti-Japanese nature of *Modekngei*, which further affirm her argument. Both parties "denied" the fact that the "*Modekngei* members were engaged in anti-Japanese

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been put aside in Ibetikl for a long time. Our father, we love him more than anybody else. We love him. The tongue of our Lord is in Ibetikl. When it is peeled from the ground, Mededengiil (ancient name of Ulimang village) quakes. The thunder will roll throughout the village. It quakes and the thunder rolls throughout the village. It is the courage of *Uchell* [sic] above. Although his body is scattered in many pieces, he is able to speak when our mother and father put them together. He is able to speak. His tongue and mouth are bloody. His tongue and mouth are bloody. His teeth are in Meteet, it is the top of the heaven. Therefore, every village is his skin. Gods and human beings do not know it. (English translation by Aoyagi, in Aoyagi, "Gods of the Modekgnei," 352)

Aoyagi, thus, denies the validity of Vidich's interpretation of the above two *kesekes* as anti-Japanese songs. Aoyagi perceives that the blood and the death of *Chosecheluiib*, caused by spears, are other examples of the *Modekngei*'s incorporation of Christian concepts, mixed with Palauan indigenous religious beliefs. The blood, or water mixed with the blood, is also identified as one of the best *Modekngei* medicines in *kesekes*.

<sup>190</sup> "Palau will always be for the Palauans. The Palau people should never take over the foreigner's religion and life. We are black and our god is black. The foreigner is white and his gods are white, so their gods and our gods can never come together" (Vidich, "Political Impact," 239).

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 218. One interesting finding from the reading of the *kesekes*, although not discussed by Aoyagi, is that some of them express *Modekngei*'s criticism against arrogant *rubak*, which reminds me of Barnett's statements about equality, allegedly, preached by Temedad.

activities/movement."<sup>192</sup> *Modekngei* members told Aoyagi that those were the people of Koror and Melekeok, who traditionally enjoyed all privileges, became sour about the success of *Modekngei*, so they reported maliciously to the Japanese administration about their religion.<sup>193</sup> Two former policemen under the Japanese, Oikawasang (Joseph Tellei) and *Ucherebelau* (Joseph) told Aoyagi that the *Modekngei* was not anti-Japanese but its followers were persecuted because of the money fraud and the adultery involved in their activities. Concerning the 1938 (1939 according to Aoyagi) arrest and trials of *Modekngei* members, which was allegedly on the basis of anti-Japanese activities,<sup>194</sup> *Ucherebelau*<sup>195</sup> stated that they were found guilty of money fraud and adultery and imprisoned.

According to Aoyagi, almost the entire official Japanese records concerning judiciary activities have been lost, probably destroyed due to the war, which otherwise would have provided information about how *Modekngei* activities were perceived by the Japanese officials. One piece of record survived, however. It is the minutes of a meeting of the Lower House (House of Representatives), Budgetary Committee, on February the 19th, 1940. At the

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 211, my translation.

<sup>193</sup> Aoyagi writes, "the *Modekngei* insist that anti-*Modekngei* Palauans instigated the Japanese government to take punitive action against them. According to them anti-*Modekngei* were mostly Catholic and high-ranking chiefs who were envious of the powerful growth of the *Modekngei*." In, "Transformation of Traditional Religion: The Influence of Christianity," in The Trival World and Its Transformation, Xth ICAES Series, no. 1, ed. by Bhupinder Singh & J. S. Bhandari, (New Delhi : Concept Publishing Company, 1980c), 138.

<sup>194</sup> See, Sugiura, "*Minzokugaku*," 216; Vidich, Political Factionalism, 91.

<sup>195</sup> He acted as an interpreter during the trials.

meeting, a member of the Lower House, Nobufusa Miyoshi questions the governor of the South Sea Bureau, Kenji Kitajima, about the Palauan anti-Japanese movement that he heard about during his trip to Micronesia and Southeast Asia half a year ago. Miyoshi asks Kitajima,

. . . According to what I have heard, there is a religion called, Ngirachomkuul Es Kiristo, in Palau, under the third leader, named Ongesi. Out of six-thousand natives [sic], three-thousand five-hundred are the followers of the religion. They secretly conducted anti-Japanese activities. Namely, they are cheating on uneducated natives [sic] by telling them to give up Japanese [paper] money and donate to the leader because it would be useless when the Japanese are defeated in the war in China. Also, the South Sea Bureau detected the fact, in mornings and evenings, [the religious followers] rally and sing anti-Japanese songs and [the police] arrested the leaders and leading followers. The trial is in its process right now . . . I wonder if these are the facts.<sup>196</sup>

Miyoshi continues and expresses his strong doubt about the aptitude of colonial policy and its administration if in fact such anti-Japanese movements were provoked in the colony. After some dialogue, Kitajima states,

. . . Current problems of this heretical religion---actually we perceive [it is] so primitive [sic] that it is questionable if we should call it a religion. . . What they actually did, hitherto, was some indecent things against the followers such as seduction of women among the leaders and followers. Now you mentioned that they were singing anti-Japanese songs, but we have not acknowledged such fact so far. Anyhow, it is probably true that [the religious members] might have said something unpleasant about the Japan administration. . .<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 213. Aoyagi states, "Miyoshi's inquiry itself can be seen as a reflection of his ambition to gain fame as a politician, through provoking exaggerated questions [at the Diet] from information he gathered during his field trip" (My translation, *ibid.*, 219).

<sup>197</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 215.

Aoyagi states that from this document, "it is undeniable that *Modekngei* possessed characteristics of counter-Japanese or a facet that was anti-Japanese in nature, or at least, that outsiders interpreted their [the *Modekngei*'s] words and conducts as such."<sup>198</sup> She repeats, however, *Modekngei* was not anti-Japanese at the beginning in her definitive tone; she adds that due to harsh Japanese persecutions, however, *Modekngei* members "probably had gradually developed counter-Japanese sentiments, and they [such sentiments] might have been expressed in forms of *kesekes*. To the Japanese government, engaged in war and extremely sensitive about any subversive activities in territories under their administration, this might have appeared as a counter- or anti-Japanese movement."<sup>199</sup> Aoyagi's argument of the non-anti-Japanese nature of *Modekngei* in its early period is solely based on information given to her by Palauan people.<sup>200</sup>

What is important here, I think, is to analyze the things not being mentioned by Aoyagi. For example, Aoyagi does not discuss the critical issue of labor conscription and the *Modekngei* followers' avoidance of it. From her description, it is not clear if *Modekngei* resisted the Japanese school system.

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<sup>198</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 215. Probably this statement represents her reason to dismiss the Sugiura-Ishikawa discourse without ever mentioning them. Sugiura's 1941 article is listed in Aoyagi's 1985 monograph. My opinion about other reasonings of her omitting Sugiura's interpretation of *Modekngei* will be discussed in Chapter 4. She stated that she did not know the existence of a booklet containing Ishikawa's interview. (Aoyagi, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997)

<sup>199</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 219. Aoyagi does not mention which *kesekes* she is referring here.

<sup>200</sup> The context in which Aoyagi conducted her fieldwork will be closely analyzed in Chapter 3.

She does not describe in detail the *Modekngei* headquarters, but simply dismisses the validity of Vidich's information. In contrast to her detailed descriptions of the spiritual power of Palauan shamans, such as the power to predict the future, being able to communicate with gods and spirits, or cure illnesses through their knowledge of medicine, the political power enjoyed by Palauan shamans in the Palauan society is almost completely deleted from her monograph.

Furthermore, Aoyagi appears to be less enthusiastic about elaborating her discussion about an incident concerning a Japanese land appropriation that took place in the early occupation period. One important piece of information Aoyagi presents that no one else does, is the fact that in around 1918 a piece of land, titled *Oratelruul*, in Chol village which belonged to Temedad was confiscated by the Japanese police for the punishment of his involvement in the *Modekngei* activity.<sup>201</sup> According to a court record, "Compensation for trees on the land was offered [by the Japanese administration] to and refused by Temedad."<sup>202</sup> In my opinion, this is a strong evidence, suggesting animosity and defiance toward the Japanese being felt by the founder of *Modekngei* in the very early period of its development. However, as discussed above, Aoyagi believes that the anti-Japanese sentiment among *Modekngei* members, if it ever existed, grew later due to the repeated Japanese suppression of the movement.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> In Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 219 & 280.

<sup>202</sup> Wasisang v. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (as successor to the Imperial Japanese Government), in Trust Territory Reports, vol. 1, 1951-1958: Containing Opinions of the High Court of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Appellate and Trial Divisions, ed. by Sheron N., Thomas L. Whittington and Donald T. Bliss, (Orford : Equity Publishing Corporation, 1969), 15.

<sup>203</sup> For more detail, see *ibid.*, 14-17. This was the second earliest case brought

The nature of chiefs' involvement in *Modekngei* activities does not come clear from Aoyagi's descriptions of the movement, which would otherwise portray the *Modekngei*'s political alliance. Aoyagi perceives that two high chiefs of Palau did not experience deprivation under the Japanese colonial administration<sup>204</sup> and they were against *Modekngei*. Or at least, *Modekngei* members told Aoyagi that they felt that the high chiefs were against their religion.<sup>205</sup> Near the end of her monograph, Aoyagi briefly mentions the meeting of chiefs, assembled by Temedad and Ongesi soon after the *Modekngei* emergence. In this, Aoyagi rather carelessly reports that "*Reklai* from Melekeok attended the meeting, but refused to cooperate [with *Modekngei* leaders]" (emphasis mine).<sup>206</sup> Although Aoyagi does not discuss the agenda of the meeting, if the meeting was for the *Modekngei*'s religious propaganda, I believe that "refuse to be converted" would be the proper expression to be used. In my view, having a chiefly assembly itself strongly suggests the political nature of the *Modekngei* movement. No serious inquiry on this matter was pursued by Aoyagi.

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to the Trial Division of the High Court. I think that it indicates a strong and long-held resentment among *Modekngei* members toward the Japanese appropriation of Temedad's land.

<sup>204</sup> Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 254. Accounts by Hezel, Nero, Peattie, and Vidich attest the discontent felt by traditional high chiefs due to the direct rule employed by *Nan'yō-chō* and resulted decrease in their power and status. For the specific study of the Japanese replacement of Palau's traditional authorities, see, Nero, "Beads of History," 336-337; also, Hezel, *Strangers*, 161-163.

<sup>205</sup> Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 224.

<sup>206</sup> The assembly of chiefs in 1918 is discussed in accounts by PCAA and Vidich. See, PCAA, *History of Palau*, vol. 3, 383; Vidich, *Political Factionalism*, 86.



The interpretation of poetic material, full of implications and trope, is another significant issue. From reading the *kesekes* collected by Aoyagi, it is obvious to me that those words are full of cultural meanings that are probably hard for outsiders to access. Aoyagi states that some of the *kesekes* were predictions composed by the *Modekngei* leaders, phrased in poetic verses; the followers gave to these *kesekes* meanings after some events took place. Although some of them express their messages more clearly than others, the conveyed meanings in those *kesekes* can be interpreted in more than one way at a given moment in history. As exemplified by the discrepancies in interpretations of *kesekes* by Hijikata, Vidich, and Aoyagi, the subjectivity of anthropologists, with their own intentions unavoidably reflecting the values and interests of the times, would play a vital role in representing such meanings, in my opinion.

Her article, "Gods of the Modekngei Religion in Belau," published two years after the monograph, provides a history of *Modekngei* with a total absence of a term, "anti-Japanese," in its content. This article is written in English. Aoyagi may be aiming at expanding the force of her discourse through the wider dissemination of her knowledge, beyond the realm of Japan.<sup>207</sup>

## 2. The Aoyagi Discourse

A Japanese student, Goh Abe, wrote his Ph.D. dissertation, "Ethnohistory of Palau Under the Japanese Colonial Administration" (1986), at the University of Kansas. In his five-page discussion of *Modekngei*, he states, "the *Modekngei* religious movement first started with the aim of helping Palauans cope

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<sup>207</sup> Aoyagi's interpretation of *Modekngei* can be seen as an effort to counter the western hegemonic (Vidich) discourse.

with the problems of everyday life"<sup>208</sup> and the movement "does not appear as [sic] to have taken the form of fully organized straight-forward **political opposition to the Japanese regime**."<sup>209</sup> He cites mostly Aoyagi and makes but a single reference to **Barnett**.<sup>210</sup> Abe's description generally follows Aoyagi's argument but places more emphasis on the aspect of internal political **rivalry between high chiefs and Modekngei**. And, unlike Aoyagi, Abe clearly states that the *Modekngei* later became "openly political."<sup>211</sup> Abe's bibliography contains Vidich's 1949 report but Vidich does not appear in his discussion of *Modekngei*. After his brief discussion of Melanesian movements as a comparative analysis, Abe points out the necessity to analyze "millennial movements occurring in non-Western colonial settings."<sup>212</sup> I do not know the current occupation of Abe, but it is possible that he is engaged in an academic career in Japan.

Perhaps the highlight of the Aoyagi discourse comes with its appearance in *Oseania o Shiru Jiten* [Dictionary to Know Oceania] (1990). In the section of "Mo,"<sup>213</sup> there lies *Modekugei* [*Modekngei*]. I had no doubt from the beginning

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<sup>208</sup> Goh Abe, "Ethnohistory of Palau Under the Japanese Colonial Administration," 1986, thesis (Ph.D.), University of Kansas, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, 163.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>210</sup> Only one place that Abe refers Barnett is in his description of Temedad's background.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 163. This is in contradiction with his above quoted statement.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 167. This comment contradicts Aoyagi's argument that *Modekngei* was not a millennial movement.

<sup>213</sup> "Mo" stands for one character or one alphabet in the Japanese language.

about who wrote the section. Of course, it was Machiko Aoyagi, the Japanese authority of the topic. It starts with a sentence, "[It is] a religion of Palau (Belau) in Micronesia."<sup>214</sup> It is an extreme condensation of her 1985 monograph. The reasons why the religion attracted people are explained as "curing practice, prophecy, money making, etc."<sup>215</sup> The syncretic nature of the religion is stressed. Aoyagi does mention the term, anti-Japanese, and states "because of the frequent control measures taken by *Nan'yō-chō* toward the *Modekngei* leaders, some people perceive it [*Modekngei*] as the anti-Japanese movement group, but it is problematic to assess, from the early period [of its development], the group had anti-Japanese characteristics."<sup>216</sup>

Almost synonymous descriptions of *Modekngei* appear in an encyclopedia, titled, *Taiheiyō Shotō Hyakka Jiten* [The Encyclopedia of the Pacific Islands], published a year earlier in 1989. Again, the section was written anonymously by Aoyagi herself. One slight difference from the above mentioned description of *Modekngei* is that Aoyagi does indicate the potential heightened anti-Japanese "tendency"<sup>217</sup> of *Modekngei*. She states, however, the anti-Japanese tendency of *Modekngei* emerged later during the Japanese

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<sup>214</sup> My translation, Machiko Aoyagi, "*Modekugei* [*Modekngei*]," in *Oseania o Shiru Jiten* [Dictionary to Know Oceania], ed. by Eikichi Ishikawa, (Tokyo : Heibonsha, 1990) 301.

<sup>215</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 301.

<sup>216</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 302.

<sup>217</sup> My translation, Machiko Aoyagi, "*Modekugei* [*Modekngei*]," in *Taiheiyō Shotō Hyakka Jiten* [Encyclopedia of the Pacific Islands], ed. by *Taiheiyō Gakkai* [The Pacific Society], (Tokyo : Hara Shobō, 1989), 548. The similar description regarding *Modekngei*'s potential anti-Japanese nature is inserted in Aoyagi's monograph, but the tone is more definitive in this article.

administration period due to the repeated harassment placed on the followers by Japanese police. A new and important aspect found in this article is Aoyagi's acknowledgment of the Japanese **persecutions** of *Modekngei*, not only on the grounds of money fraud and adultery but also **on the grounds of an anti-Japanese movement**.<sup>218</sup>

Due perhaps to the relative recentness of her work, Aoyagi has not attracted many followers from circles of Japanese scholars, although the potential for the future seems high.<sup>219</sup> Aoyagi's interpretation presented in a dictionary, an encyclopedia, and popular magazines would provide easy access to Japanese who are interested in Oceania. I am certain, among the almost exclusively monolingual Japanese population, Aoyagi's representation of *Modekngei* is received as the truth.

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<sup>218</sup> The source of this information is not mentioned by Aoyagi. See *ibid.*, 548.

<sup>219</sup> In order to trace the Aoyagi discourse among Japanese scholars, I conducted research in a library at Tokyo University. Kiyonori Kanasaka, a professor at Kyoto University, also checked library materials in Kyoto and Osaka University for my research. These are the three largest universities in Japan, and none of them have materials concerning *Modekngei* except the works by Aoyagi, listed above. Bibliographies, listing publications from government funded overseas research produced by Japanese scholars, also indicate that *Modekngei* research was conducted solely by Aoyagi. See, *Kaigai Gakujutsu Chōsa Kankei Bunken Mokuroku (Shōwa 53-60 Nendo): (Wabun-hen) and (Ōbun-hen)* [A Bibliography of Academic Research Conducted in Foreign Countries (1978-1985): (Works in Japanese) and (Works in European languages)], ed. by Hiroyuki Umeda, et al. (n.p., 1989 & 1991).

## VI. A Palauan Voice

" . . . recognize that what they have to say comes out of particular histories and cultures and that *everyone* speaks from positions within the global distribution of power" (Stuart Hall).<sup>220</sup>

The final entry I would like to introduce is a student paper, "Modekngei: What Is It, Can It Survive? View of a Non-Modekngei Palauan" (1988), written by Patrick Tellei. He is a grandson of the late Oikawasang (Joseph Tellei) who, in *Modekngei* literature, is discussed as a chief collaborator and one of the persons who was most responsible for the instigation of *Modekngei* persecutions. Tellei wrote this paper for a seminar titled "Social Movements in Melanesia," at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, taught by Geoffrey White who is an anthropologist, specializing in study of Melanesia with a focus on the issues of historical development of cultural identities.<sup>221</sup>

In his paper, Tellei characterizes *Modekngei* as a **political/religious movement** which has grown into a contemporary religion in Palau. He states that *Modekngei* has always attempted to **bring the people of Palau together**. A phrase used by Vidich, "**Palau for Palauans,**" is used repeatedly in Tellei's

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<sup>220</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Meaning of New Times," in New Times, ed. by Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, (London : Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), 133.

<sup>221</sup> Due apparently to the nature of this seminar, Tellei compares *Modekngei* with some Melanesian movements and analyzes political and religious aspects of *Modekngei* in separate sections. He adds a brief review on *Modekngei* literature, his personal experience with *Modekngei* people at the Belau Modekngei School, and his opinions on the *Modekngei*'s future.

paper as the principle which underlies *Modekngei* both as a political movement and as a religion.

He summarizes Aoyagi's 1987 article discussing the religious nature of *Modekngei*. His assessment of *Modekngei* at its emergence is somewhat ambiguous. He cites Aoyagi and Shuster and states it **started as a religion** and grew rapidly. The **Japanese felt threatened** by its popularity and the **followers' disobedience** toward Japanese authority. At the **chiefly assembly** called by Temedad, he "asked them [chiefs] to support him and his followers in order to **save Palau** for Palauans. Most of the chiefs agreed" and this further fostered the growth of the *Modekngei* movement. "**Temedad and his followers did not hide their intentions of opposing Japanese rule.** Therefore, this movement became the **vehicle to repel and reject the imposition of Japanese rule** on Palau."<sup>222</sup> Although Tellei does not clarify if *Modekngei* started as a religion or a political movement, his statement indicates the "religion" was associated with some disobedient behavior toward the Japanese, probably from its early developmental stage; then the religion became a strong anti-Japanese political movement.

Tellei cites a comment given to him from Ngirngotel Idesemang, a *Modekngei* follower, through a personal interview. Idesemang states,

*Modekngei* was seen by many Palauans as a sign of unity that would hold Palau together and preserve it for future

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<sup>222</sup> Tellei, "View of a Non-Modekngei," 5. I think Tellei read Vidich indirectly through the accounts by Peacock and Shuster since Tellei never cites Vidich. In his section of "Literature on Modekngei," Tellei introduces works by Aoyagi, Peacock, Shuster, Smith, and Rechucher and states, "Others include Arthur Vidich (1952). . . I chose not to elaborate on all their writings because most of them address the same issues and aspects of Modekngei as the others I have reviewed above." (Ibid., 17)

generations. *Modekngei* members only opposed the Japanese because they went too far in abusing the land and the people. If they had come and explained to the people, maybe things could have been different.<sup>223</sup>

According to this statement, *Modekngei* opposed the Japanese to save Palau for Palauans by its united force, as Vidich argues; the opposition was, however, not from the outset, which supports Aoyagi's argument. It is again necessary to be cautious, I think, about who is talking to whom here.<sup>224</sup> Yet, it brings up an important issue, the Japanese **abuse of** not only Palauan people but also **their land** as a causal grievance of *Modekngei* movement.<sup>225</sup>

The following are other aspects of *Modekngei* presented by Tellei that caught my attention. Tellei perceives that the large **population decline** among the Palauans, leading up to the time of *Modekngei* emergence, resulted in

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<sup>223</sup> Tellei, "View of a Non-Modekngei," 6.

<sup>224</sup> As noted before, Patrick Tellei is a grandson of Joseph Tellei and also a Catholic. In the post-war Palau, Christians have greatly outnumbered *Modekngei* followers. Accounts by Shuster and Hezel suggest that some Palauan people who follow the Christian faith look down on *Modekngei* as a pagan religion. In 1980, Aoyagi writes, "Modekngei followers came to hate those Palauans who sided with the Japanese in repressive actions. . . the emotional disagreement between Modekngei and anti-Modekngei Palauans continued and is evident even today" ("Transformation," 139). Thus, this *Modekngei* person who was interviewed by Tellei more likely spoke from his position within Palauan cultural and historical contexts.

<sup>225</sup> Another Palauan person, Tina Rechucher's paper is quoted by Tellei. It again emphasizes on the importance of the land to the *Modekngei*:

Given modekngei's historical opposition to native loss of the land, it is conceivable that the sect could participate in or actually spearhead a "Yankee Go Home" type of resistance movement, should the U.S. go ahead and seize one third of Belau for military purposes. (Rechucher, "Religio-Political," 34)

attracting many people to *Modekngei*. He explains that the people sought explanations in religion because their loss was tremendous; Tellei places importance on the **insecurity** experienced by the Palauan people as a factor contributed to the success of *Modekngei*. The **massive influx of immigrants** Palau received from Japan is discussed as a source that provoked the desire among Palauans to preserve their identity. Tellei states that it was the **Japanese oppression of *Modekngei* that raised the consciousness of "us vs. them"** and strengthened the bond among the followers. He stresses *Modekngei's* conscious effort in maintaining the **Palauan identity**. According to Tellei, there is a well-known rumore that *Modekngei* leaders attempted to **overthrow the chiefly system**. Tellei mentions that *Modekngei* members often used a Japanese term, ***syukang*** (custom), to consciously "define and analyze what was truly their own culture."<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Tellei, "View of a Non-Modekngei," 7.

Aoyagi argues that there is no court decision which acknowledged the anti-Japanese nature of the *Modekngei* movement and she appears to use it as an evidence to support her argument. However, it is apparent from the statement of Judge Ishikawa, cited above, that at least he was aware of the anti-Japanese orientation of the movement. The law applied to the indigenous population under the Japanese mandate states, "unless it involves people of non-islanders, civil cases of islanders should be judged accordingly to the indigenous customs." In Chōtoku Ōkimi, \* *Nan'yō Guntō Annai* [A Guide to the South Sea Islands], (Tokyo: Kaigai Kenkyū-jo, 1939), 17, my translation. According to Ishikawa, providing "protection" to indigenous customs was apparently of great concern among Japanese judges at that time, or at least during the time when the islands were mandated by the League of Nations to Japan. I speculate that the *Modekngei* leaders knew well about this law and argued that their activities were in accord with Palauan customs.

\*The author's name, Chotoku Okimi, can be pronounced as Tomomori Ōgimi. I used the former pronunciation as being catalogued in the University of Hawai'i Library.



Some of his information directly contradicts what Aoyagi says. Aoyagi argues that it was a rather easy transition for people to abandon their old gods and join *Modekngei* because of Temedad's breaking of taboos and performing of miracles. On the other hand, Tellei states that it was extremely uncommon among the Palauans to incorporate different gods into their own, and thus, many people had difficulty accepting *Modekngei*. Aoyagi negates Vidich's information that women who were married to Japanese men had to divorce them, while Tellei says that they, in fact, had to. Aoyagi does not mention *Modekngei*'s resistance against the Japanese school system, which Tellei describes as one of *Modekngei*'s activities. However, Tellei disagrees with Vidich's argument that Palauan money was contaminated due to the presence of the Japanese. Tellei agrees with Aoyagi on this issue and states the ritual the leaders conducted was to bless the money the followers had, so that it would be abundant. Japanese money was also brought to the leaders for the same purpose.

Interestingly, Tellei praises the works of Aoyagi and states that "Aoyagi's writing on *Modekngei* is credible and presented fairly. She obviously has put many years into the study and I suspect few, if any, Palauans would contradict what she writes."<sup>227</sup> He lists Aoyagi's monograph, *Modekugei* [*Modekngei*], two of her articles (1980 & 1987) and one paper (n.d.). I am not certain if Tellei read all of the listed works, particularly the monograph, by Aoyagi carefully. As discussed above, Tellei recognizes *Modekngei* as one entity which possessed both an anti-Japanese and religious characteristics;<sup>228</sup> Tellei seems to be

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<sup>227</sup> Tellei, "View of a Non-Modekngei," 15.

<sup>228</sup> In his section of "Literature on Modekngei," Tellei writes, "The first that comes to mind is Michiko [sic] Aoyagi, a Japanese writer who alone has written much about *Modekngei* both as a movement and a religion. . . Aoyagi looks at

unaware of the fact that Aoyagi concluded *Modekngei* was not, at least in its essence, an anti-Japanese movement.

The strongest impression I receive from reading Tellei's paper is his ambivalence. Because of his background, as a descendant of Oikawasang and as a follower of the Catholic faith, Tellei is critical of *Modekngei* to a certain degree. He criticizes most strongly Temedad's employment of his house god to be the god of *Modekngei*.<sup>229</sup> The leaders' arrogance and their abuse of power are also the target of his criticism. He even uses a term "un-Palauan" to characterize some aspects of *Modekngei*. The unification of gods and goddesses, the incorporation of Christian elements, and the abolition of food taboos are the factors of *Modekngei* that he points to as "un-Palauan." Probably due to respect for his ancestors, he claims that *Modekngei* only survived because Oikawasang and others terminated behavior such as sexual abuse which was the cause of mistrust placed on *Modekngei* by the Palauan people.<sup>230</sup> And, he states, "the leaders of *Modekngei* should have taken the opportunity to see that the Palauans got the best of what the Japanese had to offer."<sup>231</sup>

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the founding of *Modekngei* and how it has come to symbolize the movement to save Palau for Palauans" (Ibid., 15). Aoyagi never describes *Modekngei* as a movement whose aim was to save Palau for Palauans in her monograph.

<sup>229</sup> Tellei states, "one can only wonder what went through the minds of the chiefs who feared many of their people were falling into the hands of a 'foreign god.' This can also explain why not all the chiefs of Palau welcomed Temedad and his entourage. . ." (Ibid., 4). The "foreign god" referred here by Tellei is *Ngirchomkuul*.

<sup>230</sup> Tellei expresses his resentment toward the fact that many *Modekngei* literature depict the "collaborators," including two of his family members, in strongly negative terms. He asserts that it is "unfair and unfounded, and cannot be substantiated" (Ibid., 16).

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 13.

At the same time, he places a high value on *Modekngei* due to their assertion, "Palau for Palauans." As a proud Palauan, he speaks highly of *Modekngei* for the stand they have taken to protect their culture. Also, he comments on the good behavior of contemporary *Modekngei* followers and asserts the need of intentional efforts to maintain the existence of *Modekngei* religion in Palau. Tellei mentions one of the ways that will help *Modekngei* survive is a compromise of difference between the older and younger generations. As a western educated youth, he suggests that elders should put their efforts toward listening to the young people's needs. His ambivalence toward *Modekngei* and his opinion about elderly people appear to me a reflection of his own identity, as a proud Palauan, and at the same time, a man who is deeply influenced by foreign cultures through religion and education.

The penetration of both Aoyagi and Vidich discourses into Tellei's representation of *Modekngei* is unequivocal. Especially, Tellei's crediting of Aoyagi's accounts struck me as somewhat alarming because he apparently misunderstood Aoyagi's interpretation of *Modekngei*. The way Aoyagi writes about *Modekngei* in her articles, especially in her 1987 article, might be attributed to Tellei's misunderstanding of her conclusion. In her 1987 articles, Aoyagi does not express her disagreement with Vidich's interpretation of *Modekngei*, but rather completely ignores the issue regarding the anti-Japanese nature of the movement; her effort is concentrated on describing solely the religious nature of *Modekngei*. This might have misled Tellei to think that Aoyagi was not negating the political nature of *Modekngei* but more interested in studying *Modekngei* as a

religion. In addition, some of Aoyagi's articles that are more affirmative in describing *Modekngei* as a nativistic movement, might have confused Tellei that Aoyagi perceives that *Modekngei* possessed both religious and political characteristics equally.

I believe that if a *Modekngei* person had written her or his own experiences of the movement's past, the account would have been different from the way Tellei incorporated knowledge that are presented by Vidich and Aoyagi. Outside scholars' interpretations of *Modekngei*, however, have gained authority to the extent that they profoundly influence on indigenous people's understandings of the movement. In fact, I learned that some Palauan educators are interested in using Aoyagi's monograph on *Modekngei*, once translated into English, as a textbook in schools in Palau. If this happened, her interpretation of *Modekngei* would gain a firm ground to be widely disseminated and to be believed as the truth among the younger Palauan generation; it is highly possible that Aoyagi discourse would eventually become more dominant among indigenous Palauan discourses of *Modekngei*.<sup>232</sup>

## VII. A Summary and Notes

From the very beginning of the scholarly inquiry into *Modekngei*, there have been discrepancies in opinions concerning the nature of the movement. In the western *Modekngei* discourse, however, Vidich's interpretation of the movement has been the leading discourse. Although Aoyagi has published English articles which indicate her different interpretations of *Modekngei*, all

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<sup>232</sup> The domination of western knowledge about "cargo cult" and its effects on people of the place where the movements had actually occurred, in Melanesia, are discussed by Lindstrom in Cargo Cult, Chapter 5: The Return of Cargo Cult.

writers, except Abe, Tellei and Shuster, ignored her works.<sup>233</sup> In fact, the Vidich discourse have been much stronger than Barnett and Useem's discourses of *Modekngei*.

Why is it that Vidich's representation has been entrusted by unpropotionally larger numbers of scholars and students? One reason would be that the Vidich's understanding of *Modekngei* as an anti-colonial movement "made sense," when examined against the oppressive nature of Japanese colonialism in Palau in which the movement arose and developed, and when seen with a popular premise that the Palauans, in general, are highly politically oriented people. Vidich's logical explanation of *Modekngei* within a framework of Palauan factionalism, I believe, has furthered the plausibility of his work. I perceive that Vidich's definitive tones and his mentioning of two diaries too have functioned to foster the credibility of his account.

I believe that the difficulty locating Aoyagi's articles is another potential reason behind the neglect of Aoyagi's works among American researchers. For example, Shuster indicates his enthusiasm to study any available material concerning *Modekngei*; however Aoyagi's earlier articles, written in English, were not accessible to him. In addition, most of her works have been published in the Japanese language. I speculate also that some American researchers have trusted in more the western *Modekngei* discourses than the Aoyagi's. The nationality of Aoyagi as a Japanese might have had a negative effect in convincing her western readers that *Modekngei* was not an anti-Japanese movement.

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<sup>233</sup> Mark Peattie who read both Vidich and Aoyagi's accounts largely disregards Aoyagi's work.

Readers creative use of existing discourses might be another attribute to the Vidich discourse's dominance in the US. Some people in the Vidich discourse wrote their accounts with an apparent intention to empower Palauans or Micronesians, by indicating that they were not docile receivers of the Japanese colonial intrusion. By many, Vidich's information was combined with their own knowledge of *Modekngei*, which apparently were similar to Vidich's interpretation, but perhaps with more emphasis on the aspect of religious syncretism. One seems to insert his critical view toward *Modekngei* by indicating the political nature of the "religion" from a Catholic point of view. Some others point to the issue of Palauan identity, which Vidich discusses in a rather indirect manner in his accounts. However, I perceive that most whom I located in the Vidich discourse employed Vidich's research focus, the politics, strongly into their discussion of *Modekngei*; it seems that the Vidich's representation has been a basic premise underlying their works of *Modekngei*.

As recognized in Tellei, descriptions of *Modekngei*, that are fundamentally similar to the one in Vidich's accounts, appear repeatedly in the writings of mostly western authors. This implies that a person, who is unfamiliar with *Modekngei* and willing to learn about it, would find many accounts that repeatedly confirm the similar characteristics of the movement. Some readers may carefully inspect sources these authors referred to; while others seemingly do not. Thus, when a reader finds many similar descriptions in academic works regarding *Modekngei*, it is highly possible that he or she would regard the information is the fact or the truth about *Modekngei*.

The Aoyagi discourse has been created and supported almost solely by Aoyagi herself. As pointed out earlier, most Japanese population do not read English with ease, and thus, Vidich and other accounts written in English would

not reach their hands. Or, I think it is most likely that they would go to Aoyagi's accounts first before they read English authors' accounts. Aoyagi describes Vidich's interpretation as "strenuous," "far-fetched" or "exaggerated," and she provides reasons behind the "mis-interpretation" to her Japanese readers; she suggests that it was the immediate post-war anti-Japanese atmosphere that colored Vidich's perspective and representation. Therefore, even if a Japanese reader would read Vidich's account later, the person would read it with at least some reservation for its credibility or would perhaps find it unpleasant because of the preconception given from the Aoyagi's account. Aoyagi produced many accounts about *Modekngei* that include a monograph and articles in scholarly journals, popular magazines, a dictionary; these are readily accessible to people in Japan and also other Japanese reading population which includes some Palauans. I believe that it is highly possible that the Aoyagi discourse will dominate and become the "truth," at least within Japan, unless others start providing different views of *Modekngei* in the Japanese language or unless readers would be cautious and creative when they read and use Aoyagi's representation.

Aoyagi's influence on the writing of Tellei attracted my attention, though he apparently misunderstood Aoyagi's intention. In her correspondence, Aoyagi informed me, "Concerning *Modekngei*, some Palauans were critical of it while some others, who possess hardly any knowledge about *Modekngei*, indicated their curiosity and interests toward the information I collected and asked me series of questions [about *Modekngei*]." <sup>234</sup> This statement suggests that some Palauan people, particularly non-*Modekngei* people, are interested in the "facts"

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<sup>234</sup> Aoyagi, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997.

that became accessible through Aoyagi's research. Because her information is highly detailed in describing *Modekngei*'s religious aspects, those Palauan people who otherwise do not know about *Modekngei* would more likely be impressed by her work and would potentially believe what she says in her accounts. If her interpretation would gain a wider acceptance among the Palauans, it would certainly affect future *Modekngei* discourses in Palau.

I believe that the prominent characteristics of the Vidich and Aoyagi discourses is their essentialization of *Modekngei*, either as a political movement or a religion. Vidich concentrates on describing *Modekngei* as a political movement while Aoyagi's account is almost devoid of her discussion concerning the political nature of *Modekngei*. Is it possible for anyone to categorize the nature of *Modekngei* neatly into the two? Why is it necessary to do so? What kind of effect does it have?

I believe that the categorization of a social phenomenon becomes important when it becomes a subject of study by scientists. It is necessary because one important purpose of ethnographic work is to explain the "unknown" to their home audiences. To Aoyagi and Vidich, *Modekngei* had to be explained to non-*Modekngei* people, mainly the Japanese and the Americans, who do not understand the phenomenon unless familiar conceptual labels are used. It is evident that *Modekngei* has possessed multiple natures that have constituted a blended and inseparable whole. By essentializing the two aspects, either politics and religion, Aoyagi and Vidich suppressed other natures of *Modekngei*. In my opinion, both scholars divided *Modekngei* whole into narrow and rigid boundaries; each scholar emphasized one of them, which satisfied their scientific and personal purposes and interests.



I do not believe that this categorization has much importance to the Palauan people including the *Modekngei*. Patrick Tellei states, "Many Palauans (who did not go to school) would not think of *Modekngei* as a movement; the truth is they do not know the difference."<sup>235</sup> What Tellei suggests here is that there is no rigid conceptual boundary between religion and politics that exists in minds of Palauans who did not receive western oriented education.<sup>236</sup> The compartmentalization of various *Modekngei*'s aspects into either religion or politics can be seen as reflective of Vidich and Aoyagi's scholarly and cultural orientations; because of their academic authority, however, their interpretations may have begun dominating Palauan people's own experiences of the *Modekngei*.

Perhaps it is time to study discourses not only in terms of their expressive value or formal transformations, but according to their modes of existence. The modes of circulation, valorization, attribution and appropriation of discourses vary with each culture and are modified within each. The manner in which they are articulated according to social relationships can be readily understood, I believe, in the activity of the author function in its

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<sup>235</sup> Tellei, "View of a Non-Modekngei," 12.

<sup>236</sup> I argue that there is no religion in the world which is completely dissociated with politics. In most areas in the world, religions had/have been the dominant political force. More recently, in western and many other countries, the separation of the Church and the State has been proclaimed; I perceive, however, that the many aspects of the "Church" has been politically powerful in forms of institutionalized law and "commonsense," which regulates peoples' morality and behavior. There might be difference in the degree among different groups of people at different historical times concerning the political power of a religion, but I believe that religion and politics have always been one and inseparable entity.

modifications than in the themes or concepts that discourses set in motion. (Michel Foucault)<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Rabinow (ed.), Foucault Reader, 117.

Chapter 2  
Fieldwork: A Theater of Power, Politics and Emotion  
Arthur J. Vidich: January-July 1948

. . . the general consensus that "true" knowledge is fundamentally non-political (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not "true" knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced. (Edward W. Said)<sup>1</sup>

I. Introduction

The neutrality of scientific knowledge has long been regarded as a sacred premise. Edward Said analyzes the link between power and knowledge and eloquently delineates how the neutral guise, assumed in describing cultural "Others," functions to reinforce imperialism.<sup>2</sup> Ethnographers do not conduct their field studies in a political vacuum. I believe that as they enter the field with their particular cultural and historical perceptions of the world to study the others, those people, who come under their study, also use their understandings of the world to define and situate the newcomers into certain conceptual places. At the moment when an ethnographer enters the field, she is entangled in the complex webs of the historical and political contexts of the particular place which powerfully influence her position within and the types of information available to her. The following two chapters aim at debunking the sacredness of scientific neutrality by exposing how historical, political and economic circumstances at the global level strongly affect field research, which is a core process in ethnographic knowledge construction.

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<sup>1</sup> Said, Orientalism, 10.

<sup>2</sup> See, *ibid.*

One of the themes of Chapter two and three is to depict the colonial and neo-colonial forces operating in the field where ethnographers conduct their research. It is to delineate how global political relationships powerfully affect their fieldwork and thus their representations of the "Others." The information about the contexts under which ethnographers conduct their research is often inaccessible to their readers. When their findings are written down, however, especially if they are academic texts, the power of written words bestows authority on the presented knowledge. The following text intends to provide a view of how seemingly neutral scientific knowledge can reflect prevailing colonial and neo-colonial forces in the world.<sup>3</sup>

Another theme is to discern the sophistication of people in their dealings with outside researchers. Those people being observed by ethnographers also observe those outsiders. Their wisdom and familiarity with the global power relationship and the occupation of ethnographers lend them power to manipulate the research outcomes of foreign researchers. They are able to utilize a researcher not only to gain power in their local political scenes but also to provide him with certain types of information that would benefit them in their struggle against colonialism and their attempt to counter-balance the existing unequal power relationship at the global level.<sup>4</sup>

With these themes in mind, two separate field studies concerning the history of *Modekngei* from 1914 to 1945, conducted in Palau by Vidich and

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<sup>3</sup> See, Clifford, The Predicament; Clifford and Marcus, (ed.), Writing Culture; also George E. Marcus and Micael M. J. Fischer, Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Science, (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> See, Rosaldo, Culture & Truth.

Aoyagi are examined in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 respectively. As discussed in the previous chapter, Vidich states that *Modekngei* emerged and developed as an anti-Japanese political movement; Aoyagi claims that *Modekngei* was a religion which provided psychological refuge to Palauan people whose lives had been disrupted by numerous foreign intrusions. Vidich, an American anthropologist, was in Palau from January to July in 1948 while Aoyagi, a Japanese anthropologist, conducted her six periods of fieldwork, totaling 11 months, between 1973 and 1984.

Both Vidich and Aoyagi support their arguments with statements given by Palauan informants. It seems clear to me that the Palauans dealt with these outside researchers with caution and tact. Several factors might have affected Palauan people's attitudes toward the outside researchers, and thus, the types of data they provided to them. Viewing the nationalities of the two researchers and the timing of their research as the key factors affecting types of data given to them, I pay particular attention to the following aspects: 1) the political contexts in Palau when the two field studies were conducted, particularly Palau's political relationships with the United States and Japan and local political circumstances within Palau, at the times of the fieldwork; 2) the economic situation of Palau and the economic influence of the US and Japan on Palau during the time of their stay; and 3) the historical relationships among the three countries, Palau, Japan and the US, prior to and during their visits.

In this chapter, I examine the context in which Vidich conducted his fieldwork in Palau. The chapter aims at illustrating dynamic historical forces, operating within and beyond Palau, which powerfully influenced Vidich's fieldwork. How did Palauan people conceive and deal with Americans, who were

agents of new colonial authority? How did World War II and its aftermath affect Palauan views of Americans? How were conditions of local politics and with whom did Vidich associate himself most? What were the circumstances of *Modekngei* members under the new colonial administration? What was the general American sentiment toward Japan and that of Vidich?

Having access to Palauan people's attitudes and thoughts toward Americans, and their ways of dealing with American researchers, or Americans in general, becomes essential in order for me to make assessments about the above issues. Some naval records and reports by CIMA researchers offer important hints. Actual Palauan voices, however, are extremely scarce in these documents. More recent interviews with Palauan people by American and Australian scholars provide Palauan people's own oral statements concerning their experiences in World War II and of the early American administration. These comments might have been their assessed views about the past or have reflected the political relationship between nations of an interviewer and an interviewee. Despite my awareness of the problems, I utilized both historical and recent sources of information in my research because I believe that Palauan people's voices must be presented. I also gathered information through correspondence with Vidich, concerning his own experiences in Palau and his personal attitude toward Japan at the time of his fieldwork.<sup>5</sup>

The following body of this chapter depicts the historical, political and economic circumstances of Palau when Vidich conducted his fieldwork. By

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<sup>5</sup> Vidich provided me with a wealth of information. It should be noted, however, his comments not only contain his memories but also his assessed opinions about his past experiences.

presenting these factors, I question the premise of scientific neutrality and objectivity in any ethnographic endeavor.

## II. World War II and Its Aftermath

World War II ended more than two years prior to Vidich's fieldwork in Palau. The war and the consequential American military occupation, however, were the first massive encounters with Americans for most Palauan people. I believe that drastic Palauan experiences of war and its aftermath had prolonged impacts on their understanding of and sentiments toward the US, and on their later dealings with American personnel. This section contains my historical narrative of the war and its aftermath in Palau and my assessments on how such events could have contributed in shaping Palauan people's conceptions and attitudes toward Americans, prior to Vidich's visit to Palau.

### 1. Palauan Experiences of the War

The American bombardment of Palau began in March 1944. Some five years prior to the first attack, the Palauan people were ordered to engage in heavy labor in response to the demand of the increasing Japanese military presence in their islands for food and labor to build fortifications. The true hardship, however, had to be endured later during the last seventeen months of the war. The war brought intense misery and horror that the people of Palau had never known before. A Palauan Sister, Elene Ebud, told of her war experience in Angaur:

the boom, boom, boom from the ship, the cannons and the machine guns . . . as they shoot from the boats. . . Then the planes shoot also and they drop bombs. There was a lot of smoke and

somebody died. We were very afraid and we just prayed for our Lord to help us.<sup>6</sup>

The supply lines were cut off and the daily bombardment destroyed much of remaining food and vegetable gardens. Everyone had to be evacuated to the woods in Babeldaob from their settlements. As the condition of starvation became rampant, Japanese soldiers began stealing foodstuff from Palauan people and commanded them to bring food to the soldiers under the threat of death. Jonathon Emul, who experienced the war in Aimeliik, said,

Men who were fishing were in the greatest danger because pilots would sweep low over the shoreline seeking out boats. When planes appeared, the men jumped into the water and held themselves underneath by hanging onto rocks, waiting until the planes left. At low tide there was not even the protection of the water.<sup>7</sup>

Alfonso Oiterong from Aimeliik, who worked for the Japanese military during the war, sadly commented,

in those days it became sort of natural to see a child lying there, alive, but unable to move, because it was starving. . . . We would see a mother holding a baby and the baby was breathing, the mother was dead. That kind of thing became common and we couldn't do anything. We ourselves were starving.<sup>8</sup>

One man from Ngaraard stated,

There was sickness, we didn't know how to live, we didn't know how to cook, that kind of living. The woods were there all the time, but we had not learned how to live in those woods. And a lot of

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<sup>6</sup> Karen R. George, "Through a Glass Darkly: Palau's Passage Through War, 1944-1945," *ISLA: A Journal of Micronesian Studies* 3:2 (Dry Season, 1995): 321.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.



people got sick, you know, of exposure to the cold. We built very simple huts in the woods, so the dampness, the rain and all came in. The true danger, I think, was the environmental sanitation -- that was a very crucial factor in our survival at the time. A lot of people got sick.<sup>9</sup>

Another man who was near Aimeliik during the war said,

. . . we almost starved to death. We ate dog, pig, went to places where we thought we could find spoiled coconut. We ate practically everything except snake. Japanese ate snakes. . . . We lived in a dugout, a hole, practically. It was a hole. Covered with leaves. Rain came in. Small, not a house. It was not a house. Dirt. About this size, this deep. If you ask the others [his younger brothers], they wouldn't remember. They were just lying on the mattress. And I was going out to get coconuts, other food, we didn't know. So that was the life, and we were almost starved to death.<sup>10</sup>

According to an American anthropologist, Karen L. Nero, in this extreme condition of war, Palauan people observed that the Japanese fought for food, while the Palauan shared the scarce food not only among themselves but also with starving Japanese civilians. The cruelty and brutality of Japanese servicemen and their inability to fight against the US, rapidly reduced the image of the Japanese from "wise, cultured people" to the ones who were "Like animals fighting over food" and "completely helpless" in the eye of the Palauans.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Karen L. Nero, "Time of Famine, Time of Transformation: Hell in the Pacific, Palau," in The Pacific Theater, 128.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 125, 120 & 130.

## 2. First Encounters with Americans

Following the seizure of Angaur and Peleliu after fierce battles between the US and Japanese soldiers, the long and devastating war came to an end in August 1945.<sup>12</sup> A temporary administrative body was established in Koror by the end of 1945 and named, the US Naval Military Government Unit in Palau. The initial Palauan responses to the coming of the American troops were portrayed by Australian historian, Karen R. Walter, as confusion, combined with fear, uncertainty, relief, curiosity, and joy. The ending of the war was a sudden event, and people did not know what to expect next. Due to the widespread rumor among the Japanese during the war that the Americans would kill all males and rape all women, many Palauan people were fearful at their first encounters with the US military men. Also, since many Palauans did not have contact with Caucasians, the physical differences caused fear but also curiosity. In recounting his first encounter with an American for a medical examination, Father Felix Yaoch stated,

It was an unusual and interesting experience because I'd never seen a very hairy man and for the first time I see this very hairy [man], different, reddish hair with blue eyes, green eyes. So those were the points that attracted me and while he, I don't know whether he was a doctor or a corpsman, was examining me I was busy also, feeling his arm his hair and he was laughing. There was nothing of those threats we heard, nor did I ever remember those threats. I was just fascinated by the difference there was that I saw.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Peattie, *Nan'yō*, 290-297 and 307-310.

<sup>13</sup> Karen R. Walter, "Through the Looking Glass: Palauan Experiences of War and Reconstruction 1944-1951," Ph.D. thesis, University of Adelaide, South Australia, 1993, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, 204-205.

The initial confusion and fear were soon alleviated as Palauan people received seemingly endless supplies of foods from the American troops. It was badly needed relief for the people who suffered from intense hunger and then famine for more than a year. A Palauan man recalled, "these people [US troops] were like angels come from heaven, with these candies, food, everything, produce. . . We looked at them as an easy source of food, of abundance."<sup>14</sup>

Wilhelm Rengiil stated,

When the landing ship came to . . . that side of Babeldaob, then unload all kind of military C rations, that was food, you know, from [one] end to the [other] end and it was given to the people free! . . . And piles and piles and we were made to, hired to be security guards to those rations and everyday people came and hundreds and hundreds of cases were given.<sup>15</sup>

The terrifying images of Americans soon started to be replaced overwhelmingly by the one of "nice" and "generous" people. Tutii Ngirutoi from Ngaraard, who was trained to be a policeman by navy servicemen, stated, "The navy's were [sic] very nice. They gave us uniforms and they gave us guns. They would train us. We felt like real policemen..."<sup>16</sup> Karmelong Mengur who worked for the Americans at the power plant told Walter that he was "shocked" by the American generosity. He stated, his wages were small, but it was "more than enough because what they gave me were so many cartons and cases of cigarettes and big boxes of clothes, all kinds of clothes, even ones I had never

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<sup>14</sup> Nero, "Time of Famine," 133.

<sup>15</sup> Walter, "Looking Glass," 200.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 253.

seen before. They'd put it in a box, put it in front of me and say, 'Take what you want'." <sup>17</sup>

A woman from Angaur was amazed by the American power to transform her island in a short period of time. She told Nero,

. . . And then when we got back to Angaur, it was a completely different island. There were roads, new roads everywhere. And new houses, lined up on both sides of the street. And we were shown which house we should have. It was a completely different island. And there was so much food. <sup>18</sup>

Nero states, "The sharing of food, the physical transformation of Peleliu and Angaur, and the military might that vanquished the Japanese all united to create an image of Americans as all-powerful, magnanimous new benefactors." <sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>18</sup> Nero, "Time of Famine," 131-132.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 132. Some sources contradict this American image presented by Nero. John Useem, then a Lieutenant of the US Navy, reported in 1945,

. . . a medical officer decided that the civilians were too ill to work and that employment might be fatal. To this the Army colonel in command replied, "What difference does it make if they die? Put them to work at once." In another case a Navy captain's declaration that Micronesians were nothing but a "bunch of niggers [sic] like those in the South and should be used as servants" provoked a spirited reaction from his staff, who maintained that not only was his physical anthropology faulty but also the natives [sic] should devote their efforts to rebuilding their own communities . . . Island garrison commanders having limited supplies are harassed by the incessant requests for goods for civilians and annoyed by the way civil affairs officers concern themselves with native customs . . . ("American Pattern," 97)

Tatsuo Saitō, a Japanese journalist who visited Palau in the early 1970's, were told by the people of Peleliu how devastating and sad they felt when they saw their islands, completely changed by the US troops, upon their return to Peleliu from Babeldaob at the end of the war. See, Tatsuo Saitō, *Mikuroneshia*

### 3. Reconstruction of Palau

Palau was one of the Micronesian areas which received heavy bombing. Especially Koror, the former capital of the Japanese mandate, was utterly devastated. Previous to Vidich's fieldwork in Palau in 1948, the reconstruction of infrastructure, housing, and other necessities, directed by the administration, was in progress but meeting many difficulties. A shortage of man power and supplies after the departure of a large number of Marines in early 1946 is identified as the main reason for the difficulty.<sup>20</sup>

The navy administration period after the mass exodus of the Marines is today called the "Navy times"<sup>21</sup> by Palauan people. This was the period which led up to and overlapped the time of the CIMA research. Most "nice and generous" American servicemen left Palau and by March of 1946, there were only 22 American personnel, with extremely limited resources, left in Koror to administer Palau.<sup>22</sup> A monthly military report reveals that many planned construction projects "were delayed by return of experienced personnel to the U.S."<sup>23</sup> The administrators gave orders to the general public of Palau, including

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[Micronesia], (Tokyo : Suzusawa Shoten, 1975), 85-88.

It seems obvious to me that there were dialectic processes that taken place between Nero and her informants as well as between Saitō and his informants.

<sup>20</sup> See, School of Naval Administration, Stanford University, Handbook on the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands: A Handbook for Use in Training and Administration, (Washington: Navy Department, 1948); and Walter, "Looking Glass."

<sup>21</sup> Walter, "Looking Glass," 222.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>23</sup> US Naval Military Government Unit, Palau Islands - Monthly Report of Military Government Activities for May 1946, cited in Walter, "Looking Glass," 251.

the elderly and school children, to reconstruct Palau.<sup>24</sup> Mereb Eruang recalled, "[The Americans] didn't rebuild anything, just the streets, the road - that was the main thing they were working on"<sup>25</sup> Dengelei Saburo stated that the Americans "just came and they bombed out everything, our houses, our *Abai* and...left [it] like that."<sup>26</sup>

Walter states that the Palauan people today, especially when they talk about Koror, compare the post-war situation with the pre-war Koror where a lot of economic activities had taken place. Jonathon Emul stated,

[Koror] was almost a ghost town after the Japanese went back to Japan, because imagine that we had about 40,000 Japanese here in Koror, all of a sudden the town was empty when we came back, ruin after ruin. . .When I was a policeman, nothing to guard, nothing to watch except a few supply compounds by the American soldiers.<sup>27</sup>

Minoru Ueki commented,

Japanese time [sic] there were many Japanese, many activities, many economic activities. Japanese were working for themselves

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<sup>24</sup> Community rehabilitation tasks outside of Koror, Anguar and Peleliu were largely left in the hand of its residence. See, Barnett, Palauan Society, 12. In February and March 1946, nine schools on Babeldaob were constructed by the Palauans. The US military government in Palau paid "350 cartons of cigarettes, 560 pounds of candles and nearly 1700 pounds of soap" to two high chiefs, *Ibedul* and *Reklai*, for the communal work. The navy administration ordered schools to establish gardens to produce food. School children, in Koror, were required to spend an hour a day to reconstruct the landscape around their school. In Walter, "Looking Glass," 249-250.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 246. A rough meaning of *abai* or *bai* is a traditional Palauan meeting house.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 243.

and there were stores all over, while during the navy time it was just empty, nothing!<sup>28</sup>

Homer G. Barnett states that during the early period of American administration, the great aspiration of a large numbers of Palauans to be entrepreneurs, denied under the Japanese, did not materialize.<sup>29</sup> He writes that through their participation in Japanese economic activities, the younger generation of Palauans had learned avenues to gain status in the society by using their skills and knowledge rather than being contented with their social positions which were ascribed to them by their birth. According to Barnett, these younger people were more individualistic and resented the prolonged community rehabilitation projects under the supervision of their elders, which hampered them from taking part in their own economic activities.<sup>30</sup> Vidich reports that , prior to his arrival, 129 Palauans applied for a business permit which cost them between one and ten dollars.

The various types of businesses included blacksmiths, mechanics, florists, tailors, photographers, laundries, general merchandise, brokers, taxis, a tapioka [sic] flour mill, bakeries, barbers, soft drink shops, icecream shops, saw mills, sugar refinery, automotive electrician, restaurants, seamstress, and etc. . . The rush to obtain permits was based on the belief that there would be an American era of prosperity based on economic development and colonization which would surpass the Japanese period.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>29</sup> Barnett, Palauan Society, 13-15.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>31</sup> Vidich, "Political Impact," 290.

The government, aiming at restoring a "self-dependent" economy in a style that existed prior to the foreign contacts in Palau, provided employment in the government sector, but was unsuccessful in supporting private businesses.<sup>32</sup>

An American historian, Francis Hezel, cites a statement by Admiral Louise Denfield, which was address in 1947 when he took a position of high commissioner:

We seek to avoid upsetting the natural and, I might add, superbly happy existence of these natives [sic] by endeavoring to introduce into their lives an overdose of what you and I are pleased to call "civilization." . . . We see no need to interfere unduly with the happy, simple life of these new charges of the American government.<sup>33</sup>

Vidich states, "The Americans, as I note in my work, wanted the Palauans to return to their traditions. . . The policy of pastoral primitiveness -- happy natives - - was a shock to a lot of Palauans, especially in light of America's new military might and the effectiveness with which this military might had crushed Japan in the Pacific."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> In January 1948, 357 out of about 6,000 Palauans were employed by the American administration. See, Vidich, "Political Impact," 270. The navy administration was not completely negligent about fostering employment among the Palauans. In 1947, for example, the TT government established a training center in Guam to train skilled labor and several Palauan individuals were enrolled in the courses. Training of teachers and nurses was also undertaken. See Walter, "Looking Glass," 296-297.

<sup>33</sup> Hezel, Strangers, 262.

<sup>34</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997; also, see Vidich, "Political Impact," Chapter XI: The Social Impact of Colonial Administration: The United States Period: 1945-1948; & XII: The Political Impact of Colonial Administration: The United States Period: 1945-1948.



The local food production, encouraged by the administration, was apparently a success. In 1948, at the time of Vidich's research in Palau, a quarterly report of the Civil Administration, Palau Unit, reveals,

The amount, condition and prospect of the native subsistence crops is adequate. There has been an increased reliance on imported foods . . . but this is only natural and to be expected. It gives their morale a lift to be able to eat imported foods such as rice, flour, canned meats, etc. If the import of these foods were to be cut off tomorrow though, there would be no shortage of foods as there is plenty planted to take care of such an emergency.<sup>35</sup>

The locally produced food was plentiful in Palau and Palauan people no longer depended solely on American supplies for their food. Under these circumstances, I believe that the Palauans were no longer concerned about their immediate survival, but rather looking toward their future.

In his 1946 and 1949 reports, John Useem, who was in Palau as a military officer during the war and later as a researcher for the US Commercial Company, Economic Survey and the CIMA, emphasizes the disillusionment felt by many Palauan people about the lack of economic development under the American administration, particularly due to their previous exposure to the wealth and generosity of the US which led Palauans to anticipate that the economic development, larger than the one they observed during the Japanese administration, would come under the support of the new colonial administration. He urges the administration to take positive action to foster economic development in Palau.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Trust Territory of Pacific Islands, Office of the Civil Administrator, Palau District, "Quarterly Report for the month of April, May and June 1948," 9 July 1948, (A)-page 12.

<sup>36</sup> See Useem, Report on Yap and Palau & Report on Palau.

The slow process of reconstruction and the small amount of economic activities developed by the navy administration dominate the reflective assessments of Palauans about the early American administration. This contrasted sharply with the friendly, generous and wealthy American images given in their descriptions of the initial American military occupation at the end of war.

The overwhelming impression of the US among the Palauans was its military might first. The nature and scale of the US assault on Palau made people keenly aware of what the US could do if it wished. The initial fear of encountering Americans, however, was soon alleviated as the people of Palau received generous supplies of food and as they realized that, unlike what the Japanese had told them, American servicemen were nice and friendly people. The large exposure to the American might and wealth resulted in building an expectation among many Palauan people that the new colonizer would soon develop Palau and bring opportunities for their prosperity.

After the departure of a large number of Marines in early 1946, the relationship between Palauans and Americans changed. The people of Palau came to realize that the reconstruction of Palau was left largely in their hands and the Americans had little intention to develop Palau in the way that they anticipated. Not all but many Palauans, particularly the younger generations, felt disillusionment toward the Americans. At the same time, it was these youth who were most eager to learn the new ways that Americans brought to their islands, in order to establish their future under the new colonial rule.

The above is my assessment of how Palauan perceptions of the Americans, in general, shifted from the time of their first encounters to the time of

CIMA research. The Palauans would have perceived Vidich, as well as other Americans in Palau, as agents from a mighty and wealthy nation that became a new colonial ruler of their islands. An exposure to friendly American servicemen might have fostered a favorable impression of Americans among the people of Palau. I believe, however, that at the time of Vidich's fieldwork, Palauan people were still largely uncertain about American intentions and interests in their islands, and their dealings with American personnel would have been highly cautious.

### III. Early American Administration in Palau

In 1947, the United Nations approved a new type of Trusteeship Agreement mainly designed by the US, and called, "Strategic Trusteeship." It was imposed on the Micronesian islands formerly colonized under the Japanese. In September, the naval government was succeeded by the Civil Administration; however, the navy maintained its governing authority until 1951.<sup>37</sup> Under the "strategic" trusteeship, the US was entitled to establish bases, conduct missile testing, military training, erect fortification and carry out other strategic-related activities in the newly acquired territory. Through the trusteeship agreement, the US secured power to "veto any proposed UN directive on either its administration of the Trust Territory or on the termination of the agreement."<sup>38</sup> Until the early 1960's, the area was administered under the principle of "strategic denial," which prohibited the entrance of foreign nationals to the area and

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<sup>37</sup> SONA, Handbook, 1.

<sup>38</sup> John Anglim, "Palau's Strategic Position Places Palauan Democracy at Risk," Working Paper, no. 40, National Library of Australia, Canberra, May 1988, no page numbers.

required security clearance of all US citizens who wished to visit the Trust Territory. Beginning in 1946, a year prior to the signing of the agreement, the islands of Bikini and Rongerik in the Marshall Islands were used for the repeated atmospheric testing of atomic and hydrogen bombs.<sup>39</sup>

The first part of this section looks at the Palauan social and political contexts at the time immediately before and during Vidich's fieldwork between January and July in 1948. I highlight several factors regarding the field context in Palau, which I believe to have had significant impacts on Vidich's research. The factors include; colonial power relationships; American administrative policies and their effects; the circumstances which *Modekngei* members were in under the American administration which include a portrayal of Palauan local political scenes and power struggles; and American attitudes toward the Palauans and toward the Japanese. I then present my assessment of the circumstantial influence on Vidich's fieldwork.

In the second half of this section, I present my analysis on Vidich's fieldwork in Palau. The situation factors such as the setting and nature of his fieldwork, his position within Palauan society, and his personal attitudes toward the Japanese are examined, to make my assessment. I consider that it is critical to inspect Vidich's attitudes toward the Japanese at the time of his research, since Machiko Aoyagi, a Japanese anthropologist whom I mentioned above, expresses her doubt, if Vidich's own anti-Japanese sentiments were reflected in his interpretation of *Modekngei* as an anti-Japanese political movement, rather than as a Palauan new religion.

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<sup>39</sup> Hezel, *Strangers*, 272-274.

Both parts of this section aim at illustrating global political circumstances in mid- to late 1940's, which had a direct impact on Palauan people's lives and how such circumstances inevitably influenced Vidich's research in Palau. Through this examination, I point to the limits of scientific objectivity and neutrality that one scholar could attain during field research.

## 1. American Administrative Policies and Their Effects

### A. *Modekngei* under the American Administration

A handbook compiled in 1948 for the training of administrative officials for the new territory in Micronesia by the School of Naval Administration (SONA) at Stanford University, provides a detailed report of Trust Territory Government's administrative policies and activities, and the progress and problems in carrying out their objectives. Since the handbook was prepared at the beginning of 1948, it describes colonial activities and their impact on Islands peoples by the end of 1947, a month before Vidich's arrival in Palau. According to the handbook, education<sup>40</sup> and political development were still in a testing stage. The improvement of hygiene is discussed as the most successful area among the welfare of the island population, however, not without difficulties.

The administrators soon found the main source of such difficulties. The handbook states that the islanders were "still in a world of taboos, omens, spells,

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<sup>40</sup> In order to facilitate the communication between the Palauans and the Americans, schools under the American administration placed the English language acquisition to be the first priority. The schools were designed to strengthen local identity, but also to "inculcate respect for and loyalty to the United States by teaching the history, customs and ideals of the United States and its people." See Dorothy Richard, United States Naval Administration of the Pacific Islands, cited in Hezel, Strangers, 259.

charms, and psychological mumbo jumbo," and they trust and relied on the "so-called shaman or spiritual practitioner."<sup>41</sup> March 1947 report by the Palau District Military Government Unit states,

The presence of *Modekngei*, a nativistic religion, is still working against the United States Naval Military Government. This religion practices native medicine and its followers are warned against medical treatment from the Dispensary. It also teaches a revision to pre-foreign customs of the Palau with the accompanying recommendation that all foreigners leave these islands.<sup>42</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the medical practices among the *Modekngei* members, which was one of the most significant aspects of their activities and the main source for leaders to obtain power and money, was banned by a decision made by the court in June 1947.<sup>43</sup> Two months later, in August 5, 1947, the Health Service Policy for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, was issued by High Commissioner, Admiral Louis Denfeld and the policy specifically states,

Sec. 32. *Enforcement; Practice Without a License; Penalty.*-- Criminal prosecution shall be conducted by the Deputy High Commissioner, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Any person who shall practice the healing arts in any of its branches or shall treat human ailments by any system whatsoever or shall practice midwifery without a valid existing license under these regulations so to do shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine or by confinement in jail or by both such fine and imprisonment in the discretion of the court.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> SONA, Handbook, 214.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Navy, Palau District Military Government Unit, "Monthly Report," March 1, 1947, section E, part 4d, unnumbered pages (personal collection of Leonard Mason, Honolulu, Hawaii), cited in Shuster, "Islands of Change," 129.

<sup>43</sup> Shuster, "Islands of Change," 130; also, Vidich, "Political Impact," 299-301.

<sup>44</sup> SONA, Handbook, 291

The case against *Modekngei* healing practices was brought by a navy doctor. The anti-*Modekngei* ruling was made under strong influence of the high chiefs *Ibedul* and *Reklai*, now closely working with the new administration. The US administration took a measure of indirect rule and issued policies not to disturb indigenous "traditional ways and practices" except for matters concerning sanitary and health conditions.<sup>45</sup> The two Palauan high chiefs were immediately identified as the proper place in which traditional authority resided. Despite the American officers' assumption about the rigidity of Palauan "tradition," it had undergone a series of transformations by the time of the American arrival. Yet, by the definition of this policy, restoration of "tradition," the two high chiefs, as well as others from high ranking clans, gained an excellent ground to exercise their power.<sup>46</sup>

The opening of the judicial system<sup>47</sup> was part of the American effort to establish a democracy-oriented indigenous government body, the Palau Congress, which came in effect in July 1947. *Ibedul* and *Reklai* had authority to appoint the court staff, and thus, the high chiefs had great influence on court decisions. Members of the administrative branch in the Palau Congress were dominated by the two high chiefs and their new allies, among them, Joseph Tellei, Takeo Yano, and Charlie Gibbons, all of whom were closely associated

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>46</sup> See Vidich, "Political Impact," Chapter XI.

<sup>47</sup> The Native Court, with supervision of the military government, was originally established in 1946. The jurisdiction of the court as well as Palauan policemen was limited to the Palauan population. Mongami Kelmal, a Palauan policeman at that time, recalls, "it was against the rules to touch any American soldier because they were stronger than the Palauans." In Walter, "Looking Glass," 255.

with the former Japanese administration, hence, a most likely unfriendly, and potentially hostile, force to *Modekngei* followers.

Allegedly, the high chiefs and their new Palauan associates feared the power enjoyed by the *Modekngei* leaders and the ruling against unlicensed medical practice was the result of their power struggle. Although, to American administrators, the indigenous governmental body was meant to be a "purely advisory body" to colonial personnel,<sup>48</sup> the Palau Congress appears to have had considerable authority in local politics, particularly due to its direct connection with the American colonial officials. According to Vidich, the policy of indirect rule, combined with the introduction of a semi-western style judicial system and political structure, resulted in undermining other authorities who traditionally had power to counter-balance the power of chiefs.<sup>49</sup>

#### B. Palauan Reactions to the American Administration

The establishment of Palau Congress was one of the many attempts to introduce American democracy to Palau, made by the American administration. How did Palauans perceive it? Several people talked about their memories concerning their first encounter with western style democracy. The initial response appears to have been confusion. Jonathon Emul, one of the 75 young

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<sup>48</sup> In a letter, dated on 12 May 1947, from the Deputy Commander of the Marianas, Rear Admiral C.H. Wright to a Commanding Officer, Military Government Unit, Palau Islands, in "Political Activities and Development of the Legislature Officials, and Congressmen Duties and Responsibilities in Palau, 1947-1957," Trust Territory Archives, microfilm, V10001, Reel 0106, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i. The Palau Congress was reported to have met once a year.

<sup>49</sup> See, Vidich, "Political Impact," chapter XI and XII.



Palauans who were sent to the Pacific Island Teacher Training School in Guam and Chuuk, recalled,

I had to choose which system is good and I didn't know anything about democracy. With Japanese, you know, you just shut up and listen. To me - at that time when you had to make your own decision and people are listening to you...I was somewhat a bit confused because I got kind of used to somebody making the decision and you are just following it...but I began to like the American system.<sup>50</sup>

Another such youth, Wilhelm Rengiil, commented to Walter,

they were beginning to see the difference and most of us were attracted to the new democratic system where there is no difference between you... during the Japanese [period] there was a big segregation between the Islanders and the Japanese and we were not allowed to mingle even in school.<sup>51</sup>

Vidich thinks, however, the Palauan attitude toward democracy, at the time of his stay, was one of rather passive acceptance. He writes, "Democracy is an American export commodity imposed on whatever governmental traditions might prevail in places where it has authority. . .the Palauans reaction was one of accommodation to the demands that Palau become a democracy."<sup>52</sup> Another view was presented by Obechou Delutauch from Koror. She stated, ". . . in

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<sup>50</sup> Walter, "Looking Glass," 301. The school in Guam (later moved to Chuuk) was designed to train indigenous teachers. It established in March 1947 but closed in August due to the lack of the funding until its re-opening in later times. See, SONA, Handbook, 227, for more information.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 303-304.

<sup>52</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997. He was in Japan during the post-war American occupation period. He states, "The military occupation of Japan was trying to do the same thing there on a larger scale," Ibid.

Palauan ways that [not to control others] means ignorance. If you don't speak to somebody else and you just let somebody do their own thing at their own will, it,s [sic] ignorance."<sup>53</sup> Several Palauans reported to Walter that the democracy and the election system that Americans attempted to bring to Palau were seen as a "negative thing" but "since it was from Americans we had to do it, we felt we had to do it."<sup>54</sup> They valued the Palauan way of title inheritance over the introduced American democratic way. Dengelei Saburo commented,

In Japanese times somebody inherits the title. They inherit it, but in American times you have elections and get somebody who probably doesn't have the heart and the will to do it, even though he probably has the skills and the knowledge.<sup>55</sup>

An quarterly report made by an civil administrator reveals that American personnel did not perceive that the Palauans were enthusiastic in accepting democracy or other American ideas. The report, dated 9 July 1948, notes,

There is little in the Palauan culture that has a counter-part in the American culture; to the average American the idea of equality is strongly inbred; to the Palauan the idea is ridiculous, he has his station in life, he was born in it, and is usually resigned [sic] to it by the time he gets old enough to do anything about changing it.

. . . in matters where there is room for individual variance some degree of acculturation has taken place among the younger people . . . There has been very little change voluntarily in the areas not directly affected by the Americans. The character of acculturation is superficial. The Palau society has remained essentially unchanged.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Walter, "Looking Glass," 222.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>56</sup> TTPI, Palau District, "Quarterly Report," Apr., May & Jun., 1948, (A)-page 21.

Walter reports a marked diversity among the Palauans concerning their acceptance or rejection of newly introduced American ideals. According to her, people in Koror, Angaur and Peleliu who had more contacts with the Americans and American cultures tended to accept the new ways, while the people living in the central and northern Babeldaob more likely stayed with the pre-war style of life. Walter also notes that the younger people in Koror were most willing to acculturate themselves to American ways, partly due to their exposure to the American movies in Koror. The tension between the individualistic youth and the elderly, who valued community oriented life, began to rise during the early times of American administration.<sup>57</sup>

No matter how differently American democracy was perceived by individual Palauans at that time, many Palauan people today believe that "the biggest change that Americans brought was freedom, particularly the freedom to choose."<sup>58</sup>

### C. Relationships Between Palauans and American Personnel

The first page of the officer training handbook by the SONA states; "Though the security factor has been to the fore, the United States in acquiring the islands has also assumed responsibility for the welfare of the approximately 50,000 brown-skinned islanders who live on them."<sup>59</sup> The comment is poignant in revealing the Americans' air of supremacy and their lack of respect toward

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<sup>57</sup> Walter, "Looking Glass," 267, 290-293.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 334.

<sup>59</sup> SONA, Handbook, 1.

Micronesians. Under such a colonial regime, what kind of relationship did Palauans have with American administrators and workers?

Quarterly reports prepared by the Civil Administration, Palau Unit, repeatedly mention "friendly" and "good" relationships supposed to have existed between administrative officers and Palauans in 1947 and 1948. One exception is a report made about an incident which occurred on a ship during an official fieldtrip to the remote southern islands of Palau. It reveals poor accommodation provided to Palauan crew members who were forced to sleep on a deck under constant sea spray, while all American administrators and crew slept in their quarters. During the same trip, an American cook on board was reported to have mistreated a Palauan with verbal and physical abuse.<sup>60</sup>

Nero was told by her Palauan interviewees that the initial image of egalitarian Americans gradually shifted after the departure of the Marines, when "the civilian personnel segregated themselves from the Palauans as their Japanese predecessors had done."<sup>61</sup> Vidich's view of the American and Palauan relationships of the time is far from "friendly." He states,

Palauans were subordinate to the Americans -- both administrators and [CIMA] researchers. After all, the researchers could not re-make themselves as Americans and would inevitably be treated with what I call the attitude of the subordinate in any colonial situation. That is the social-psychology of the underdog (slaves, serfs, and colonized peoples, and cast relations . . . ) who must live by his-her wits be polite and observe an etiquette appropriate to such an unbalanced relationship. As a result of years and years of

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<sup>60</sup> TTPI, Palau District, "Quarterly Report," Apr., May & Jun., 1948, (E)-page 4. Walter, who studied monthly and quarterly military reports, notes that the people in the northern part of Babeldaob had very little contact with American personnel. See, Walter, "Looking Glass," 312.

<sup>61</sup> Nero, "Time of Famine," 134.

training, the Palauan people were masters of this art. Never once were we engaged in an altercation with anyone and, moreover, our needs were almost always anticipated.

He also recalls that not all but at least one administrator in Palau "regarded the Palauans as helplessly inferior."<sup>62</sup> Walter reports that although American servicemen were allowed to have sexual relationships without constraint, higher officials "frowned on [inter-racial] marriage" and strongly advised against to those who wished to marry Palauan women.<sup>63</sup>

Concerning Micronesian attitudes toward the Americans, the handbook of the SONA reports, "Having experienced a succession of alien rulers, most of the islanders inevitably show great passivity, a wait-and-see attitude, in the face of this new set of foreigners who now dominate their affairs."<sup>64</sup> The handbook further describes the difficulty in American dealings with the island populations and says,

[Toward Americans], the islanders tend to have a duality of emotions, appreciating the advantages which come from larger contacts, yet feeling insecurity and possibly hostility when outside domination presses them against their will. . . it became clear that islanders believed that the Japanese were soon coming back, that the United States had no intention of holding the islands for long, and that persons who collaborated with the Americans would be held to account later. This produced something of a covert "fingers-crossed" attitude.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997.

<sup>63</sup> Walter, "Looking Glass," 276-277.

<sup>64</sup> SONA, Handbook, 67-68.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 67.

Despite the reported passivity, Micronesians were not mere docile recipients of the colonial rule. Government officials and researchers observed that Micronesian people, from their experiences of multiple colonial rules, were quite tactful in their dealing with the colonizers and knew ways to take advantages in the period of colonial transitions. In 1947, Useem wrote,

The writer has attended meetings of native chiefs who, assuming that he did not understand their language, devoted considerable time to deciding what they should stress and what play down [sic] in presenting their needs and social structures to the new foreigners.<sup>66</sup>

The SONA handbook states, "They have become sophisticated in maintaining a duality of behavior, with a 'front' of conduct through which their foreign rulers are met and satisfied, but behind which they quietly carry on their own affairs in their own way."<sup>67</sup>

Another significant change that the administration desired to bring to Palau was the elimination of Japanese influences. The conscious attempts to achieve such a goal, first by the American soldiers and later by administrators, are highly visible in several reports and articles. John Useem reported in September 1945, the bulldozing of the remaining buildings and other facilities, including "native houses," were "rationalized on the grounds that 'it's all Jap stuff anyway'."<sup>68</sup> He observed that the general American attitude toward the

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<sup>66</sup> Useem, "Applied Anthropology," 1.

<sup>67</sup> SONA, Handbook, 68.

<sup>68</sup> Useem, "American Pattern," 97.

According to Vidich, such activities by the American troops took place only in Koror. He states,

the rest of Bobledaub [sic] was left untouched and remained as it

Japanese, Okinawan, and other Asian immigrants, and reports, "The term 'gooks' summarized their [American] feelings toward these Orientals."<sup>69</sup>

A sense of rivalry in the American administration toward the Japanese seems to have been apparent. In his August 1946 article, Useem wrote, "Americans wanted to be appreciated and thought of as generous donors of a better life. This yearning found expression in the perennial questions: 'Do they [Micronesians] really like us?' 'Do they think we treat them better than the Japs did?'"<sup>70</sup> Two years later, in 1948, an administrator in Palau wrote in his official report, "It is gratifying to hear them [Palauans] singing American songs now almost as frequently as they do the Japanese and other songs."<sup>71</sup>

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had been when the Japanese were expelled: the Japanese built schoolhouse as well as all other structure in Melekiok [sic] remained as they had been before the conquest. As far as I would see, the Americans did not bulldoze the remaining traces of the Japanese occupation. Such bulldozing as was done, was used to build roads in Koror - but it is true that Koror had been a substantial city under the Japanese administration and most but not all of that was gone. (Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997)

<sup>69</sup> Useem, "American Pattern," 100. For more information concerning American sentiments toward Japanese, see John W. Dower, War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War, (New York : Pantheon Books, 1986).

<sup>70</sup> Useem, "Americans as Governors of Natives in the Pacific," Reprinted from *The Journal of Social Issues*, August, 1946, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> TTPI, Palau District, "Quarterly Report," Apr., May & Jun., 1948, (A)-page 6.

The navy administration indicated their high anxiety toward the contact between imported Japanese workers at phosphate mining in Angaur and Palauan people of Angaur in 1946 and 1947. Walter reports that "The American policy on association between Palauans and Japanese was complete segregation." See, "Looking Glass," 326-328.

Under this circumstance, perhaps, the sadness expressed at the repatriation of the Okinawans and Japanese by groups of Palauans would have been a shock to the navy administrators who believed that they liberated the islands from the evil of Japanese. Hezel writes, "Palauans composed songs lamenting the departure of the Japanese and Okinawans. 'Our relationship with you has ended; we don't know where to go next,' they sang, with more heartfelt emotion and genuine confusion than might be imagined."<sup>72</sup> Augusta Ramarui told Walter that she "was 'very sad' to see the Japanese leave because for a long time, 'they were our protectors. We loved them'."<sup>73</sup> Jonathon Emul stated, "I wanted them to stay in Palau as long as Americans allow them, but they had to leave straight away. It took a very long time before we forget this feeling of friendship."<sup>74</sup>

Needless to say, not all Palauans felt this way, however. Alfonso Oiterong reported to Walter, as soon as Palauans found out the war was over, "some Japanese were beaten up [by Palauans] and some ran away...[These Palauans] beat up the Japanese who were really their enemy because they pushed them to work and they really had a hard time with them."<sup>75</sup> A woman from Ngermid said, "We Palauans didn't know anything [during the war], weren't

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<sup>72</sup> Hezel, *Strangers*, 250. The full version of this song is found in Nero, "Time of Famine," 133-134.

<sup>73</sup> Walter, "Looking Glass," 208.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.



told anything and we minded our own business and yet many Palauans died because of the war. It was the fault of the Japanese."<sup>76</sup>

The change in colonial languages apparently caused the Americans difficulty in facilitating a smooth communication with Micronesian people. The SONA handbook states, due to the language barrier, "intimate American contact have tended to be with the very small group of more educated islanders."<sup>77</sup> Palau is specifically noted as an area with only five English speaking persons. Walter's account reveals that most Palauans communicated with Americans in sign language. Two different opinions from Palauan people about the relationship between the Americans and Palauans are presented by Walter.

[there was] an equality between them [Palauans and Americans] unlike during the Japanese time where there were Palauans, and there were Japanese. There was a wall in between them. Wherever Americans go we would all go with them. . . We didn't know the language or anything, but we would just tag along. (a man from Ngermid)

maybe the Palauans and the Japanese were one people, because even after all the things that went on during the Japanese times, I and the Japanese people were closer, in the way that we were able to speak to each other. . . With the Americans its [sic] different - they're Americans - I felt much closer to the Japanese people because I could communicate with them. (Baiei Babul)<sup>78</sup>

A description in the SONA handbook might summarize the Palauan sentiment toward the Japanese at that time. On one hand, they gave an impression to American personnel that "The most favorable Japanese impress

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>77</sup> SONA, Handbook, 67-68.

<sup>78</sup> Walter, "Looking Glass," 258.

[sic] seems to have been in the Palaus," while at the same time, their experiences of the war and its consequences brought "the subsequent widespread feeling of being glad to get rid of the Japanese."<sup>79</sup> I infer that many Palauan people then might have had ambivalent feelings toward the Japanese and they differed greatly depending on their experiences during and immediately after the Japanese colonial administration in Palau.

## 2. An Analysis of Vidich's Fieldwork in Palau

### A. Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology

In responding to the acute demand for knowledge of the former Japanese mandate islands in Micronesia, on December 8, 1941, the first assembly of anthropologists was called at Yale University by George Peter Murdock.<sup>80</sup> They were assigned to gather reliable information about the area as a part of the war effort. The project was the beginning of a series of government, more specifically, navy sponsored scientific studies concerning the area. With a broad goal to collect "ethnographic data [that] would be of value for the administration of dependent peoples," a systematic anthropological endeavor, the Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology, was inaugurated in 1947.<sup>81</sup> Two

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<sup>79</sup> SONA, Handbook, 67.

<sup>80</sup> Murdock was a prominent anthropologist who was the head of a cross-cultural survey project at Yale University. During the war, Murdock became "a Commander in the U.S. Navy, and he supervised the production of military handbooks for the postwar naval administration of Japanese Micronesia." See, Robert C. Kiste and Suzanne Falgout, "Anthropology & Micronesia: The Context," chapter 2, in American Anthropology in Micronesia: An Assessment, ed. by Robert C. Kiste & Mac Marshall (in press, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, n.d.), 12.

<sup>81</sup> Prior to the CIMA project, The US Commercial Company, Economic Survey was conducted from May to August 1946 to assess the post-war economic

main funding agencies were the Office of Naval Research and the Viking Fund.<sup>82</sup> Between 1947 and 1949, Palau received eight CIMA researchers, among them, a graduate student from the University of Wisconsin, Arthur J. Vidich.<sup>83</sup>

#### B. Vidich's Sentiments Toward Japanese

As mentioned earlier, Aoyagi points out that the time of CIMA research was an era when all Japanese were perceived as criminals of the war and the anti-Japanese mood was dominant among Americans in the US and in Micronesia. She speculates that Vidich was not an exception. Aoyagi writes, "Under this then current atmosphere, it is possible that the Palauans provided types of information which emphasized anti-Japanese aspects of *Modekngei*, or he [Vidich] could have been selective in emphasizing these [anti-Japanese] aspects of *Modekngei* from various information given to him, when he produced his text." Vidich's attitude toward the Japanese at the time of his research in Palau, thus requires an examination.

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conditions in the Micronesian area which came under the American administration. More than twenty members, mostly trained anthropologists, conducted not only the economic survey but also ethnographic studies which were the first most extensive field research conducted by American researchers in this area. The project was sponsored by the navy and the collected data was "valued by administrators because of their immediate practical use." (See, Kiste and Falgout, "Anthropology & Micronesia," 19-20)

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 21; also H. G. Barnett, Anthropology in Administration, (Evanston & White Plains : Row, Peterson and Company, 1956), 88-90.

<sup>83</sup> Appendix 1A, in Kiste & Marshall (ed.), American Anthropology in Micronesia, 4. Among the eight anthropologists who went to Palau as CIMA researchers, three later worked for the Trust Territory government as TTPI Staff Anthropologists and TTPI District Anthropologists. See, Appendix 1C, *ibid.*

Since I knew that Vidich fought in Guam and Saipan against the Japanese during World War II, I suspected his strong anti-Japanese orientation at the time of CIMA research. In his response to my question concerning this issue, however, Vidich offered me an alternative view by stating,

. . . I participated in the U.S. occupation of Japan where, because of my earlier training as an economist, I became a procurement officer for the second battalion of the second division of the U.S. Marine Corps which was stationed in Kyushu. In that capacity, I landed at Nagasaki on August 18th and the sight of the destruction of that city left a permanent scar on my psyche (the nuclearization of the 20th Century is not only an obsession with me, but my exposure to radiation at that time has had its effects on me). I spent a year on Kyushu moving from city to city including Sasebo, Fukuoka [Fukuoka], Miakonojo [Miyakonojō], Miazochi [Miyazaki], Oita and Bepu [Beppu], during which travels I had many dealings with Japanese administrators who were my counter parts. . . my interest in Anthropology was stimulated by these war time experience (especially that I seeing the destruction of the bomb which knocked out of me any patriotism still left in me at the end of the war. I revisited Nagasaki in 1978. . .) . . . My experience in Japan during the occupation led me to empathize with the Japanese.<sup>84</sup>

The above statement suggests, unlike Aoyagi's speculations, Vidich did not have either strong anti-Japanese or pro-American sentiments at the time of his research in Palau. If this is the case, Vidich's interpretation of *Modekngei* as an anti-Japanese movement is not the reflection of his anti-Japanese stance.

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<sup>84</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997. After the war, Vidich has published at least two articles explicit in his alarming concern about the unprecedented power, enjoyed by a secular government, by its possession of nuclear weapons and its power to manipulate general public through controlling information for its war propaganda. See Vidich, "Atomic Bombs and American Democracy," 1995, *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 8 (3): 499-506. See also, id., "Hiroshima's Legacy: The Theodicy of Man-Made Hazards," 1980, *Anthropology Research Center Newsletter*, 4 (3): 3.

Or, at least, Aoyagi's suspicion that Vidich intentionally selected evidence that emphasizes *Modekngei*'s anti-Japanese nature, proves to be at fault. I will further discuss this issue in the later part of this chapter.

### C. The Setting

Vidich entered Palau in late January 1948 and stayed mostly in Melekeok and Koror until his departure, six months later in July 1948. He conducted his CIMA research as a member of a research team, headed by John Useem. The team was composed of five CIMA researchers: Francis Mahoney, Robert Rizenhalter, John Useem, Harry Uyehara, and Arthur Vidich.<sup>85</sup> Vidich states, "This team much stayed together throughout the period of our stay in Palau -- none of us could ever afford to be too far away from Harry [due to their reliance on Harry Uyehara as an interpreter]."<sup>86</sup>

These five researchers, after spending a few weeks in Koror, moved to Melekeok where they spent the most time during their research in Palau. They conducted their interviews together in a house they rented in Melekeok. Vidich states, "as I recall we stayed there [Melekeok] a good part of the time living in a simple house rented to us by its owner (it was located, conveniently next door to the school house in Melekeok where we conducted all of our interviews around a

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<sup>85</sup> Other three CIMA researchers in Palau, Homer G. Barnett, Allen Murphy (these two formed another team and studied in Ulimang Village in Ngaraard) and Arthur Capell, conducted their research separately from Useem's team. (Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997)

<sup>86</sup> Harry Uyehara was a CIMA researcher. Due to his fluency in English and Japanese, he sacrificed his own research and functioned as a crucial interpreter for the other CIMA researchers in the team. Uyehara was an Okinawan from a US territory, Hawai'i.

table)."<sup>87</sup> After several months of their stay in Melekeok, the team moved to Koror, where they visited houses of Palauan individuals for the interviews. According to Vidich, his team interviewed a variety of people from all over Palau and "Many of my [his] informants were sophisticated intellectuals who made it an occupation to understand their own society and the intricacies of the politics."<sup>88</sup>

In order to learn the then current situations in Palau and administrative policies directed to Island peoples, the CIMA researchers also interviewed navy administrative officers, who were in Koror. In his CIMA report, Vidich states,

Commander C.M. Hardison, Governor of Palau, place at our disposal the facilities under his command and unstintingly satisfied our many needs upon request. Warm and special thanks are extended to Lt. Newal Cummings for pulling the group through many tight-spots. Most gratifying of all was the openness and forthrightness with which all Naval officials willingly discussed Trust Territory problems with the author. In all cases information was freely extended to the participants in the project.<sup>89</sup>

Vidich also remembers that throughout his stay in Palau, all necessary supplies, including food, were readily purchasable at a military Post Exchange, "supplied by the American Armed Services which have always understood the importance of providing comforts for its employee."<sup>90</sup> Although Vidich today does not

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<sup>87</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Vidich, Political Factionalism, i.

<sup>90</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997. In this letter, Vidich informed me that the member of his research team enjoyed alcoholic beverages after work. At the time of CIMA research, alcohol drinking among Palauan individuals were "discouraged" and "controlled" by the Administraion in Palau. It was the privilege for American personnel.

believe that there was a close association that existed between the CIMA researchers and American administrators, who were stationed at Palau,<sup>91</sup> I

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<sup>91</sup> As one of my questions to Vidich, I asked,

I understand that the CIMA project was designed to provide information about indigenous populations in order to bring more effective administration to the new territory in Micronesia. In your account (1949), you state that "all Naval officials willingly discussed Trust Territory problems with the author." How did they perceive Modekngai? How much influence and authority did the administrators have over your research? What was the main motivation for you to join the project? (Kazumi Nishihara, personal correspondence, 13 March 1997)

In his response, Vidich stated,

I am not sure if the CIMA project was designed to make the administration of the Palauans more effective. Certainly we gave no information to local administrators while we were there and no administrator asked for a briefing from me (or us). When we first arrived in Koror and again when we were in residence there during the latter part of our stay, I interviewed several naval officials regarding their administrations of Palau and the policies that were supposed to guide them. I never talked with any of these administrators about Modekngai. The administrators had no influence over our research. . . . John Useem was one of my professors and had received a CIMA grant from Peter Murdock (Yale) and asked me to join his group. I accepted Useem's invitation without having too much of an idea of what it would mean -- I simply innocently saw it as a good opportunity. After that I learned fast where [sic] we were briefed by Felix Keesing at Stanford and Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa?) in Hawaii. I also learned that the entire CIMA project was basically Murdock's enterprise and that for him it was part of his effort to complete his world-wide study of what he called cultures. (Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997)

However, it seems fair to assume that the CIMA research results were used by the administration of the TTPI, regardless of Vidich's intention. An annual report prepared by the TTPI government to the UN states,

The Navy-sponsored program of anthropological research

suspect that at least to the Palauan people's eyes, the close affiliation between the two parties was unquestionable. *Modekngei* members, whose movement was not well received by the US administration, must have been very cautious in their dealings with the CIMA researchers.

#### D. Difficulties in *Modekngei* Research

I have discussed that the American administration banned *Modekngei* healing practices under the law and that the two high chiefs, *Ibedul* of Koror and *Reklai* of Melekeok, used their newly acquired power, through their direct tie to the colonial officials, to undermine the power of *Modekngei* in the Palauan political scene. As also indicated in the previous chapter, *Modekngei* was under harsh suppression by the former Japanese administration for nearly thirty years. I believe that *Modekngei* followers developed sophisticated skills to baffle colonial intrusions during the thirty years, and that they were well equipped with strategies in dealing with the Americans, a new threat to their existence, by the time of CIMA research.

A few of such tactics employed by *Modekngei* members will be discussed first. One *Modekngei* member who was interviewed by Barnett later told William

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"Coordinated Investigations in Micronesian Anthropology", (CIMA) was brought to a close in fiscal year 1949, when the last of the CIMA investigators concluded his field study. Meanwhile, the first results, in the form of final reports of various of the investigators, have received. Most of these received contain a wealth of information useful to the administrator. (The United States Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Report of the Administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands for the Period July 1, 1948 to June 30, 1949, 80)



V. Vitarelli<sup>92</sup> that "he made up source of the info." concerning *Modekngei*.<sup>93</sup> To Vidich, *Modekngei* members seem to have applied a tactic of disguise. They did not reveal their true identity as *Modekngei*. Vidich stayed in Melekeok for several months and had opportunities "to meet with and interview a wide variety of Palauans, not only those from Melekeok, but from other parts as well."<sup>94</sup> However, Vidich does not recall that he interviewed *Modekngei* members.<sup>95</sup> I believe that it is unlikely that Vidich did not interview any *Modekngei* members, since a large number of Palau's people were affiliated with the movement. It

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<sup>92</sup> William V. Vitarelli, an American educator, moved to Palau in 1951 and lived there until the late 1970's. He was closely associated with *Modekngei* people for years and helped them build their own school, the Belau Modekngei School. The school, which emphasizes instructing students to take pride in their Palauan identity and ways of life, opened in 1974. Vitarelli was the first Principal of the school.

<sup>93</sup> The person's name is identified as Targora, by Vitarelli. (Personal correspondence, 17 March 1997)

<sup>94</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997.

<sup>95</sup> Vidich's fieldwork was conducted fifty years ago and he donated his field notes to the Belau National Museum. Thus, he did not have written information at hand to refer to, when responding to my questions about his fieldwork. However, the field notes of Harry Uyehara, discussed below, indicates that their team conducted an interview with the *Modekngei* leader, Rnguul, on May 15, 1948. I sent a copy of Uyehara's field notes to Vidich and he responded to me as following:

I read Harry's notes about the interview with Arnquul [Rnguul] which surely proves that I was there at that occasion. Since I turned over all my field notes to the Palau museum, I now have no way of checking up on my memory. If and when you get to Palau, you might wish to look for this interview which would have the name of the respondent on the top of page one. (Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997)

seems more reasonable to think that the *Modekngei* members avoided revealing themselves as *Modekngei* to the American, Vidich.

The same tactic of disguise appears to have been used by *Modekngei* members from the earlier period of American administration. Useem, who conducted a census in 1946 in Palau, as a researcher of the US Commercial Company, reported that the total number of *Modekngei* in Palau then was 922, which was a sharp decline from an estimated number of 3,500 out of about 6,000 Palauan people in 1940.<sup>96</sup> Useem describes the conditions under which the census was taken as follows: "Through the cooperation of Military Government and native chiefs, natives [sic] were ordered to remain in their village at the scheduled time of the inquiry."<sup>97</sup> I doubt, under this condition, if all *Modekngei* members revealed their true identity. For example, the number of *Modekngei* followers in Ngaraard, the center of *Modekngei* activities, is counted as 24, while 325 people are placed under the category of "none (no religious belief)." In my opinion, the former Japanese suppression of *Modekngei* and American disapproval of *Modekngei's* healing practices, prompted *Modekngei* followers to disguise their identities to the new colonizers.

Barnett, who also experienced difficulty conducting *Modekngei* research, assumed it was due to the suppressive measures taken toward *Modekngei* by both the American administration and the high chiefs. He stated,

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<sup>96</sup> The estimate of 3,500 is based on a statement made by a congressman, Nobufusa Miyoshi, at the Japan Diet in 1941, discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>97</sup> Useem, Report on Yap, Palau, and Lesser Islands of the Western Carolines, (Honolulu : The U.S. Commercial Company, Economic Survey, 1946c), Appendix, 275.

The combined effect of these attacks has been to drive the cult underground. As a result, it is extremely difficult for an American to learn anything about it. The subject is never talked about freely, and if inquiries are made the natives [sic] are on their guard. Very few of them will admit knowing of its existence even after long familiarity with them.<sup>98</sup>

The high chiefs' court ruling against *Modekngei*'s healing practices, discussed above, apparently was only a part of their attack on *Modekngei*. Allegedly, some Palauan chiefs who were sympathetic to *Modekngei* were "officially removed from their positions" on the grounds of "neglect of duty," and the Palau Government, headed by *Ibedul* and *Reklai*, "gained the administration's support for their removal."<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, the two high chiefs "sent him [Rnguul, the leader of *Modekngei*] a notice saying that bigamy is forbidden [by the law under the American administration] at the penalty of 5 years of jail or \$500.00 fine."<sup>100</sup> Polygamy was sign of affluence in pre-Christian Palau. Rnguul's consequent divorce from one of his wives in June 1948 "symbolized the close of an era" marked by the *Modekngei* dominance in Palau.<sup>101</sup> Apparently, *Modekngei* was

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<sup>98</sup> Barnett, *Palauan Society*, 215.

<sup>99</sup> The Palau Government was a temporary establishment of indigenous government body which was later reformed and renamed as the Palau Congress. Vidich "Political Impact," 317.

<sup>100</sup> Harry Uyehara, a journal entry, 15 May 1948, in "General Correspondence on Palau Local Religion '*Modekngei*,'" 1959, Trust Territory Archives, microfilm, V10001, Reel 0556. There are eight brief entries, specifically concerning *Modekngei*, excerpted from Uyehara's journal, available in the Trust Territory Archives. There is no mentioning of a term, anti-foreign or anti-Japanese in his journal entries. *Modekngei*'s healing practices and chanting of *keseke*s (*Modekngei* hymn/chant) are mentioned.

<sup>101</sup> Vidich, "Political Impact," 318.

the most oppressed and dissatisfied group of people in Palau during the time the CIMA research was conducted. Under such circumstances, *Modekngei* members would have been most cautious and tactful in their dealings with American researchers, and studying *Modekngei* must have been difficult at best.

Perhaps, the followers' unwillingness to speak about the movement was enhanced by local meanings associated with the places where Vidich and his team conducted their interviews. Vidich's CIMA research in Palau was conducted in Koror and Melekeok, which are the home districts of the two high chiefs.<sup>102</sup> Vidich recalls "having turtle soup at a banquet given for the research team in Memeliok [sic]." He further states that "Turtles were scarce and a taboo food for commoners" at that time.<sup>103</sup> This event clearly indicates that Vidich and his team members in Melekeok were treated as "important guests" of Melekeok. People who were called in for the interviews from other districts were probably keenly aware that they were in the land of *Reklai* and being interviewed by the guests of *Reklai*.<sup>104</sup> Knowing of *Reklai*'s antipathy toward *Modekngei*, many

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<sup>102</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, people of Koror and Melekeok seem to have been perceived by *Modekngei* generally as anti-*Modekngei* in their orientation even before the coming of the Americans in Palau. See Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 211.

<sup>103</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997.

<sup>104</sup> In his discussion about *Modekngei*, Barnett states,

*Reklai*, has forbidden the Palauans to practice their native religious beliefs . . . He has several times told groups of Palauans that they must abandon their old religion. Perhaps he has intended to direct his censure only to their curing practices and to other forms of magic. The Palauans nonetheless believe that his pronouncements have been directed against everything that they call religious. (Barnett, *Palauan Society*, 215)

Palauans, who were *Modekngei* members or who were sympathetic to the movement, would have been extremely cautious of what they said, if they revealed anything, about *Modekngei* to the CIMA researchers.

Furthermore, Vidich identifies Joseph Tellei, mentioned above, the chief instigator of *Modekngei* arrests who worked as a constable under the Japanese administration, as "a crucial go-between into Palauan society, someone upon whom we depended very heavily."<sup>105</sup> In addition to that "Tellei was surely not fond of *Modekngei* [sic],"<sup>106</sup> he had considerable power within the newly emerged local court and the Palau Government in general. Being able to speak English, Tellei as well as other "elites" from the former Japanese administration period, had unquestionable political power at the time of the CIMA research.<sup>107</sup> This factor must have had further discouraged *Modekngei* members to give information to the CIMA researchers.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> See, Vidich, "Political Impact," Chapter XI.

<sup>108</sup> As noted above, Joseph Tellei was the one of two former Palauan constables, worked under the Japanese administration, who told Aoyagi that *Modekngei* was not an anti-Japanese movement. If he told Vidich the same or not is unknown (Tellei's comments in Vidich's field note needs to be inspected).

Joseph Tellei was not the only Palauan intermediary for Vidich's team, however. Another Palauan man, name Meltel, in Koror is identified in Vidich's CIMA report, as their main contact. No further information about Meltel is available. Yano Takeo of Melekeok, who was educated in Japan prior to the war, was in a close contact with Vidich. Vidich informed me that another man name Ruluked as his key informer. Ruluked of Melekeok was chosen by the former German administration as a replacement for *Reklai* for their convenience. According to Vidich, Ruluked also worked as a constable for the German administration.

In addition, the SONA handbook indicates that the Micronesian interpreters took advantage of the administrators' inability in understanding the local language, particularly for the benefit of their clans or families. It is indicated that it was particularly problematic when the interpreter was also "a native administrative official, or one who is [was] interested in a mercantile activity."<sup>109</sup> Vidich and other CIMA researchers did not understand the Palauan language except a few words at the time of their research and had to completely rely on the interpreter, Harry Uyehara. Vidich states that "Harry conducted all interviews in Japanese and if a Palauan did not know Japanese, another Palauan who did know it was used as a second interpreter. In sum, there was plenty of room for inaccuracy and mistakes."<sup>110</sup> Under this condition, the Palauan people, if they

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<sup>109</sup> SONA, Handbook, 48.

<sup>110</sup> He adds, "but Harry was punctilious in his efforts to achieve exactitude." (Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997)

I should note similar problems associated with my thesis. The thesis contains information presented by scholars and journalists from several nations, including Japan. I did my best to faithfully convey the meanings and wordings in translating Japanese materials. Many of these translated materials include comments from Palauan people. I have no means to discern if the original comments were made in English, Japanese or Palauan. In their conversations with Japanese journalists, Palauan people probably used either English or Japanese. If not, whether they depended on Palauan interpreters or not is unknown. Aoyagi, a Japanese scholar, conducted interviews mostly in Japanese but she understands and speaks Palauan to a certain degree. Also it is possible that she had a Palauan interpreter or interpreters, especially at the beginning of her research. Since she is fluent in English, I am not sure if her interpreter(s) used English or Japanese.

Thus, Palauan people's comments, gathered by a Japanese scholar and journalists, are sometimes translated twice before my translations are made.

A somewhat similar condition is observable about the Palauan people's comments gathered by American and Australian researchers. Vidich and other CIMA researchers' use of translators and associated problems are discussed. Karen Walter indicated that she employed Palauan translators, but which of her Palauan informers spoke to her in Palauan or English are not specified, thus impossible to assess.

desired, could have manipulated quite easily the types of information that were available to the CIMA researchers, for whatever the benefit it would have brought to them.

It is most likely that Tellei helped the CIMA researchers as an interpreter, as well as a mediator between the Americans and the Palauans, which situated him in a position of advantage from where he could easily cast his influence on types of data given to the researchers. Vidich states,

I remember Joseph Tellei very well . . . Tellei was a practical politician who elected to deal with Palau's conquerors in full recognition of their superior power, but with the understanding that given to conqueror's dependence on native intermediaries for the administration of a society which the conquerors didn't understand, there was plenty of room left open to influence how the conquest would be administered. Under the Americans Tellei played the unsung role of the practical politician.<sup>111</sup>

Was it possible for Tellei to use his position in an attempt to eliminate the power of *Modekngei* within Palauan political scenes, by informing the Americans, including CIMA researchers, that *Modekngei* was an anti-foreign political movement and would continue to be so? As a persecutor of *Modekngei*, was Tellei more familiar with or interested in the political nature of *Modekngei* than in its religious significance to its followers? Considering the difficulty the CIMA researchers faced in their gathering of substantial data about *Modekngei*, I can

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Thus, I can not determine the degree of accuracy concerning Palauan people's comments presented by American, Australian and Japanese writers. In my opinion, any translated material, including ones with my translation does not carry the exact nuances and/or meanings that are expressed in an original language.

<sup>111</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997.

only speculate that Tellei's, as well as other pro-western Palauan elites', opinions had a marked influence on the researchers' understanding of *Modekngei*.

Finally, the factor, Vidich's conducting group interviews with other members of CIMA researchers, needs to be examined. This fact seems to suggest that Palauan interviewees did not talk to Vidich, per se, but to the "Americans" who interviewed them. I have no means to discern how other CIMA researchers perceived the Japanese at the time; if other members indicated anti-Japanese sentiments to the Palauan people, however, the types of information given to the researches by Palauans could have reflected such sentiments, regardless of Vidich's own feelings toward the Japanese. Considering Palauans' previous wide exposure to American soldiers and the close association of Palauan elites with navy administrators for over two years, even if the CIMA researchers did not have anti-Japanese sentiments, I suspect that Vidich could not escape from the powerful stereotype about the Americans as generally anti-Japanese in their orientation. Hence, Aoyagi's suspicion might be relevant; the general American sentiment, at the time, toward the Japanese could have influenced types of information concerning *Modekngei* that Palauan people provided to the CIMA researchers.

#### IV. A Summary and Notes

Vidich's research was conducted under circumstances in which the unequal power relationships between the Americans and the Palauans were highly visible. The American rule in Palau began with their display of overwhelming military might and wealth. Being utterly devastated by the war, the US material support was vital to the Palauans' immediate survival. They had no choice but to accept the imposed US administration, which possessed political



and physical power to determine their fates. By the time of the CIMA research, however, the Palauans were no longer dependent on the US supply of food and looking forward to their future; having experienced successive colonial rule, and thus, possessing knowledge of what colonialism would entail, people of Palau utilized tact and caution in their dealings with the new colonizers in order for them to best survive within the given situation.

The prevailing anti-Japanese sentiment among American servicemen, colonial officials and researchers would have been sensed easily by the people of Palau. It is highly possible that the Palauan people, in order to better survive under the imposed circumstances, would have provided the information that they thought the Americans wanted to hear. This, accompanied by Palauans' then recent experiences of abuses inflicted on them by the Japanese, could have resulted in their emphasizing anti-Japanese images of *Modekngei* to the American researchers.

Vidich himself appears to have not had anti-Japanese sentiments at the time of his research, which could have been reflected in his interpretation of *Modekngei*. However, Vidich conducted interviews as a team with other CIMA researchers and, as briefly mentioned above, his representation of *Modekngei* was based mostly on the information given to other CIMA researchers from Palauan informants. Thus, it can be surmised that the prevalent anti-Japanese feelings among the Americans at that time would have had influence on what Palauan people told the CIMA researchers, including Vidich.

American intervention in Palauan local politics led to a concentration of power, monopolized by a small group of elites which included traditional high chiefs, *Ibedul* of Koror and *Reklai* of Melekeok, and a handful youths who played the role of intermediary between the chiefs and the American administrators.

Backed by the American support, these elites attacked *Modekngei* leaders, who were seen as threat to their consolidation of power. This and the suppressive measures taken by the Americans on *Modekngei*'s curing practices placed *Modekngei* in adverse circumstances. The followers disguised their identity as a *Modekngei* and kept their mouths shut. Under these conditions, Vidich as well as other researchers experienced great difficulty conducting their *Modekngei* research.

Information reveals that Micronesian people possessed a considerable degree of power in manipulating the new colonizers who were unfamiliar with colonial situations, in rather implicit ways. In Palau, the young elites apparently cast powerful influence on Vidich's *Modekngei* research. Due to their ability to communicate in English and their familiarity with Palauan society, these non-*Modekngei* elites most frequently associated themselves with the CIMA researchers and were consulted by the researchers. It is my opinion that the elites could have provided an aggressively anti-foreign image of *Modekngei* to the researchers in their attempt to further undermine the political power, formerly enjoyed by *Modekngei* leaders.

The political circumstances in Palau, both at the global and local levels, apparently had a profound influence on Vidich's fieldwork. Vidich's nationality and the timing of his research had varying but certain meanings to different groups of Palauans; to *Modekngei* members, Vidich was a potential threat to their existence, on the other hand, for the new Palauan elites who were directly aligned with the US administration, Vidich could have been seen as a potential aid to further their political power within Palau. For other Palauans, it must have been wise not to offend the new colonizers and sustain peace in the given situation. I believe that circumstantial elements, either historical, political or

economic, have determining effects on a foreign ethnographer's research in the field. The myth of scientific objectivity and neutrality melts down and disappears when confronted with the disclosure of secrets, carefully kept from the contents of books.

Chapter 3  
Fieldwork: A Theater of Power, Politics and Emotion  
Machiko Aoyagi: 1973-1984

I. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined the historical, political and economic circumstances in Palau at the time of Vidich's research and assessed their impacts on his investigation of *Modekngei*. This chapter is a similar attempt at discerning Aoyagi's fieldwork in Palau. Her research on *Modekngei* stretched over twelve years from 1973 to 1984. During the twelve years, Aoyagi made seven visits to Palau to conduct her field research. Again, perceiving her nationality and the timing of her research as key factors influencing types of data that were made available by Palauan people to Aoyagi, I analyze how historical, political and economic conditions in Palau might have affected Aoyagi's research on *Modekngei*.

The circumstances of Palau, during the historical period of Aoyagi's visits, can be best characterized by a comment made by a Palauan educator, Bernice Keldermans, in 1983: "Japan is moving in with its businesses and the United States is moving in with its militarism and we are sandwiched in between."<sup>1</sup> Palau was in a negotiation process for their future political status with the United States, who maintained unwavering strategic interests in Palau. The Japanese government and businesses, on the other hand, began expanding their economic interests into Micronesia, including Palau. On many political and economic issues, Palauan people were divided into factions, and complex political maneuvers, which preoccupied both Palauans and foreigners, took place.

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<sup>1</sup> *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 5 May 1983.

My analysis focuses mainly on several events which directly involved Japanese participation in Palauan economic and political scenes during the given period. Keeping in mind that one crucial obstacle for Palauan people in their negotiation with the US was Palau's inadequate economic development, I also present scenes of Palau's political struggle for their independence and make my assessment of its potential influence on Aoyagi's research. In addition, the Japanese historical intrusion in Palau as a colonizing force is also briefly examined since I believe that the impacts of this history on Aoyagi's *Modekngel* research is enormous.

As repeatedly noted above, Aoyagi points to the dialectic process which might have taken place during Vidich's fieldwork; she argues that Americans' then prevalent anti-Japanese sentiment influenced types of data given to the CIMA researchers from their Palauan informants. I believe that Aoyagi herself could not escape from taking part in the dialectic process when she conducted her interviews. From her writings, it is apparent to me that Aoyagi does not perceive that the Japanese colonial intrusion in Palau was detrimental. Rather, she seems to believe that many Palauan people had genial experiences during the Japanese administration period. Assuming the dialectic process is almost inevitable, I examine the relationship between Aoyagi's rather lenient perception toward Japanese colonialism and types of information Palauan people provided to Aoyagi.

Learning how past and recent Japanese involvement in Palau helped to shape and reshape Palauan people's attitudes and opinions about the Japanese is critical in my inquiry. I am certain that when Aoyagi interviewed Palauan people, they saw her as a Japanese, especially because her research topic concerned their past experiences with the Japanese. How Palauan people dealt

with Aoyagi at her interviews, I believe, was influenced by how they evaluated Japan more than how they perceived her as a person. Palauan people's views toward the then current colonial country, the United States, have also contributed in shaping their opinions toward the Japanese, since the two recent colonial rules appear to have been often compared and contrasted in the minds of the Palauans.

Concerning the availability of Palauan people's own voices, many recorded interviews, which provide Palauan views toward the Japanese and the Americans, are readily accessible. The best sources available are local Palauan newspapers, *Tia Belau* and *Didil a Chais*, since these newspapers were written by and directed to the people of Palau.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, these two newspapers do not contain much about their views toward the Japanese. They, however, are an excellent place to learn local politics and Palauan views toward the American stewardship in Palau and in Micronesia. Many scholarly articles and books, documentary video-recordings, newspapers, and magazines supply me with ample comments from the Palauans regarding their evaluations of the past

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<sup>2</sup> *Didil a Chais* was the local bilingual (Palauan and English) newspaper, funded by the Trust Territory government. Because *Didil a Chaise* voiced criticisms toward the American administration in Micronesia, the TT government did not tolerate its continuation. *Tia Belau* was edited by a Palauan leader, Moses Uludong, who at that time was a strong supporter of the independent and united Micronesia. Although his political stand is inevitably reflected in the newspaper, and thus, it does not represent opinions of the entire Palauan population, it at least presents one influential Palauan perspective. Also, many Palauan subscribers expressed their own opinions in the section, letters to the editor, in each issue. About 1,000 copies of *Tia Belau* were issued during its publication. The number of registered Palauan voters ranged between 7 to 9,000 during the time of Aoyagi's fieldwork.

Japanese involvement in Palau as well as more recent Japanese penetration in Palau's business and political arenas.<sup>3</sup>

There is one major disadvantage in making assessments on historical, political and economic factors on Aoyagi's research. As compared to Vidich who, through his correspondence, provided me with detailed information concerning his fieldwork, Aoyagi appeared to be less enthusiastic in responding to my inquiries; she did not answer several critical questions I asked and her information was less specific and detailed.<sup>4</sup> This was perhaps due to her

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<sup>3</sup> The problems associated in employing this information presented by outside researchers and journalists are discussed in the previous chapter and in the introduction.

<sup>4</sup> As a response to my inquiry about potential impacts of the political and economic circumstances in Palau on Aoyagi's research, in relationship to American stewardship, she simply stated that "If you ask whether the Japanese economic prosperity had relevance to the Palauan people's acceptance of me, that I do not know." (My translation, Aoyagi, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997)

In another question, I asked Aoyagi,

. . . At that time [of your research], Japanese businesses and government were proposing the construction of the Port Pacific and nuclear dumping in the ocean off the Marianas. How did Palauan people react to these proposals? In response to Micronesian petitions concerning the war damage claims, in 1969, as a form of an agreement made between Japan and the US, the Japanese government dealt with it by offering the \$5 million worth Japanese materials and services [to Micronesia] (amended in 1975). Did you have occasion to know how Palauan people felt about this implementation? How much impact do you think these Palau-Japan relationships have had on your fieldwork (particularly, concerning the Port Pacific proposal, I was informed that *Modekngei* people were opposing the proposal)? (My translation, Nishihara, personal correspondence, 13 March 1997)

Except indicating her skepticism about the *Modekngei's* opposition to the Port Pacific project, Aoyagi did not comment on any other issues. Her opinion on the Port Pacific project is discussed later in this chapter.

fieldwork in Palau consisted of several visits and lasted more than a decade and it was too much of a task for Aoyagi to assist me with detailed information. Because of the scarcity of Aoyagi's personal information, my assessment on Aoyagi's fieldwork tends to be more speculative in nature.

This chapter attempts to discern reasons why all Palauan people, both *Modekngei* and non-*Modekngei*, told Aoyagi that *Modekngei* was not an anti-Japanese movement. Aoyagi herself perceives that it is likely that *Modekngei*, during the later times of its development, acquired anti-Japanese characteristics, though it was fundamentally a religion.<sup>5</sup> Why then, did all of her informants tell Aoyagi the contrary? In my view, Palau's historical, political and economic circumstances at the time of Aoyagi's research, and her nationality as a Japanese, had a great influence on the types of information that Palauan people provided to her. The following chapter closely examines these issues and challenges the notion of scientific neutrality and objective truth in ethnographic endeavor.

## II. War Damage Claims

Four years before the Aoyagi's first entry to Palau, the governments of Japan and the United States made an announcement to the people of Micronesia regarding compensation for their loss and damages caused by World War II. People of Micronesia, especially the people of Saipan and Palau

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<sup>5</sup> Aoyagi, "*Fiirudowāku ni Tsuite* [Fieldworkers and Informants]," 1992, *Shien*, 53 (1): 88; id., "*Modekugei*," in *Taiheiyo Gakkai* (ed.), [*Encyclopedia of the Pacific Islands*], 548. In her monograph, Aoyagi presents this view, which *Modekngei* acquired anti-Japanese characteristics later in the Japanese administration period, only in a form of question. Some of her articles are more explicit in stating this point.



districts, who intensely suffered from the war, were discontent with the decision made by Japan and the US and have continued their pursuit to acquire what they consider to be just compensation. During the time of Aoyagi's research, the war damage claim was still an unsettling issue which concerned many Palauan people. This section briefly depicts the manner in which the Japanese government handled this issue, Palauan reactions to the settlement, and my analysis on a potential influence of this event on Aoyagi's research in Palau.

As discussed in the previous chapter, World War II brought extreme misery to all Palauan individuals. Today, World War II is described as the "War of Japan and America" in Palauan terms.<sup>6</sup> Alfonso Kebekol, who was twenty years old at the time of the war, stated, "[We were] attacked because there were Japanese military bases [on Palau]."<sup>7</sup> Otoich F. Besebes from Ngaraard wrote to a local newspaper, *Didil a Chais*, "we should not welcome any military activities in our country, because their mere presence will impair our

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<sup>6</sup> Nero, "Time of Famine," 117.

<sup>7</sup> My translation, Hitoshi Sakurai, *Mikronesia Ripōto: Hikaku Sengen no Shimajima Kara* [Micronesia Report: From the Islands of the Nuclear-Free Declaration]. (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1981), 186.

The following text contains numerous citations from the above monograph. Hitoshi Sakurai is a journalist working for the *Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai* (NHK), the national broadcasting network. He originally entered Micronesia during the 1970's to produce a documentary about Japanese women's experiences of war. During his stay in Micronesia, however, he realized that island people's voices had not been represented by the Japanese media as well as Japanese historians. The monograph is aimed at portraying a recent history of Micronesia, with an emphasis on Palau's constitutional struggle, from the perspectives of Micronesian people. Many comments of Micronesian people are directly quoted in his texts.

psychological peace and we do not want to be a battle ground [sic] for other nations, again."<sup>8</sup>

After waiting more than twenty years for the first compilement of the War Damage Claims, in 1969, it was announced that the Micronesian people were to receive \$10 million *ex gratia* contributions from Japan and the US. Both governments expressed that they had no legal responsibility to provide such contributions, and declared that the issue was "fully and finally settled." The government of Japan offered \$5 million for the purchase of Japanese commodities and services and, in return, acquired the rights for Japanese fishing vessels to have access to ports in Palau and Chuuk.<sup>9</sup> In its press release, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized that "Japan accepted a 'voluntary' payment to Micronesia, and that it was a 'practical' solution of the problem."<sup>10</sup>

The agreement was reached between the governments of Japan and the US without the participation of or proper consultation with a single Micronesian person. This occurred despite the fact that this agreement was arranged as a result of the pressure from the United Nations due to the repeated requests and petitions made by the people of Micronesia. The high-handed manner with which the Japanese government handled this issue was criticized by a Japanese

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<sup>8</sup> *Didil a Chais*, 13 October 1969, Koror, Palau.

<sup>9</sup> *Gaimu-shō* [the Ministry of Foreign Affairs], *Waga Gaikō no Kinkyō* [Present Status of Our Deplomacy], (Tokyo: Gaimu-shō, 1970), 411-412.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Fluker, et al., "Interim Report. The United States and Japan in the Western Pacific: Micronesia and Papua New Guinea," University of Kansas, 1978, available in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, 291.

journalist who likened the outcome to the "practice of throwing a piece of bone to a dog."<sup>11</sup>

At hearings before the US Congress concerning the war damage claims of Micronesian people toward Japan and the US in 1970, Francisco Morei, vice chairman of the special committee of the Palau Legislature for war damage claims settlement, talked about Palauan experiences of the war and its aftermath.

During the 17 months of intensive assault by bombing, shelling and final landing by the US military forces, our suffering was intense. Children and the aged and the infirm would cry for food or suffer in silence--and eventually die of starvation. The Japanese soldiers prohibited us under threat of instant death, from eating our own food. All food was for the Japanese soldiers. . . . Many of our people were executed when they were caught by the Japanese when they were taking food from their own gardens or for not turning in all the fish that they had risked their lives to catch. . . . The people of Palau suffered so much more than it is possible for me to describe. The Japanese soldiers at the latter stages of the war turned into animals and did many bad things to the people of Palau in their desperate attempts to survive. . . .

After the end of the fighting in 1945, our people moved back to Koror Island, and most of the houses were still good or usable. But a US military commander destroyed our houses by burning them down--all of them. We asked the military people to let us have the materials to build our houses elsewhere, but they said that American building materials were coming to us from Guam. But they never came.<sup>12</sup>

He voiced his anger to the Congress by stating, "ex gratia [sic] payment to our minds means a 'gift' or 'handout.' . . . We are asking for payment for our losses

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 292.

<sup>12</sup> Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Micronesian Claims: Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements, 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 16, 23 June and 16 September 1970, 47-49.

from those responsible. No true Palauan has ever accepted any charity in lieu of a valid right." He added that the minimum total amount claimed by the people of Palau, including the loss of human lives and other materials, and permanent damage to the land, was nearly \$51 million.<sup>13</sup>

A Japanese journalist, Tatsuo Saitō, who visited Micronesia between 1972 and 1975, was questioned by a Palauan individual,

I heard that Japan proposed to pay some \$ 5 million to us. What kind of measure did they use to estimate the amount? Isn't it odd that the decisions were made only between Japan and the US? Why don't they send investigators to ask us our opinions?

During the war, the Japanese military took our families and friends and made them cooperate in Japanese war effort. Many of them never came back. . . Although we had nothing to do with the war, the Japanese took them away. Why doesn't the Japanese government acknowledge the fact and express an appropriate apology to us?<sup>14</sup>

A former member of *Parao Teishintai*, a team of Palauan men who served the Japanese military in Papua New Guinea (then New Guinea), Toshiwo Kiyota told another Japanese journalist, Hitoshi Sakurai, "we took the responsibility of performing our duties, but the Japanese government has not taken its responsibility. I am very sorry about it. I feel ashamed being a partially Japanese. . . . If, at least, they could provide us the daily wages for the work we did for three years, we would be contented."<sup>15</sup> Other members of *Parao Teishintai* told Sakurai there were nine confirmed deaths and four missing among the forty-two members sent to New Guinea; the bodies of the deceased were left

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<sup>13</sup> Congress, Micronesian Claims, 48-49.

<sup>14</sup> My translation, Saitō, [Micronesia], 75.

<sup>15</sup> My translation, Sakurai, [Micronesia Report], 58.

at the old battle-ground. *Teishintai* members never received any compensation, even after the 1969 agreement, because the compensation was directed specifically to the loss and damages occurred within Micronesia.<sup>16</sup>

Beginning in 1968 and throughout the 1970's, a great number of Japanese mission groups visited Micronesia, collecting skulls and bones of Japanese war victims and conducting religious rituals to appease souls of the deceased.<sup>17</sup> An eighty-five-year old Palauan lady told Saitō, "Every year, bone collecting missions come to visit here from Japan. I too wish to go to collect my son's bones, if I had money. I do know where he died in New Guinea. . ."<sup>18</sup> In the island of Peleliu, where one of the fiercest World War II battles was fought, a Palauan man commented,

We receive groups of Japanese bone collectors every year. It is all right. If people die here, they are our brothers. We give our cooperation to collect our brothers' remains. But, to tell you the truth, we have unsettling feelings. People from Japan seem that they do not know anything about the fact that our own people died because of the war and we, who live here today, also had to hide around from air raids. As soon as they [the Japanese] collect the bones of their deceased, they tell us that their job is all done.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>17</sup> The mission was sent mainly from a group, called the Japanese Association of Bereaved Families, which was supported by the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare. For more information, see Peattie, *Nan'yō*, 314-315.

<sup>18</sup> My translation, Saitō, [*Micronesia*], 76. The lady's name is identified, but the spelling of her name in English is not given by Saitō. It sounds like Ngkengale Amandeyon or Kengail Amandeon.

<sup>19</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 84.

Saitō also learned that the total destruction of Peleliu's land caused by the war has been the source of continuous hardship to the people of Peleliu.

A Palauan, Francisco Uludong, expressed his criticism to Saitō regarding the "insensitive Japanese who erect 'war memorial stones, exclusively for the Japanese victims' all over Micronesia."<sup>20</sup> Sakurai, who visited Palau in the late 1970's reports, "Almost all [Palauan] people I met expressed strong resentment about the settlement of war damage claims. In sum, the most frequently heard complaint was that the amount they received was about one third of what they have claimed."<sup>21</sup> The Japanese government has never expressed an apology for the suffering inflicted on the Micronesian people, and has adamantly rejected repeated appeals from Micronesian delegates for further compensation to this day.

All of Aoyagi's field research in Palau in the 1970's was conducted during the summer, when the presence of the Japanese missions was the highest. This, in addition to Aoyagi's research topic which concerned the Palauan past during the Japanese colonial administration, must have been a conspicuous reminder of Palauan people's bitter memories during the war. I suspect, like the two Japanese journalists, that Aoyagi had an opportunity to learn Palauan people's discontent with the Japanese government's way of settling the war damage claims.

Peleliu especially, was not only the place where many Japanese bone collecting missions went, but also where Aoyagi conducted her research

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<sup>20</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 86-87.

<sup>21</sup> My translation, Sakurai, [*Microneisa Report*], 76.

extensively, due to the availability of information concerning *Modekngei*. I believe that many people in Peleliu remembered the misery of war that was intensified by the cruelty of the Japanese servicemen, and they resented the way the Japanese government handled the war damage claims. Although Aoyagi was privileged to be under the care of Toyomi, a mother of *Obak*, the highest ranking *rubak* [chief] in Peleliu, it would not be surprising if many people who were interviewed by Aoyagi had reservations about fully cooperating with her research and tactfully dealt with her.

### III. The Negotiations for the Future Political Status Between Palau and the United States

The negotiation for the future political status with the US was a most significant event to the people of Palau, which lasted throughout the period that Aoyagi conducted her *Modekngei* research and beyond. All of Palau was involved in the process to terminate the trusteeship and the people were divided into competing political factions. No one can speak about the modern history of Palau without this event. In this section, I present my narrative about a tense political climate in Palau, leading up to the time period that was immediately before Aoyagi's first fieldwork in the summer of 1973.

Palau, with other Micronesian Trust Territory states under the US administration, began negotiating their future political status in the late 1960's. Micronesia was the crucial strategic area for the US for their mission to win the "Cold War." Having the foresight to withdraw from the Asian military bases, the US was determined to retain its strategic rights in the Micronesian territory.

Thus, despite the then current international mood of decolonization, the US was a reluctant decolonizer at best.

Lacking sound economic development, infrastructure and natural resources, Micronesian people were in a disadvantaged position in their future political status negotiation. It was not difficult to predict that, without US subsidy, the standard of living that had steadily increased during the 1960's in Micronesia, would take a reverse course.<sup>22</sup> Micronesian leaders realized that the only means to achieve self-governing power and secure continuous financial support from the US, was to put their strategic positions, their land and ocean on the bargaining table.

Two years after the establishment of the Future Political Status Commission in the Congress of Micronesia, the long and turbulent negotiations concerning the future status of Micronesia was formally initiated in 1969. At the first negotiation talks, the Commission expressed their wish to become a freely associated state with the United States based on four underlining principles,<sup>23</sup> or

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<sup>22</sup> The Solomon Report, prepared under the Kennedy administration in 1963, clearly indicates the US intention to make Micronesia dependent on the US by providing a large subsidy so that the US would be able to retain the valuable strategic area in Micronesia as a US territory. A group of Micronesian students first disclosed the contents of the report to the public in 1971. For further information, see United Nations General Assembly, Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People, Petition from Mr. F.T. Uludong, Chairman, Micronesian Independence Advocates - Hawaii, Concerning the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, 1971, A/AC.109/Pet.1192.

<sup>23</sup> Four principles are lined out as following:

1. That sovereignty in Micronesia resides in the people of Micronesia and their duly constituted government.
2. That the people of Micronesia possess the right of self-determination and may, therefore, choose independence or self-government in free association with any nation or organization of



to achieve full independence. The US, determined to maintain its military prerogatives with minimum constraints, offered a commonwealth option the next year during the second round of status talks.

The US proposal led to the emergence of the Independence Coalition in the Congress of Micronesia, having an influential Palauan senator, Roman Tmetuchl, among its members; the proposal fostered a widespread sense of Micronesian nationalism throughout the region. One exception was the Northern Marianas district whose people indicated their desire to establish closer political ties to the US and later acquired commonwealth status in 1976.<sup>24</sup>

At the opening of the third round status talks in 1970, a Palauan senator and the chairman of the Joint Committee on Future Status, Lazarus E. Salii stated,

We have come here to talk about independence. For that, we feel, is the real subject of these negotiations. . . We wish to be free -- to govern ourselves, to deal with the rest of the world on our own terms, to make our own mistakes. . . We are willing to discuss arrangements wherein that independence has minor limitations placed upon it -- limitations as contained in the Free Association

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nations.

3. That the people of Micronesia have the right to adopt their own constitution and to amend, change or revoke any constitution or governmental plan at any time; and

4. That free association should be in the form of a revocable compact, terminable unilaterally by either party.

"Micronesian Future Political Status Talks, Hana, Maui, 1971," a reprint of minutes of the talks and other papers, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, page 2 in the section, "The meeting of the U.A. Micronesian Status Talks convened at 10:18 a.m., Monday, October 4, 1971."

<sup>24</sup> Hezel, Strangers, 337.

proposal. We are not interested in discussing more limiting arrangements.<sup>25</sup>

The head of the US negotiation team, Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, recognized the option of the compact, but carefully avoided the phrase, Free Association, the internationally recognized new political status that was first negotiated between the Cook Islands and Aotearoa/New Zealand.<sup>26</sup> Under the compact, Micronesia would assume authority over internal affairs as far as was consistent with the US obligation to provide defense and foreign affairs. During the life of the compact, the US would provide financial support; the termination of the compact would be by the consent of both parties.

In addition, the ambassador put forth, for the first time, a general outline indicating the land areas that would be under the "United States military requirements" of the "compact." Along with the Marianas and the Marshalls, four land areas in Palau were designated as such, and a separate payment on the use of the land was proposed.<sup>27</sup> The 1972 draft compact, which was accepted by delegates of the Joint Committee on Future Status in April 1972, further

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<sup>25</sup> "Hana, Maui," pp 1-4 in the section, "The meeting of the U.A. Micronesian Status Talks convened at 10:18 a.m., Monday, October 4, 1971."

<sup>26</sup> "New Zealand received nothing from the arrangement but recognized (1) national sovereignty, (2) the right to self-determination, (3) an autonomous constitution for the Cook Islands, and (4) unilateral termination of free association." Robert Aldridge and Ched Myers, Resisting the Serpent: Palau's Struggle for Self-Determination, (Baltimore: Fortkamp Publishing Company, 1990), 45. Under the Compact of Free Association, Cook Islanders have a right to become citizens of New Zealand; New Zealand provides financial support; and New Zealand assumes the responsibility for foreign affairs and defense upon request made by the Cook Islands government.

<sup>27</sup> "Hana, Maui," pp 2-3 in the section, "Chapter I: A. Summary of the United States Position."

specified the potential base areas in Palau as twenty-eight percent of the total land in Palau.

The Congress of Micronesia at the special session held in Pohnpei during the summer of 1972, however, voted the draft compact. The Palauan local newspaper, *Tia Belau*, reported the speech delivered by a Spokesman for the Micronesian Independence Coalition, Hans Williander from Chuuk. Williander stated:

Viewing Americans as a benefactor of Micronesia seems to be one popular illusion shared by numerous people, including Americans themselves. The now huge amount of money through grant funds and federal programs being poured into Micronesia . . . are offered as examples of this role of benefactor. I choose to take a different view, however, for I see the intent of the funds, the plans, programs, and people as being part of the U.S. role as Manipulator -- not benefactor. Whatever good the U.S. has done out here in Micronesia has either been at the urging of the U.N. at our request and complaint or because it dovetailed with American interest -- military interests -- in Micronesia. If anyone still finds this doubtful, then I ask them to read the Solomon Mission Report which is much more explicit than my speech. When this report was made public in the Young Micronesian, denials were issued which tried to create the illusion that the report was never implemented. But if one studies that report's recommendations and compares them with the record, it is obvious that the recommendations of the report were, indeed, implemented and those who say otherwise are either liars or fools. . . In the name of national interest and security, the United States has . . . destroyed and razed our islands, contaminated our lagoons, and made ill our people by testing radioactive bombs, . . . carrying civilized mans [sic] most savage weapons -- to destroy, destroy, destroy -- all of us. . . We in Micronesia have a greater sense of belonging to our land and to our customs than the people of America. America, after all, is barely 200 years old. Yet perhaps some Micronesians have forgotten or have not been taught that our cultures are thousands of years old and that our lands and its importance is an inseparable part of our customs, traditions, lore, and our very way of life. . . I much prefer the reality of Micronesia to the illusionary America, that is something that

cannot be taken away. It is a security and comfort to my mortality, it is a birthright I will pass on to my sons and daughters.<sup>28</sup>

The paper also informed readers about the position of Palauan delegates on this issue. The Palau delegation, led by high chief *Reklai*, acting *Ibedul* (Takeo Yano), vice speaker of the Palau Legislature Sadang Silmai, and Mayor of Koror Municipality Fritz Rubasch rejected the draft compact. The article reveals that at the session, Silmai reminded the Joint Committee that the "Palau Legislature, through resolutions in October of 1969 and April of 1972, have expressed its stand that 'no military facilitates of any kind, or troops of any government, be stationed in the Palau District'." He also indicated his concern over "the U.S. plan to store nuclear material or weapons on any of those 2,000 acre [sic]" of land that was a partial requirement proposed by the US.<sup>29</sup>

One of the independence advocates, Francisco T. Uludong, analyzed the draft compact and stated,

Because internal sovereignty is not an isolated thing, the fact that the United States is given "full responsibility for and authority over" both the foreign affairs and defense of Micronesia is in itself a limitation on the internal sovereignty of Micronesia. . . . As far as defense is concerned, the proposed partial compact grants the United States unlimited power, right and freedom to use Micronesia for its military purposes. This is an intolerable position.<sup>30</sup>

In August of the same year, *Modekngei* leaders came to agree that "Palau should be independent." Droteo Espangel told *Tia Belau* on behalf of *Modekngei*, the decision was reached by group representatives during their trip

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<sup>28</sup> *Tia Belau*, 11 September 1972, Koror Palau.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Tia Belau*, 2 October 1972.

to Guam and Saipan. Another major decision, to build a *Modekngei* school which would emphasize Palauan culture and self-sufficiency in its teaching, was also made during the trip. A leader told other *Modekngei* members that "it was now time to tell the politicians that we want independence." The article notes that *Modekngei* "claims over a third of Palau's population in membership."<sup>31</sup>

In such a political climate with a heightened aspiration for self-determination, on November 20, 1972, fifty traditional chiefs, municipal magistrates and members of the Palau Legislature issued a joint declaration in their response to expressed US militaristic interests over Palauan land and sea:

Joint declaration of the united leadership of the people of Palau against the use of land in Palau by the United States Military.

Whereas, the people of Palau were subjected to untold suffering and misery during World War II as a result of the fact that Palauan land was used by an alien military power; and

Whereas, the people of Palau have no desire to have military installations and personnel on Palauan land in the future, because this could result in suffering human beings within or without Palau; and

Whereas, the people of Palau see the right to control their land as the basis of freedom, justice and equality both present and in the future; . . .<sup>32</sup>

High Commissioner Edward Johnston quickly responded to the declaration and sent Ambassador Williams into Palau in the following month for further negotiation. His meetings with Palauan leaders were held in the Palau Legislature Building, where more than a hundred people protested in favor of the

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<sup>31</sup> *Tia Belau*, 1 August 1972.

<sup>32</sup> *Tia Belau*, 14 December 1972.

Joint Declaration by carrying placards, stating, "Colonialism Must End Now," "Self-Government Now," or "We Do Not Want US Military On Our Land."<sup>33</sup>

I above provided my narrative on the Palauan political circumstances, leading to Aoyagi's first entry in Palau. During the first years of the future political status negotiation with the US, sentiments against colonialism and militarism began heightening among the Palauans. Especially after the exposure of the Solomon Report to the public, many Micronesian leaders and youths lost their faith in the US, which, previously, was generally seen as a benevolent provider and protector of Micronesian peoples. The US stewardship in Micronesia, especially the areas of economic development, came to be the target of scrutiny and criticism, since it was the main factor hampering Micronesians from achieving desired conditions for their future political status. In Palau, where considerable numbers of people still remember the economic development which was fostered by the Japanese colonial administration, people began re-evaluating the US and Japanese administrations in Palau.

#### IV. Aoyagi's First Encounters with the People of Palau and Their Influence on Her Research Motive

The above described circumstances perhaps give one explanation to how Aoyagi was received by many Palauan people when she first visited there. In the introduction of her monograph, *Modekugei* [*Modekngei*], Aoyagi presents two

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<sup>33</sup> *Tia Belau*, 31 December 1972. During the negotiation with Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, "the Palau Legislature toned down its position [indicated in the Joint Declaration] and informed the United States that it might negotiate if the US were to return all the public lands in Palau now controlled by the US through the Trust Territory Government." (*Tia Belau*, October 1974)

comments made by Palauan people to her, apparently in the Japanese language. One told Aoyagi, "The Japanese times were good. Indeed. The town of Koror was prosperous. The shops were there one next to each other, so we could walk without an umbrella. Our feet didn't get dirty because of the long paved roads. Now, not much is here."<sup>34</sup> The other Palauan commented, "We know the Japanese language well. We are used to the Japanese way, too. All Palauan people like the Japanese but we don't like Americans. We, all Palauans, want the Japanese to come back here."<sup>35</sup>

These might have been the extreme examples of Palauan people's greetings and Aoyagi indicates her uncertainty whether such comments were made out of Palauan people's courtesy or of their true feelings. Nevertheless, it appears to be the case that Aoyagi and her co-researchers<sup>36</sup> were generally

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<sup>34</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 1.

<sup>35</sup> My translation, *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Out of Aoyagi's seven visits to Palau, at least two field researchs were conducted as a part of Japanese anthropological research projects.

The earlier project, Cultural Anthropological Research on the Folk Culture in the Western Caroline Islands of Micronesia, was funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education. Project team, *Mikronesia Kenkyū inkai* [the Micronesia Study Committee], was composed of six anthropologists, including Aoyagi. The committee members conducted research between July and November, 1977, in Palau and Yap. Subjects of the study varied depending on each researcher's interest and covering linguistics, archaeology and cultural anthropology (social organization, function of political and community organizations, religion, and others).

The second project, Studies on the Ethno-History of Micronesian Folk Culture, was sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Education. The objective of this project was defined as "to develop a comprehensive view of regional divergencies [sic] in Micronesian folk culture by comparing and integrating research data collected [sic] by individual researchers," in *Cultural Uniformity and Diversity in Micronesia*, Iwao Ushijima and Ken-ich Sudō ed., Senri Ethnological Studies, no. 21, (Osaka : National Museum of Ethnology, 1987), first page of Editors' Preface. Researchers were sent to various islands in Micronesia

welcomed warmly and sometimes highly enthusiastically by Palauan people whom they encountered during their research. As her research progressed, Aoyagi realized not all Palauan people welcomed her. However, I believe that it is important to remember that the strongest impression that Aoyagi received from Palauan people was their warm welcome, because of her nationality.

Through her personal correspondence, Aoyagi informed me that she believes that many Palauan people had close and amiable relationship with the Japanese, particularly with Japanese laborers who were economically deprived and were working hard to make their daily living. Aoyagi also stressed, in her letter, that many Palauan people were highly nostalgic about the Japanese administration period.<sup>37</sup> It is apparent to me that Aoyagi believes that the Japanese colonization of Palau was well received by many Palauans, at least until the coming of Japanese military troops. I infer that the nature of Aoyagi's initial encounter with the people of Palau produced two interrelated and essential outcomes.

Firstly, it functioned to instigate her *Modekngei* research. According to Aoyagi, during her first research in Palau and Yap, she accidentally came upon an article about *Modekngei*. The author of the article utilized Vidich's study of *Modekngei*, and thus, *Modekngei* was described as an anti-Japanese political movement.<sup>38</sup> Because of the way Palauan people warmly received Aoyagi and

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between 1982 and 1984 to conduct their individual research. The research group was composed of "one scholar of prehistory, two linguists, two ecologists, seven social anthropologists and four ethnologists." See, *ibid.* Topics of their studies vary greatly.

<sup>37</sup> Aoyagi, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997.

<sup>38</sup> The article is "*Modekngei: the Palauan Religion*," 1972, *Micronesian Reporter*, 20 (1): 9-10.



her co-researchers, the article greatly surprised her. On that day, Aoyagi decided to engage herself in *Modekngei* research.<sup>39</sup> In other words, Aoyagi's skepticism toward Vidich's study, which stemmed from the way she initially encountered Palauan people, motivated Aoyagi to start her research on *Modekngei*.

Secondly, the dialectic process between an interviewer and interviewee needs to be considered. I believe that Aoyagi's positive evaluation toward the Japanese colonial intrusion in Palau, which was influenced by the way Aoyagi was greeted by many Palauan people, had some effect on types of information that Aoyagi received from her Palauan informants. As I discussed in the introduction of this thesis, it often is not difficult for one to sense what a researcher likes to hear and often out of courtesy, people tend to avoid making comments which might offend the researcher. Assuming Aoyagi perceives that the Japanese administration in Palau was not detrimental, it is likely that Palauan people would have abstained from providing negative opinions about the past deeds of Japanese. This, in return, could have encouraged Aoyagi to believe that *Modekngei* was not an anti-Japanese movement. This issue is further examined later in this chapter.

## V. The Superport

The most significant Japanese involvement in Palau during the time of Aoyagi's *Modekngei* research was the superport project, the construction of an enormous oil transshipment port and facilities. Although the project was aborted

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<sup>39</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 1-2.

at the level of conceptualization, the scale of the project and the prospected economic benefit, entangled with Palau's internal political struggle, provoked considerable commotion in Palau. I present my narrative of the event first and at the end of the narrative, I make an assessment of its potential impacts on Palauan people's views toward the Japanese and on Aoyagi's research.

In early 1974, the concept of "Superport" or the "Port Pacific" project was developed, by a group led by a large Japanese company, Nisshō Iwai Co. Ltd., and the Industrial Bank of Japan, with the strong support of the Japanese government in conjunction with the Iranian National Oil Company. The project was designed to build the world's largest oil transshipment port/storage and industry complex in Palau. The May 1975 report defines the project as including:

The construction of a major petroleum transshipment port, with all its facilities and equipment, to permit an annual throughput of 50 million tons of various petroleum crudes, without undue environmental risks. It should include sufficient storage capacity to permit flexible loading and unloading schedules.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Panero Associates, Inc. "Port Pacific at Palau: Development of an International Petroleum Transshipment Port/Storage Center and Energy-Industry Complex at Palau in the Western Pacific, 1 May 1979," in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port," 401. Robert Panero Associates, Inc. produced at least six proposals/reports and a feasibility report. They are: 1) "The Mitre/Washington Operation Report (October 1974); 2) "Port Pacific: A Conceptual Development Program for a Large Ecologically Advance Petroleum Storage and Transfer Port Refinery" (October 1974); 3) "Interim Report: Port Pacific at Palau, Conceptual Study" (April 1975); 4) "Port Pacific Palau: Development of an International Petroleum Transshipment Port/Storage Center" (May 1975); and 5) "A Proposal for the Development of an International Transshipment and Petroleum Storage Port: The District of Palau, Western Caroline Islands, Trust Territory of the Pacific" (June 1975). Although obtained by the Palauans, the October 1974 Report was not for public release but made exclusively for the US government by Robert Panero Associates, Inc. Each proposal/report differs slightly. The prefeasibility report is titled, 6) "Site Screening Prefeasibility Study for a

An initial cost of \$300 million was estimated. The Mitre Report, the confidential original plan, indicated the necessity of some 10 to 12 thousand alien workers, including family members, to operate the port complex.<sup>41</sup> The population of Palau at the time was about 14,000. Robert Panero, an American consultant,<sup>42</sup> was commissioned by the above Japanese companies.

The estimated annual income from the project was \$50 million with \$4 million operation costs per year. The most sophisticated technology for the high-speed shipping was to be employed, with a " 'zero leak' environmentally advanced approach."<sup>43</sup> The May 1975 report indicated future expansion of the project to include construction of oil refinery plants, petrochemical production plants, ship building plants, power plants, and the extension of transshipment facilities capable of storing 50 million tons of oils. Intensive improvement of the infrastructure, the construction of new city for the expansion of the population, joint ventures for the shipping industry, the development of a "sea park" for nature conservation, the facilitation of tourism, and the establishment of a marine

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Petroleum Transshipment Terminal in the District of Palau" (August 1976). Detailed analyses of first two reports by Palauan people are available in *Tia Belau*, 13 January 1976, and a paper written by Salvadora Katosang in "A Case of 'Modernization'," presented at Idaho State University, Pocatello, Idaho, 7 April 1976, available in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i.

<sup>41</sup> Katosang, "Modernization," 8 and *Tia Belau*, 13 January 1976. I do not have access to the Mitre Report.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Panero is portrayed as "a mysterious, globe-trotting promoter with a potentially sinister background," in the *Los Angeles Times*, 1 February 1977. The article also reveals that Panero dreamed of grandiose schemes for years but never been successful and accumulated "debts all over Europe and the Near East." See, Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 701.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Panero and Associates Inc., "Interim Report, April 1975," in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, 3.

biology institute were also planned. Technical and capital investments were guaranteed.<sup>44</sup>

The Japanese lobbyists, composed of members of Nisshō Iwai Co. Ltd., and the Industrial Bank of Japan, accompanied by Panero approached two Palauan leaders, Senator Lazarus E. Salii and a businessman Ngiratkel Etpison in September 1974. Salii and Etpison agreed to "take up the idea of the port with Palauan leaders on the very broad and general approach of encouraging the pursuit of studies with respect to the development of an oil transfer facility in Palau."<sup>45</sup> In October, the two men succeeded in gaining support for the concept from twenty-three Palauan leaders including high chiefs *Ibedul* and *Reklai*,<sup>46</sup> and were able, thus, to facilitate a feasibility study.<sup>47</sup> Panero kept in close contact with Salii and Etpison. In his letter, Salii stated, "[the superport concept] fire [sic] my enthusiams and imagination ... from the start and still does increasingly."<sup>48</sup>

The leaders, as well as proponents of the project and Trust Territory High Commissioner Johnston, kept this issue secret from the people of Palau. An article in *Pacific Daily News* in April 1975 brought the first news of a superport to most of the people in Palau. In May 1975, nine traditional chiefs petitioned the

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<sup>44</sup> Robert Panero and Associates Inc., "Port Pacific, May 1975," in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 377-443.

<sup>45</sup> A letter from Senator Lazarus Salii to Speaker of Palau District Legislature Itelbang Luii and Palau District Administrator Thomas O. Remegsau, dated on 9 May 1975, in "The US Policy on Proposed Palau Superport Project with a US Dept. of State Message," 1975, in Trust Territory Archives, microfilm, V10001, Reel 408, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i.

<sup>46</sup> The two highest ranking chiefs of Palau.

<sup>47</sup> *Tia Belau*, 1 June 1975.

<sup>48</sup> "US Policy on Superport," TT Archives, Reel 408.

High Commissioner to release the information, including the written proposals, to the Palauan people. They expressed their concern that the newspaper "reports caused the people of Palau serious anxieties that decisions are being made which may have enormous impact on their lives and that they are being denied the opportunity to participate in the decision making process in any meaningful way."<sup>49</sup>

Palauan politicians and bureaucrats working closely with the Trust Territory government, including those who were employed at the headquarters in Saipan, favored the superport concept. In Palau, government officials and business leaders formulated a cogent pro-superport team. The members included the District Administrator Thomas O. Remegesau, the Speaker of Palau Legislature, Itebarg Luit and Sandang Silmai, and Senator Roman Tmetuchl, followed by other members of the Liberal Party. The legislature created the Special Committee on the Port Authority in 1975; the committee was led by pro-superport legislators, Johnson Toribiong, Ngiratkel Etpison and Masaich Etierngel. A high chief *Reklai* Lomisang also maintained his firm support for the project and presented himself as the head of the northern federation.<sup>50</sup>

The group, with the possible exception of *Reklai*, maintained its position to talk about the superport in terms of "concept" not as a "plan" in order to baffle the opposition. The Palau Legislature proceeded to facilitate feasibility studies not by a third party but by representatives of those companies involved in the

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<sup>49</sup> A letter from Palauan traditional chiefs to High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston, 15 May 1975, in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 545-546.

<sup>50</sup> See *Reklai* Lomisang's letter to Henry M. Jackson, chairman of Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, in the US Congress. In, Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 77.

superport project from Iran and Japan. In April 1976, the Trust Territory government and Japanese parties, Nissho Iwai Co. Ltd. and the Industrial Bank of Japan, signed an agreement for the Japanese companies to conduct a 12 to 18 month feasibility study at their own cost of 5 million dollars. The document states, "The reports submitted by the Contractor will be treated by the Government as the property of the Contractor, and confidential as such, for a period of five (5) years" (emphasis mine).<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, numerous secret and open negotiations between these Palauans and interested Japanese, Iranian and American groups had taken place. Considerable numbers of dealings with money under the table were reported to have been made.<sup>52</sup> A letter of Lee Hoskins, Chief of the Micronesian Bureau of Investigation, dated November 29, 1977, to High Commissioner Adrian P. Winkel, reveals that an illegal appropriation of about \$20,000 from district revenues was made by the Palau Legislature "to defray operating and contingency expenses of the Special Committee on the Palau Port Authority." The letter also discloses that allegations were made by the US Department of the Interior concerning the matter that Robert Panero was secretly employed by the legislature and paid approximately \$5,000 for his counseling. Roman

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<sup>51</sup> "Contractor" is defined as Nisshō Iwai Co. Ltd. and the Industrial Bank of Japan, and the "Government" refers to the Government of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. See, "Agreement, 30 April 1976," in Congress, "Palau Deepwater Port," 354.

<sup>52</sup> "Hearing on Proposed Superport at Palau," 1977, Trust Territory Archives, microfilm, V10001, Reel 323. Also, Robert Fluker, et al., "Interim Report," 138. A high chief of Koror, *Ibedul* Yutaka Gibbons, was reported to be offered a bribe from the US Navy. See, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 22 March 1976. Involvement of the Navy in the promotion of the superport will be discussed below.

Tmetuchl is described as "the real power" behind these secret maneuvers in the letter.<sup>53</sup>

In February 1976, an opposition group called the Save Palau Organization, headed by high chief *Ibedul* Yutaka Gibbons and the editor of *Tia Belau*, Moses Uludong, was formed. This group perceived that the superport would pollute Palau environmentally and culturally. The organization members were urged to educate Palauan people about the nature and scale of the project and its potential impacts on Palau, and to immediately began campaigning. A pamphlet and a poster written in both Palauan and English were distributed. Members of the Save Palau Organization visited rural municipalities numerous times and held meetings. Films illustrating pollution resulting from the oil spills and smoke from refineries were shown at those meetings. Large support for the organization came from the people living in those rural areas and whose lives depended on their natural environment.<sup>54</sup>

John Ngiratiou submitted a letter to the editor of *Tia Belau*:

As I look on the map of the proposed plan for Superport that was printed on January 13, 1976, it reminded me of one of the stories of World War II that some older people told me. The story goes like this. They said that there was one tunnel that was located in Ngetbang Municipality that was equipped with bombs and they said that all the Palauans were supposed to go in it and be blown to death. Luckily, there was one American spy who saved our fathers and mothers lives and our land.

Chiefs, Legislators, Magistrates and fellow Palauans, boys and girls, think back during Japanese time and make your decision carefully before accepting the Superport. Friends, Japan lost its

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<sup>53</sup> "Palau Legislature's Hiring of a Consultant, Mr. Robert B. Panero and Certain Allegations Against Him," 1977, Trust Territory Archives, microfilm, V10001, Reel 8.

<sup>54</sup> Shuster, "Islands of Change," 291.

first attempt to kill us but now the war is started again but this time in a political way. So friends, be careful. Now, it is our turn to protect ourselves. . . Palau Island is beautiful and there's no place like it so let's keep it for ourselves and our future generations.<sup>55</sup>

The proposed superport sites included four rural municipalities, Ngerchelong (including Kayangel), Ngaraard, Peleliu and Ngatpang, where Aoyagi conducted her interviews most intensively.<sup>56</sup> Among them, the northern part of Babeldaob, Ngkessol reef in Ngerchelong was the strongest candidate for the port site and the May 1975 proposal designated the entire area consisting of Ngaraard and Ngerchelong municipalities as the "Port Pacific Area."<sup>57</sup> A chief, Klulchad, along with other chiefs and leaders of Ollei hamlet, to which Ngkessol reef belongs, publicly expressed their adamant opposition to the superport.<sup>58</sup> So did *Obak*, the chief of entire island of Peleliu.<sup>59</sup> Both are identified by Aoyagi as her key informants. People of Kayangel, whom Aoyagi also interviewed, were against the project "because it would deprive them of their fishing rights over Kossol [Ngkessol] Reef and bring on the destruction of their home [sic] and

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<sup>55</sup> *Tia Belau*, 4 February 1976.

<sup>56</sup> For proposed sites, see Nisshō-Iwai Company, Ltd. et al., "Prefeasibility Study," in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 463-542. The information concerning locations of Aoyagi's field research and her key informants is based on Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 6-7; id., "(*Futatsu no Hanbun*)," 274; and Aoyagi, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Panero Associates, Inc., "Port Pacific, May 1975," in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 459.

<sup>58</sup> "Petition" from Ollei Hamlet to the District Administrator Thomas Remegesau, in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 548-550. The petition states, "The proposed superport appears to be too magnanimous in scope and its impact on Palau's environment, culture, and society can be disastrous."

<sup>59</sup> Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 53-59.



culture."<sup>60</sup> According to William V. Vitarelli, then a principal of the Belau Modekngei School in Ngatpang, "they [*Modekngei* members] were not activists vs. the superport but expressed opposition."<sup>61</sup>

Another anti-superport group, called the Tia Belaud Movement, headed by Moses Uludong worked closely with the Save Palau Organization. Members of the movement directly petitioned Washington by submitting reports, portraying the problems concerning the superport project. The Save Palau Organization and the Tia Belaud Movement also appealed to international environmental groups. They succeeded in bringing scientific survey groups to Palau, and gained overwhelming support from environmental, social action and other organizations from more than fifty countries, with a combined population of over 20 million people. This support from the international groups provoked serious concerns in the Japanese Diet and resulted in the Japanese withdrawal from the project in 1978.<sup>62</sup>

The superport concept inevitably affected the Palau's secessionist movement from the rest of the Trust Territory states in Micronesia, due to the

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<sup>60</sup> From a comment made by Roman Bedor, a representative from Kayangel, in *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 5 April 1977. Kayangel was identified as a place where many *Modekngei* members reside. Margo Vitarelli, personal communication, May 1996. Aoyagi conducted her interviews in Kayangel sometime between July 1974 and October 1980.

<sup>61</sup> Vitarelli, personal correspondence, 17 March 1997. In contrast to his opinion, Aoyagi stated, "I am not aware of the fact that *Modekngei* people opposed the Port Pacific. I believe it was Mr. Vitarelli, then a principal of [the Belau Modekngei School at] Ibobang, who opposed it" (my translation, Aoyagi, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997).

<sup>62</sup> Julian Gresser and Ruby Compton, "(addressed to) Japan Diet, In the Matter of the Establishment of a Superindustrial Complex in Palau, Micronesia," in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 110 and Shuster, "Islands of Change," 296.

prospect for the "self-sufficient" economy.<sup>63</sup> The Japanese involved in the superport, however, clearly indicated their desire for Palau to be under the influence of the US.<sup>64</sup> Thus, in order for the superport project to materialize, Palau needed to maintain a strong tie with the US. Under the influence of Roman Tmetuchl, in April 1976, the Palau Legislature passed a resolution to seek a separate political status with the US, based on an agreement "similar in nature to the Northern Marianas commonwealth agreement."<sup>65</sup> A former

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<sup>63</sup> Frank Quimby, "The Yin and Yang of Belau: A Nuclear Free Movement Struggles With the Quest for Economic Development," in Micronesian Politics, ed. by Roniti Teiwaki et al., (Suva, Fiji : Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1988), 132-135.

Other reasons that Palau sought separate negotiation from the rest of Micronesia are discussed below.

<sup>64</sup> Interim Report specifically states, "the Palau Island can reasonably expected to be under the protection of the U.S. Navy for at least a generation" (Robert Panero Associates, Inc., "Interim Report, April 1975," 29).

<sup>65</sup> Shuster, "Islands of Change," 283. This resolution conflicts with the result of July 1975 referendum by which Palauan voters rejected a commonwealth option. Ibid., 279. A synonymous request was made in a letter to Ambassador Williams from Roman Tmetuchl, a chairman of the newly created Palau Political Status Commission, dated on May 29, 1975. See, *Tia Belau*, 1-5 July 1975.

At the meeting held in Teheran, Iran, on 15 March 1976, Palauan legislators, Roman Tmetuchl and Sadnag N. Silmai, expressed their full support for the superport concept. According to a minutes of the meeting, They [members of the Palau Legislature] had recently petitioned the U.S. for direct Commonwealth Status (similar to that recently accorded to the Marlanes [sic]) and that they expected that this formal and permanent tie to the U.S. would be formalized thereby assuring the economic and strategic support and protection of the island group. ("Minutes of the Second Coordinating Committee Meeting for the Palau Project," p.3, in "Hearings on Proposed 'Superport' at Palau," 1977, Trust Territory Archives, microfilm V10001, Reel 323.)

Micronesia unity advocate, Lazarus Salii, shifted his political position in favor of Palau's cessation.

These Palauan leaders' gestures, expressive of their desire for Palau's close political affiliation with the United States, alarmed other Palauans who looked to a unified, independent Micronesia for their future political status. Under the auspices of chief *Obak* of Peleliu, on March 24 1977, Jackson R. Ngiraingas attended the hearing before the US Congress regarding the Palau Deepwater Port. Due to the time constraint, he did not have an opportunity to present the prepared testimony. The document states,

. . . prior to the War the Japanese had built the island of Peleliu economically with very little benefit to the people of the Peleliu\*. . . After the American invasion of Peleliu, the U.S. military construction group (Seabees) entered Peleliu and overturned most of its arable lands into roads and airstrips for military purposes. . . Our island and its people have been abused for so many years and we will not allow history to repeat itself over again. Thus, even for the price of millions of dollars to Peleliu, we would still not accept the superport.<sup>66</sup>

He further indicated the desire of some people, including chiefs, that Peleliu Municipality politically secede from Palau and join the Federated States of

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<sup>66</sup> Ngiraingas, "Testimony," in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 53-59. The prefeasability study (August 1976), indicated that the area surrounding Peleliu was one of the options for the superport. See, *ibid.*, 511, 519.

\*Phosphate mining on Peleliu is not well-known. In 1935, Yanaihara reported that the Peleliu's mining would start at the end of 1939 and approximately 25,000 ton of phosphate were expected to be mined annually. See, Tadao Yanaihara, Nan'yō Guntō no Kenkyū [A Study of the South Sea Islands], 4th ed. (Tokyo : Iwanami Shoten, 1941), 94. Ōkimi, in 1939, reported the mining in Peleliu was in operation but he presented no further information. See, Ōkimi, Guntō Annai, 72. Kenichi Sugiura, in his 1941 article, mentioned a land dispute among the people of Peleliu, caused by the Japanese misconception of rightful owners of the purchased land area. See, Sugiura, "Nan'yō Guntō Tōchi," 197.

Micronesia, "if the Palau Legislature does not adopt a resolution to stop the superport," and submitted a petition with fifty signatures to the US Congress.<sup>67</sup>

The leaders of the Save Palau Organization and the Tia Belaud Movement, Moses Uludong and *Ibedul* Gibbons, were supporters of Micronesian unity as their future political status. In 1976, *the Washington Post* reported that the CIA had been bugging the negotiations among Micronesian leaders for the last four years.<sup>68</sup> In his statement to the US Congress, Uludong expressed his suspicion about the CIA's interceptions of opinions among Palauan leaders about the superport and "these interceptions have further compromised our [Palauan] political process."<sup>69</sup>

Two American officials, Fred M. Zeder II, Director of Territorial Affairs,<sup>70</sup> and Rear Admiral Kent Carroll, Commander of the US Naval Forces, worked

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<sup>67</sup> Ngiraingas, "Testimony," in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 53-59. During the hearing before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, pro-superport individuals, including Robert Panero and Johnson Toribiong, were given sufficient time to present their statements, while, the people who opposed the superport, including *Ibedul* Gibbons, Moses Uludong, Father Felix Yaoch had less than five minutes in total for their presentations. Some others, such as Roman Bedor, Jackson Ngiraingas, or Julian Gresser, were not given an opportunity to speak in front of the committee. See, Congress, Palau Deepwater Port; and *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 5 April 1977.

<sup>68</sup> *Washington Post*, 12 December 1976, in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 558-559.

<sup>69</sup> Moses Uludong, A letter to a congressman, Phillip Burton, 7 April 1977, p.9 in "'Superport' at Palau," TT Archives, Reel, 323. Burton, then, was the chairman of the Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs and also a US congressman. He and some American congressmen strongly opposed the superport concept.

<sup>70</sup> In June 1975, Zeder, a Texas-based millionaire businessman, was appointed to the position by President Ford. Zeder told the *Los Angeles Times*, that the president was "an old fraternity brother and has remained a close friend and golf partner. It was on the golf course, ... Ford recruited him... Zeder said, he went

closely with Robert Panero from the early stages of the development of the superport concept. Zeder perceived that the superport would generate enough income to replace financial support provided by the US Congress to the Trust Territory.<sup>71</sup> Carroll, on the other hand, endorsed the Japanese group's request for Palau to be continuously "under the protection of the U.S." for purposes of political stability, since it was exactly what the navy desired.<sup>72</sup>

Captain N. R. Gooding, Jr., a Senior Research Fellow of the Strategic Research Group of the National War College, identifies a more specific interest of the US Navy. In his 1975 report, Gooding states, "From a strategic standpoint, the [superport] facility could be important to both the US and Japan as Babelthup [sic] became a joint refueling (and, possibly, operating) base for both Japanese and US vessels." The report recommends "an increased role for an old enemy in an old battleground."<sup>73</sup> More crudely, Commander David L.

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on a three-week 'Whirlwind trip' with Panero via Paris, Holland, Iran and Japan... U.S. government paid his plane fare." See, *Los Angeles Times*, 1 February 1977, in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 702.

<sup>71</sup> Nisshō Iwai Co. Ltd., Robert Panero Associates, Inc., and Van Houten Associates/Ammann & Whitney Engineers, "Site Screening Prefeasibility Study for a Petroleum Transshipment Terminal in the District of Palau, August, 1976," in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 537.

<sup>72</sup> "Admiral Backs a Super Port," *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 1976, 47 (1): 16.

<sup>73</sup> N. R. Gooding, Jr., "A Role for Japan in Micronesia," (Washington: National Technical Information Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1975), 11. It is indicated that the report "has been reviewed and cleared for open publication by the Department of Defence," 1. Strong security ties between the US and Japan in the eastern Pacific area recommended in this report under the name, the MICPAC (Micronesia-Pacific Defense Force) came to see its materializaion by a joint naval maneuver of the US Navy and the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force in 1980 in the ocean including the Micronesian area. See, *Bōei-chō* [the Defense Agency], *Bōei Hakusho - Shōwa 55 Nen Hen*. [*White Paper of Defense Agency*, 1980], (Tokyo: Bōei-chō, 1981). Two months after the declaration of

Burt, in his conversation with an American naturalist Douglas Faulkner, said, "You realize that there are millions of people in Japan and only 14,000 people in Palau, we may have to sacrifice those 14,000 people."<sup>74</sup>

The motivation on the Japanese side was simpler but perhaps more urgent. The Japanese government, alarmed by the oil crisis in 1973 due to the Arab oil embargo, was seeking the means to secure a large amount of oil. Responding to the mounting claims against the physical and environmental damages caused by pollution in Japan, which included a large scale oil spill from the Mitsubishi Oil Refinery into *Setonaikai* [Seto Inland Sea] in December 1974, the government tightened the environmental laws.<sup>75</sup> The chance to gain an agreement from a prefecture government to build an oil storage/port of desired scale was grim.<sup>76</sup>

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"New Pacific Doctrine," by President Ford in December 1975, the new committee was formed in the Japanese Defence Agency to analyze and discuss the US-Japan cooperation in Pacific area. In 1978, a proposal for the new types of Japanese involvement in the US security matters, titled, "The Policy of the Japan-US Defence Cooperation," was approved by the Committee of the Japan-US Security Talks and later by the Defence Agency and at a Cabinet council meeting. See, Sakurai, [Micronesia Report], 211-216; also, Aldridge and Myers, Serpent, 33-39.

<sup>74</sup> *Tia Belau*, 4 February 1976. This statement by Burt has a strong resemblance to a comment made by former US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, in 1969, stating, "There are only 90,000 people out there [in Micronesia]. Who gives a damn!" In Donald McHenry, Micronesia. Trust Betrayed: Altruism vs. Self-Interest in American Foreign Policy, (Washington, D.C. : Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1975), 98.

<sup>75</sup> The oil spill in Seto Inland Sea was reported as "the worst in the history (in Japan?)" in the scale of pollution. See, *Asahi Shinbun*, 10 January 1975, Tokyo Japan. The oil spill caused damages to eleven prefectures in Japan. The damage for the three most affected prefectures was estimated as at least 10 trillion yen. See, *Asahi Shinbun*, 9 January 1975.

<sup>76</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, 9 January 1975.

Almost simultaneously, the ship wreck of *Shōwa Maru*, a 237,000 deadweight ton (DWT) oil tanker at the Malacca Strait, brought strong criticisms from nearby countries and about \$27 million worth of damage claims as the responsibility of the transshipment company and the Japanese government.<sup>77</sup> The use of a safer route via the Lombok and Makesser straits for large size tankers became necessary. This route, however, required a longer shipping time, therefore, more cost unless supertankers were used for the oil transshipment.<sup>78</sup> Japan had very few ports which were capable of

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<sup>77</sup> The serious danger for large tankers to pass through this narrow and shallow strait was repeatedly pointed out by the government of Indonesia prior to the accident but was largely ignored by the Japanese side. Newspapers reported the main cause of the accident was the extremely strenuous schedule placed upon the ship's crew members.

Most of the able adults of numerous small islands near the Malacca Strait moved out from their islands for the employment opportunities. The older people who were left with small children depended on the fish from the ocean to support their lives. Their supply of fish, of course, became contaminated and thus not eatable after the oil spill. See, *Asahi Shinbun*, 11 January 1975.

At the press conference after the accident, Sanpei Yamaji, the president of *Taiheiyō Kaiun* (a large transshipment company who possesses numerous tankers and ships including *Shōwa Maru*), stated, "the sea transportation business deals with [uncontrollable] natural conditions and the ocean. It is unavoidable for accidents to happen. . . [We] will not stop the large tankers going through the Malacca-Singapore strait route simply because the accident happened" (my translation, *Asahi Shinbun*, 11 January 1975). The Ministry of Transport took a similar position. A request made by the Ship Crew Members' Union to avoid passing through the Malacca Strait by tankers larger than 200,000 DWT was turned down by the Ministry due to the economic disadvantage of the alternative, safer route.

The representatives from South East Asian countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, whose ocean and shores were contaminated, could not take a strong oppositional measure against Japan, probably because the Japanese aid to the area was too significant to risk. Newspaper articles also reveal that at that time, only scanty scientific knowledge existed about the short and long time effects of large scale oil spill to the natural environment.

<sup>78</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, 14 January 1975.

accommodating supertankers larger than the 500,000 DWT.<sup>79</sup> The stagnant domestic economy in the early 1970's and the increasing price of oil required Japan to seek the cheapest way possible to bring oil to the country.

The superport in Palau was a perfect plan for the Japanese government since the proposed site possessed all the desired features. Palau had an "excellent" natural deepwater port site, which was seen as being capable of accommodating 1,000,000 DWT.<sup>80</sup> Since Palau was under the Trusteeship, the negotiations would be made mostly with the US government, who in addition was in favor of the concept. The environmental laws under the Trusteeship were less strenuous than those in Japan or the US.<sup>81</sup> In sum, by supplying financial and technical aid to build the transshipment facility, Japan could secure not only a less expensive supply of oil but also a large amount of surplus oil without a risk of further environmental destruction in the home country.

How would the Japanese proposal and maneuvering concerning the superport affect Aoyagi's fieldwork? There were groups with different interests within Palauan society; one group was enthusiastic in accepting the Japanese proposal for the prospected economic benefit, and another group foresaw tremendous negative impacts on Palau if the project had materialized and strongly opposed the Japanese interest. Hence, the impact of the superport

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<sup>79</sup> Robert Panero Associates, Inc., "Interim Report, April 1975," 23.

<sup>80</sup> Robert Panero Associates, Inc., "Port Pacific, May 1975," in Congress, Palau Deepwater Port, 409.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Panero Associates, Inc., "Interim Report, April 1975" 29.



project on Aoyagi's research would have been varied depending on whom she interviewed.

For Palauan political and business leaders, the project could have meant an opportunity to gain a huge economic asset. The possibility of having a strengthened economy, at that time in Palau, had direct effects on their negotiation for the future political status with the US. Suddenly, achieving autonomous political power, with less interference from the US, became possible. The close tie between the US and Palau was requested by the Japanese businesses, and some Palauan politicians, led by Roman Tmetuchl, indicated their desire for a closer political affiliation with the US. However, this was not the desire of the larger Palauan population. I wonder if any Palauan individual dreamed that the economic independence of Palau would eventually lead to the total political independence of their nation. If not, the concept of the superport construction at least contributed in fostering Palau's separation from the rest of Micronesian states in their political status negotiation.

For those Palauan people who positively received the Japanese proposal of the superport construction, the Japanese economic power must have been seen as a profit to Palau. I speculate, therefore, that if they were interviewed by a Japanese, like Aoyagi, concerning the Japanese past involvement in Palau, they might have provided more positive images of the Japanese. The economic development that was achieved during the Japanese administration period in Palau would have been re-evaluated in a more positive light, and discussed with the researcher. I firmly believe that these Palauans avoided making comments which might have offended the Japanese. It is my opinion that this circumstance helped Aoyagi to believe that the Japanese colonial intrusion in Palau was not culturally destructive enough to provoke an organized anti-Japanese movement.

People, who opposed the superport concept, would have seen Japan as a threat to their culture and environment. As is obvious in assertions by John Ngiratiou and *Obak*, cited above, the Japanese economic re-entry in Palau was analyzed through their past experience with the Japanese. The Japanese, in order to convince the Palauan chiefs of the northern districts who opposed the superport project, employed an old tactic, the "cultural tour to Japan," from the mandate period. The whole project, aimed at bringing profits to Japan at the cost of the island people's land, assets, values and interests, shows a strong conceptual resemblance to what the Japanese did in Micronesia between 1914 and 1945. Then, the islands were the food and resource producing colony for an overcrowded and poverty ridden Japan first, and later a crucial strategic bastion to hold the advancing enemy in check and protect the islands of Japan. Palauan people who saw this resemblance between the Japanese past involvement in Palau and the proposed superport project would have attempted to prevent the past to repeat itself.

I do not have evidence, indicating how these people treated Aoyagi. As I mentioned above, chiefs of the rural areas where Aoyagi conducted numerous interviews were against the Japanese proposal of the superport. I speculate that these *rubak* and people under the influence of these elders might have had reservations in cooperating with Aoyagi during their interviews. According to Karen Nero, an American anthropologist who conducted research in Palau, the notion, "spy . . . has historical basis" in Palau and "is a favorite designation for anthropologists."<sup>82</sup> This statement suggests, at least, those Palauan people who

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<sup>82</sup> Nero, "Time of Famine," 136.

were against the superport project dealt with Aoyagi, a Japanese anthropologist, with a caution.

The Japanese proposal of the superport triggered large scale political skirmishes, which were fought at both local and international theaters. Due to the nature and scale of the proposed project and the project's implication for Palau's future political status, hardly any Palauan people could have escaped from taking one side or another. The project was a reminder of the Japanese past involvement in Palau. At the same time, it was an indication of the Japanese renewed economic interest, and thus, a strong potential for their further economic involvement in Palau. I have no direct evidence to prove the impact of the superport proposal on Aoyagi's research. It is most likely, however, that the superport issue influenced the Palauan people's perception toward Japan, and their dealings with the Japanese, including Aoyagi.

## VI. The "Japanese Times:" 1914-1945<sup>63</sup>

This section concerns the history of Japanese colonial intrusion in Palau. I present a short narrative of the past in the first part of this section. My focus is on two issues: one is the situation of *Modekngei* under the Japanese rule; the other is the Japanese development of Palau, particularly the economic conditions, and its impact on Palauan society. The later part of this section deals with several issues, relative to this historical period, that might have influenced

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<sup>63</sup> Nero reports that the term, "Japanese times," is used among Palauan people to designate the time period between 1914 and 1945. See, Nero, "Time of Famine," 139. There has been a concern, however, that dividing the history of Palau by various colonial periods should not be established as an academic practice. I choose to place quotation marks whenever I employ the term in my thesis.

Aoyagi's fieldwork in Palau. The issues include Palauan people's shifting perspectives on the Japanese past involvement in relation to the current political and economic circumstances in Palau, and the nationality of a researcher and its impact on types of data being gathered. Research difficulties which Aoyagi experienced due mainly to the Japanese past abuse of *Modekngei* members are also presented.

In 1922, six years after the Japanese seizure of the Germany territory in Micronesia above the equator during World War I, the League of Nations had bestowed a trusteeship for the area on Japan. The Japanese stayed as a colonial force until their defeat in World War II. During these three decades, especially during the 1930's, the mandate experienced a self-sustaining economy from sugar, phosphate, fishing, copra and other industries. Koror, the current capital of Palau, and the former capital of the Japanese colonial government, was a small "metropolis" with numerous shops, a department store, recreation facilities, a radio station, newspaper stands, offices, schools, a hospital, city park, and a zoo. Palauan people living near Koror town, including young and mostly male Palauans who moved from rural areas, were exposed to the conveniences of "modernity" and became participants in the nascent capitalistic economy. Those Palauans who sold their land or found relatively well-paid employment acquired foreign currency which brought a new path to gain power and esteem within their social structure.<sup>84</sup> The Palauan constables

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<sup>84</sup> Hezel, *Strangers*, 202-203. Also, Peattie, *Nan'yō*, 211-212.

and assistant teachers were the newly emerged elites and enjoyed high status in the society.<sup>85</sup>

However, all of the development was for the Japanese, not for the Palauans. Statistics reveal that in April 1937, the number of Japanese immigrants including people from Korea and Okinawa in Palau was 9,532 while Palauan people were counted at 6,578, and the pace of immigration was increasing rapidly.<sup>86</sup> A large land area was designated as "public land" and appropriated by *Nan'yō-chō*, Japan's South Sea Bureau/Government, and later leased or sold to the Japanese businesses and residents.<sup>87</sup> The Palauan population was relocated from Koror, since Koror was a "Japanese town." The

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<sup>85</sup> Vidich, Political Factionalism, 95. One of such elites was Joseph Tellei, discussed below, who not only enjoyed higher status in the Palauan society but also exercised considerable influence over the Japanese administration and its policies. PCAA's account reports that Tellei, aiming at reducing the power of chiefs and high ranking clans, recommended the Japanese officials to issue an order of money reform, which compromised the social status of Palauan high ranking individuals and women. Because of his political power, Tellei became a representative for Melekeok, undermining the traditional legitimate authority of Melekeok, *Reklai Rull*. See, PCAA, History of Palau, Vol. 3, 365-368.

<sup>86</sup> Ōkimi, Guntō Annai, 6. The number of the Japanese immigrants doubled by the end of the 1930's. Hezel, Strangers, 203. This figure probably includes the military troops and laborers brought from Japan for the fortification of the islands.

<sup>87</sup> According to Yanaihara, *Nan'yō-chō* divided the land in Palau into three different categories: 1) the land belonging to the a *blai* (a Palauan term for an extended family); 2) the land belonging to a village; and 3) the land belonging to village chiefs. Initially, *Nan'yō-chō* appropriated all land belonged to a village, most of which were located near the coast and mangrove swamp areas and the inland uninhabited fields and forests. Both of these areas were vital for Palauan people's survival because they provided access to the sea and important resources from the forest. Due to the strong oppositions raised from the Palauan people, *Nan'yō-chō* later returned some of those areas to rightful owners (villages). Yanaihara, Guntō no Kenkyū, 224-225.

Palauan indebtedness to the Japanese further created the condition of land alienation.<sup>88</sup>

*Nan'yō-chō* controlled the islands by means of direct rule, which drastically undermined Palauan political and social systems and values.<sup>89</sup> In

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<sup>88</sup> Dirk Anthony Ballendorf, "Micronesian Views of the Japanese: The Palauan Case, Notes for a Presentation Made at the Micronesian Area Research Center Seminar Series, 3 October 1984," 6, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i. Ballendorf does not state reasons behind the Palauans' indebtedness to the Japanese. A clue found is in Hezel's account. He quotes from a Catholic missionary who wrote, the Palauans spent their money "to smoke, to build homes in Japanese style, with roofing and verandas, and to buy the thousand little things that are displayed in the stores." See, Hezel, *Strangers*, 204.

Vidich also states that the Japanese colonists "excelled" in profit-making by selling goods to the Palauan people. "Every conceivable product, from popsicles, clothing, radios and bric-a-brac, were dumped on the native market" (*Political Factionalism*, 70). Through *ocheraol*, formerly a house building ceremony where a large amount of money was collected through kinship ties, the Palauan people purchased "power-driven boats, motorcycles, automobiles, and so forth" (Ibid., 73). Other expenses included hospital fees, inter-island passage fees, fees for electricity (for Palauans who live near or in Koror), and others. See, PCAA, *History of Palau, Vol. 3*, 360. In other words, islands people became consumers of Japanese goods and services.

On the other hand, the Palauan people, perhaps with a few exceptions, were grossly disadvantaged in their economic participation. Phosphate labor was the main income for the majority of the people. A Japanese earned about five times more than a Palauan at the phosphate mine in 1933. The second most common income source for the people of Palau was from the copra industry. Yanaihara, however, states that the dealers practiced barter, and thus, the Palauans did not receive cash for their labor. In addition, Palauan people had to pay taxes to *Nan'yō-chō*. Yanaihara, *Guntō no Kenkyū*, 114, 117 & 255-257. Due to the shipping charges added to the imported commodities, "the cost of living in the Mandated Islands was higher than the cost of living in Japan, perhaps nearly twice as high." Palau Community Action Agency, *History of Palau, Vol. 3*, 353.

<sup>89</sup> Nero reports,

Behind of facade [sic] of support for the local chiefs, shown in the Japanese selection of the district chiefs as *soncho* and the *Reklai* and *Ibedul* as *so-soncho* leaders, and regular meetings of the *Rubekulbelau*, the Japanese worked through the chiefs only to the

fact, the acculturation of island people to the Japanese culture was the official policy of *Nan'yō-chō*. The island people were labeled as *santō kokumin*, the third class citizens,<sup>90</sup> and discriminatory treatment in education, occupation, wages, and other social practices was a way of life. Most Palauans worked as manual laborers for the minimum wage. The customs and other practices which hampered the Japanese economic development<sup>91</sup> or which were considered to be disturbing to the "peace" in the society were suppressed. The oppressive control measures taken by many police officers included physical and verbal abuses.

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extent that the chiefs acceded to their wishes. The Council of High Chiefs became known as the *ouai sei* council (the "yes" council). ("Beads of History," 336)

At the celebration of the inauguration of President Remeliik in 1981, there was a procession, portraying a history of Palau. The "Japanese Times" was symbolized by Palauan people with the *ouai sei* council, where only function of chiefs was to respond with "yes" to orders given by the Japanese. See, Sakurai, [*Micronesia Report*], 203.

<sup>90</sup> The word, *kokumin*, literally means citizens. This term was used despite the fact most island people were not legally citizens of Japan. According to Peattie, people in the mandate were in the three hierarchical categories: 1) the first class citizens, who were Japanese (not including half Japanese); 2) the second class citizens, who were Okinawans and Koreans; and 3) the third class citizens, who were of the island origins. See, Peattie, *Nan'yō*, 111-112.

<sup>91</sup> The best example is a Japanese ban of *omeluchel*, very roughly meaning a custom of exchange, in 1920. According to PCAA, the ban was issued by a *rubak* of Koror. I suspect this *rubak* was the one chosen by the Japanese, since Nero reports that *Ibedul* Tem, the traditionally recognized high chief of Koror, "held a major *mur* [a large feast] in Koror in defiance of the Japanese," after the ban took effect. *Ibedul* Tem was reported to have fled to Ngaraard, the center of *Modekngei* activities, after the Japanese removed him from his position of *sō-sonchō*. See, PCAA, *History of Palau, Vol. 3*, 365; Nero, "Beads of History," 336-337.

*Modekngei* was one target which received the harshest treatment among the Palauans.<sup>92</sup> The police frequently harassed *Modekngei* followers and confiscated their sacred ritual objects. Leaders were arrested, "investigated,"<sup>93</sup> and imprisoned several times. In Chol, Ollei, Kayangel, and Peleliu, there are people who experienced police interrogations. According to their statements, numerous people were taken to the police repeatedly. Some were allowed to return to their village after being questioned by the police; others were confined in prison, for a week, a month, sometimes a year and used as free laborers.<sup>94</sup>

The islands were fully utilized for the benefit of the Japanese. A great majority of Micronesian people did not share the fruit of the development.<sup>95</sup> The swarming Japanese immigrants and industrial developments brought drastic changes to the faces of the most islands with no regard to the wishes of the island people. The dominant momentum made it inevitable that Palauan society would undergo a rapid and often unwelcome transformation of its traditional social structure and values. Japan's rule ended with a massive destruction of human lives and land, and in miserable famine at the end of World War II.

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<sup>92</sup> According to Hijikata, mentioned in Chapter 1, the basis of accusations against *Modekngei* used by the police were: 1) perplexing good citizens by prophesying and rumoring; 2) avoiding labor assigned by the government; 3) neglecting work as a result of extravagant feasts being held in the name of gods, which lasted all night long; 4) abusing women in the name of the gods; and 5) extortion of money and other articles by *Modekngei* leaders in the name of gods. See, Hisakatsu Hijikata, *Parao no Kami*, 28 & 261.

<sup>93</sup> Emphasis Vidich's. Political Factionalism, 91.

<sup>94</sup> Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 205-207.

<sup>95</sup> Peattie, *Nan'yō*, 81-117. Yanaihara, *Guntō no Kenkyū*, 106-127.



The above narrative reflects my learning of the Japan's past involvement in Palau as well as other areas in Micronesia. If indeed the Japanese administration in Palau were oppressive and were only interested in their own gains, why did Palauan people give Aoyagi a strong impression that they liked the "Japanese times"? Some researchers suggest that Palauan views on Japanese colonialism have shifted, or that their representations of the same memories have changed over time. Stronger negative images of the Japanese and their impacts on Palau presented by Palauans during the early American administration period have been gradually replaced by more positive opinions, seemingly due to the political and economic circumstances of Palau in more recent times. As a result of interviews conducted in 1984, an American researcher, Dirk A. Ballendorf reported,

One respondent observed that the Japanese provided very sound models of industry and hard work to Palauans which, he felt, stood Palauans in good stead today in a more competitive world. The Japanese presence was the reason, he thought, why the Palauans today are considered to be among the most vigorous and determined of the "new" Micronesians.<sup>96</sup>

A newspaper article,<sup>97</sup> dating roughly to the same time period, states that older Palauans perceive that serious social problems among the youth today are rooted in the lack of employment as well as lack of ethics encouraging hard work, both of which were available under the Japanese administration. In his assessment of reasons behind the rapidly raising crime rate in Palau, Legislator

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<sup>96</sup> Ballendorf, "Micronesian Views," 9.

<sup>97</sup> n.d. The article is located in a collection of newspaper clippings on variety of issues concerning Palau during the 1970's and 1980's, kept by Karen Peacock, the chief curator of the Pacific Collection in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i.

Baules Sechelong indicated his preference for the law and order under the Japanese (and German) administration, in comparison with the American oriented laws. He stated,

From the German time to the end of Japanese times, the laws worked side-by-side with customs and traditions. Now we neglect our customs and under American laws, what have we got?<sup>98</sup>

Palauan elders indicated to Aoyagi their disapproval of younger people's mimicking of American ways. Some also suggested to her their concern about the current education system by stating, "we [elders] went to school only several years but we can speak Japanese but young people cannot speak English very well for the amount of education they get at schools."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, n.d., in the collection of newspaper clippings kept by Karen Peacock mentioned above. A brief citation of the law applied to the indigenous population under the Japanese mandate is given in footnote near the end of Chapter 1.

<sup>99</sup> Aoyagi, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997. Many authors, including Aoyagi, who write about the Japanese education of the island children discuss the harsh disciplinary nature of the teachers and the ban of Palauan language at schools. See, Aoyagi, *Modekuger*, 90-91; Hezel, *Strangers*, 172-174; Peattie, *Nan'yo*, 92-94; and David Ramarui, "Education in Micronesia: Its Past, Present, and Future," 1976, *Micronesian Reporter*, 24 (1): 10.

Aoyagi also notes that some Palauan people who received a Japanese education complain about their children's behavior as following; 1) very few manners exist between two genders and young people enjoy too much sexual freedom, 2) young people do not respect elders, 3) due to the influence of movies, the cases of fighting and murder increased [among the youth], and 4) young people become violent under the influence of alcohol and marijuana. She states that "even though parents are dissatisfied with their children's behavior, they convince themselves it is the American way and refrain from expressing their opinions to them." See, Aoyagi, "*Kodomo no Seichou to Shakaika—Berau no Kuni no Kodomotachi* [Growth and Socialization of Belauan Children]," 1982a, *Seinen Shinri*, 30: 175-176.

I believe that these positive comments about the "Japanese times" made by older people of Palau could partially originate in their social positions within the contemporary Palauan society. A Palauan member of Palau Community Action Agency, Katharine Kesolei, laments that the older people being "pushed aside" have obtained "the attitude of total resignation" because "what they know which [sic] was regarded as obsolete."<sup>100</sup> A following comment by a well respected Palauan artist, *Rechucher* Charlie Gibbons, might exemplify the feelings of resignation among the older people:

Young people today are living in the Western ideas in their hearts and minds, and they have forgotten Palau from old days up until today. I think that if there were young people around and we talk like this, they might feel hurt, as we may appear to be angry . . . but it is not true. The world today is just like that. The world has changed to be like that. So we are just keeping quiet, whether we like it or do not like it, they all get mixed up and we pretend we like it. People of long ago have different ideas and ideals. But it turned out to be like that. Let it be. Our sun is setting, so when we leave, they can do whatever.<sup>101</sup>

The western style political system firmly established by the 1960's in Palau also functioned to foster the decay of powerful political influence once possessed by the elders. The decreasing power of traditional chiefs peaked at the birth of new constitutional government in 1981 by their loss of chambers in the legislature.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Katherine Kesolie, in a document attached to her letter to Daniel J. Peacock, Supervisor of Library Services in the TT Education Department, in "File on the Palauan Community Action Agency, 1970-1978," Trust Territory Archives, microfilm, V10001, Reel 0098.

<sup>101</sup> In Dan Baker, *Klea Belau: Palau Through the Eyes of Reuer Charlie Gibbons*, (Koror : Belau National Museum, 197-), videorecording. The comment is made in English.

<sup>102</sup> See, Shuster, "Custom versus a New Elite," *The Journal of Pacific History*, 1994, 29 (2): 188-202.

In such circumstances, the older people could have remembered their past with nostalgia and emphasized the positive aspects of the "Japanese periods" to Aoyagi.<sup>103</sup>

Another American researcher, Nero, who conducted interviews on the Palauan experiences of the war during the late 1980's, also discusses the transforming images of the Japanese among Palauan people. She states, the images of Japanese "are today being redefined more favorably in any case as Japanese businesses move into Palau and provide employment, and as more Japanese tourists visit Palau."<sup>104</sup> In his assessment of both the Japanese and American involvement in Palau, Roman Tmetuchl stated in 1986,

The difference between the Japanese and Americans is that under the Japanese, the Palauans had roads and no cars, while under the Americans, the Palauans had cars and no roads. . . The Americans may establish military control over Micronesia, but economic control is clearly shifting in favor of the Japanese.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Vidich, in 1948, identified the Palauan men between the ages of 17 and 35 as dissatisfied youth. According to him, this group of men lost their opportunities to succeed in business, that was a newly learned and desired means to achieve social status during the Japanese colonial period. Under the American rule, the discrimination, which was practiced by the Japanese and had hampered the Palauans to excel in economic activities, was largely removed, but the economic development, as they anticipated, did not materialize. See Vidich, "Political Impact," Chapter XI & XII. Some of them became government elites later, but many could not compete with younger American educated generations of Palauans. I believe that this might be an additional factor contributing to foster nostalgia among people of the older generations.

<sup>104</sup> Nero, "Time of Famine," 145. One article in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* also discusses that some Micronesians, especially people who are disenchanted about the condition of economic development during the US administration, express their willingness to accept the return of the Japanese to their islands. See, "Japanese Welcomed Back to Micronesia," *PIM*, 1986, 57(2): 42-43.

<sup>105</sup> "The Good Old Days are Coming Back," *PIM*, 1986, 57 (7): 28.

The scale of the Japanese investment between 1973 and 1984 in Palau was not significant when compared to the later development. I believe it is important to note that during the time Aoyagi was in Palau, although relatively small in scale, the Japanese economic influence was observed by the Palauan people and it accelerated toward the end of her research period.<sup>106</sup> The unemployment rate

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<sup>106</sup> Between 1973 and 1984, when Aoyagi was conducting her research in Palau, the amount of Japanese governmental aid to the Trust Territory fluctuated yearly. The largest sum was given in 1983, totaling \$8.78 million. This figure more likely includes the aid to the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas and post-independent Marshalls and FMS. *Gaimu-shō, Waga Gaikō*, (1974-1985). One statistic I obtained about the Japanese aid received by Palau indicates, in 1981 and 1982, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the government-run agency, provided about 12.5 million yen worth of equipment and vessels for the fishing and coconut industry promotions in Palau. See, Junko Edo, Japanese Aid to the Pacific Islands Region, (Honolulu : Pacific Islands Development Program, East-West Center, 1986), 87. In 1973, the Micronesian Mariculture Demonstration Center was built with the Japanese aid. See, Masateru Anraku, "*Parao Kyōwakoku no Suisan Kaihatsu: MMDC no Saiken to Engan Gyogyō no Shinkō* [Fishery Development of Palau: MMDC Reconstruction and Coastal Fishery Development]," *Taiheiyō Gakkaishi*, July 1987 (35) : 77-84.

In the private sector, Tōkyū Real Estate Co. and Japan Air Lines made investments in early 1980's. Tōkyū runs Pacific Islands Development Corp. The JAL purchased and operates Hotel Nikko Micronesia, Inc. See, *Tōyō Keizai, Kaigai Shinshutsu Kigyō Soran* [Japanese Multinationals: Facts & Figures], (Tokyo : Tōyō Keizai, 1983 & 1984). I do not have access to the information about the amounts of their investments. A Japanese branch of an international religious organization, OISCA established a modest agricultural training center in Aimeliik in 1982. See, Hiroshi Nakajima, "*Intabyū, Kuroki Tsutsumi: OISCA Parao Kaihatsudan Danchō* [Interview with Tsutsumi Kuroki: The Head of OISCA Palau Development Team]," *Taiheiyō Gakkaishi*, April 1983 (18): 8-13. For the information about the process of the project development, see, "Agreement Format Between Palau and Japan (OISCA)," 1980 Trust Territory Archives, microfilm, V10001, Reel 0201, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i.

An article written by Ed Rampell discusses on a much larger scale Japanese investment in Palau, but I was unable to confirm its information. See, "Special Report: Japanese Investment in the Islands," *Pacific Magazine*, 1985, 10 (3): 38. Tōkyū Co. was in process of constructing Palau Pacific Resort, 100-room hotel with a man-made beach near Koror. A magazine article states some

in Palau was high and the development of private sector was sought. Pro-business Palauan might have concealed their negative comments toward the Japanese presence in the past, if presented, would work against the potential future Japanese development in Palau. Thus, they could have intended to provide only positive opinions of the time period to Aoyagi when they were

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\$20 million were invested for the resort. See, "The Good Old," *PIM*, 57 (7): 28. Japanese fishing companies paid \$400,000 in 1979 for the fishing entry fee. See, "Monthly Narrative Reports on Trades/Investments," 1979, Trust Territory Archives, microfilm, V10001, Reel 201. The Japanese tourists to Palau between 1973 and 1984 composed about a half of the visitors to Palau. The visitors numbered between 5 to 6,000 annually. See, "Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands," reports made by the Trust Territory Government to the United Nations, 1974-1985.

The US policy to open up the TTPI to foreign investors, announced in January 1974 by Rogers C. B. Morton, Secretary of the Interior, provoked waves of excitement in Japan. The national newspaper, *Asahi*, in March 29, 1974, published an article under the title, "Doors Opened to Micronesia; Influx of Japanese Capital Expected; Resort Area for 'After Guam'; US Measure to Appease Nationalist Movements." On June 18, 1974, the Japan Micronesia Association was established in Tokyo. One of the aims of the new organization was "promoting exchanges in the economic area between Japan and Micronesia." More than two hundred members belong to the association and the executive members included government officials, Japanese top business leaders, and former executives of *Nan'yō Kohatsu* and *Nan'yō Takushoku* which dominated the economy in Micronesia under the Japanese mandate. Immediately, a frequent exchange of correspondence and visits between the members of TT government and the Japan Micronesia Association began taking place. Lazarus Salii in correspondence sought their investments in Palau, but, prior to 1984, no agreement was reached and they were still in the process of negotiation. See, "File on 'Japan Micronesia Association' Regarding Tourism, Commercial Fishing, Marine Culture & Aquaculture of the Sea Food Species, Tropical Agricultural Production & Processing, Marketing," 1988, Trust Territory Archives, microfilm, V10001, Reel 201.

Other Palauan leaders, especially Roman Tmetuchi, were busy negotiating with the Japanese government and businesses for further development of Palau by the Japanese. Palauan leaders, as members of the Joint Committee on Future Status, made official visits to Japan to meet Japanese government officials and business leaders at least twice during the 1970's. See, "Monthly Narrative Reports," TT Archives, Reel 201.

interviewed. And, those comments could have influenced Aoyagi's understandings of Palauan experience during the Japanese mandate period, and thus, her interpretation of *Modekngei*.

Keeping the potential influence of the Japanese economic activities on Aoyagi's field study in mind, a possible maneuver of Joseph Tellei in his dealings with Aoyagi should be examined. Two former constables who worked for *Nan'yō-chō*, Joseph Tellei and *Ucherebelau* (Joseph), reported to Aoyagi that *Modekngei* was not an anti-Japanese movement; she employs their statements as some of the strongest evidence to support her argument about the nature of *Modekngei* during the "Japanese times." I have no access to the information concerning *Ucherebelau*,<sup>107</sup> while many descriptions of Tellei are available in literature and from people's memories of him.

Tellei was well trusted and the highest ranking Palauan constable who worked more than twenty years for Japanese administrators, and he was the chief instigator of the *Modekngei* arrests. He was also one of the most wealthy Palauans of the time, which brought him high social status, due to the salary he earned through performing his duties as a constable.<sup>108</sup> Near the end of the war, however, foreseeing the Japanese defeat, he managed to escape from Babeldaob and placed himself under the protection of the US Navy on Peleliu.

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<sup>107</sup> *Ucherebelau* is a high ranking *rubak* of a village in Angaur.

<sup>108</sup> For more information about Tellei and his involvement in *Modekngei* persecution, see Hezel, *Strangers*, 160-166.

Hezel writes, "A few prestigious Palauans, Joseph Tellei among them, lived in beautifully furnished Japanese-style houses valued at up to ten thousand yen" (*Strangers*, 203). The internationally recognized exchange rate of the Japanese yen in 1938 was about thirty cents for one yen. One yen, however, allegedly had a purchasing power equal to a dollar if used in Japan. See, Palau Community Action Agency, *History of Palau, Vol. 3*, 353.

Because of his intimate knowledge of Japanese officials and activities in Palau, his swift action seems to have seriously upset the officials.<sup>109</sup> I can only speculate how uneasy Tellei may have felt during his interview with Aoyagi, probably conducted in the Japanese language, concerning his past experiences with the Japanese.

During his stay in Peleliu, Tellei quickly learned English and, in the early American administration period, he played the important role of a go-between who bridged American administrators and Palauan leaders who could not communicate without the help of an interpreter, such as Tellei. For the sophistication of his ability to manipulate outsiders, Tellei is characterized by Vidich as a "practical politician."<sup>110</sup> Vitarelli thinks that "His [Tellei's] personal contact and benefits condition his response [to researchers' questions]." He states, "I knew J. Tellei quite well--we worked together. . . I don't know much about his feeling re: Japanese but I can understand how he could compromise and go along with anything that seems to help him and his program."<sup>111</sup> Aoyagi herself indicates her skepticism toward the accuracy of information given to her from Tellei, with the exception of his statement regarding the nature of the *Modekngei* movement.<sup>112</sup> I have no means to discover if Tellei was in a

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<sup>109</sup> See, *ibid.*, 238.

<sup>110</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997. As discussed in the previous chapter, Joseph Tellei was a key informant for Vidich and worked closely with the CIMA researchers.

<sup>111</sup> Vitarelli, personal correspondence, 17 March 1997.

<sup>112</sup> See Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 127. Concerning Tellei's comments about the emergence of *Modekngei*, Aoyagi perceives his statements might reflect a Japanese police record more than what actually happened. She does not clarify whether she has access to this record or not. If her assessment on Tellei's statements is correct, it can be surmised that Tellei also faithfully restated a



circumstance which welcomed Japanese investments in Palau; it is clear, however, he dealt with Aoyagi with his highly political tactics and caution which he learned from his past dealings with foreigners, including the Japanese.

Although the economic aspect of Palau may help elicit more positive narratives of the "Japanese times," negative comments on the Japanese administration are also expressed by the Palauan people in a reflective manner and often in comparison with the American administration. During the interviews conducted in 1991 by an Australian historian, Karen R. Walter, Jonathon Emul stated,

If I was still under the Japanese and the Japanese continued to rule the island, I can never become somebody, you know, like a Congressman or an official, unless the Japanese could have changed their way of handling the island or the system of government. There was no chance for Palauans to move up the ladder.<sup>113</sup>

The first impression of the Americans told by Obechou Delutaoch from Peleliu offers an indirect critique of the Japanese.

The only thing that I began to notice was they [Americans] did not abuse people. They didn't use beatings. . . They were easy-going people and they didn't always have to scold people or demand

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Japanese police or court record concerning the nature of *Modekngei*, more than what actually happened.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, according to *Ucherebelau*, who acted as an interpreter during the *Modekngei* trial, Japanese judges never found leaders of *Modekngei* guilty on a ground of anti-Japanese political movement but rather on money fraud or adultery (Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 220). This ruling was made despite the fact the chief judge of the South Sea Government Supreme Court, Otoji Ishikawa, perceived the movement as an anti-Japanese in its nature. See, *Nan'yō Keizai Kenkyūjo*, [Interview with Otoji Ishikawa], 21.

<sup>113</sup> Walter, "Looking Glass," 304.

something from people. They just let us do whatever we had to do.<sup>114</sup>

The cruelty and brutality inflicted by the Japanese military men were remembered and reported to the researcher regardless of the Japan's increasing economic influence in Palau during more recent times.

*Modekngei* people too remembered the Japanese abuse inflicted on them. According to Aoyagi, her nationality, being a Japanese, brought some disadvantages to her *Modekngei* research. In her article, "*Fiildowāku ni Tsuite* [Fieldworkers and Informants]," and in her monograph, Aoyagi describes difficulties she faced during her *Modekngei* research as the following:

It appears to me that *Modekngei* people's ill feelings toward the Japanese has not been wiped out. I first visited a current *Modekngei* leader, Ngirchobeketang, in summer of 1974. . . He told me rather reluctantly,

"The name of the *Modekngei* god is *Modekngei*. I don't know why Temedad [the founder of *Modekngei*] started it. Everyone in Palau came to worship this god naturally. The most important day [for *Modekngei*] is Christmas. There is only one god [that exists], so [the *Modekngei* god] is same as Catholic god."

After that, he refused to answer my questions and simply repeated that he does not know about the god.

My first visit was a total failure. Later, I found out from an informant that prior to my visit, Ngirchobeketang asked for a god's opinion, through his assistance [a spirit medium], on the matter if he should accept me or not. The god, who descended down upon his request, told Ngirchobeketang,

"Once, leaders of *Modekngei* were abused by the Japanese. Our god despises the Japanese. Never tell the truth to the Japanese woman. For example, [the fact that] the god descends down to the medium must be kept secret from her."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>115</sup> Aoyagi, "[Fieldworkers]," 88, my translation. The message from the *Modekngei* god is presented in two other sources. See Aoyagi, "*Parao no Shin-Shūkyō* [New Religion in Palau]," *Hon*, 1980, 5 (6): 36; & id., *Modekugei*, 219.

After several visits to the [*Modekngei*] school over the years, Ngirchobeketang became seemingly more friendly. During my visit in 1977, he gave me permission to stay in the chapel [at the *Modekngei* school]. It was very convenient for my research, since I was given an opportunity to observe their prayer at night and day.

I experienced some discomfort [while staying at the chapel], however. I constantly felt like being watched by someone and that made me feel hesitant even to freely stretch my body. When I participated in their prayers, I could always hear some *Modekngei* members whisper, "A foreigner (*chad er siaba*) is here. Is it O.K.? Did our leader give her permission to be here?"

So, each time, I had to duck and hide behind the crowd. One time, I wanted to tape their hymns and pushed the button of my tape-recorder. The sound, the recorder made, attracted the attention of everyone present at once. Their glare pierced me.<sup>116</sup>

. . . I felt that Ngirchobeketang never willingly accepted me. Despite his fluency in the Japanese language, he only used Palauan to answer my questions<sup>117</sup> and provided me with extremely limited information. In retrospect, I assume that this was due to his position as a leader [of *Modekngei*]. He could not, perhaps, do more for me due to his responsibility to [*Modekngei*] god who despises the Japanese and due to his consideration for [*Modekngei*] elders who, regardless of their positive or negative feelings toward the Japanese, do not wish to talk about their god.<sup>118</sup>

Aoyagi also learned that near the end of her fieldwork, the leader, Ngirchobeketang, has placed a sort of gag order on *Modekngei* followers about providing information about *kesekes*<sup>119</sup> to Aoyagi. Some informants told her,

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<sup>116</sup> Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 3, my translation.

<sup>117</sup> Aoyagi conducted most of her interviews with Palauan informants in the Japanese language. She states that the Palauan language is extremely difficult to pronounce and when she tried to speak in Palauan, that made her informants laugh. They answered back to her in Japanese. (Aoyagi, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997)

<sup>118</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, "[Fieldworkers]," 89.

<sup>119</sup> *Kesekes* is *Modekngei* hymn/chant.

"There are more *kesekes* but we cannot give them to outsiders."<sup>120</sup> Aoyagi reports that when she was in *Modekngei* follower's houses to collect *kesekes*, she was "always afraid of someone coming in and telling her informants not to tell *kesekes* to the Japanese."<sup>121</sup> Aoyagi, thus, acknowledges disadvantages which were associated with her nationality in conducting *Modekngei* research,<sup>122</sup> though she also reports that most *Modekngei* members received her well and told her about their past experiences with the Japanese.<sup>123</sup>

The nationality of a researcher becomes a critical point to be examined. Nero's account confirms the influence of the interviewer's nationality on the types of answers presented by the Palauan people. She compared her results of interviews with the Palauan oral statements made to a Japanese historian, Wakako Higuchi, who conducted her interviews in the mid-1980's. Nero states, "In many cases, similar or identical material was reported, but at times the tone, the emphasis differed. Palauans would share negative images of the Japanese with me which they might hold back from Higuchi, and undoubtedly the converse was also true."<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 153.

<sup>121</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, "[Fieldworkers]," 89.

<sup>122</sup> Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 3. Aoyagi attributes her research difficulty more to the shamanistic nature of *Modekngei* than her nationality. Because of this nature, according to her, *Modekngei* followers themselves do not know well about their religion. See, *ibid.* I will briefly discuss this issue in Chapter 4.

<sup>123</sup> Aoyagi, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997. Her comments will be cited later in this chapter.

<sup>124</sup> Nero, "Time of Famine," 145. Nero notes that Palauan interviewees did not report to Higuchi about death among Palauans due to starvation and diseases caused by World War II. See *ibid.*

In an article discussing the impact of the interviewer's nationality on the resulting data, mentioned earlier, a Canadian researcher, Marty Zelenietz and a Japanese researcher, Hisafumi Saito, present an opinion similar to that of Nero. Their research was conducted separately, but in the same years, with the Kilenge people in Porne village in New Britain, Papua New Guinea about their experiences during World War II. They found that the different accounts given by the Kilenge people to each researcher mirrored their previous experience with and perceptions of people from each country. Despite the intended efforts to elicit "true" experiences of the Kilenge people by encouraging them to ignore his nationality, Zelenietz received negative opinions about the Japanese activities during the war. Such opinions were concealed from Saito, however. Saito "felt that, in terms of his war research, he suffered because the people of Porne never failed to show him courtesy and compassion."<sup>125</sup>

The courtesy and compassion of informers expressed to the Japanese researcher, Saito, seems to have some relevance with Aoyagi's experience in Palau. I suspect that one of the reasons that Aoyagi declined to believe the anti-Japanese nature of *Modekngei* during the "Japanese times" was because Palauan people provided positive images of those times to Aoyagi. The following three statements by Aoyagi, Vitarelli, and Yoichi K. Rengiil should be examined, keeping in mind the possibility that Palauan "courtesy and compassion" were given to Aoyagi.

Machiko Aoyagi:

Many [*Modekngei*] followers received me well and, for some reason, they willingly and happily told me about their stories from the past.

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<sup>125</sup> Zelenietz and Saito, "Observer Effect," 180.

At least to me, Palauan people talked about their memories from the Japanese mandate period without feelings of grudge or hatred. Rather, [Palauans] expressed their nostalgic sentiments [toward the Japanese] so enthusiastically even to the extent that we felt grateful and obliged, and [they] told us their memories, about their [Japanese] school teachers and so forth. But, after the war started and the military came in, there seems to be occasions that unpleasant events took place.<sup>126</sup>

William Vitarelli:

The older *Modekngei Rubaks* relate Japanese [to] torture and punishment [inflicted by the Japanese] in an effort to stamp out their beliefs. . . . Some *Modekngei* say that Japanese economic situation [sic] was better than the U.S., but most deplore the Japanese treatment during the war and describe the violence with distaste and hatred.<sup>127</sup>

Yoichi K. Rengiil (one of *Modekngei* leaders):

The Micronesian way is that I may hate your guts, but if you come to visit my home, I'll be cordial and hospitable and entertain you to the best of my ability.<sup>128</sup>

I believe that a dialectical process between an interviewer and an interviewee took place during Aoyagi's research. Palauan people might have sensed what she wanted to hear and provided opinions accordingly. Those Palauan opinions contributed to reinforce Aoyagi's perception about the "Japanese times" in Palau and the nature of *Modekngei* during the historical periods.

Another critical issue that might have affected Aoyagi's research, in relation with her nationality, is her use of the Japanese language during her

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<sup>126</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997.

<sup>127</sup> Vitarelli, personal correspondence, 17 March 1997. (Emphasis Vitarelli's)

<sup>128</sup> *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 13 October 1981.

interviews with Palauan people. As I noted above, Aoyagi indicated that her choice of language was made according to Palauan people's kind utilization of the Japanese language.<sup>129</sup> I doubt, however, if all of her informers spontaneously used Japanese in their dealings with Aoyagi. Her comment on *Modekngei* leader's employment of the Palauan language, despite his fluency in Japanese, appears to me as a complaint more than a genuine acceptance of his choice of language. I speculate that Aoyagi's anticipation or appreciation for Palauans' use of the Japanese language might have been sensed by her informants, and they allowed her to continue the practice in her subsequent interviews.

No matter whose initiative it may be, a colonial language, especially if it is used to trace memories of colonial times and if an interrogator comes from the colonizing nation, is a reminder of power asymmetries that existed during the colonial times. The use of the language, then, would have a strong impact on statements, presented by the people who were formerly subjugated under a colonial rule regardless of their will and who are now under the influence of neo-colonial forces operating in the area.

Finally, the nature of Aoyagi's fieldwork and its potential influence on her field data should be examined. Her field studies were conducted in seven discrete occasions scattered over a time span of more than a decade. Her longest stay in Palau at one time lasted less than four months; during the four months, she did not stay in one place but visited many different villages located in separate municipalities. Under these conditions, I suspect that it would have

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<sup>129</sup> Aoyagi also indicated her regret that she was not able to learn the Palauan language, sufficient enough to utilize it in her research, which she wished to do. (Personal Correspondence, 9 April 1997)

been extremely difficult for her to gain trust from Palauan people to the extent that they would reveal their most intimate and possibly secret information.

An American anthropologist, Lynn B. Wilson, who conducted fieldwork in Palau in the late 1980's, describes how her conceptual "location" in the eyes of Palauan people shifted during her two-year stay in Palau and how her "locations" affected the result of her research. She states that after a year passed and after people began to recognize her location within the frame of Palauan society where she lived, was when the most significant conversations between her and her Palauan counterparts took place.<sup>130</sup> Wilson grappled with a highly sensitive political issue; Aoyagi dealt with a historically extremely sensitive topic. The degree of detailedness that Aoyagi's monograph contains about the *Modekngei* religion, may be an indication of her skills as a fieldworker and close collaborations of some Palauan individuals. However, I wonder if the types of her field data would remain the same if she conducted a longer and more extensive research in Palau.

## VII. Anti-Nuclearism and Self-Determination

In this section, I trace the process of Palau's nuclear-free constitution building, which includes a description of the serious difficulties that Palauan people experienced due to US opposition to the proposed constitution. The constitution building involved every single person in Palau. During this period,

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<sup>130</sup> See Lynn B. Wilson, Speaking to Power: Gender and Politics in the Western Pacific, (New York & London : Routledge, 1995), Introduction. Wilson mentions that "Many I talked with pointed out that another aspect of this reticence to speak openly was tied to a [Palauan] belief that 'knowledge is power,' that maintaining power means maintaining secrets, and that knowledge should not easily be given away." (Ibid., 11)



awareness toward colonialism and a pride for their nation ran exceedingly high among the people of Palau. Following my historical narrative of this event, I present my opinion about how this process might have affected Aoyagi's fieldwork in Palau.

#### 1. A Palauan Perception of Nuclearism and Its Influence on the Palauan Political Processes

To general public of Palau, the American testing of nuclear and hydrogen bombs in the Marshalls was regarded as "a Marshallese concern" until the late 1960's.<sup>131</sup> According to an Australian researcher, Ellen Wood, the perception had changed as more information and critical awareness was brought to them by students returning from schools outside of Palau, and by the increasing American Peace Corps volunteers. This new consciousness linked the nuclear testing with the military and with the contamination and loss of ancestral land. This was associated with the already existing wide-spread fear among Palauans, that the US military would take Palauan land away from them. This fear had deep roots in their experiences of World War II; it was newly triggered by the increasing presence of US military teams in the late 1960's due to American involvement in the Viet Nam War.<sup>132</sup>

The new awareness about nuclear devastation was further enhanced by the Congress of Micronesia's establishment of the Special Joint Committee Concerning Rongelap and Utrik Atolls in 1972. The extensive survey made by

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<sup>131</sup> Ellen Wood, "Roots of Anti-Nuclearism in Palau: The Shadow and the Mailed Fist," Thesis (M.A.), Macquarie University, 1991, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, 187, 192.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 18, 193.

the committee led to the public exposure of a large amount of information concerning the US nuclear testing in the Marshalls and its consequences on the people who were irradiated. The members of the committee became acutely aware that the strategic nature of the trusteeship makes the UN Trusteeship Council powerless in controlling the US strategic policies and activities in the Trust Territory, and that it had to be the people of Micronesia to protect their human rights and environment from further US military exploitation.<sup>133</sup>

According to Wood, an alarming concern ran particularly high among the Palauan leaders since the US strategic interests in Palau became clear during the compact negotiations. Roman Bedor, who later became a member of People's Committee during the Constitution Convention, told Wood that "the Palauans in the 1972 Congress [of Micronesia] realized that they would have to take action to protect Palau from the suffering that they felt would surely come if the American military with their nuclear weapons gained access to Palau," and noted "1972 as the year that the drive for the Palauan Constitution emerged."<sup>134</sup> Palau's aggressive pursuit toward its own self-determination and thus a political drift from rest of the Trust Territory states in Micronesia, began to take its course.

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 58-63.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 62-63. 1972 was also a year that the aspiration for the independence ran high in Micronesia; the Joint Declaration against the militarization of Palau was issued by the leaders; and the base options for Palau were specified by the American status negotiation team in the 1972 draft compact.

The Palauan members in the 1972 Congress of Micronesia included the Assistant Legislative Council Mamoru Nakamura, Researchers Francisco Uludong and John Tarkong, Senators Lazarus Salii and Roman Tmetuchl, and three House of Representatives Timothy Olkeriil, Polycarp Basilius and Tarkong Pedro.

## 2. Palauan Ethnic Pride Runs High: Secession or Unity?

In April 1973, the Palau Legislature passed a Constitutional Convention bill, which was vetoed by the District Administrator on the ground that "Palau is not sovereign state therefore it does not have the right to form its [own] government."<sup>135</sup> In October, a resolution, containing the same intents of the vetoed bill was passed by the legislature.<sup>136</sup> This resolution resulted in the establishment of the Pre-Convention Committee and the Constitution Drafting Committee in early 1974. By August 1974, the Drafting Committee had prepared several draft constitutions for Palau. The committee was led by Father Felix Yaoch and Senator Roman Tmetuchl, and assisted by a staff composed of Sadang Silmai, Johnson Toribiong, Francisco Uludong, and three Americans, Thomas Gladwin, Frank King and Dennis Goughling.<sup>137</sup> Five years before the "official" installation of the Palau Constitutional Convention in 1979, the Palauans had already built a solid foundation to draft their own constitution.

There were strong Palauan advocates for Micronesian unity including members of the Tia Belaud Movement, the Save Palau Organization members led by the high chief *Ibedul* Yutaka Gibbons and acting *Reklai* Eusebio

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<sup>135</sup> *Tia Belau*, 20 October 1973.

<sup>136</sup> The District Chief Executive under the TTPI government did not have power to veto resolutions passed by district legislatures while bills were subject to veto by the same authority.

<sup>137</sup> *Tia Belau*, October 1974. No identification of these three Americans are given. Thomas Gladwin was a CIMA researcher conducted research in Chuuk. He later became a District Anthropologist and worked for the TT government. By the 1970's, Gladwin became a very strong advocate for Micronesian independence.

Termeteet, and many of Palau's government workers.<sup>138</sup> The chairman of the Joint Committee on Future Status, Lazarus Salii, was another unity advocate until Palau's economic prospect through the compact and the superport lured him to shift his position for Palau's cessation.<sup>139</sup> The driving force headed by Roman Tmetuchl, however, overwhelmed its opponents. At the state-wide referendum on September 24, 1976, eighty-eight percent of the Palauan voters expressed their hopes to negotiate their future political status with the US, separate from the rest of the Micronesian states currently under the Trusteeship.<sup>140</sup>

The reasons behind the Palauan aspiration for their cessation were multi-fold: 1) The Mariana District negotiated a separate negotiation with the US and became a commonwealth of the US; 2) disputes over the returning of public

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<sup>138</sup> Palau had about 1,300 government workers in the late 1970's. They feared that the separation from the rest of the TT states would result in the loss of their jobs.

The leader of the Tia Beluad Movement, Moses Uludong, a long time leader of the Micronesian unity movement did not support the Constitution at the 1978 referendum. He did not believe that the proposed organization could sustain the united Micronesian states. See, Shuster, "Islands of Change," 305.

<sup>139</sup> Salii as discussed above was a strong advocate for Micronesian independence at the beginning of the political status negotiations. In 1972, in his speech presented at the Palau High School graduation, Salii criticized the separate negotiations of the Marianas with Ambassador Williams. He stated that "[the separate negation] was blatant move to undermine the negotiating position of the Congress of Micronesia." (*Tia Belau*, 28 June 1972) However, by 1974, Salii's main concern for the negotiations shifted from the levels of self-governing power to the amount of US subsidy the Micronesian states could obtain under the condition set by the compact. During the political campaign for the 1978 referendum on the Constitution, Salii maintained his silence.

<sup>140</sup> This referendum was not formally recognized by the US, UN and Trust Territory Government. It was solely sponsored by the Palau Legislature. Shuster, "Islands of Change," 283-284.

lands by the US made the Palauans suspicious concerning the authority of the Congress of Micronesia over the Palauan land; 3) Palau, having one of the smaller population among the Micronesian states, feared that unification would result in the undercutting of Palauan political power in the prospected federation;<sup>141</sup> 4) a large sum of financial support proposed in the 1976 draft compact, and the anticipation to have the superport constructed in the near future, Palauan leaders viewed that the unification would deprive rather than promote the economic well-being of Palau;<sup>142</sup> and 5) despite the decades of successive colonial rules of "Micronesia," the people of Palau have maintained

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<sup>141</sup> Hezel, Strangers, 346-349.

<sup>142</sup> According to Aldridge and Myers, the draft compact of 1976 guaranteed US financial support of about \$23.5 million per year for the Palau government operation for 15 years, upon the ratification of the compact. In addition, \$20.5 million, for having right to militarize Palau over the 15 years, was to be provided to Palau. Aldridge and Myers report specific US strategic requirements in Palau as below:

Exclusive use of forty acres of dry and submerged land in Malakal Harbor for a naval port facility, plus joint use of all anchorage rights. The latter is expected to eventually accommodate a forward base for the new Trident strategic missile-launching submarines.

Exclusive use of two areas totaling 2,000 acres on Babeldaob, the largest island in Micronesia, for storage use -- presumably for the nuclear, chemical-biological, and conventional weapons associated with other bases.

Non-exclusive use of 30,000 acres on Babeldaob -- about a third of the island and taking in five states -- for a jungle warfare training area. This includes four contiguous beaches on the east coast for practicing amphibious landing operations.

Joint military/commercial use of the airports on Babeldaob and Angaur and extension of runways to 9,600 feet, with provisions of a 65-acre exclusive use area at each airport. (Serpent, 49-50)

their distinctive identity as Palauan. Their ethnic pride echoed the *Modekngei* assertion, "Palau for Palauans."<sup>143</sup>

On February 22, 1978, a document called "Proclamation of Palauan Leaders" was issued by the Palau Legislature. The four-page statement pointed out and furiously criticized "malicious and irresponsible attacks by the COM [Congress of Micronesia] on the integrity of the elected leaders of Palau, and thus, the people of Palau and their national dignity."<sup>144</sup> At the end of the

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<sup>143</sup> Concerning the fifth aspect that deals with the artificial geographical boundary of "Micronesia" created and imposed by outside forces, Michel Foucault writes,

Once knowledge can be analyzed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power. There is an administration of knowledge, a political knowledge, relations of power which pass via knowledge and which, if one tries to transcribe them, lead one to consider forms of domination designated by such notions as field, region and territory. (Foucault, Power and Knowledge, 69)

See also, David Hanlon, "Micronesia: Writing and Rewriting the Histories of a Nonentity," *Pacific Studies*, March 1989, 12(2):1-21.

European and Japanese historical documents appear to place more emphasis on the divided loyalty among different clans, villages, and federations within Palau. One of the early discussions by outside researchers on "Palauan identity" is located in the Handbook for the administrators, see, SONA, Handbook, 50. During the 1970's, many conservation efforts on Palauan traditions are materialized. In 1975, the Belau Modekngei School was established. Frank Quimby writes, "The consciousness-raising process of creating a Constitution and a Republic and the long controversial stalemate with United States over the Compact of Free Association have significantly furthered the development of this 'National sentiment'." ("Yin and Yang," 130)

<sup>144</sup> "Proclamation of Palauan Leaders," in "Correspondence Regarding Maritime Authority, Superport, Credit Union, Status Committee, and Others, 1974-1980," 1980, Trust Territory Archives, microfilm V10001, Reel 187.

The main accusation made in the proclamation against the COM were: 1) members of the COM sent a cable to the president of the UN Security Council reporting repeated election frauds allegedly occurred in Palau; 2) the COM

document, they proclaimed that they had no desire in continuing future political status negotiations at which the Congress of Micronesia is represented. One-hundred twenty-five Palauan leaders signed the proclamation and it was certified by the Legislative Secretary of the Palau Legislature, Sylvester F. Alonz. Among the 125, there was a list of thirty-six *Modekngei* signatories, following their leader Sechalboi Wasisang (Ngirchobeketang).<sup>145</sup>

After months of vigorous campaigning which divided Palau into the unity and secessionist factions, on July 12, 1978, ninety-three percent of all Palauan voters participated in the referendum. The result was that by a fifty-five percent majority vote, Palau rejected the Constitution drafted and signed by members of the Congress of Micronesia.<sup>146</sup> The outcome of the referendum meant that Palau would be a separate political entity from the rest of the Micronesian states after the termination of the Trusteeship. In consequence, Palau needed to draft its own constitution and to negotiate their future political status with the US. The same year, on November 28, the Palauan voters elected thirty-eight delegates for the Palau Constitutional Convention.

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appropriated \$304,000 to campaign against the secessionist movement in Palau; and 3) the COM attempted to undermine the Palauan people's desire to become a separate political entity, indicated by the September 1976 referendum.

<sup>145</sup> "Proclamation," pp. 7-9, in *Ibid.* I have never encountered a document indicating a direct political involvement of *Modekngei* members as being explicit in this proclamation.

<sup>146</sup> Shuster, "Islands of Change," 307.

### 3. People of Palau Construct and Defend the World's First Nuclear-Free Constitution for the Republic of Palau

The first meeting of the ConCon on January 28, 1979 was convened in "the euphoria of regaining power after 100 years of colonial rule and amidst a heightened concern about sovereignty, cultural and environmental protection."<sup>147</sup> During the four-month drafting process, the ConCon was led by Haruo I. Remeliik, the President of the ConCon and leaders of several committees of the ConCon. They included the head of the Committee on the Executive Branch Lazarus Salii, the head of the Committee on the Legislative Branch Kaleb Udui, the head of the Committee on General Provisions Tosiwo Nakamura, the head of the Committee on Civil Liberties and Fundamental Rights Bonafacio Basilius and others. Many of the elected delegates were religious leaders, community leaders and teachers who had strong support from the general public. Those included older individuals who experienced World War II and several youths who participated in anti-Viet Nam War movements in US colleges during the 1960s. Throughout the convention, the public attended the proceedings and participated in the debates in drafting their first constitution.<sup>148</sup> In addition, the "people held village meetings throughout Palau to ensure the widest possible participation in drafting the constitution."<sup>149</sup> The April 1979 constitution draft was a result of collective efforts of the entire Palauan population.

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<sup>147</sup> Quimby, "Yin and Yang," 135.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 136. More than a hundred public hearings were held during the four months. See, Sakurai, [Micronesia Report] 119. Traditional chiefs were excluded from becoming ConCon delegates. They had, however, means to participate in the drafting process through attending the ConCon proceedings and community meetings. Shuster, "Islands of Change," 309.

<sup>149</sup> Anglim, "Democracy at Risk," 12 (my count).



Prior to the establishment of the ConCon, in April 1978, the Chairman of the Legislature's Political Status Commission, signed the 1978 draft compact with the US. One of the new agreements made at the Hilo meeting was an accord, commonly called, the "Hilo Principles." The accord delineates the major US concerns, interests, and perspectives that were sought to be the bottom line in their negotiations of free association. The principles specify that under the political arrangement of free association, the Micronesian states are not independent and "Constitutional arrangements for the governance of Micronesia shall be in accord with the political status of free association as set forth in these principles." Another critical point expressed in the accord was that the US, with full authority, will define what constitutes the defense in the Micronesian area and "The peoples of Micronesia will refrain from actions which the United States determines . . . to be incompatible with its authority and responsibility for security and defense matters."<sup>150</sup>

The drafted April 1979 constitution titled, *Uchetemel a Llach er a Beluu er a Belau*, The Constitution of the Republic of Palau, prepared by the ConCon, was in dissent from the Hilo Principles. It prohibited the use of Palauan land for the benefit of the foreign nations or individuals, claimed sovereignty over a 200-mile maritime zone, and banned use, testing, storage and disposition of harmful substances, including nuclear materials, in the republic unless approved by not less than three-fourths of votes at referendum. Tosiwo Nakamura, who introduced the nuclear-ban clauses to the constitution, stated,

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<sup>150</sup> "Statement of Agreed Principles for Free Association," April 9, 1978, in US Department of State, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands: 1978, 31st annual report to the UN, (Washington DC : Department of State, 1978), 24.

The major concern motivating the [ConCon] delegates was to protect the culture, land and water resources. The delegates were thinking about Belau and what's good for the people, not with what might happen with the status negotiations or the Compact of Free Association.<sup>151</sup>

Roman Tmetuchl, having ongoing secret negotiations with Ambassador Peter Rosenblatt to secure a larger US subsidy under the compact of free association, perceived the constitution would impede such negotiations.<sup>152</sup> Tmetuchl sent copies of "anti-nuclear" clauses to Rosenblatt who, in return, immediately sent a cable concerning the four "offending clauses" in the draft constitution.<sup>153</sup>

On April 29, 1979, two months before the scheduled plebiscite for the constitution, Rosenblatt flew to Palau and held a closed meeting with about one-hundred Palauan leaders. According to the *Pacific Daily News*, the ambassador expressed the "grave concern" of the US government on those clauses since, in the US view, they would make American strategic activities in Palau virtually impossible. Rosenblatt told Palauan leaders that they had "freedom" to make their own choices. He stated,

You can have the constitution as it is now, but you are not entitled as a matter of right to an agreement of free association. . . The types of financial assistance that your status commission and I are now negotiating are quite generous. . . If we were discussing some other status, I am absolutely confident that these levels of funding would not be possible.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Quimby, "Yin and Yang," 138.

<sup>152</sup> Sakurai, [Micronesia Report], 125-129.

<sup>153</sup> Anglim, "Democracy at Risk," 12-14 (my count).

<sup>154</sup> *Pacific Daily News*, 8 May 1979.

Immediately, the Palauan Legislature, dominated by the Tmetuchl group, took action to stop the July referendum for the constitution approval. The two bills, which were to promote public education for the constitution referendum and to appropriate funds for the July referendum, were suspended by the legislature.<sup>155</sup> In addition, the legislature passed Bill No.1140 which was to void the constitution without a required three-quarters quorum attending the session. The bill was sent to the TT High Commissioner Winkel. Ten out of thirty-three legislators, who supported the draft constitution, boycotted the legislative sessions between the mid-May and mid-June.<sup>156</sup>

During an interview with a Japanese journalist, Sakurai, concerning his opposition to the drafted constitution, Roman Tmetuchl in his fluent Japanese stated,

Who in the world would give us two to three-hundred million dollars as economic aid? Even Japan wouldn't give us that much. [Palau is] still a territory under the Trusteeship. Under the Trusteeship Agreement, America can freely use [Palau] for the strategic purposes, anyway. . . It is better to get the money from America and built our own country. . . Those who now try to protect the constitution will be willing to bend their knees when faced with money shortage. There has never be a time when Palau can be sold in the high price like now.<sup>157</sup>

Five hundred Palauans protested outside the legislature building against Bill No.1140. About two hundred *mechas*, elderly women of leading clans who

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<sup>155</sup> Sakurai, [Micronesia Report], 124.

<sup>156</sup> Donald Shuster, "Palau's Constitutional Tangle." *The Journal of Pacific History*, 1980, 15 (1), 79.

<sup>157</sup> My translation, Sakurai, [Micronesia Report.] 128-129.

are the most powerful traditional authority in Palau, joined the protest. One of *mechas*, Toyomi from Peleliu, told Sakurai,

In Puerto Rico, wealthy Americans live in big houses but poor people are working as janitors in churches and other places. With these eyes, I observed very closely how miserable people become once they sold their country for money. Some fish are big; others are small. We are [like] small fish dancing in the reefs, and our lives are given from God. We don't worry about [the needs of] the big fish in the Pacific.

This constitution is a hideout to protect the islands. We don't, however, close our islands [to outsiders]. So, when you use our land, please come in [to use it] with a promise. The ocean and hills [here] are ours, and I want you to come here with this premise.

The people created this constitution with a [Palauan] Island heart. It was finally delivered after [incorporating] frequent scoldings of village *rubak* [on the contents of the constitution]. We will enter into the big ocean in the meantime. Now, [however,] I don't think we have to think about the feelings of a big country. Because we are [citizens of] a small country.<sup>158</sup>

Vitarelli reports that *Modekngei* followers "were against the concept of military" and strongly supported the nuclear-free constitution for Palau.<sup>159</sup>

The pro-constitution group formed the Palau Post-Convention Committee, which later became the People's Committee for the Nuclear-Free Constitution, generally known as the People's Committee. Four members of the committee, *Ibedul* Yutaka Gibbons, Tosiwo Nakamura, Moses Uludong and Carlos Salii attended at UN Trusteeship Council meetings in late May. At the assembly, Carlos Salii, a legal counsel of the committee, stated,

The people of Palau view Ambassador Rosenblatt's statement, as well as the manner in which it was made and its timing, as a direct

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<sup>158</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 192-193.

<sup>159</sup> Vitarelli, personal correspondence, 17 March 1997.

interference with the fundamental right of the people of Palau to self-determination. . . . We view this as analogous to a situation where a little boy has been forced to the edge of a cliff, saved only by the hand of a bigger man holding the collar of the boy's shirt and told to either accept the demand of the bigger man or be let loose. No matter how this is viewed, we do not believe it its proper in any form. . . . A great majority of the people of Palau support the proposed constitution and are demanding their right to vote on it, their right of self-determination.<sup>160</sup>

*Ibedul* argued,

. . . section 11 of article XV of the constitution permits amendments for the purpose of avoiding any inconsistencies or conflicts between the constitution and a compact of free association. . . . Therefore, any objections raised by the United States that were not resolved through negotiations leading to a compact of free association could be remedied by the process of amendment to the constitution at the same time as the draft compact is voted on. This would require the use of a democratic process, a process that the United States has fostered in the Trust Territory for the past 30 years, to correct any conflicts.<sup>161</sup>

The committee members succeeded in gaining UN approval to carry out the referendum over the adaptation of the constitution on July 9, 1979 as was previously scheduled. Upon their return, the committee submitted petitions, expressing people's desire to vote on the drafted constitution, with two-thousand and three-hundred signatures of the Palauan people to the Palau Legislature.

A decision by Judge Harold Burnett of the Trust Territory High Court on the legality of the Bill No. 1140 was not reached before the referendum. The

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<sup>160</sup> Carlos Salii's petition, in United Nations Trusteeship Council, Verbatim Record of the Fourteen Hundred and Eighty-Seven Meeting, 24 May 1979, 1979, T/PV.1487, 28-29.

<sup>161</sup> Yutaka Gibbons' petition, in United Nations Trusteeship Council, Verbatim Record of the Fourteen Hundred and Eighty-Seven Meeting, 29 May 1979, 1979, T/PV.1487, 17.

ruling came, however, sixteen days after the referendum and the constitution was approved by the overwhelming 92 percent of Palauan voters. The decision was based on the Order No. 3027, issued by the US Secretary of the Interior a year earlier when Palau voted not to be incorporated in the Federated States of Micronesia upon the termination of trusteeship. The order accorded the same authority to Palau as to the Congress of Micronesia, which operated with a simple majority quorum. Now the same rule could be applied to the Palau Legislature. However, Clause 3a of the same order specified the Palau Legislature to abide by its own charter.<sup>162</sup> The People's Committee appealed to the High Court but the final ruling nullified the referendum result and thus allowed the revision of the constitution.

The revised constitution, now compatible with the Hilo principle of the free association, was disapproved by the voters through the referendum, held on October 23 of the same year.<sup>163</sup> Allegedly, the CIA was sent into Palau to persuade voters to approve the second draft of the constitution, prior to the October referendum. There was an incident; bullets were fired toward the People's Committee's office by someone, several days before the referendum.<sup>164</sup> Yet, the majority of Palauans were determined to adopt their original constitution. The September election for the Palau Legislature resulted

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<sup>162</sup> Sakurai, [Micronesia Report], 133; and, Shuster, "Constitutional Tangle," 79-80.

<sup>163</sup> Seventy percent of voters disapproved the revised constitution. Nearly 90 percent of the total registered voters turned out for the referendum. Shuster, "Constitutional Tangle," 82.

<sup>164</sup> Quimby, "Yin and Yang," 58.

in bringing 27 new legislators who were supporters of the original constitution. Most members of Tmetuchl's faction left the legislature.

At the third constitutional referendum on July 9, 1980, the drafted constitution, which was quite close to its original draft, was ratified by nearly eighty percent of the Palauan voters. Finally, six months later, the Constitution of the Republic of Palau went into effect. At the constitutional election in November 1980, Haruo Remeliik, with strong support from the *Modekngei* group, was elected to be the first President of the Republic. In the prevailing mood of euphoria and excitement, in January 1981, an inaugural festival to celebrate the birth of the Republic was held. People were not aware at the time, however, of the prolonged and even more difficult negotiations to terminate the trusteeship were yet to come.

Aoyagi was in Palau in 1978 and 1980 when Palau was in the middle of a political struggle involving their separation from the other TT states in Micronesia, and at the time of the third referendum to approve their nuclear-free constitution. During the historical period, depicted above, the opposition toward colonial pressure to militarize Palau was extremely high, and a sense of national or ethnic pride was nurtured. The aphorism, "Palau for Palauans," which *Modekngei* leaders proclaimed against Japanese colonialism, had come back and now became a national slogan for their right of self-determination. At the same time, the Japanese proposal of the superport project, although opposed by many Palauans, played a role in Palau's decision to secede from the Federated States of Micronesia. Other Japanese economic investment in Palau's economy was increasingly visible to the people of Palau.

I believe that the Palauan attitude toward Japan was highly ambiguous. On one hand, Japan was a former colonial oppressor who, like the US, was only interested in their own gain at the cost of Palauan people, land and values. On the other hand, Japanese recent economic involvement in Palau had positive meanings to many Palauan people, due particularly to the political circumstances that they faced during the process of compact negotiation with the US. I speculate that many Palauan people presented their polite and friendly outlooks to Aoyagi, avoided making comments which they thought to have offended her, and answered her questions with caution and tact.

#### VIII. The Japanese Proposal for Nuclear Dumping in the Micronesian Ocean

Coinciding with the period of the constitutional convention when Palauan anti-nuclear sentiment and national pride were hiked to the extreme, the Japanese government made a proposal to dump nuclear waste into the Micronesian ocean. During the summer of 1980 when Palauan people were vigorously opposing the Japanese proposal, Aoyagi was in Palau, conducting her research on *Modekngei*. This section explores the process of Micronesia-Japan negotiations on this proposal, Palauan people's opinions about Japan on this issue, and its potential influence on Aoyagi's fieldwork in Palau.

In 1979, the government of Japan proposed to dump 5,000 to 10,000 cement filled 55-gallon drums of radioactive waste in the ocean 600 miles north of Saipan, in the Northern Mariana Islands. Seeing the Pacific as a void, an empty space, owned by no nation, the Japanese government recognized the area as an excellent waste dumping ground. This proposal provoked strong opposition not only from the peoples of Micronesia but also from the South



Pacific Forum, representing the independent island governments of a wider Pacific region.<sup>165</sup>

Without waiting for the formal announcement from the Japanese government about the plan, on March 5, 1980, the Palau Legislature passed a resolution to protest against the nuclear dumping concept. The resolution condemns the concept as "morally inexcusable" and points out the connection of the Japanese government with the US authority who was also interested in dumping nuclear waste in the Micronesian ocean. The legislature perceived "This is a continuation of military policies whereby our lands were seized and used without our consent by warring nations in the past."<sup>166</sup>

Five months later, a mission, headed by a Speaker Joaquin I. Pangelinan of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and a Palauan consultant-aid, Francisco T. Uludong, made a

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<sup>165</sup> Japan's as well as the US proposals to dump nuclear wastes in the Pacific enhanced already strong sentiments against the use of the Pacific Ocean for nuclear testing. This regional opposition led to a negotiation to conceptualize the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone which was established in 1985. In its effort to appease regional opposition against the proposed nuclear dumping in the Pacific, the Japanese delegates traveled Saipan, Guam, Australia, New Zealand, Western Samoa, Fiji and Papua New Guinea in 1980. See, Yoko S. Ogashiwa, "Regional Protests Against Nuclear Waste Dumping in the Pacific," 1990, *Journal of Pacific Studies*, 15: 51-66.

In response to a Japanese delegate's statement at a meeting, "the ocean area [proposed dumping site] does not belong to any nation," a Micronesian representative stated, "it means that the ocean area belongs to all of us." (My translation, Sakurai, [Micronesia Report], 225)

<sup>166</sup> HEM Resolution, No. 044, passed by the Seventh Palau Legislature, Second Regular Session, in "The Association of Chief Executives & Their Meeting with the Japanese Government on the Dumping of Japanese Nuclear Wastes in the Pacific Basin. 1980-1981," 1980, unnumbered pages, Trust Territory Archives, microfilm, V10001, Reel 0085.

seven-day visit to Japan. The objectives of the mission were to systematically express the Micronesian opposition to the proposed nuclear waste dumping. As one of their tactics, the mission appealed to the attendants from the twenty-five countries at the World Conference against Atomic & Hydrogen Bombs, held in Tokyo. As a result of a direct appeal to the conference, the "Tokyo Declaration," approved by the all attendants included a clause,

We note and support the opposition of the governments and people of the Pacific Islands to any dumping or storage of nuclear wastes in the Pacific Ocean by Japan or any other country. We applaud the people of Palau for creating and approving the world's first nuclear-free constitution and call on the rest of the world to follow their example.<sup>167</sup>

Knowing the anti-nuclear sentiment prevalent among the general public in Japan, the delegates also appealed to the Japanese media. All major national newspapers, *Asahi*, *Yomiuri*, *Mainichi* and *Nihon Keizai*, plus *Tokyo Shinbun*, reported the opposition from Micronesia to the proposed Japanese nuclear dumping in the Pacific Ocean. A report made by a delegate from the CNMI, Pangelinan, upon their return to Micronesia, reveals that the Japanese national television network, NHK, broadcast the news about their mission at prime time on August 6, the memorial day of the Hiroshima bombing. The report victoriously states that the news about their mission was aired second, after a broadcast of the Hiroshima anniversary, and "preceding President Carter's explanation of his role in the Billygate affair."<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> "Tokyo Declaration," *ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Joaquin I. Pangelinan, "Report on Trip to Japan," *ibid.*

The mission team also formally submitted a statement of opposition to the proposed nuclear dumping to the government of Japan. The statement criticizes the concept of nuclear dumping and states, "the Japanese have become too selfish and all they care about is to enjoy the fruits of nuclear power generation without regards to the grave potential dangers in its resulting wastes pose to the Pacific Ocean and the peoples who still rely on it for their livelihood."<sup>169</sup> Roman Bedor, a member of the People's Committee, Palau,<sup>170</sup> campaigned in Hiroshima to gather signatures from the Japanese public and petitioned the Japanese government with additional signatures numbering about 10,000 gathered in Micronesia.<sup>171</sup>

In response to the mission's appeal to the Japanese government to dispatch a group to Micronesia, in August 14 and 15, 1980, the second annual meeting of the Association of Chief Executives of the Pacific Basin was held in Guam with the attendance of four government officials from Japan and High Commissioner, Adrian Winkel.<sup>172</sup> The conference began with a briefing by a

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<sup>169</sup> Pangelinan, "An Appeal to the Japanese People," *ibid.* A Japanese newspaper article reveals that Pangelinan was a Japanese war orphan found by an American serviceman in Saipan. His parents and sister died during air raids and he was adopted by the Pangelinan family. In the article, he states, "I came to the country of my [birth] parents to represent all the people of the Marianas, who kindly raised me and to whom I would like to devote myself." My translation, *Mainichi Shinbun*, 6 August 1980, Tokyo Japan.

<sup>170</sup> As discussed earlier, during the year prior to this campaign, the People's Committee fought vigorously to defend the Palau's nuclear-free constitution.

<sup>171</sup> *Mainichi Shinbun*, 6 August 1980.

<sup>172</sup> The membership of the Association of Chief Executives of the Pacific includes not only representatives from the former TTPI states, but also from Guam, American Samoa, and Nauru. See, "Association of Chief," TT Archives, Reel 0085.

Japanese delegate, Deputy Director-General of the Nuclear Safety Bureau of the Science and Technology Agency, Hiroshi Gotō. During his two-hour long speech, Gotō insisted the scientifically proven safety of the proposed nuclear waste dumping and suggested that since the Japanese proposal meets the International Convention and Standard approved by the forty-five nations in London in 1972, Japan could proceed with its operation without consent from the Micronesian nations.<sup>173</sup>

Despite the repeated affirmations of the safety of the low-level nuclear waste dumping, Gotō was unable to provide a satisfying answer to a question about why Japan does not dump the waste either on Japanese land or in the sea near Japan.<sup>174</sup> Kuniwo Nakamura represented Palauan voices and submitted a

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<sup>173</sup> This convention is known as the London Dumping Convention and it came into effect in August 1975. See, *ibid.* At the meeting between Japanese delegates and leaders of the CNMI, a Japanese representative, Tsuda, was "attacked" on his careless comments that the basis of Micronesian opposition to the Japanese proposal was emotional in contrast to the Japanese, whose claims were based on the scientific and technological studies. See, "Meeting Between the CNMI Government Leaders and Japan Representatives on Nuclear-Dumping," 1980, unnumbered pages, Trust Territory Archives, microfilm, V10001, Reel 143.

<sup>174</sup> The grounds on which the Japanese delegates proclaimed the safety of the hazardous material being dumped in the ocean were: 1) the expected site has 6,000 meters in water depth and 4,000 meters are considered to be appropriate depth; 2) the area is absent of volcanic activities; 3) dumping of 10,000 drums would produce 0.02 millirem of radiation annually, while the average person gets 100 millirems of radiation from the natural cause, such as sun, earth, and foods; and 4) A total of \$7,900,000. was spent for the development of technology, the marine exploration, the oceanographic survey, and the formulation of standards (?). The reasons for Japan to avoid using their land and ocean areas are due to the unsuitability of the area from frequent earthquakes and the amount of the waste material. The amount was said to be too great to consider storing in the small islands in Japan. See, "Transcription of Association of Chief Executives of the Pacific Basin Conference—August 14, 1980," in "Association of Chief," Reel 0085.

paper stating the position of the Palau government on the proposed nuclear dumping to the Japanese delegates. The paper states,

Palau unequivocally opposes the reported plans of the Government of Japan or any other Nation to dump nuclear wastes . . . Our new Constitution . . . indicates the strength of our abhorrence of nuclear materials in our region of the Pacific. . . It is ironic indeed that Japan is the first Nation which wants to inflict its nuclear waste on us. . . In the event of an accident, our fishing and tourist industries -- our only chances for survival as a people -- would be threatened. . . Palauans do not wish to join their fellow Micronesians as unwilling guinea pigs for the research necessary [to discover the impact of nuclear dumping in the ocean] . . . Neither the United States nor the Government of Japan consulted us prior to surveying the Pacific Ocean bed for suitable disposal sites. We learned of the plans of both Nations not through official notifications, as benefits emerging sovereign entities, but through reading the newspapers.<sup>175</sup>

At the end of the second day of the meeting, a resolution to oppose nuclear waste dumping and storage in the Pacific was unanimously adopted and signed by chief representatives. Amata Kabua, the President of Marshall Islands, Peter Coleman, the Governor of American Samoa, and Leo Keke, the Minister of Justice of Nauru Republic, were absent from the conference and were unable to sign the resolution.<sup>176</sup>

How did the people of Palau react to this issue? In Palau, between 1979 and 1980, the nuclear-free clause in their constitution was under attack by the US, and the issue of nuclear hazards occupied the center of the people's

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<sup>175</sup> "Position of Palau on Nuclear Waste Dumping in the Northwest Pacific Ocean," *ibid*.

<sup>176</sup> "Resolution by The Association of Chief Executives of the Pacific Basin to Oppose Nuclear Waste Dumping and Storage in the Pacific Basin Region," Resolution no. 1, *ibid*.

attention. Beginning in 1979, the People's Committee, a pro-nuclear-free constitution group, headed by Moses Uludong, had visited each village in Palau as well as Koror to play films portraying the nuclear devastation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and those who were exposed to the nuclear radiation from the bombs.

A Japanese journalist, who visited such meetings in Palau during the summer of 1980, reported the fear expressed by the Palauan audiences as they watched the nuclear related films. He also mentioned the serious concerns and criticisms directed toward the Japanese nuclear dumping proposal. He was asked a series of questions, such as, if nuclear related diseases could be cured by medicine, if plants grow in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or if there are people still suffering from their exposures to the nuclear blasts during the war. Then, one Palauan man suggested to the journalist,

Japan has the constitution which contains the nuclear-free three principles; not to make, not to possess, and not to bring in. Your constitution was a model of our new constitution. So, why don't you add the fourth principle of not to bring out? Then, Japan will not cause troubles to other countries.<sup>177</sup>

Another journalist, Sakurai, was asked at a such community meeting, if the Japanese have a habit of dumping garbage in their neighbor's yard. He describes his experience at the meeting as the following:

. . . Despite of my anticipation that I would receive many questions about the horror of the nuclear explosions [experienced by the Japanese], questions raised by [Palauan] attendants of the meeting were all about the Japan's proposal of nuclear dumping without an

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<sup>177</sup> My translation, *Asahi Shinbun*, 21 July 1980. The name of this journalist is not listed at the article. Vitarelli reported to me that *Modekngai* people were also against the Japanese nuclear dumping proposal. (Personal correspondence, 17 March 1997)

exception . . . it is indescribable how tense the air was [during the meeting].<sup>178</sup>

Sakurai, upon his return to Tokyo, also received a letter from Alfonso Kebekol, a Palauan man who lost his left arm from an accident caused by an explosion of a undiscovered bomb from WWII. In his letter, written in Japanese in 1980, sixty-four year old Kebekol stated,

The Japanese government plans to dump nuclear waste in the Pacific in the fall of this year. Won't the ocean get contaminated? Or, won't the waste radiate the deadly plutonium? If there is no expected harm from the dumping of nuclear wastes, Japan should dump them in the ocean off Yokohama. Why do you dump the dangerous garbage in the Pacific Ocean, 750 km far away from Japan? Such conspiracy violates the nuclear-free constitution adapted by the people of Palau. . .<sup>179</sup>

Unlike the superport proposal that divided Palau into pro- and anti-factions toward the Japanese involvement, the nuclear dumping proposal appears to be anonymously opposed by the people of Palau. Since Aoyagi did not inform me about her personal experiences with Palauan people over this proposal, I have no evidence to prove its impact on her research. Reading Japanese journalists' comments, however, makes me realize how angry Palauan people were toward Japan because of the proposal; their negative opinions toward Japan and its proposal, expressed to the journalists, are direct and harsh. The timing of the Japanese in making the proposal was perhaps one of the reasons that enhanced Palauan intolerance of the issue.

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<sup>178</sup> My translation, Sakurai, [Micronesia Report,] 199.

<sup>179</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 201.

I speculate that Aoyagi must have seen her informants go to community meetings about the nuclear dumping issue; or she must have sensed the tense air regarding the Japanese proposal among the people whom she interviewed. The ethnographic fieldwork depends greatly on the goodwill of people being studied. Those people give their cooperation to the researcher with no expectation for a favor in return. The Japanese proposal could have made some of Aoyagi's informants question why he or she should be fully cooperative to this Japanese scholar. I suspect that the proposed nuclear dumping was a damaging blow for Aoyagi to maintain a good relationship with her Palauan informants.

#### IX. Compact Money vs. Nuclear-Free Constitution

The last section briefly illustrates political and economic circumstances in Palau from the birth of the Republic in 1981 to Aoyagi's last fieldwork in 1984. The urgent task for Palau then was to terminate the trusteeship through further negotiation with the US over the compact of free association. I focus on conflicting interests held among the people of Palau; their repugnance toward the potential militarization of the islands and their financial predicament. At the end, I present my assessment of the circumstantial impacts on Aoyagi's research in Palau.

The last and most critical task for Palau to regain its "sovereignty" was to reconcile the differences in the Constitution and the compact of free association and to terminate the trusteeship. Independence was still an option. Having underdeveloped and stagnated private businesses, however, Palauans



concluded that independence was almost not a viable option.<sup>180</sup> The amount of subsidy promised by the US in the compact agreements, on the other hand, kept hiking up. A member of Palau Community Action Agency, Belhaim Sakuma, commented on the economic condition of Palau as following:

I don't know whether it's by design or by what. But after thirty years under the United States, you know, colonialism, we have become so dependent on it. . . . We don't see any development in our island. We don't have any infrastructure to be able to contain any tourism we like to get into. We sit in the middle of the fishing ground in the world, [but] we don't even have a single fishing fleet.<sup>181</sup>

Before Aoyagi's last visit to Palau in 1984, two separate referendums, concerning the adaptation of the compact of free association, were held. On both occasions, the majority voted for the approval of the compact, but another question on the ballot to waive the constitutional ban on nuclear materials did not gain the required 75 percent vote. The US government strongly desired to secure full authority on strategic matters in Palau, and insisted that, without it, there would be no compact of free association between the US and Palau.

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<sup>180</sup> According to a newspaper report, there were about 2,000 jobs in Palau in 1981. About sixty percent of the 2,000 were employed in the public sector. Every year, more than four-hundred students graduated from high schools but most of them could not find a job. A high rate of youth suicides, alcohol abuses, and delinquency was a serious problem. The average wage of the private businesses then was 80 cents an hour, while the average government workers earned \$1.30. More than 10 percent of the Palau's population had left their home islands to seek better employment opportunities. See, *Honolulu Advertiser*, 16 December 1981.

<sup>181</sup> Debra Dralle, prod., Strategic Trust: The Making of a Nuclear Free Palau, (New York : Cinema Guild, 1984), videorecording. The statement made in English.

A considerable degree of manipulation and pressure from the US government and pro-compact members of the Palau Congress was placed on people to make them approve the compact, which guaranteed the US authority over security matters. Many Palauan people hoped to receive some financial support from the US, as is the case for most young independent nations, formerly under colonial rules.

In late 1981 and early 1982, two violence-ridden strikes by about 300 government workers who demanded 100 percent wage increase occurred in Koror. The Palauan government had a \$2.5 million deficit at that time, and thus, there was no means to meet such demands.<sup>182</sup> The US subsidy promised through the compact of free association was not only attractive but also badly needed by the government of Palau and by many in the Palauan public. President Remeliik altered his position from a guardian of the new constitution to a supporter of the compact which would come to terms with the US strategic interest.

*Modekngei* members, who advocated a self-sufficient and independent Palau earlier in the 1970's, also seem to have gradually shifted their opinions about the compact of free association. In 1983, *Modekngei* leaders were facing the end of a funding, which they had received since 1974 from the Janns Foundation for the establishment and operation of the Belau Modekngei School.<sup>183</sup> Vitarelli commented, "At first, they [*Modekngei* members] were

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<sup>182</sup> *Honolulu Advertiser*, 16 December 1981. For more information about the strikes, see Aldridge and Myers, Serpent.

<sup>183</sup> Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 238. The contract with the Janns Foundation was a ten-year term. The Modekngei School received \$140,000 in the first year. The funding was designed to gradually decrease over a decade. Other sources of income for the school included personal donations from *Modekngei* followers, the

against it [the compact of free association] but when U.S. made promises of great \$ [sic] they changed their mind."<sup>184</sup> Aoyagi, who was interested in studying *Modekngei's* response to the American pressure for the approval of the compact, confirms his view.<sup>185</sup>

Money was a pressing issue in Palau at that time. However, at the same time, Palauan people have persistently asserted their desire to have firm control over their lives and land. Approving the compact of free association meant accepting the possibility that the US military would alienate more than one-third of the Palauan land from Palauan owners. On February 8, 1984, two days before the second referendum, all traditional chiefs assembled in Koror and held a convention against the compact. A female chief, Dirramang Ngirkelau, addressed the audience with determination and passion:

All I have to tell you, tribal leaders of Palau, is don't rush into the modern way. We may be the weaker of the two countries, but think of our land and our children. And, I want to tell all of you gathered here that no one has been able to take my land yet. And, I am determined no one ever will take away what is rightfully mine. I have nothing more to say.<sup>186</sup>

Nuclear weaponry was the last thing they wanted to have in Palau. A Palauan educator, Bernice Keldermans, stated, "In a matter of second [sic], the

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fund made available from the Modekngei Credit Union, the profit made from students labor at the school, and fees for performed rituals and other money raised at *Modekngei* churches and meetings, and the profit from a store, owned by *Modekngei*. See, *ibid.*, 231-233 & 238.

<sup>184</sup> Vitarelli, personal correspondence, 17 March 1997.

<sup>185</sup> See, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 250-251.

<sup>186</sup> Dralle, *Strategic Trust*, videorecording. The statement was made in the Palauan language. The English translation was provided in the video.

race can be wiped out [by nuclear weapons]. If we allow any storage of nuclear weapons here, we will be used as a target area for big powerful nations."<sup>187</sup>

Their experiences of World War II remained as the root for the anti-nuclear and anti-military sentiment. A voice from a Palauan woman, at the political gathering of Palauan women in Koror, is explicit about the repeated plea:

During the last war [World War II], we had nothing to do with the struggles between America and Japan. However, many [Palauan] people were killed by air raids. The air raids devastated our village. I make it clear that it was not our war. Because we know that well, we adamantly deny the American attempt to bring nuclear weapons [into Palau], now again.<sup>188</sup>

How did this political and economic circumstances influence Aoyagi's research? Again, I perceive that Palauan people's exposure to the Japanese business interests in Palau and their anticipation toward Japan to economically develop Palau in the near future, would be the strongest factor that might have influenced types of data Aoyagi was given from Palauan people. As noted earlier, toward the end of Aoyagi's research in Palau, the amount of Japanese economic investment and tourism had been increasing steadily.

Although not all Palauan people welcomed the Japanese businesses, I speculate that it would have been seen as less a threat than US subsidy which was to come only with the Palauan acceptance of the US base requirement. *Modekngei* followers, who reportedly had become more money-oriented than they once were, might have had more positive sentiment toward the recent

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid. The statement was made in English.

<sup>188</sup> My translation, Sakurai, [*Micronesia Report*], 142-143.

Japanese involvement in Palau. As discussed earlier in this chapter, because of the undeveloped economic condition in Palau, which was a main obstacle to avoid the potential US militarization of their islands, Palauan people have re-evaluated the Japanese past involvement in Palau with more positive feelings.

Under this circumstances, I surmise that many Palauan people could have provided positive images of the Japan's past involvement in Palau to Aoyagi. Perceiving further Japanese development of Palau was sure to come, those Palauan people, who desperately felt a need for Palau to become less dependent on the US subsidy, could have dealt with Aoyagi with tact and caution. I believe that the political and economic circumstances in Palau must have had a certain degree of impact on how Palauan people treated Aoyagi and what they chose to tell her about Japanese past deeds in Palau.

#### X. A Summary and Notes

Palau, at the time of Aoyagi's fieldwork, was in great political turbulence. People were divided into factions which were in a constant process of dissolving and reforming. Palauan consciousness about colonialism, their repugnance toward militarization of the islands, and their sense of nationalism were heightened. In the compact negotiations with the US government for their future political status, Palau's undeveloped economy and the need of US financial assistance hampered their pursuit of achieving the desired conditions that would directly affect the future of their country. At the same time, Japan's increasing economic involvements in Palau, or its possibilities in the future, were observed by the Palauan people, and that too divided people in Palau.

Potentially, some Palauan people, especially business leaders and some politicians, could have perceived the potential Japanese economic investments

as one of the ways to waive US pressure to accept strategic requirements in exchange for their subsidy. The superport proposal would have been the best example of such an expectation. Again, sensing what Aoyagi likes to hear and/or hoping to achieve economic development, people might have concealed their negative assessments about Japanese past deeds and provided positive opinions about Japan and the Japanese. Some older Palauans, seemingly due to their dissatisfaction with the recent political, economic and social conditions of Palau, nostalgically remembered and described their past during the "Japanese times" to Aoyagi in such a manner. These people presented their positive views of the Japanese presence and influence in the past to Aoyagi. And, as mentioned above, this enhanced Aoyagi's skepticism, and potentially a sense of rivalry, toward Vidich's interpretation of *Modekngei* and led her to place research focus on religious aspects of the movement rather than the political one.

Memories of World War II and the miseries, enhanced by Japanese abuse during the periods, were recalled vividly by the Palauan people being interviewed by American or Australian researchers. Some Palauan people were alarmed by the high-handed manner exhibited by the Japanese government and businesses in their dealings in and with Palau, since such attitudes and activities reminded them of abuse and exploitation. *Modekngei* people remembered the past Japanese violence against them. These groups of people could have had strong reservations in cooperating with Aoyagi's research, simply because they did not like the Japanese. Aoyagi reveals that the *Modekngei* leader and elders, who possess strong influence over the other followers, declined to talk about their religion, their god, or their past activities. This means that Aoyagi did not have support from the people who could have provided her with the most detailed and

insightful information due to their direct involvements in *Modekngei* activities in earlier times.

In the last two chapters, I have examined field contexts in which Vidich and Aoyagi conducted their research on *Modekngei* and analyzed their impacts on the two researchers' investigations. It is not my intention to say that none of the researchers were able to make any findings about the nature of *Modekngei* history. Rather, the nationalities of Vidich and Aoyagi in the two different time periods they conducted their researches in Palau, with different historical, political and economical contexts, affected the types of information the Palauan people provided. The dialectic nature of the interviewee-interviewer relationship, most likely, further fostered the difference in types of data, given to the researchers. This, in turn, made a large contribution to the reasons why there are different interpretations of *Modekngei* history and the two representations of the movement with significantly different foci, that were made by the two researchers.

Through this study, I learned that ethnographic fieldwork is a extremely dynamic process: Different perceptions and values, across time and space, mingle with each other and powers collide; emotions dictate; each player, ethnographer and informants alike, assumes his role and position in relation with each other and the role is subject to a constant change; meanings of past and present events are reexamined and redefined; narcissism and jealousy act out; layers of images interplay and their boundaries get blurred. I argue that no matter how seriously ethnographers attempt to be neutral investigators of the objective truth, they cannot escape from past and contemporary histories which entangle their informants as well as ethnographers themselves.

Chapter 4  
The Strategic Fronts:  
Selected Truths and Reflected Selves in Ethnographies<sup>1</sup>

"When Hermes took the post of messenger of the gods, he promised Zeus not to lie. He did not promise to tell the whole truth" (Vincent Crapanzano).<sup>2</sup>

I. Introduction

Both Aoyagi and Vidich present their scholarly representations of *Modekngei* based on their assumptions of scientific neutrality and the existence of objective truth. This chapter is my attempt to unveil the subjectivity of the two scholars, as was employed in their efforts to present convincing arguments. Brief personal profiles of both scholars are inserted as a reference. The theoretical or scholarly orientations of Vidich and Aoyagi take more pages since they seem to have brought secular biases, particularly in Vidich's work, to determine their foci and the types of descriptions that they have produced. Detectable tactics of the two scholars are highlighted. Alternative interpretations are also introduced to counter the works of the two scholars. The chapter illustrates how scholarly and personal orientations and intention of scholars powerfully shape representations of the other.

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<sup>1</sup> The following chapter deals with theories and ethnographic works of many scholars. Admittedly, I could not survey the below mentioned works or theorists to the point I would obtain a deep insight into their works. What is presented is my best attempt at this time.

<sup>2</sup> Crapanzano, "Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description," in Writing Culture, 53.



## II. Arthur J. Vidich

I know very little about Arthur J. Vidich's life. He was born in the early 1920's and grew up during the middle of the Depression in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.<sup>3</sup> Vidich majored in Economics as an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. He informed me that his cross-cultural encounters during and immediately after the war motivated him to enter a MA program in Anthropology at the above university in 1946.<sup>4</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, his experiences in war apparently made Vidich critical of the US government. This is mildly reflected in his CIMA report, and strongly so in his dissertation completed three years later.<sup>5</sup> He entered Palau as a CIMA researcher in his

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<sup>3</sup> Concerning information about Milwaukee, I referred to Joseph Bensman and Arthur J. Vidich, American Society: The Welfare State & Beyond, Revised, (South Hadley, MA : Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1987), cover page. Vidich informed me that he is currently 75 years old. In personal correspondence, 10 June 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997. The information presented in the preface of the above monograph, American Society, reveals that Vidich attended the University of Michigan, as well as the University of Wisconsin, before his entry to Harvard University as a Ph.D. candidate.

<sup>5</sup> Following are the main criticisms Vidich presents in his dissertation:

1. Perceiving Palauan tradition as rigid and unchanging and failing to understand the complex social relationships among different groups of Palauans, the US administration conferred almost exclusive authority on two high chiefs. This led to a disturbance on the "checks and balances" that existed within Palauan society and lend the chiefs to "abuse" their authority.

2. Despite the expressed desire of many Palauan people for the American administration to develop a capitalistic economy, the administration was reluctant to do so. According to Vidich, the American's image of "South Sea natives" influenced the decision. He criticizes the strategic interests of the US that precedes the development of Micronesia for its inhabitants.

3. Vidich points out the contradiction between the universal education provided by the administration and their lack of interest in economic development. Vidich states, "This meant that in a subsistence economy large numbers of Palauans were being trained in new skills and techniques for which

mid-twenties.<sup>6</sup> By that time of his involvement in the CIMA project, he was married to his wife, Virginia Wicks Vidich, and his first child was born during his research in Palau.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to his engagement in the CIMA research, Vidich completed his MA thesis except for the defense. I do not know what the topic or themes of his study were, but he studied Native American youth in a rural town, Viroqua, in western Wisconsin, where he conducted his fieldwork.<sup>8</sup> In his paper, "Looking Backward," Vidich discusses how Palauan people impressed him with their sophistication in understanding the world through their dealings with multiple colonial administrations. He states, "I was immediately convinced that there was

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there was no ready market, an example of 'trained incompetence'." ("Political Impact," 292)

Vidich's CIMA report discusses the first of the above three criticisms and briefly mentions the strategic orientated nature of the US administration. During his Ph.D. study at Harvard, Vidich went to London on a Fulbright grant, where he associated himself with many anthropologists from all over the world. Among them, students from British colonies in Africa, who "thought that the United States, the original rebels against colonialism, would be their redeemer," had strong impact on Vidich's attitude. Vidich, just returned from Palau, knew that the US was not the "redeemer" as perceived by the African students. I believe that the critical stand Vidich expressed in his dissertation toward the US policy in Micronesia derived more from his experience in London. In Arthur Vidich, "Looking Backward," a draft of a paper presented at the American Anthropological Association Meetings, in Philadelphia, 1986, p.3. This paper is my personal collection, originally provided by Vidich, enclosed in his letter dated on 27 March 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>7</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997; and Arthur Vidich and Joseph Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in Rural Community, (Princeton : Princeton University Press; London : Oxford University Press, 1958), p.x.

<sup>8</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997; and Vidich, "Looking Backward," 1.

no way it [Palauan society] could be understood outside of this framework."<sup>9</sup>

Vidich's inquiry into colonial histories of Palau, presented in his CIMA report, seems to have partially originated in his realization about the Palauan people's familiarity of the global politics.

A scholar who profoundly influenced Vidich's scholarly orientation is the German sociologist, Hans H. Gerth.<sup>10</sup> He was an intellectual exile whose liberal

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<sup>9</sup> Vidich, "Looking Backward," 2. Vidich was especially impressed by a Palauan man named Takeo Yano. He states,

. . . one of the first informants I met was the superintendent of schools, a Palauan whose father had been a Japanese soldier and who had received his B.A. and M.A. degrees in philosophy from a Seventh Day Adventist university in Tokyo. Speaking Palauan, Japanese, and English, this trilingual informant, aged 30, a few years older than I, wished to engage me in a discussion concerning the works of Kant and Hegel and the philosophy of an educational system of Palau. (Ibid., 1)

A similar description of the above mentioned Takeo Yano appears in Vidich's dissertation, "The Political Impact of Colonial Administration" (1952). Vidich also states,

I could not understand why Homer Barnett, then leading another team of researchers in Palau, had chosen to study the remotest Palauan village he could find in the expectation that there he would find a purer representation of its culture and society. I was impressed that wherever I travelled [sic] in those islands, there was a short-wave radio listened to by natives [sic] eager to learn what disposition would be made of them by the superpowers who they already understood to be in a power struggle of global proportions. ("Looking Backward," 2)

<sup>10</sup> Vidich describes Gerth as an intellect with no academic boundaries: "He never compartmentalized psychoanalysis, psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, linguistics, mass communication or the natural science." (Arthur J. Vidich, "Hans Gerth: A Modern Intellectual Exile," in Politics, Character, and Culture: Perspectives from Hans Gerth, Contributions in Sociology, no. 41, ed. by Joseph Bensman, Arthur Vidich, and Nobuko Gerth, (Westport & London : Greenwood Press, 1982), 5.

philosophy was impeached by the Nazis party in pre-World War II Germany. Gerth was Vidich's teacher during his MA study, immediately before his departure to Palau. The sociology of Max Weber, under Gerth's guidance, runs through Vidich's CIMA work.<sup>11</sup> The first part of the following discussion focuses on detectable influences of Weber's theories on Vidich's study on the Palauan society, which might have partially determined Vidich's representation of *Modekngei*.

In my assessment, the primal influence which shaped Vidich's analysis of Palau (including *Modekngei*) is Weber's notion of "ideal type." Ideal type, as defined by Weber, refers to typical courses of conduct shared by members of a group. It is an essentialized abstract concept extracted from historical phenomena, which does not necessarily always correspond to the "reality" of those who live today. Yet, it provides a collective rational or motive for a social actor which in turn is manifested in the behavior of individuals within the group. What I understand about this concept is that the ideal type, selectively chosen characteristics of a certain phenomenon at a given historical period which are crystallized as abstract concepts, is to be used as an analytical devise which

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Gerth and his teachings appear to have a lasting influence on Vidich and his scholarly work. Vidich seems to have been one of the best students of Gerth. In a commemorative monograph published after his death, Politics, Character, and Culture, listed above, Vidich introduces Gerth in the opening chapter; this clearly indicates his admiration and affection toward Gerth. See, Vidich, "Hans Gerth: A Modern Intellectual Exile," in *ibid.*, 3-13. Also, several books, authored by Vidich, are dedicated to Gerth. See, Vidich and Bensman, Small Town; and *id.*, The New American Society: The Revolution of the Middle Class, (Chicago : Quandrangle Books, 1971).

<sup>11</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997.

measures contemporary social phenomenon in terms of levels of deviation and similarity to the conceptualized ideal type.<sup>12</sup>

Vidich clearly perceives factionalism, as evidenced in pre-contact historical periods in Palau, as a prominent characteristic of Palauan culture. As mentioned in Chapter 1, he describes that the way Palauan social "equilibrium" had been maintained was through institutionalized competition and reciprocity; the two antithetical institutions functioned as checks and balances which prevented one group from consolidating much power over the other. Flexibility in Palauan culture is also noted by Vidich. I believe that the above premise is the ideal type of Palauan society as perceived by Vidich. He analyzes the succession of colonial policies and their impacts largely on Palauan social and economic structures (including motivational factors associated with competition), and provides his analysis of how the ideal type deviated due to the colonial intrusions, or how it has remained the same regardless of the changes.

Concerning his CIMA research, Vidich states that "[he] tried to show how values were institutionally embedded and acted out in a society that had gone through several social and administrative revolution."<sup>13</sup> This comment supports my speculation about his use of Weber's theory of ideal type. If this analytical method of ideal type was actually employed by Vidich, then *Modekngei* was analyzed from the perspective of institutionalized competition, and thus, resulted in compromising the significance of the religious appeal that *Modekngei* might have had to the general public in Palau, in his representation of the movement.

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<sup>12</sup> To understand Weber's theory of ideal type, I referred to Thomas Burger, Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation . . . History, Laws and Ideal Types, (Durham : Duke University Press, 1976).

<sup>13</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1977.

In my assessment, Vidich's use of the ideal type worked as an effective tool to provide a clear-cut picture of social change that occurred in Palau. *Modekngei* to Vidich, thus, could have been simply one of many such variations of ideal type, or could be the primal sample, which he could explain clearly through the use of this notion of ideal type.

According to Weber, every human action is a means to achieve an end, regardless of whether the actor is aware of it or not. The "rationality of man," seemingly the basis of Weber's analysis, is also applied to his study on religion. To him, it is clear that "practical impulses for action are founded in the psychological and pragmatic contexts of religion."<sup>14</sup> Weber appears to have believed that any religion is rationally oriented, in the way that it promises this-worldly reward, for example, good fortune, for those who are suffering.<sup>15</sup> As an example of such rational orientation behind a religion, particularly among socially oppressed peoples, Weber states, "All that can be said is that resentment *could* be, and often and everywhere has been, significant as one factor, among others, in influencing the religiously determined rationalism of socially disadvantaged strata."<sup>16</sup>

Weber's view of religion, his emphasis on rationality, might have further influenced Vidich's observation of *Modekngei*. At least, it can be surmised that

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<sup>14</sup> H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, trans., ed., and with an introduction by H. Gerth and C. Mills, (New York : Oxford University Press, 1958), 267.

<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that Weber associates religion particularly with what he calls "underclass" or "slaves" and discusses religious functions to alleviate their suffering. See, *ibid*, Chapter XI.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

Weber's fascination with rationalism might have had a strong impact on Vidich, which in turn directed Vidich's focus to the pragmatic and secular characteristics of *Modekngei*. Yet, the latent social function of religion is perhaps more of a concern of social scientists, not of people who believe in it. For people who worship ancestral spirits or/and various "mythical" deities, our religions are not experienced as simply a means to achieve an end, such as salvation. Nor, is it the definition of a god or a religion that has significance, but it is the reverence we have toward the natural world, supernatural beings and everyday or seasonal religious practices (rituals), that carry meaning.

My understanding of religion must not be seen as identical to those of the Palauan people. The religions of Palau seem to have been more directly connected with politics. However, I believe, at least, some people followed the *Modekngei* faith simply out of their desire to express their reverence to supernatural beings in a way that was familiar to them. It is less likely that Palauan people understood the world as Weber did: ". . . principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation."<sup>17</sup> I believe that regardless of its political nature, *Modekngei* as a religion did have significance to its followers and this aspect should not have been dismissed in the way Vidich did in his CIMA report.

From reading the writings of Weber, the strongest impression I received was his obsession with power and politics, almost as much as post-modernists are. Weber's definition of power is "to realize their [ones'] own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 139.

the action."<sup>18</sup> And, politics means "striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power."<sup>19</sup> I am almost certain that Vidich entered Palau with Weber's passion for power and politics as his choice of topic, "political factionalism," suggests. In my view, his inclination toward the above issues partially explains why Vidich almost entirely excluded the religious nature of *Modekngei* and depicted it almost solely as a political movement, despite his apparent realization of the religious nature of the movement.

Because of this analytical foci on power and politics, Vidich reduced the religious value of *Modekngei*, perhaps not so much for the leaders, but for its followers; his emphasis on the political nature of *Modekngei* provided a overtly unbalanced characterization of the movement with solid scientific authority. He failed to provide an image of *Modekngei* that placed value on "mutual assistance" as discussed by Hijikata, and as also reported by (Patrick) Tellei as one of the best qualities of the current *Modekngei* religion. Although Hijikata's impression of *Modekngei* could have been colored by Ongesi's intention, Hijikata lived among the people of Palau and I believe he observed them helping each other out in the difficult conditions that existed under Japanese colonial rule. The Palauan cultural characteristic of reciprocity, discussed by Vidich, was not extended to his discussion of *Modekngei*.

Weber explains that sociology is a "science which aims at the *interpretive understanding* (*Verstehen*) of social behavior in order to gain an explanation of its causes, its course, and its effects."<sup>20</sup> It is clear that Weber takes a stand that

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>20</sup> Max Weber, Basic Concepts in Sociology, (New York : The Citadel Press, 1964), 29.



the mission of a social scientist is to discern and explain reasons underlying observable behavior that the actors themselves cannot articulate; it is the premise that "we" know while the "others" do not. This leads me to question whether Vidich was as attentive to what the people of Palau said to him in the same way as he was attentive to obtain the *verstehen* from their words. This is basically the same attitude that Aoyagi indicates in her monograph about *Modekngei*. She states, "it seems to be the fact that followers of this type of religion that is founded on shamanism, do not know well what their religion is about."<sup>21</sup>

Concerning this type of condescending air evident in western representations of the "other," Edward Said writes that it is the authoritative tones of scholars and legitimacy associated with science that have justified the western colonization of the "others." He states, "authority here means for 'us' to deny autonomy to 'it'--the Oriental country--since we know it and it exists, in a sense, as we know it."<sup>22</sup> It is the relationship of power; who is in a position to speak for whom and for what purpose. Here, it is what Vidich and Aoyagi want to say about "it" (*Modekngei*) rather than what the people themselves express of their experiences becomes more important; what is said by outside scholars, with their academic authority, is what is heard by their western or Japanese audiences, and their interviewees are left out in the cold as the ones who are denied their autonomy by the hegemonic forces.

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<sup>21</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 32.

Another influence of Weber on Vidich's analysis of Palauan society is his employment of Weber's famous theory on types of authority. Weber categorizes authority into three types; 1) rational-legal authority, 2) traditional authority, and 3) charismatic authority.<sup>23</sup> The above categories may have helped Vidich identify 1) pro-Japanese elites, 2) chiefs and females, and 3) *Modekngei* leaders, respectively, as three main loci of power in his analysis of political factionalism during the Japanese administration period. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, the last two authorities, according to Vidich, came to cooperate in their battle against the first group of authority, aligned with the Japanese.

I believe that Vidich's categorization of the Palauan population into largely two groups, pro- and anti-Japanese factions, is also influenced by Weber's theory on class. Weber incorporates a category of "status group" into Marx's definition of class structure, which is based almost solely on economic factors. Weber states,

Every technological repercussion and economic transformation threatens stratification by status and pushes the class situation into the foreground. Epochs and countries in which the naked class situation is of predominant significance are regularly the periods of technical and economic transformations. And every slowing down of the shifting of economic stratifications leads, in due course, to the growth of status structures and makes for a resuscitation of important role of social honor.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> A definition of charismatic authority is "legitimate right to expect willing obedience to their command. . . which rested on the appeal of leaders who claim allegiance because of their extraordinary virtuosity, whether ethical, heroic, or religion." In, Lewis A. Coser, Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context, 2nd ed., (San Diego, New York, Chicago, Austin, London, Sydney, Tronto : Harcourt Brace Javanovich, Publisher, 1977), 227.

<sup>24</sup> Gerth, From Max Weber, 194.

Vidich emphasizes that the anti-Japanese or *Modekngei* faction was composed of Palauans who suffered the most loss of their status, rather than placing the focus on simply economic factors. *Modekngei* leaders were the best examples of such. They suffered loss of the esteem they enjoyed in "traditional" Palauan society, where religious specialists were highly respected by all members of society, but they, according to Vidich and Aoyagi, gained more wealth through their money raising activities. Chiefs (and members of high ranking lineages or clans), on the other hand, experienced both a decay of their once legitimate high social esteem and a decline of their economic power. Chiefs and *Modekngei* leaders, therefore, shared one important grievance, their loss of social status.<sup>25</sup> The common ground led them to take "communal action" that is "action which is oriented to the feeling of the actors that they belong together"<sup>26</sup> to "slow down" the process of class stratification based on the capitalism-oriented mode of economy which was intensified by the Japanese.

In my opinion, Vidich's categorization of the Palauans into the pro- and anti-Japanese factions is too rigid and simplistic. As mentioned above, some *kesekes* (*Modekngei* hymn/chant) suggest that *Modekngei* followers, or at least *Modekngei* leaders, did not approve of "arrogant chiefs" who contributed to the divisions within Palauan society. Chiefs, especially high chiefs, appear to have been more concerned about their loss of power and privileges,<sup>27</sup> in which

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<sup>25</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, Vidich incorporates a few other groups, who suffered the decline of their social status, into a *Modekngei* and thus anti-Japanese faction. These groups include women (between the ages of 20 and 50) and people in the remote districts which benefited the least due to the Japanese intrusions in Palau. See, Vidich, Political Factionalism, 90.

<sup>26</sup> Gerth, From Max Weber, 181.

<sup>27</sup> For example, PCAA's account of a history of Palau contains an incident where

*Modekngei* leaders must have been seen as one of the main threats to their wish to consolidate power into their hands. My study about more recent Palauan politics, discussed in Chapter 3, shows factions in Palau are extremely fluid and group affiliations shift constantly according to the issue at stake. Boundaries dividing numerous factions in Palau, in my view, contain much ambiguity and flexibility, and were not as clear-cut as Vidich described them to be.<sup>28</sup> I believe that Vidich's view of factionalism in Palau during the Japanese colonial period could have been more refined.

Despite the seemingly profound influence of Weber's theories, Vidich's CIMA report does not list either Gerth or Weber as a reference. The scholars mentioned in Chapter one of his report, as providers of Vidich's theoretical framework for his analysis of political factionalism in Palau, are: Bernard Barber,

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a chief of Koror banned the traditional exchange system, because he felt threatened by a Palauan individual named Oseked who accumulated so much wealth, through his use of *omeluchel* (an exchange system), that he purchased a power driven boat and utilized it to obtain further wealth. This incident suggests that chiefs were not solely on guard to protect "Palauan tradition" but concerned about their loss of privileges, which once enabled them to be in the most advantaged position in controlling wealth as well as other social matters. See, PCAA, History of Palau, Vol. 3, 365.

<sup>28</sup> I should note, however, Vidich does carefully mention that "Without doubt there were some fuzzy edges between the two groups," and continues, "but the tendency throughout this Japanese period was for a greater and greater divergence and crystallization of the two factions" (Political Factionalism, 91).

Christians in Palau at the time of the Japanese administration is left rather ambiguous in Vidich's report. He points out that the Christian population did not join *Modekngei*. And, Vidich designates all non-*Modekngei* members as "collaborators" (Ibid., 90). However, his discussion, in the above mentioned section about collaborators, does not elaborate on the roles of Christian population in Palau during the Japanese administration period. I believe that this is because this group, Christians, did not support his argument of social status as a determining factor of political factionalism in Palau, and thus, was largely ignored.

Philleo Mash, Wilbert E. Moore, Talcott Parsons and Clyde Kluckhohn. Among these, the theories of Parsons take up the most pages in Vidich's discussion of his theoretical framework. Yet, in our correspondence, Vidich told me that he employed neither Parsons nor Kluckhohn's theories, but simply used their terminologies.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Vidich's introduction mainly discusses the following aspects of Parsonian theory. Parsons categorizes that "main conceptual components of the social system" into four: "a) the structure of the situation; b) the cultural tradition; c) institutional structure; and d) motivational forces and mechanisms." In Talcott Parsons, Essays in Sociological Theory, Pure and Applied, 3rd ed., (Glencoe : Free Press, 1948), 8.

My understanding of the above four components are that the structure of the situation implies the culturally defined sets of expectations, goals, attitudes, and so forth, and how each individual or a society as a whole perceives a certain situation. The cultural tradition is a primary orientation systems shared for generations by members of a culture, which largely govern the action of individuals. Institutional structure gives members of a culture a framework of functional values, such as status and social roles. Finally, motivational forces and mechanisms deal with aspects of human psychology that are often unconscious and driven by emotions. See, *ibid.*

For Kluckhohn, Vidich discusses his theory of covert culture in his introductory chapter. Kluckhohn defines covert culture or "cultural configuration" as aspects of a culture of which members of that culture are not aware of or are barely aware of. Covert culture, thus, functions to regulate behavior and motivation of social actors, without them knowing what drives them to act in a way they do. See, Clyde Kluckhohn, "Covert Culture and Administrative Problems," *American Anthropologists*, 1943, 45: 213-227.

Kluckhohn is famous for his work as an agent of the Office of War Information during World War II. The above article also discusses how the US government and anthropologists worked together to manage "Indian affairs" and he expresses his appreciation for the government's generous support and incorporation of their knowledge into the actual policies as a "test" for administration of Native Americans. See, *ibid.*, 213-214. For his involvement in war time applied anthropological research, see, Dower, War Without Mercy, Chapter 6.

Vidich explains that he entered Harvard University two months after his return to the US from Palau, and he was obliged to submit the CIMA report in a hurry, during his first two semesters in Harvard.

Parsons and Klockhohn [sic] come into the picture because I needed some kind of a theoretical orientation for the study. Since I was taking their courses and reading their writings I used them as my major references and cobbled from their language the theoretical introduction. . . If you look closely at what I write, however, you will see that although I use their language, I do not use it in the spirit of their writing. . . During that first semester my head been [sic] stuffed with the then sociological and anthropological ambiance of Harvard, and, hence, I used their terminologies in the CIMA report.<sup>30</sup>

Later, during his study at Harvard, he grew more critical of Parsons' theories and decided "there was nothing in this [Weber as being taught by Gerth] tradition I could learn from Parsons."<sup>31</sup> Vidich criticizes Parsons' theory of social systems for its neglect of issues of social change and social conflict in his social analysis. Kluckhohn's study, according to Vidich, lacks an analytical grip on history and institutional foundations.<sup>32</sup> Vidich's introduction of the above theorists was apparently an unusual deed that he committed in his CIMA report.

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<sup>30</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997. In his letter, Vidich specifies that the foci of his analysis on the Palauan society included factionalism, conflict, social change and administration.

<sup>31</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997. Vidich noted that his criticism toward Parsons is located in his monograph, with Stanford M. Lyman, American Sociology: Worldly Rejections of Religion and Their Directions, (New Haven & London : Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>32</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 6 May 1997. His dissertation, which contains an almost identical description of *Modekngei* as presented in his CIMA report, refers neither to Parsons nor Kluckhohn. I did not ask Vidich about other theorists, but Moore remains in his bibliography in the dissertation.

Wilbert E. Moore was a professor in the Institute of World Affairs and the Office of Population Research at Princeton University.<sup>33</sup> His study seems to focus on the process of industrialization among immigrant peasants and Native Americans. Two main aspects discussed by Moore are the "incentives to work" and "the process of cultural adaptation."<sup>34</sup> His bibliography lists numerous works by Weber and also a structural-functionalist, Bronislaw Malinowski. Several issues pointed out in his article, "Theoretical Aspects of Industrialization," seem to have had relevance in Vidich's interpretation of *Modekngei* and political factionalism in Palau.

For example, for a study of incentives underlying people's engagement in industrial work, Moore encourages readers to examine the institutional context and social structure of the society or cultural group that is being studied. He states that unless the institutional context and social structure of a given culture become compatible with individuals' incentives for work, people, who formerly did not practice a capitalistic mode of economy, do not work effectively in the "modern" industrial work place. Moore states that it is only possible when a person's "activities fit a meaningful pattern of social existence."<sup>35</sup> He stresses that the process of social change, resulting from cultural contacts, is not "two static entities in juxtaposition, but a continuous interaction, not only between the

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<sup>33</sup> Wilbert E. Moore, "Theoretical Aspects of Industrialization," *Social Research*, 1948, 15: 277-303.

<sup>34</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

foreign and the native culture but also between the new elements and the old within the native culture itself."<sup>36</sup>

The above perspective is well embedded in Vidich's study on Palau. Vidich focused on how the basic conceptual framework of Palauan indigenous social institution and structure, which he identified as competition and reciprocity among factions, had been maintained to an extent, but had also incorporated new elements. Furthermore, Moore's discussion of how "traditionally" lower ranking individuals most often take advantage of the social change caused by foreign intrusions reminds me of how Vidich describes "collaborators" including Tellei and Omang, and how he explains the motivations behind their actions.

I suspect, however, Vidich's study of Native American youth also influenced his perspectives used on the study of Palau, as well as Moore's theories. Philleo Nash, cited by Vidich, who studied histories of Native American religious revitalization movements among the Klamath, Modoc, and Paviotso peoples in Oregon, describes how factionalism became crystallized as foreign influence brought new social conditions. Nash states, "We know, therefore, that all members of the Indian [sic] community were in conflict with one another over acceptance of, or resistance to, white culture as it was presented to them, and we may well believe there was conflict in their own minds."<sup>37</sup> He emphasizes that particularly young members of those cultural groups often took best

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>37</sup> Philleo Nash, "The Place of Religious Revivalism in the Formation of the Intercultural Community on Klamath Reservation," in Social Anthropology of Northern American Tribes, ed. by Fred Eggans, 6th ed., (Chicago & London : University of Chicago Press, 1970), 436.



advantage of contact situations and obtained power to an extent that outsiders perceived them as "chiefs." This worked against their elderly leaders.<sup>38</sup>

Vidich's MA thesis was on Native American "youth."<sup>39</sup> I do not know much about cultures of Native American peoples or their social conditions in the late 1940's. I speculate, however, that the youth were more likely than the elderly to incorporate eagerly new ideas and technologies to carry out culturally valued or newly emerged goals, and as a result, contributed to the alteration of this culture's social hierarchy as being ascribed by their original cultures. Vidich's experience with Native American youth could have pointed his attention to social conflicts directly deriving from foreign contacts and led him to perceive that anti- and pro-colonial factions emerge as a "due" consequence, as is elaborated in his own work on Palauan social changes.

Concerning his discussion of religious revivalism, Nash presents different types of religious expressions among the above mentioned three groups. He studied several different sects, the so-called "Ghost Dance," "Earthlodge" and "Dream Dance" religious movements. He characterizes the first two as strongly anti-white, while "Dream Dance" is directed inwardly toward their selves, and

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<sup>38</sup> Although Vidich criticizes Nash as well as Barber, discussed below, for excluding other factions raising at the same time as the rise of religious movements, Nash, at least, points out that "The only group which had unequivocally benefited by identification with, and acceptance of, white skills and values--the Indian [sic] employees at the agency--not only took no part in the revival but attempted to suppress it" (ibid., 442).

<sup>39</sup> In Vidich's CIMA report, the section concerning the "collaborators" takes up more pages and provides a detailed analysis of the group than his description of *Modekngei*. I believe that this is partly due to the availability of information concerning the two groups, and is possibly reflecting Vidich's stronger interest in the former group. See, ibid., Chapter IV, section III, The Collaborators: A Program for Social Change, 93-113.

thus, is not anti-colonial in its orientation.<sup>40</sup> The pivotal roles played by shamans, the suppression of their religions by the US government, and "songs" as well as rituals associated with their religious/political activities are discussed. Nash states that both pro- and anti-white factions suffer from deprivation and concludes as follows:

Revivalism is that portion of the response which expresses in ritual symbolism the basic attitudes of acceptance or rejection of white culture, feelings of loss or damage, aggressive relations in response to deprivation suffered.<sup>41</sup>

I believe that Vidich was fully exposed to the idea that religious movements are tied with anti-colonial sentiments and sometimes with actual physical violence, before he encountered *Modekngei* in Palau.

Another article by Bernard Barber,<sup>42</sup> referred to by Vidich, also discusses various types of religious orientations and their actions. In my opinion, Barber's interpretation of revivalistic religions is closer to Aoyagi's than to Vidich's.

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<sup>40</sup> I should note that Nash studied different factions within the above three religious movements and presents his evaluation to them. My summary of his work is a very simplified version of this complex work.

Concerning "Dream Dance," one faction, the Klamath with the exception of Klamath shamans, appeared to Nash to have accepted "white culture" but his description of their religion suggests more than simple acceptance of their new situation. He writes that the Klamath "produced fantasies which expressed (a) their acceptance of the roles defined by white administrators, and (b) their dissatisfaction with the benefits attached to their own roles" (Ibid., 441-442). Moreover, the dreams Nash collected from "Dream Dance" followers indicate that repeated themes in their dreams include power, danger, death, or the return of their ancestral spirit to bring peace to their lives as well as many other unreadable symbolic expressions. See *ibid.*, 426-435.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 442.

<sup>42</sup> Bernard Barber, "Acculturation and Messianic Movements," *American Sociological Review*, 1941, 6(5): 663-669.

Although Barber recognizes the anti-white sentiment as a shared characteristic among members of newly emerging religious movements, he states that the "exclusion of the whites from the golden age is not so much a reflection of hostility toward them as a symbolization of the fulfillment of the former way of life."<sup>43</sup> He employs the notion of social anomie as a prime cause of such religious movement; he does not discuss the movements in terms of resistance, although he mentions anti-white sentiments prevalent among members of the movements. Vidich apparently took Barber's discussion on conditions of discontent and deprivation, where this type of movement emerges, into consideration, though he did not agree with Barber's interpretation of the movements. (My opinion concerning what constitutes resistance will be discussed below.) One thing that is common between Barber and Vidich is that both talk about religious movements in a strongly secular language. They are interested in the positive or negative "correlation" between causal and resultant "variables."<sup>44</sup>

Barber's account frequently refers to the "golden age," which was allegedly sought by followers of numerous religious movements that emerged under the condition of deprivation. Vidich uses a phrase, *ancienne regime*, to describe a goal *Modekngei* wished to achieve. Common themes expressed in *keseke*s collected by Aoyagi do not clearly project the image of "idealized past;" their desire for a united Palau, however, is explicit. Probably *Modekngei* people longed for their going back to the past or at least rejected the changes imposed

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 663. Although he refers to Nash's study above, Barber perceives that the "Ghost Dance" movement was not an anti-white movement, while the Peyote religion among the Navaho was.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 667; Vidich, Political Factionalism, 1,

by the Japanese, but I wonder if their articulation of an idealized past was as clear and as precise as Vidich indicates in his passage-2.<sup>45</sup> As discussed in Chapter two, Vidich associated most closely with Palauan elites, such as Tellei and Yano, who probably perceived themselves as the opposite end of the stand taken by *Modekngei* members. Vidich did not have close relationships with *Modekngei* members. The entire statement in the passage-2 gives an impression that *Modekngei* members clearly objectified themselves and their philosophy. As far as I can discern from *kesekes*, I do not think that it was the philosophy or doctrine consciously embraced by all *Modekngei* followers.

As Vidich lightly suggests, *Modekngei* seems to have been pro-German in their inclination. This might be simply a reflection of lament felt by *Modekngei* leaders who once enjoyed higher status as constables under the German administration. A few *Modekngei kesekes* contain phrases, indicating their closer conceptual affiliation with Germany. While no reference to the US or Japan is made in *kesekes*, Germany appears as a place to play,<sup>46</sup> or water in Germany and at *uchel* [Palauan gods in general] contains the blood of Jesus.<sup>47</sup> Vidich reports on a *kesekes* which includes a phrase, "We are waiting for the battleship;" he was informed that this was a German battleship they waited for.<sup>48</sup> One *kesekes* contains the following words; "please make a coming country [to

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<sup>45</sup> For Vidich's passage-2, see Chapter one.

<sup>46</sup> *Kesekes*, no. 13, in Aoyagi, *Modekngei*, (48). This *kesekes* is apparently composed more recently since it indirectly refers to the war in Cuba (Cuban Crisis). It expresses *Modekngei*'s repugnance toward wars.

<sup>47</sup> *Kesekes*, no. 116, in *ibid.*, (70). Blood of Jesus was considered to be the best medicine. Another *kesekes*, no. 102, also mentions the name, Germany.

<sup>48</sup> Vidich, "Political Impact," 239-240.

Palau] to come sooner, please make a coming country to come sooner."<sup>49</sup>

*Modekngei* utilizes Christianity to unite Palau rather than Buddhism or Shintoism. As clearly indicated in *keseke*s about *Eskiristo Ngrichomkuul* cited in Chapter 1, it was the power of religion and the deity of Germany that they incorporated into *Modekngei* religion. Thus, I believe that *Modekngei* should not be hastily characterized as entirely an anti-foreign movement. I think the boundary is rather blurred.

As I read the books and articles, authored by Weber and the scholars identified in the footnotes in Vidich's CIMA report, they constantly and clearly indicated to me why Vidich represented *Modekngei* in the way he did. It was a surprise to me how strong the theoretical frameworks can shape the gaze of a scientist. Those theories specifically point out the aspects of social phenomena to be examined and a method or methods to pursue such examination. As discussed above, issues such as power, politics, factionalism, conflict, authorities, status group and class configuration, acculturation process or social change, and administrative impacts on indigenous society were apparently the loci of Vidich's well analyzed academic or/and personal interests, prior to his entry in Palau. He was also well equipped with methodological devices which most likely instructed him on what aspects of society he should place his focus so that they would lead him to produce a clear-cut analysis out of the more likely somewhat disorganized bombardment of information that might have been provided to him through his interviewees during fieldwork.

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<sup>49</sup> My translation, *keseke*s, no. 10, in *ibid.*, (47). This is probably a prophecy, anticipating the coming of the German.

Essentialization or generalization of certain principles underlying all manifested actions and institutions seems to be the key method that Vidich used in his study of Palau. Weber's theory of ideal type is a prime example of this sort. It is based on a premise that some principles, once extracted, can explain most of what is observed. Different life experiences of individuals do not weigh much when considered through this premise. His interpretation of existing social phenomena takes more weight over what individuals in his study say about their lives or how they explain their experiences. And, in order to present cohesive arguments, what appears to be less significant to support his thesis is excluded from his text. Given his essentialization of "competition," Vidich obviously perceived that the political nature of *Modekngei* was the essence of the movement. Thus, I suspect that the religious aspects of *Modekngei* were not significant, not to *Modekngei* members but to Vidich's scientific purpose.

I believe that this is part of the reason that Vidich's description of Palau is so orderly and clear-cut and marked by the almost total absence of ambiguity and inconsistency. As compared with Aoyagi's account, Vidich's account stresses "rational" reasoning behind the occurring events or collective actors participating in the events. Spiritual gratification, which might have been one main motivation, in addition to their political agenda, for the people of Palau to have joined the *Modekngei* movement, is treated with the least respect. His representation of *Modekngei*, and Palau in general, might have been a reflection of Vidich's strongly rationally oriented mind, which is so profoundly logical that it reminds me of a mathematical equation.<sup>50</sup> Yet, I believe that this orderly manner

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<sup>50</sup> I speculate that Vidich's majoring in economics as an undergraduate might have had some influence on his ways of thinking.

in which Vidich represented *Modekngei* is the exact reason that bestowed scientific authority to his account and, in turn, gained the trust of many readers of his account rather than any other *Modekngei* researchers, as delineated in Chapter one.

Above all, there are two strong impressions I received from studying the theories and issues that influenced Vidich's scholarly orientation. One was his western oriented thinking. I do not mean that he was not respectful of Palauan people, though he utilizes terms such as "non-literate people" in his text. This was a common practice of that time. What I perceive is that Vidich, by being associated with young Palauan elites, particularly Takeo Yano, who had western oriented educations, seems to have believed that Palauan people were basically the same as the people of America or more sophisticated in western ways of thinking than some of the people he knew in the US.<sup>51</sup> Vidich's representation of *Modekngei* could be made under the strong influence of these elites' objectified explanation of the movement. It seems that these English speaking elites who inclined to use a western type of reasoning was applied by Vidich to interpret *Modekngei's* ways of reasoning.

Weber's theory, which apparently had a strong impact on Vidich, is also very western oriented in my opinion. Not only is his analysis mainly focused on histories of western institutions, but also his interpretation of so-called world religions attests to his projection of a Christian mind into his analysis of some of

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<sup>51</sup> Vidich explains that his encounter with Yano and his observation of Palauan people in general as highly "westernized" through their dealings with multiple colonial administration, made him think that there was no people left in the world who were not influenced by western thinking. This prompted Vidich to become a sociologist after completion of his Ph.D. study, instead of being an anthropologist. In Vidich, "Looking Backward," 1-2.

the other religions in the world. I believe that the influence of Palauan elites and Weber on Vidich profoundly affected his representation of Palau, which depicts Palauan people, particularly leaders of the society, fundamentally secular, the notion which closely resembles the western sense of secularity, in their modes of thinking.

I also believe that his representation of Palauan society could be a reflection of his scholarly mind-set that was nurtured prior to his entry into Palau. This is sometimes called a "cookie-cutter approach." You have a pre-shaped device that is to be applied to different raw materials. Resulting products differ due to the variance in materials, but the angle of pieces being taken out from the wholes present a striking resemblance. The difference in orientations and historical backgrounds between a group of Native Americans and a group of Palauans, both of whom were being studied by Vidich, must have been profound. Yet, I wonder how much conceptual and theoretical differences the two studies contain.

Needless to say, no scholar engages herself or himself in fieldwork without a frame of reference or focused interests in certain issues. But we also know that western theories are not without bias, but rather reflections of western culture and political circumstances. Hence, all one can do is to tell a partial and biased story of what it is out there at a given historical moment. The problem as I perceive it is the authority attached to the represented partial truth because of its academic nature and because of the way it is presented. The definitive tone, the premise of scientific neutrality and objectivity, and the invisibility of interactions between informants and the ethnographer in the text contribute to produce an illusionary effect which, whether intentional or not, leads readers to



believe that what they read is the whole truth about the studied subject or people.

### III. Machiko Aoyagi<sup>52</sup>

Machiko Aoyagi was born in 1930 in a port city, Yokohama, Japan. She initially received the immediate pre-war education in Japan which is commonly characterized as ultra-nationalistic. She was about 15 years old when World War II ended. Soon after, the Japanese education took a radical change from ultra-nationalistic to democratic teachings. As a young person, Aoyagi observed the shift in the American political stand toward Japan, as a result of the Korean war, particularly on the issue of the Japanese militarization. She also experienced riots, demonstrations, and campaigns by millions of Japanese people, protesting against the Security Treaty between Japan and the US during the fifties and sixties. At the same time, the Japanese economy had been growing rapidly in the fifties, sixties and seventies.

She majored in history as an undergraduate and entered the *Tokyo Toritsu Daigaku* [Tokyo Metropolitan University] as a social anthropology major where she earned her Ph.D. degree in 1964. During her doctoral study, Aoyagi conducted her fieldwork in Tonga between July, 1962 and February, 1963. Her first monograph, *Hikyō Tonga Ōkoku* [Tonga: Polynesian Kingdom], published in 1964, is more likely based on her dissertation. She is a productive writer and has published at least six monographs and numerous articles in scholarly

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<sup>52</sup> I must mention that the following descriptions about Aoyagi and her academic training are dependent on extremely limited information and a few available materials written by her teachers whom I assume had a strong influence on her academic orientation.

journals as well as magazines. Aoyagi was engaged in the translation of Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses, by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown between 1972 and 1975. This is just around the time Aoyagi began her study of *Modekngei*.<sup>53</sup>

Aoyagi is one of the earliest Japanese women who succeeded in an academic career, as well as being a mother and a wife. She taught at the *Seisen Joshi Daigaku* [Seisen Women's College] as an assistant professor, and in 1977, during her *Modekngei* research, she was promoted to a professor at the *Rikkyō Daigaku* [St. Paul's University]. It is likely that Aoyagi's research on *Modekngei* was conducted with her confidence as a successful and competent scholar. Her studies concentrate mostly on island cultures in Oceania and her research topics vary ranging from child socialization, gender, social organization, and material cultures to cultural histories and religion. Her recent study includes *Ratana*, a religion of the Maori in Aotearoa, which Aoyagi identifies as pro-Japanese due to its historical relationship with some Japanese individuals.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Aoyagi also studied at Auckland University, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, and some institutes in Australia before and during the period of her *Modekngei* research. Aoyagi's study in Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Australia seems to have been related to her research of Tonga.

<sup>54</sup> Concerning *Ratana*, see Aoyagi, "[Fieldworkers]." Information about Aoyagi's profile is drawn mainly from Toshio Otaka (ed.), Shintei Gendai Nihonjin Meiroku 94 [Who's Who, Today's Japanese, '94, New Version], 1st ed., vol. 1, (Tokyo : Kinokuniya Shoten, 1994), 47; Aoyagi, Tonga no Bunka to Shakai [Tongan Culture and Society], (Tokyo : Sanich Shobō, 1991); id. Asobi no Bunkajinruigaku [Play from Anthropological Viewpoint], 7th ed., (Tokyo : Kodansha, 1984a); A. D. Radcliffe-Brown, Mikai Shakai ni Okeru Kōzō to Kinō [Structure and Function in Primitive Society], 4th ed., trans. Machiko Aoyagi, (Tokyo : Shinsensha, 1993); and personal communication with Robert C. Kiste (a professor at the University of Hawai'i) and Eikichi Ishikawa (discussed below) via Kiyonori Kanasaka (mentioned above).

Four teachers, during her graduate study, are reported to be the most influential on her early scholarly training. They are Kiyoto (or Kiyondo) Furuno (1899 -1979), Tōichi Mabuchi (1909 -1988), Masato Oka (1898 -1982), and Eikichi Ishikawa (1925 -).<sup>55</sup> The first three scholars are prominent anthropologists who contributed to the establishment of Japanese anthropology.<sup>56</sup> Ishikawa is the authority among Pacific specialists in Japan. His geographical and historical orientations appear to have influenced Aoyagi's cognitive study of Palauan spatial organization.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ishikawa identified Furuno, Mabuchi and Oka as influential scholars for Aoyagi's work. In my correspondence with Aoyagi, I mentioned their names and stated that I learned that they were influential to her work. Aoyagi did not give me any comment concerning the above three scholars. I assume that her silence means that she does not object to what I wrote.

Ishikawa is a single scholar whose name is listed in her monograph, *Modekugei*, as a person who gave Aoyagi useful comments and criticism. Other scholars whom she acknowledges for the same reason are not specified by their names but are identified as "several scholars who specialize in the study of Micronesia" (My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 7).

<sup>56</sup> See, *Bunka Jinruigaku Gunzō: Nihon Hen* [Masters of Anthropology: A Japanese Version]. *Bunka Jinruigaku Gunzō*, vol. 3, ed. by Tsuneo Ayabe, (Tokyo : Academia Press, Inc, 1988).

<sup>57</sup> For the best example, see, Machiko Aoyagi, "The Geographical Recognition of Palauan People: With Special Reference to the Four Direction," in *Islanders and Their Outside World: A Report of the Cultural Anthropological Research in the Caroline Islands of Micronesia in 1980-1981*, ed. by Machiko Aoyagi, pp. 3-33. (Tokyo : St. Paul's (Rikkyō) University, 1982b); see also, id., "Shisha-tachi wa Odsongeru ni Ikoite: Parao Jūkyō no Utsuri Kawari [The Deceased Rests in Odsongel: Transformation of Palauan Housing]," 1980b, *Garasuraifu*, July: 2-5.

Also, one of her articles published during her graduate study, "Soubunsei no Ichirei—Shiga-ken Nakayama no Imo Matsuri [A Case Study of the System of Dichotomy—Potato Festival in Nakayama, Shiga Prefecture]" indicates her early interest in cognitive (spatial) divisions. I do not have access to this article. See, *Minzokugaku Nōto: Oka Masao Kyōju Kanreki Kinen Ronbunshū* [Ethnological Note: A Collection of Articles for the Memory of Professor Masao Oka's Sixtieth Birthday Celebration], ed. by Tōichi Takahashi, et al., (Tokyo : Heibonsha, 1963), p.326.

Furuno, Mabuchi and Oka were all interested in what then was called the "folklore" of indigenous populations, and thus, the historical origins of cultural practices observable at the present time. Among them, Oka was under the strong influence of Wilhelm Schmidt of the Vienna School whose focus was to trace "cultural histories," "cultural areas" and "cultural strata" through the study of archaeology (including physical anthropology), linguistics, religion, "myth," and social organization.<sup>58</sup> Kunio Yanagida, who was a cross-disciplinary scholar with a strong emphasis on ethnology, was also reported to be an influential figure to Oka. Yanagida's extensive surveys on ancient religions and oral traditions of numerous cultural groups among the Japanese affected Oka's work. Mabuchi

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Ishikawa's monographs that I studied are: *Minami Taiheiyō: Mizokugakuteki Kenkyū* [The South Pacific: An Anthropological Study], (Tokyo : Kadokawa Shoten, 1979); *Nihonjin no Oseania Hakken* [The Japanese Discoveries of Oceania], (Tokyo : Heibonsha, 1992); and Eiichiro Ishida, Kazuo Terada & Eikichi Ishikawa, *Jinruigaku Gaisetsu* [An Introduction to Anthropology]. (Tokyo : Nihon Hyōron Shinsha, 1958).

<sup>58</sup> Oka produced his five-volume dissertation, "*Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan* [The Cultural Stratum in Ancient Japan]," (1933) during his stay in Vienna. The source written by Oka, I referred to is, Masao Oka, et al., *Nihonminzoku no Kigen* [The Origins of the Ethnic Japanese], (Tokyo : Heibonsha, 1958). It is difficult for me to discern the degree of influence Oka had on Aoyagi's scholarly orientation. Aoyagi, as well as her husband, Kiyotaka Aoyagi, as two of his best students, contributed their articles to a monograph, Takahashi, et al, (ed.) [Ethnological Note]. Aoyagi's article is about Tongan *ngatu* (a cloth made out of tree bark) production, an art of women; her husband presents his survey on literature written between 1955 and 1959 concerning changes in the lives and psychological conditions of African Americans, particularly ones in the southern part of US, occurring as their legal status in relation to practice of racial segregation had been in the process of modification. During World War II, Oka worked for the Japanese military as a government anthropologist in South East Asia, Manchuria, and northern China. His war-time conducts became a target of criticism among later Japanese scholars.

and Furuno also utilized oral traditions extensively in their inquiries into the foundation of whatever cultural traditions they studied.

I speculate that Mabuchi had a strong influence on Aoyagi's scholarly orientation in several ways. Mabuchi was interested in island cultures, mostly islands in South East Asia, Taiwan and Okinawa. Aoyagi's interest in island cultures might have originated from her exposure to Mabuchi. Mabuchi also seems to have had interests in the social power of women.<sup>59</sup> Aoyagi's focus on women's roles and their social positions might derive from his influence. Mabuchi's study seems to emphasize social structure most, but religion, cultural history, material culture and linguistics are incorporated into his analyses of social structure.<sup>60</sup> In his book, *Jinrui no Seikatsu* [Human Lives], Mabuchi expresses his criticism of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown's structural-functionalism by claiming their approaches neglect history which significantly shapes culture.<sup>61</sup> Throughout his career, Mabuchi energetically conducted a lot of fieldwork; Aoyagi might have learned this approach from him.

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<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Tōichi Mabuchi, "Spiritual Predominance of the Sisters: Studies of Ryukyuan Culture and Society" (1946), in Ethnology of the Southwestern Pacific: The Ryukyus-Taiwan-Insular Southeast Asia, Asian Folklore and Social Life Monographs, vol. 59, ed. by Lou Tsu-k'uang, (Taipei : The Orient Cultural Service, 1974). This monograph is a collection of Mabuchi's articles written between 1946 and 1970. For Aoyagi's work on the roles of Palauan women, see, "Onna ga Erai Kuni, Parao [Palau, the Country of Female Dominance]," 1979b, *Crossroad* 18: 14-20; id., "Parao no Josei [Palauan Women]," 1979c, *Kikan Minzokugaku* 8: 56-63. For Tongan women, see, id., Onna no Rakuen Tonga [Tonga, the Paradise of Women], (Tokyo : Sanshūsha, 1984b).

<sup>60</sup> Mabuchi translated Les Structures Elementaires de la Parente, [Elementary Structures of Kinship] (1949), by Claude Levi-Strauss.

<sup>61</sup> See, Tōichi Mabuchi, *Jinrui no Seikatsu* [Human Lives], (Tokyo : Mainichi Shinbunsha, 1951) 52. Aoyagi's study is strongly history-oriented. This monograph, Mabuchi includes his discussion of American anthropologists,

Kiyoto Furuno was interested almost solely in various religions, and psychology and cosmologies in relation to religions. French positivism is reported to have had a profound influence on Furuno's attitude toward science. Furuno studied shamanism among the Ainu in Sakhalin and Japan early in his career. His studies on religious rituals, concepts, organizations, and roles and abilities of religious specialists among the *Takasago-zoku* (one of indigenous populations of Taiwan) is also well-known. Later, he conducted research on "Christianism" among non-western cultural groups (including symbolic analyses), and then studied religious rituals and beliefs of ancient origins associated with agriculture among various religious groups in Japan. His interest in relationships between several western (literary) writers' drug use, and its influence on their writings is also noted.<sup>62</sup> For Aoyagi's study on *Modekngei*, I believe Furuno's perspectives and approaches to religion had substantial influence.

It is interesting to observe some similarities between the works of Furuno and Aoyagi. In his book, *Kakure Kirishitan* [*Christians in Disguise*], Furuno discusses how Catholicism, which was introduced during the 16th century to Japan and was soon banned by Japanese feudal lords for about three-hundred years under a penalty of death, has been maintained by discrete but numerous

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particularly E. B. Tyler and Lewis H. Morgan, and also Franz Boaz, Margaret Mead, and Ruth Benedict. Influence of E. E. Evans-Pritchard on Mabuchi's study of religion is also noted.

<sup>62</sup> See, [*Masters of Anthropology*], 301-306. I also referred to Kiyoto Furuno, *Kakure Kirishitan* [*Christians in Disguise*], (Tokyo : Shibundō, 1959); and id., *Shishi no Minzoku* [*Folk Cultures of Shishi*], (Tokyo : Iwanami Bijutsusha, 1964). *Shishi* is an imaginative creature, which somewhat resembles to a lion but often possesses deer or bull-like horns and is directly associated with numerous religions, tied to agriculture.

groups, and their descendants (until today),<sup>63</sup> through the means of religious syncretism. Furuno does not characterize the phenomena, despite apparent spiritual resistance against oppression, at least during the early periods of religious transformation, as a way of resistance, except for the cases of armed revolt. His detailed study of their rituals, chants, religious concepts, syncretism, use of history, and his interpretation of the religions reminded me of Aoyagi's work on *Modekngei*.

All three scholars, discussed above, appear to have been influenced by Emile Durkheim to different degrees. Among them, Furuno, I assume, was the Japanese authority on the study of Durkheim,<sup>64</sup> and I am certain that Aoyagi was exposed to Durkheim's theories on society and religion. Furuno's as well as Oka and Mabuchi's interest in religion might have contributed to Aoyagi's scholarly endeavor on the Palauan religion, *Modekngei*. In addition, in his book, *Syūkyō Shakaigaku Gakusetsu* [Theories in Sociology of Religion], Furuno discusses the profound influence of Durkheim on the work of Radcliffe-Brown,<sup>65</sup> whom Aoyagi identifies as an influential theorist on her work of *Modekngei*.<sup>66</sup> The following

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<sup>63</sup> Furuno explains that because of the altered natures of their "Catholicisms," even after the abolishment of the ban placed on Christianity, those people have distinguished their religions from Catholicism as being embraced currently by other Japanese people, and have maintained their own faith.

<sup>64</sup> Furuno translated *Les Formes Elementaires de la vie Religieuse* [The Elementary Forms of Religious Life] by Durkheim. His dissertation was also on Durkheim's theory of religion.

<sup>65</sup> Furuno, *Syūkyō Shakaigaku Gakusetsu* [Theories in Sociology of Religion], (Tokyo: Nomura Shoten, 1948), 242-245. In this monograph, Furuno presents his extensive research on the historical philosophical influences on Durkheim's theory of religion and his influence on numerous scholars who came after him.

<sup>66</sup> Aoyagi neither cites nor refers to Radcliffe-Brown in her monograph or articles. As a response to my inquiry about her theoretical orientation for her

several paragraphs will discuss Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown's perspectives on religion and their potential influence on Aoyagi's interpretation of *Modekngei*.

In his discussion of religion, Durkheim analyzes other scholars' assessments of religions and states, "The first religious conceptions have often been attributed [by other scholars] to feelings of weakness and dependence, of fear and anguish which seized men." Being critical of this premise, Durkheim argues, "on the contrary, it [a conceived deity] is very near to him and confers upon him very useful powers, which he could never acquire by himself."<sup>67</sup> According to Durkheim, the main function of religion is "to strengthen the bonds attaching the believer to his god, they at the same time really strengthen the bonds attaching the individual to the society of which he is a member."<sup>68</sup>

Radcliffe-Brown summarizes Durkheim's theory of religion as follows:

. . . religious ritual is an expression of the unity of society and that its function is to 're-create' the society or the social order by reaffirming and strengthening the sentiments on which the social solidarity and therefore the social order itself depend.<sup>69</sup>

My reading of Durkheim is that he provides a grand scheme of "universal law" stating, that religion is a source of power, which consolidates social bonds and

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study of *Modekngei*, Aoyagi stated, "When I was young, I translated [a work of] Radcliffe-Brown. It seems that it [his work] shaped my [scholarly] orientation, and although I am not conscious at all, I think that his influence is profound" (My translation, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997).

<sup>67</sup> Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. Joseph W. Swain, (New York : The Free Press, 1915), 255-256.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 252-253.

<sup>69</sup> A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Address, with a foreward by E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Fred Eggans, 4th ed., (London : Cohen & West Ltd, 1961), 165.



endows the members of the society with strength. A religion, according to Durkheim, does not emerge from psychological deprivation but rather to reconfirm the positive order within society.

Despite the fact that Aoyagi employs a notion of anomie, a term coined by Durkheim,<sup>70</sup> she apparently disagrees with his theory on religion, and thus, does not incorporate it in her interpretation of *Modekngei*. Aoyagi states that Palauan society, as a result of being "trifled"<sup>71</sup> with by powerful nations including, Britain, Spain, Germany, Japan and the United States, experienced a great transition, accompanied with social anomie, in which many members of the society felt deprivation.<sup>72</sup> Under this circumstance, as observed elsewhere in similar colonial situations, a religion (*Modekngei*) emerged to appease the anxiety, then rampant among people, by providing a psychological refuge and a hope for the future. In other words, it was the social and psychological deprivation that prompted the rise of a new religion and that provided the ground for it to be widely accepted. Thus, unlike Durkheim, she believes in the premise that religion emerges as a response to people's feelings of dependence<sup>73</sup> and

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<sup>70</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, Durkheim defines anomie as a condition of relative normlessness, where social regulations controlling members of a society or a group are disintegrated by some causes. See, Durkheim, *Suicide*, 209.

<sup>71</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 252.

<sup>72</sup> Aoyagi explains that some Palauans who enjoyed upward social mobility during the Japanese administration periods, such as constables, chiefs including *Ibedul* and *Reklai*, and those who worked for the Japanese, did not become members of *Modekngei*, because they did not experience social, economic or psychological deprivation as a result of the Japanese colonialism. See *ibid.*, 254-256.

<sup>73</sup> Radcliffe-Brown argues, "what makes and keeps a man a social animal is not some herd instinct, but the sense of dependence in the innumerable forms that it takes" (*Structure and Function*, 1976).

weakness. In Aoyagi's interpretation, the concept that religion strengthens social bonds or unity, discussed by Durkheim, is lacking.

Aoyagi's reasoning seems more related to what Radcliffe-Brown understands as the source of religion and its prevalence. He states,

. . . religion develops in mankind what [sic] may be called a sense of dependence. . . what is expressed in all religions is what I have called a sense of dependence in its double aspect, and that is by constantly maintaining this sense of dependence that religions perform their social function [sic].<sup>74</sup>

In his brief discussion of contact situations, Radcliffe-Brown writes,

a society that is thrown into a condition of functional disunity or inconsistency (for this we now provisionally identify with dysnomia) will not die. . . but will continue to struggle toward some sort of eunomia, some kind of social health, and may, in the course of this, change its structural type. . . We have, for instance, in Africa, in Oceania, and in America the appearance of new religions which can be interpreted on a functional hypothesis as attempts to relieve a condition of social dysnomia produced by the rapid modification of the social life through contact with white civilisation.<sup>75</sup>

According to Radcliffe-Brown, religion functions as an antidote which alleviates the "functional disunity or inconsistency," a society suffers as consequences of rapid social change at times of colonial intrusions; people's sense of dependency fosters its development. Aoyagi's interpretation of *Modekngei* is similar to

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 175 and 177. Radcliffe-Brown explains the "dependence in its double aspect," quoted above, by using the metaphor of a parent-child relationship. A small child is dependent on his parent. He receives comfort and security from his parent; at the same time, he is under the control of his parent. Thus, Radcliffe-Brown's argument on religion is that religion provides security but controls one's moral and behavior.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 183 and 184.

Radcliffe-Brown's above assessment. However, I do not think that Aoyagi points out that *Modekngei* functioned to alter a "dysfunctional" social structural type, as discussed by Radcliffe-Brown in the above quote; she simply stresses people's sense of deprivation and their need to relieve anxiety by clinging to the religion. I believe that Aoyagi incorporated Radcliffe-Brown's notion of "dependence," but not "systematic social unity," in her analysis of *Modekngei*.

Aoyagi's inclination to Radcliffe-Brown is observable more clearly in many of her writings on Palauan social structure. In her article, "*Bitang Ma Bitang* (Two Halves), *Eual Saus* (Four Corners) and Mechanical Confusion in Palau Socio-Political Organization," Aoyagi describes how oral traditions that indicate the social rankings, especially among the five highest title holders in Palauan villages, have gone through transpositions almost without exception.<sup>76</sup> She concludes, "the historical two divisions system may be better called structural or mechanical confusion that has been devised to maintain an equilibrium of power."<sup>77</sup> Here, she clearly employs Radcliffe-Brown's notion of structure-function-equilibrium.

A similar discussion is found at the end of her article, "*Parao no Shaman* [Palauan shamans]." In this article, Aoyagi is more explicit about the power of

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<sup>76</sup> Aoyagi also makes a close analyses of the manner in which a particular type of food (pigs, turtles, fish-shaped dumplings, etc.) has been distributed among the ten *rubak* and traces the historical "confusion" in status attached to each title. The seating order in the *bai* (traditional meeting house) is also discussed as an indication of such confusion by Aoyagi. See, Aoyagi, "*Bitang ma Bitang* (Two Halves), *Eual Saus* (Four Corners) and Mechanical Confusion in Palauan Socio-Political Organization," 1979a, reprinted from REPORT Cultural Anthropological Research on the Folk Culture in the Western Caroline Islands of Micronesia in 1977, in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 38.

shamans and states; "the destiny of a village depends solely on this [village] god and a *rubak* who plays a role of shaman who communicates with the god."<sup>78</sup> In both articles, she pays special attention to privileges bestowed to the fifth ranking *rubak*, who is commonly a shaman of a village.<sup>79</sup> She states, "the fact that the highest ranking *rubak* does not act concurrently as a shaman, and the shaman is placed in the fifth rank, a rank below the *Eual Saus* [four most powerful social rankings], can be understood as a mechanism of artificial dispersion of authority." Then, she provides her hypothesis: The "artificially divided political authority [among ten *rubak*] and their specialized functions are a cultural device to prevent the further growth of political power of the first ranking *rubak*."<sup>80</sup>

Aoyagi's argument is that as the role of shaman is to counter-balance any excessive power acquired by the highest authority; this is somewhat similar to Vidich's argument about checks and balances. This implies that one prime role of Palauan shamans has been as the political antithesis against overly exercised dominance either by chiefs or possibly by colonial oppressors. Aoyagi's

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<sup>78</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, "*Parao no Shāman* [Palauan Shamans]," in *Shāmanizumu towa Nanika* [What is Shamanism?], ed. by Kansai Gaikokugo Daigaku Kokusai Bunka Kenkyūjo [Intercultural Research Institute, Kansai University of Foreign Language Studies], (Tokyo : Shunjūsha, 1983), 115.

<sup>79</sup> Aoyagi states that shamans, through their communication with gods, provided important and final decisions concerning war, *bai* construction, communal fishing, and epidemic diseases. Some of the privileges some shamans enjoyed were; 1) a shaman was in charge of proceedings of *rubak* meetings in a *bai*; 2) some shamans were allowed to bring their children into a *bai*, which is an unusual privilege; and 3) the fifth ranking *rubak* (usually a shaman) often had the privilege to eat a certain part of pigs or turtles, which were considered a special delicacy, at official meetings.

<sup>80</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 116.

monograph, *Modekugei* [*Modekngei*], very lightly touches on this issue, and the monograph does not mention the critical role of shamans as a determining factor for the future of a village. In my view, this seems to be Aoyagi's tactic, perhaps inadvertently, deployed to avoid presenting an elaborate discussion of shamans' political roles and their power, in order to direct readers attention more toward their religious characteristics.

Another of Aoyagi's strategies to provide authority for her thesis that *Modekngei* was a religion, not a political movement, is observed in her choice of theory. In her concluding chapter, Aoyagi depends almost solely on a theory of a Japanese sociologist, Kiyomi Morioka. To Morioka, it is a solid premise that a new religion springs up due to the condition of deprivation caused by social anomie.<sup>81</sup> Morioka's study focuses on Japanese religions which emerged during times of rapid social change. She states, "If it is a case that a person can solve one's problems through her/his participation in a new religious movement, its secret may be that it would change [the nature of] her anxiety and suffering to something that s/he can tolerate, through bringing an end to a vicious circle of deprivation types."<sup>82</sup> This is the idea, I perceive, that Aoyagi applies to her analysis of *Modekngei*.

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<sup>81</sup> Morioka's article in *Hendouki no Ningen to Shūkyō* [People and Religion in the Period of Social Change], in this discussion, is crucial because it was the source used by Aoyagi. I wish I could have inspected it. Unfortunately, however, I do not have access to this monograph. Instead, I read a book written by her, *Shin-shūkyō Undō no Tenkai Katei* [The Developmental Process of New Religious Movements], (Tokyo : Sōbunsha, 1989). Morikawa refers to the writings of Kazuo Aoki, C.Y. Glock, D.O. Moberg, R.D. Knudten, Eiichiro Suzuki, P.A. Sorokin, and others. These authors write mainly about the emergence and decline of various Christian sects among the Americans and Europeans, not placing particular focus on religions which emerge in colonial situations.

<sup>82</sup> My translation, Morioka, [*New Religious Movements*], 24. According to

My question is why Aoyagi employs Morioka's theory to explain *Modekngei*. Morioka mainly studied Japanese religious movements which did not occur in colonial circumstances. In contrast to her heavy reliance on Morioka's theory, Aoyagi's interpretation of *Modekngei* completely ignores a book listed in her bibliography, The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults, by an Italian historian, Vittorio Lanternari. As is obvious from the title, the entire book is devoted to discussing numerous religious movements that occurred under various conditions of colonial oppression. Lanternari states,

. . . the political and social situation which brought on the nativistic religious movements is clearly summarized in the cry of native agitators to the whites. . . the new cults not only express and implement a popular yearning for liberty and a fuller life, but also fulfill, in modern terms, the role of secular leadership which religion is expected to play in a primitive [sic] society. . . almost invariably a new religious cult springs into being which inspires the natives [sic] to express opposition to foreign rule. . . As a matter of fact, premonitory religious movements of revival and transformation usually lie at the origin of every political and military uprising among the native peoples.<sup>83</sup>

Similar interpretations of so-called nativistic religious movements have appeared in many other writings.<sup>84</sup> More recently, Edward Said states that for most cases,

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Morioka, several types of deprivation occurs at times or rapid social change. They include; social deprivation (e.g. dysfunctional family), physical deprivation (e.g. sickness), economic deprivation (e.g. failure in business), and psychological deprivation (caused by disintegration of a value system). Morioka states that these types of deprivation reciprocate with each other, create a vicious cycle, and make a condition of deprivation intolerable.

<sup>83</sup> Vittorio Lanternari, The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cult, 1st American ed., trans. Lisa Sergio, (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1963) 3-8.

<sup>84</sup> Aoyagi's bibliography also includes the following three books related to religious movements under colonial situations: David Aberle, The Peyote Religion among the Navaho; Peter Lawrence, Road Belong Cargo: A Study of

a nationalistic revival movement accompanies a people's awareness of the culture of the colonizers as imperialism and "Often this was done. . . by 'prophets and priests,' among them poets and visionaries."<sup>85</sup>

Speaking of nationalism, Radcliffe-Brown, the theorist identified as particularly influential on Aoyagi, also confirms religion's role in giving affirmation to a sense of nationalism among its followers.

. . . a well-developed sentiment of patriotism in its members is essential to maintain a strong nation. In such circumstances patriotism or national feeling may be given support by religion. . . one of the social functions of religion is in connection with war.

The social function of the rites is obvious: by giving solemn and collective expression to them the rites reaffirm, renew and strengthen those sentiments on which the social solidarity depends<sup>86</sup>

Although Palau then was not a nation, its repeatedly heard assertion, "Palau for Palauans," I believe, can justify their similar sense of nationalism or patriotism.

A book authored by a historian Michael Adas, Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order, is most

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the Cargo Movement in the Southern Madang District New Guinea, (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1964); and Peter Worsley, The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of 'Cargo' Cults in Melanesia, 2nd ed., (New York : Schocken Books, 1970). Their interpretations of religious movements are not discussed or incorporated into Aoyagi's analysis of *Modekngei*, except for two brief sentences and one short footnote referring to Lawrence and Aberle's works. Concerning Aoyagi's treatment of the works by Lawrence and Worsley, see below.

<sup>85</sup> Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism, (New York : Vintage Books, 1993), 224. This is a part of Said's discussion about nationalist resistance movements which arose against colonial physical and mental oppression. He states that prophets and priests often possess a conscious awareness of a colonial culture as imperialism; this awareness is directly tied with an emergence of resistance movements, armed or unarmed.

<sup>86</sup> Radcliffe-Brown, Structure and Function, 161 and 164.

explicit about the pivotal role played by religious leaders in resistance to colonial oppression. Although his analysis is based on the outright physical rebellions against colonial hegemony, Adas, I believe, provides clear scrutinization of the roles of prophets and significant insights into our understanding of the *Modekngei* movement. Adas writes,

The prophet's followers are convinced that he or she possesses superhuman powers, which are frequently displayed in predictive or healing abilities. In some cases the prophet may claim to be or may be regarded by the faithful as an incarnation of the divine. More important for the origins of social movements, the prophetic figure serves as a channel for divine revelations that provide a plan of action for oppressed groups and present fundamental challenges to existing beliefs and institutions.<sup>87</sup>

Adas's descriptions of spiritual leaders indicate a close resemblance to the characteristics of leaders of *Modekngei*, especially the first leader, Temedad, discussed in Aoyagi's monograph.<sup>88</sup>

Moreover, Adas as well as Lanternari, discuss numerous occasions where those prophets often incorporated foreign elements, especially Christian concepts and symbols, because a blending of values and behavior benefitted their survival in the changing social conditions they are in. Those concepts and symbols, I suspect, are no longer foreign to the minds of followers, but rather are adopted into the pre-existing ideas; they go through a metamorphosis, and are

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<sup>87</sup> Michael Adas, Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements Against the European Colonial Order, (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 1979), XX.

<sup>88</sup> The last sentence quoted from Adas might not resemble Aoyagi's description of the *Modengei* leaders. However, I argue that *Modekngei*'s emphasis on Palauan "traditional" ways can be seen as "fundamental challenges to existing beliefs and institutions" imposed by the Japanese, as Adas states.



turned into a new and unique product of their own mind. Aoyagi seems to perceive the incorporation of Christian elements, especially the erection of a huge cross on a hill by *Modekngei* leaders, as a proof that the movement was not, at least at the beginning, anti-foreign in its nature. But the studies of the above mentioned authors provide a more persuasive alternative to Aoyagi's position.

Furthermore, according to scholars who write about resistance movements, an incorporation of Christian elements often is a tool to bring a new "unity" among the oppressed members, devised by leaders of numerous religious movements, which covertly or overtly tied with a sense of resistance. In an attempt to form a united front to fight against their common enemy, the colonial oppressors, clans and villages often relax the rigid boundaries that separate them and move toward unification. Said, quoting an Africanist historian, Basil Davidson, states, "all of them respond to the humiliations of colonialism, and lead to 'the principal teaching of nationalism: the need to find the ideological basis for a wider unity than any known before'."<sup>89</sup> Lanternari's account is full of such examples.<sup>90</sup> The incorporation of the foreign concepts or symbols, such as Christianity, reveals a different meaning as a tactic of resistance in contrast to

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<sup>89</sup> Said, Culture and Imperialism, 210.

<sup>90</sup> Also, see Roger M. Keesing, Custom and Confrontation: The Kwaio Struggle for Cultural Autonomy, (Chicago & London : University of Chicago Press, 1992). Keesing states, "one element that distinguishes resistance . . . is communication among subalterns regarding their common situation of subordination and regarding modes and strategies of opposition to it (bold and overt or subtle and covert, depending on the mode of domination and the nature of sanctions)" (p.214).

Aoyagi's view attributing the "progressive" characteristic to *Modekngei*'s religious syncretism.

A historian, Ranajit Guha, whose career has been largely devoted to the study of peasant resistance movements in colonial India, discusses several "elementary aspects of rebel consciousness."<sup>91</sup> One of the aspects Guha elaborates on is solidarity that is almost always accompanied by the raise of resistance movements. He perceives that the solidarity or unity has two main impacts on consciousness of the oppressed people. Solidarity becomes a "figure of his self-consciousness;" and, the solidarity "separates his own consciousness of this activity completely and unequivocally from its cognition by his enemies."<sup>92</sup> Considering the meaning of the term, *modekngei*, that is to unite or to come together, and their incorporation of Christian concepts and in the light of the above discussion, I believe that it is misleading to represent that *Modekngei* was not a resistance movement from its early developmental stage.

The definition of resistance becomes a crucial issue influencing scholars' interpretations of such religious movements. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Aoyagi recognizes *Modekngei*'s opposition toward imposed changes. However, she declines to represent their "religion" as a form of resistance against colonial rules. Thus, it seems apparent that Aoyagi does not acknowledge resistance unless it is expressed in forms of physical violence. I believe, however, when an

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<sup>91</sup> Ranajit Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India. London, Glasgow New York, Toronto, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Karachi, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Nairobi, Dar Es Salaam, Cape Town, Melbourne, Auckland, and in associates in Beirut, Berlin, Ibadan, Mexico City : Oxford University Press, 1983) 13.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 169.

apparent power imbalance exists between two opposing groups, the disadvantaged group would more likely take the means of resistance that reduces their chance of receiving severe punishments and thus helps them to survive better. This choice does not necessarily mirror their willingness to submit to the advantaged group, but it is a form of compromise or accommodation, reflective of the circumstances.

Plantation Workers: Resistance and Accommodation, edited by three Oceanianist historians, Brij V. Lal, Doug Munro, and Edward D. Beechert, offers a more inclusive definition of resistance, which would help better locate *Modekngei* within this notion. Historians who contributed their articles to this book, attempt to remove a dichotomy between the notions of resistance and accommodation. Brij V. Lal, who studied resistance among plantation workers in Fiji under colonial circumstances, argues that measures of accommodation taken by the oppressed is a part of a continuum of what is called resistance. He and other contributors to this volume discuss that under conditions where outright resistance would meet immediate and harsh punishment, more subtle, indirect everyday forms of resistance become a necessary accommodation, which would allow them to take best advantage of the situation. The accommodation/resistance is accompanied by a conscious redefinition of imperialism; their own moral worth provides a sense of inner integrity, and a (non-explicit) rejection of the values, imposed upon them in institutional forms. "[It] is not the action but the motivation that matters."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Plantation Workers: Resistance and Accommodation, ed. by Brij V. Lal, Doug Munro, and Edward D. Beechert, (Honolulu : University of Hawai'i, 1993), 29.

James C. Scott, who studied poor farmers in a village he calls Sakada, in Malaysia, defines resistance as "any act(s) by member(s) of a subordinate class that is or are *intended* either to mitigate or deny claims . . . made on that class by superordinate classes . . . vis-à-vis those superordinate class."<sup>94</sup> Scott identifies the following everyday acts among the oppressed group as resistance; footdragging or being "lazy" (rejection to be an effective worker/subject for oppressors), sabotage (avoidance from imposed work), boycott (intentionally avoid producing surplus food to reduce the tax payment), speech acts (e.g. spreading malicious gossips directed against the dominant group), dissimulation (refusal to conform identified prominent characteristics of the dominant class), false-compliance, feigned ignorance, and arson (destruction of oppressor's property). Like Lal and others, Scott states that this is resistance in disguise or "ideological resistance," which commonly and "routinely" occurs before, in-between, and after more outright and armed resistance.<sup>95</sup>

Another example of this type of resistance is eloquently discussed by Guha. He analyzes peasants' conscious negation of symbols associated with the dominant class as a form of resistance. Guha points to the rebel's undermining of the "dominant culture in its most important, that is, religious aspect not only by emulating it, but more directly and dramatically by acts of desecration."<sup>96</sup> According to Guha, oppressed groups often mimic some characteristics of a religion, worshipped by the dominant group, and openly

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<sup>94</sup> James C. Scott, Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance, (New Haven & London : Yale University Press, 1985), 290.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 255 & 290.

<sup>96</sup> Guha, Elementary Aspects, 73.

ridicule them in public. Homer Barnett, a CIMA researcher mentioned above, provides the following episode concerning Palauans' desecration of the Japanese Shinto religion:

It was generally known that the Shintoists venerated many spirits of the sea, sky and woods; and several [Palauan] persons had seen Shinto priests engaged in their ablutions and purificatory rites at various times in Koror. . . . During the celebration given by the Ngarard people for their Peleliu visitors in January 1948, a skit or shibai was presented which lampooned the activities of the Shinto priest. To an outsider [Barnett] the playlet was scarcely amusing; but the native spectators applauded it with uproarious laughter.<sup>97</sup>

Considering their strong ties and an inclination toward *Modekngei* among peoples of Ngaraard and Peleliu, it seems fair to assume that many *Modekngei* followers participated in this celebration. It is more likely that this type of event also took place during the Japanese administration period. The acts of desecration of the religion of their former colonizers was apparently enacted and enjoyed by the *Modekngei* people. Guha argues that this is an example of rebels' conscious resistance actions to invert the colonial hierarchy, which is otherwise rigidly imposed on their psyche.

The book edited by Lal, Munro and Beechert also argues that various patterns of resistance exhibited by different groups in colonial situations often correspond to their "culturally accepted manners" of resistance. For example, in a culture that places high value on physical aggression, their expression of resistance tends to be more aggressive than passive. Taking the risk of generalizing Palauan cultural traits, I perceive that a marked characteristic of

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<sup>97</sup> Barnett, *Palauan Society*, 211.

culturally appropriate manners in Palauan political or personal maneuvers is indirectness or subtlety.

A History of Palau, compiled by the Palau Community Action Agency, discusses "a *rolel a kelulau* (way of politics)," which a Palauan person has been expected to master.<sup>98</sup> It is a set of strategies and disciplines. Employed techniques might have varied from one group to another, but the basic idea has been "to sublimate one's true emotions and achieve a favorable result by assuming an appropriate attitude. Subtlety and cunning often helped."<sup>99</sup> I believe that this political strategy and discipline beautifully characterize the nature of *Modekngei*. Among the seven most common techniques delineated by the PCAA, none suggests physical violence, in order to achieve one's political goals; and only one suggests the use of a threat, but not without a technique to soften the created tension.<sup>100</sup> In the above techniques, the avoidance of direct

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<sup>98</sup> PCAA, History of Palau, vol. 1, 50.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>100</sup> The discussed seven techniques are:

1. Omechar a reng (buy a heart) - one attempts to succeed by giving pleasure to others to gain their support for one's goals.
2. Mengarm a mecherocher (bitter and salty) - one hopes to influence others by one's determination to do the impossible.
3. Ideuekl chemaidechedui (hiding the lizard) - one attempts to surprise and confuse the enemy by unexpected tactics.
4. Bekokuui el reng (sympathetic heart) - this path parallels the Christian ideal of the Golden Rule.
5. Tuich el kelulau (firebrand politics) - this relies on the successful threat to sway one's opponents to one's side.
6. Tuich el kelulau el loubuich er a ralm (firebrand politics extinguished with water) - appeasement and compromise are the methods employed here.
7. Tmolech el reng (sincere heart) - this is the quiet, rational approach. (Ibid., 51-52)

confrontation and use of subtlety and intrigue are quite clear as an appropriate political maneuver in Palau.

This view is supported by Lynn Wilson, an anthropologist who recently conducted research in Palau. She states that she first believed her research topic, which dealt with sensitive political issues, directly involving her own country, the US, would have been the reason behind the Palauan people's unwillingness to disclose their opinions to her. However, she "soon realized other factors contributed to this reticence and found, in general, that Palauans tend to avoid self-disclosure and readily acknowledge their use of ambiguity and vagueness to cultivate consensus and avoid confrontation."<sup>101</sup> The tendency to be indirect in achieving their own goals appears to be one prominent characteristic among Palauan people.

Did people of Palau employ their culturally appropriate manners in their struggle against the coerced subjugation and its accompanied sense of deprivation imposed by the Japanese? *Modekngei* took the form of a religion; if, in fact, *Modekngei* was an anti-Japanese movement, its indirect manner of resistance would be explained by these culturally treasured values and techniques of Palau. Guha would characterize this choice as an embodiment of an inertia aspect in the rebel consciousness; that is, their unwillingness or difficulty in abandoning culturally valued manners. I believe that this would have

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The PCAA refers to a work by Robert McKnight, "Competition in Palau" (1960) as the source. The above techniques might have well been utilized by *Modekngei* leaders, not only in their effort to combat the colonial force, but also to attract a large number of followers and to persuade anti-*Modekngei* Palauans to side with them.

<sup>101</sup> Wilson, *Speaking to Power*, [ii].

been one reason that *Modekngei* did not exercise direct physical violence toward their oppressors.<sup>102</sup>

The issue of "cultural appropriateness" can be also examined at a different level. As Aoyagi suggests, Palauan religious specialists, because of their religious power, also possessed political power which served to counter-balance the abuse of power by high ranking chiefs. I suspect that the Palauan concept of *bitang ma bitang* (two halves), well elaborated in Aoyagi's discussion, could have been applied to their understanding of power relationships in Palau which included the Japanese administration. In my view, *Modekngei* followed very closely the political and social concepts and behavioral patterns, defined and reported by Aoyagi. The reason, I speculate, why *Modekngei* took such a covert manner of resistance is due to the harsh German suppression of shamans immediately before *Modekngei* emerged, and to the observable power imbalance that also existed between the colonial and indigenous populations during the Japanese administration. I surmise that *Modekngei* leaders might have taken extreme caution in their acts of resistance.

As previously mentioned, Aoyagi seems to stress that there are no existing Japanese historical documents, especially concerning court decisions, which indicate official Japanese knowledge of *Modekngei* as an anti-Japanese organization. She attempts to enforce her interpretation of *Modekngei* by pointing her readers to the statements given to her from *Ucherebelau*, a *rubak* (chief) of Angaur who acted as an interpreter at the court proceedings for the *Modekngei* leaders' indictment, in which *Modekngei* leaders were not found guilty

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<sup>102</sup> See Guha, Elementary Aspects, Chapter 4, especially, 164-167.



of anti-Japanese activities but of adultery and money fraud. However, Doug Munro, referring to Scott, states,

innumerable acts of petty resistance, which in their totality can be enormously disruptive to the superordinate classes, are only successful if undetected, and if undetected they will find little or no echo in the historical sources. Thus observable resistance is much like the tip of an iceberg--simply a small fraction of the totality.<sup>103</sup>

I believe that it can be inferred that *Modekngei* was so successful in their rather secret anti-Japanese conduct that the Japanese officials failed to detect or nail down their political activities.

Moreover, Guha argues that "What is regarded by one side as a symptom of disease, immorality and negation of reason is to the other a positive sign of health and spiritual rejuvenation based on the unquestionable right of the oppressed to resist."<sup>104</sup> As discussed in Chapter one, according to only one existing Japanese official document, *Modekngei* was viewed by the Japanese administration as immoral for their alleged conducts of money fraud and seduction of women, and their reported perplexing good citizens by prophesying and rumoring. According to Guha's interpretation of resistance, these exact actions of *Modekngei* can be seen as deliberate and positive demonstrations of their resistance by negating values and morals that the administration attempted to impose upon them, and by indicating their intention to place their values above and before the ones of the colonizers. Guha states that often, petty crimes against the law of the oppressor are committed by discrete individuals first; when the act becomes collective, public and destructive to the administration, it has

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<sup>103</sup> Lal, et al. (ed.), Plantation Workers, 30.

<sup>104</sup> Guha, Elementary Aspects, 169.

clearly become the act of rebellion. Against this definition of resistance, Aoyagi's argument that *Modekngei* functioned to accommodate the psychological needs of Palauan people can be seen as denying or dismissing its character of resistance.

Roger Keesing, in his discussion of the Kwaio struggle against colonial rule in Malaita, the Solomon Islands, states, "We need, at least, to note that when resistance is more in the eye of the observer than the eye of the actor, its character is changed considerably."<sup>105</sup> *Modekngei* perhaps does not satisfy Aoyagi's definition of a resistance movement. There are rather curious comments made by Aoyagi, however. In the middle of her *Modekngei* research in 1977, Aoyagi wrote that she did not think *Modekngei* was a radical anti-Japanese movement as Vidich depicted, "However, it is certain that *Modekngei* had revitalistic Palauan nativistic<sup>106</sup> characteristics, and I suspect that this was tied to the anti-Japanese [orientation of the movement]."<sup>107</sup>

Furthermore, in an article written before her sixth visit to Palau in 1980, Aoyagi writes,

In addition to a perspective to faithfully reconstruct the past of [*Modekngei*] as a nativistic religious movement<sup>108</sup> under the

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<sup>105</sup> Keesing, *Custom and Confrontation*, 215.

<sup>106</sup> Aoyagi uses a term, *minzoku-shugi*, which literally means ethnic-ism (?) or ethnic oriented. I could not find an English term for it. The closest term, I think, is nationalistic.

<sup>107</sup> Aoyagi, "Kyū Nan'yō Shotō ni Okeru Nihon no Shūkyō Seisaku [The Japanese Policy on Religion in the Former Mandate in Micronesia]," *Nampō-Bunka*, 1977b, 4: p73.

<sup>108</sup> This is one of the very few occasions that Aoyagi uses the term, "movement." This is in sharp contrast to Vidich, who frequently employs the term, movement, and declines to apply a term, religion, in his representation of *Modekngei*.

foreign dominance, which I have been pursuing, this year, I am enthusiastic about discerning another important aspect [of *Modekngei*]. Currently, in Palau, people are struggling to adopt their nuclear-free constitution against the US. I am interested in observing how this religion, which has been proclaiming, "Palau for Palauans," would contribute to their political activities.<sup>109</sup>

Later in her monograph, published in 1985, Aoyagi states,

Often new religions, as nativistic movements, play a central role in anti-colonial or self-determination movements. For example, it is reported that Voodoo religion greatly contributed to the Haitian independence. The Cao Dai religion of Viet Nam also fought courageously in their anti-French battles. The current *Modekngei*, however, does not possess such power. Under the extremely unusual condition that forced [Palauan] people to repeat their constitutional referendum for three times, excitement among the people was extremely high, but *Modekngei* did not take this opportunity to pursue their anti-American campaign to expand their influence. (emphasis mine)<sup>110</sup>

What I can infer from these comments is her acknowledgment of *Modekngei* as a "nativistic movement" and the fact that once it possessed power to act against colonial rule. Furthermore, in her 1992 article, Aoyagi states, "It was certain that [*Modekngei*] was the group with anti-Japanese characteristics."<sup>111</sup> If this is the

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Aoyagi also uses the phrase, "Palau for Palauans," here, but this is very unusual for her.

<sup>109</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, "[New Religion in Palau]," 37.

<sup>110</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 250. Here, Aoyagi refers to Lanternari for her descriptions of Voodoo and Cao Dai religions.

<sup>111</sup> Aoyagi, "[Fieldworkers]," 88, my translation and emphasis. In her monograph, Aoyagi only suggests a possibility of the anti-Japanese nature of *Modekngei*, and never writes in the affirmative tone as does in this article. It seems that in some articles, published both before and after her monograph, Aoyagi is often more vocal and certain about the anti-Japanese nature of the *Modekngei* movement, developed toward the end of the Japanese administration period.

case, the exact criticism Aoyagi made toward Vidich's work by condemning it as a "strained"<sup>112</sup> interpretation, needs to be redirected toward Aoyagi. Aoyagi might argue, however, that she perceives that the nature of *Modekngei* shifted to a more political orientation toward the end of the Japanese colonial administration. To this, I would like to insert Vidich's own criticism, stating,

It seems to me that the idea that *Modekngei* "gradually shifted its orientation from a religious to a political one" due to Japanese police harassment misses the point. If foreign administration created the anomie, then who would *Modekngei* blame for the problems it experienced? It had to be administrations from the beginning.<sup>113</sup>

Aoyagi's argument that people tend to desire a psychological refuge under the condition of deprivation might be a valid one. I think, however, unlike an inexplicable force, the colonial invasions and what accompanies them are visible and tangible factors that are the causes of deprivation among the oppressed. Thus, it is my opinion that it seems more reasonable to think that *Modekngei* offered a means, which was in accord with their rich traditions, to alleviate their suffering and to fight against the cause of the suffering, that was the colonial oppression.

In a direct relation with the above discussed notions of resistance, I perceive that Aoyagi's sweeping categorization of indigenous "responses" toward rapid social changes, contains some serious problems. As discussed in Chapter one, Aoyagi categorizes those responses in four groups and places *Modekngei*

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<sup>112</sup> Aoyagi, "[Fieldworkers]," 86.

<sup>113</sup> Vidich, personal correspondence, 10 April 1997. I should make it clear that Vidich states, "in any case, I have no intention of engaging in a debate with her [Aoyagi]."

into the type-b group, which is a "redemption type."<sup>114</sup> She states that peoples of this type rely on "unrealistic and irrational"<sup>115</sup> means (their religions) to seek solutions to soften peoples' negative attitudes toward imposed changes, and channel them into their religious expressions. According to Aoyagi, most religious movements, which occurred at times of great social change, can be categorized into the redemption type, and, numerous millenarian movements are the paragons of the type-b group.

In my opinion, this is a grossly unrefined generalization of religious movements. I strongly disagree particularly with Aoyagi's view that does not distinguish religious movements that occurred under colonial circumstances from the ones that emerged in non-colonial situations. One reason, as discussed above, is that colonial oppression is a tangible cause of the suffering of the colonized. And, as for the case of *Modekugei*, many groups of people who developed new religions under colonial settings have clearly discriminated "us," the indigenous populations, from "them," the colonial oppressors. Many of these "religions" have asserted their desire to go back to their own ways and have rejected changes imposed by the colonizers. In my assessment, Aoyagi underestimates devastating impacts on the colonized peoples, resulting from conditions of racial discrimination and subjugation which have taken place in colonial circumstances; I believe that the discrimination and coerced subordination are two main causes of psychological deprivation experienced

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<sup>114</sup> A redemption type, according to Aoyagi, is a group with a new religion who seeks redemption or salvation at the time of rapid social change. See, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 266-267.

<sup>115</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 267.

among the colonized, which differ significantly from the conditions of other social changes.<sup>116</sup> And, even after the colonial and non-colonial distinctions are made, Aoyagi's way of categorization is still too broad, considering the diversity of manifest differences among numerous such movements.

In her brief discussion of these four types of responses, Aoyagi incorporates Melanesian resistance movements, typically called cargo cults, into the same group with *Modekngei*.<sup>117</sup> She studied works by Peter Lawrence and Peter Worsley on the movements but completely ignores reference to Worsley's work, although listed in her bibliography, which analyzes them as anti-colonial movements. Concerning the work by Lawrence, Aoyagi specifically selects one aspect of his study; she states that Lawrence notes that the religious nature of cargo movements functioned as a "force"<sup>118</sup> to retard the emergence of aggressive nationalism among the people of the southern Madang area in New Guinea, where he conducted his research. Aoyagi also comments that "in this

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<sup>116</sup> Wakako Higuchi, mentioned in previous chapters, perceives that Micronesian people's negative feelings toward the Japanese administration periods derives mainly from the discrimination practiced by the Japanese toward the Micronesian people. Micronesians strongly resented not only the institutionalized racial discrimination in almost all areas of the imposed life conditions, which placed them in the position of subjugation, but also the general contemptuous attitudes held by the Japanese toward them. Higuchi reports that the Micronesians were regarded by the Japanese as "only a Tomin (islander)," and this word, *tōmin*, entailed obvious negative connotations. In Higuchi, "Islander's Japanese Assimilation and Their Sense of Discrimination," 1993, a paper prepared at the Micronesian Studies, Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam, Mangilao, pp.1-2 (my count).

<sup>117</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, Aoyagi also incorporates Palauan anti-colonial movements that occurred during the German administration period into the same group.

<sup>118</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 267.

large area where the cargo movements were prevalent, the only incident that can be characterized as an armed uprising was the Bagasin incident, and even this did not succeed."<sup>119</sup>

What I understand from this discussion presented by Aoyagi is that she attempts to draw a line between a religion and a political movement. Like the Melanesian movements and *Modekngei*, they are seen, by Aoyagi, as first developed as religions and then shifted their orientation to political movements. Where and how exactly is anyone able to draw a line in between the two characteristics? And, why is it necessary to do so? For the first question, as mentioned in Chapter one, I think that the boundary dividing the two characteristics would be extremely obscure, if it actually existed. As indicated in the above discussion, many new religious movements that occurred under colonial influences, or religions in general, have possessed a blended nature of religion and politics. And, the distinction becomes necessary only when a scientist tries to put those dynamic and complex movements into a few categories.

Aoyagi's way of categorization not only disregards the anti-colonial nature of *Modekngei* and the Melanesian movements, but also characterizes most millenarian and other movements, expressed in forms of religion, exclusively as "religions" and not resistance. I believe that this is obviously a misconception about these movements. As indicated by Lanternari and Adas, numerous religious movements, led by shamans, rebelled against colonial forces with arms; still others expressed their resentments toward not only the imposed changes but also to colonialists themselves through various, more subtle means, as

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<sup>119</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 267.

discussed by Scott, Guha, Lal and others. Aoyagi's distinction between an armed resistance and a religion among "responses" seems to need re-examination.

Furthermore, I argue that it is problematic for Aoyagi to condemn these religions as "unrealistic and irrational."<sup>120</sup> This bold statement can be generated only by a person who completely dismisses the intelligence behind these movements, which I cannot accept as an accurate view. I perceive that this is highly disrespectful to millions of people who were forced to be in difficult and/or insulting colonial situations, where they often had to accommodate means, such as "religions," in order to counter hegemonic forces. I assert that, even when those movements were strongly religious, their ingenuity and tact should never be reduced as "unrealistic and irrational" acts.

Now I move on to the issue of interpretation of poetic materials, *Modekngei kesekes*, which in my opinion disclose more political characteristics of *Modekngei*. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Aoyagi criticizes Vidich for his "far-fetched" interpretation of *kesekes* in his attempt to prove that *Modekngei* was an anti-Japanese movement. From reading *kesekes* collected by Aoyagi, it is evident that they are full of metaphors and other symbolic expressions that are only intelligible to *Modekngei* people who have extensive knowledge of. There are, however, a few *kesekes* that are rather explicit about their anti-Japanese sentiments. One prime example was a *kesekes* I cited in Chapter one stating,

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<sup>120</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 262, 265 and 267. Statements in the pages 262 and 265 are directed toward *Modekngei*, and the word "irrational," not "unrealistic," is inserted in both statements. In page 262, Aoyagi states that only with the help of an American, William Vitarelli, was *Modekngei* able to reach a rational ground where establishment of their school or participation in Palauan political parties materialized.



"Four policemen threw down the cross. It is the cause of the debt of Belau. It is the cause of the debt of Belau. This is why today people are in debt. This is the cause of the debt of the people."<sup>121</sup> Aoyagi states that the four policemen probably symbolize the harsh Japanese persecutions of *Modekngei*.<sup>122</sup> If the latter four phrases indicate a borrowed Christian concept, as Aoyagi suggests, it can be read that the original sin of the Palauan people was created by Japanese police.

There is another *keseke*s probably expressing *Modekngei*'s lament or resentment of their leaders' arrests by the Japanese. The *keseke*s goes,

*Chosecheluib ra Delbong, mlo meketeket ra kelbus, mlo meketeket ra kelbus. Ekmal dimlak ngibetii, al kero Cheim Chol, ngar ngii ubhabo chad megil betii. . . [Chosecheluib ra Delbong was in prison, was in prison for a long time. No one went to bail him out. And, when he descended down to Chol, there was a benevolent person and he was released. . . ]*<sup>123</sup>

This *keseke*s indicates that *Modekngei* people were resentful, at least of the Japanese treatment of them and that they placed the Japanese at the opposite end of "benevolence."

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<sup>121</sup> Aoyagi's translation, in Aoyagi, "Gods of the Modekngei," 349.

<sup>122</sup> To her Japanese audiences, Aoyagi adds that "However, I did not hear that the Japanese policemen actually threw down the cross at Tangel bad." (My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 166)

<sup>123</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, (31) and (61). *Chosecheluib ra Delbong* is one of the main *Modekngei* gods who is the god of war and also a very brave warrior. One of the *keseke*s describing his death is cited in Chapter 1. Aoyagi states that *keseke*s which depict the death of *Chosecheluib ra Delbong* (in a brutal way) express the aggressor in the third person, which makes her suspect that "they" are anti-*Modekngei* people (*Ibid.*, 169). I think that the anti-*Modekngei* people could include the Japanese.

*Chosecheluib ra Delbong* is one significant deity of *Modekngei* and appears very often in *keseke*s. Aoyagi explains that it is the image of Jesus Christ being crucified on the cross, that is projected into the image of *Chosecheluib ra Delbong*, being speared to death.<sup>124</sup> I believe that *Modekngei*'s incorporation of this deity has more significance than Aoyagi perceives. He is a victim of brutality (and imprisonment) more likely committed by anti-*Modekngei* people, as Aoyagi suggests. In my interpretation that is similar to Vidich's, his divided and scattered body could be seen as a metaphor for divided Palau, which needs to be reassembled or reunited<sup>125</sup> by the healing power of medicines<sup>126</sup> (in my view, a metaphor of power possessed by shamans/leaders),

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<sup>124</sup> See *ibid.*, 170.

<sup>125</sup> The *keseke*s about *Chosecheluib ra Delbong*, cited in Chapter 1, states, "Although his body is scattred in many pieces, he is able to speak when our mother and father put them together. He is able to speak" (Aoyagi, "Gods of the *Modekngei*," 352, translated by Aoyagi). And, as Aoyagi states, *keseke*s often express *Modekngei*'s laments of his body being scattered. As indicative from the meaning of *modekngei*, many *keseke*s also express their desire to unite scattered pieces or divided peoples.

<sup>126</sup> For example, the following *keseke*s, which resembles the first *keseke*s presented by Vidich, states,

*Ar chelid oldak aikal rengud, e diak boldak el do mo tang, le ruchel a telchalb a rirusii a TedebeIngot er Ngermelech. Chelechal lomech a chiusel me lo bechebech a ngurd, e ng rengul Belau el do mo tang, metirkei lulleit a tekoi a mo bechebech el modekngei. . .*

Gods attempt to unite our hearts in one but they cannot unite [them] in one. This is because *uchel* in the *Telchalb* (a world in heaven) divided *Tebel el ngot*, a god of Ngermelech (a village in Melekeok). Now, the bones being connected, and as the blood vessels become straight, hearts of Palau will be one. Because of this, people who reject this idea will perish and everyone will be connected straight, and become *modekngei* (members of *Modekngei* or coming together). . . (In Aoyagi, *Modekugei*,

to reach the harmony that existed in the past. *Chosecheluib ra Delbong* would be thus often identified with Palau or the divided nature of Palau which needs to be mended.

At the same time, like *Eskiristo Ngirchomkuul*, another important deity of *Modekngei*, *Chosecheluib ra Delbong* is the god of war.<sup>127</sup> The character of the deity, a brave warrior, is often associated with courage, which is a repeated theme in *Modekngei kesekes*.<sup>128</sup> Hence, the victim of brutality (divided Palau) is also a warrior with courage who fearlessly fights against his enemies. The spear, a weapon, is also the most important religious symbol, worshipped by *Modekngei* members. In addition, at least twelve out of 128 *kesekes* refer to war or describe battle scenes. In my opinion, *Modekngei*'s incorporation of the war

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*kesekes* no. 81 in pp. (32) and (33), and in 179, my English translation from the Japanese text, which Aoyagi translated originally from Palauan)

I perceive that this *kesekes* indicates that the healing of the body and the healing of Palau are viewed in the same light.

This is the first half of the *kesekes*, which Aoyagi introduces as a famous prophecy predicting a war being fought in Palau, and Vidich introduces as an anti-Japanese song, discussed in Chapter 1. As is evident in the above *kesekes*, the body of *Tebel el ngot* was divided not by the Japanese but by *uchel* (a term used to refer to a god in general). In my reading, *uchel*, in this *kesekes*, is a metaphor for the authority, possibly an anti-*Modekngei* faction.

<sup>127</sup> Aoyagi states that *Ngirchomkuul* and *Chosecheluib ra Delbong* are sometimes identified as a same god with different names (see *ibid.*, 169).

<sup>128</sup> *Kesekes*, no. 20, 25, 28, 32, 35, 39, 40, 44, 100, 106, and 119, in *ibid.*, (49), (50), (51), (53), (54), (55), (66), (67), and (71). It appears that *kesekes* chanted by different groups of *Modekngei* have different emphases in their themes. The concept of courage appears most frequently in *kesekes* collected from *Ngirameketii*, a brother of Temedad and the first ranking *rubak*, of Chol village.

gods may signify their courageous and aggressive fighting spirit against the causes of their suffering.<sup>129</sup>

*Ma Chosecheluib ra Delbong, el lebilebii e mubuchii, e ng mechellii a delad le chelid, me kid ditial chemat er ngii, kid ditial chemat er ngii. E kau choltueb ra ngklel, e msallel bel metengel eriou, me lobang ongetekill a mekemad, el racech ra irechar, a mekemaad el rasech ra irechar. Mesel desiu, mekil meriou a rois, a kerrekar ma blai, ma bai ma diangel, archad ma bad, me ng uchula blekeu er ngii. (Ngirameketii of Chol, Ngaraard)*

And,<sup>130</sup> *Chosecheluib ra Delbong* was created and broken into pieces, and [he] gave a birth to the god, our Mother. Because of this, we praise him. We praise him. And you disgrace his name. Therefore, he descended down and has become a helmsman of wars.<sup>131</sup> It is the ancient blood. It is the ancient blood of war. At the time of earthquake, mountains crumble down, and trees, houses, *bai*, canoes, human beings, and stones are all crashed and perish. This is due to his courage.<sup>132</sup>

The above *kesekes* is the best example of what I think evidences *Modeknge's* warring spirit.

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<sup>129</sup> And, as discussed above, Radcliffe-Brown, as discussed above, perceives that the function of religion supports the nationalistic/patriotic sentiment and often is associated with war.

<sup>130</sup> It seems that this is a part of one *kesekes* which was divided and numbered by Aoyagi, though I am not certain.

<sup>131</sup> Since the Japanese language commonly does not accompany an article before a noun, and Japanese nouns do not usually distinguish plural from singular, I cannot determine if the Japanese term, *senso* [war], originally stands for "a war," "wars," or "the war" in the Palauan text. The same thing is true about almost all nouns that I translated in this thesis.

<sup>132</sup> *Kesekes* no. 40, in *ibid.*, (24) and (54), my English translation of Aoyagi's translation from Palauan into Japanese.

There are also some anti-Japanese prophecies that predicted the Japanese defeat in World War II. Aoyagi presents, in her monograph, a famous prophecy made by Ongesi at his departure to a jail in Saipan in July 1941, stating, "I take rice for lunch as I leave, but when I come back, I will bring with me a lunch made with bread."<sup>133</sup> Aoyagi introduces another prediction implying the Japanese defeat and *Modekngei*'s desire for the Japanese to leave Palau:

Spain was defeated and left [Palau], and Germany came. Germany was also defeated and left Palau. Japan, who came after Germany, will eventually be defeated and leave Palau, also.

When the time comes, Palau will be united and [become] *modekngei*. And then, the *Modekngei* will be rewarded.<sup>134</sup>

This prediction is emphatic about *Modekngei*'s anti-colonial nature and that the meaning of *Modekngei* is to unite all of Palau, and to be free from foreign intrusions. Aoyagi does not present this prediction anywhere else except in one article published in 1977.

Several other repeated themes appear in *kesekes*. Quite a few *kesekes* discuss the "goodness of Palau" or how the lives of Palauans will be better in the future.<sup>135</sup> One of them states, "he [a god] will release us free, and we will be good."<sup>136</sup> One *keseke* laments the fact that "the glory of Palau has not come for a long time."<sup>137</sup> Some of them express their wish "for Palau to change" or

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<sup>133</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 143.

<sup>134</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, "[Japanese Policy on Religion]," 73.

<sup>135</sup> *Kesekes*, no. 15, 55, 97, 98, 118, 122, and 124, in Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, (48), (57), (66), (71), and (72). None of *kesekes* collected by Aoyagi indicates dates or times of which the *kesekes* were composed.

<sup>136</sup> My translation, *kesekes*, no. 124, in *ibid.*, (72).

<sup>137</sup> My translation, *kesekes*, no. 82, in *ibid.*, (62).

that "the time is coming close."<sup>138</sup> Another one states, ". . . gods and people know about it. And you are very arrogant because you do not know it. . . And, you disturb our relationship."<sup>139</sup>

Although the above *kesekes* are obviously taken out of context, I include them in my hope to provide an alternative glance into some of the themes readable in *kesekes*, in addition to the ones presented by Aoyagi.<sup>140</sup> In my opinion, although often disguised in tropes, *Modekngei's* apparent desire for change for the betterment of Palau, and their wish to repel the Japanese, come through quite vividly in the *kesekes* and the above predictions. I perceive that Aoyagi, inadvertently perhaps, failed to elaborate on these aspects in her monograph and articles in order to divert attention away from *Modekngei's* anti-Japanese nature.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *Kesekes*, no. 29 and 71, in *ibid.*, (51) and (71).

<sup>139</sup> This *kesekes* could be directed to anti-*Modekngei* Palauans or Japanese. My translation, *kesekes*, no. 52, in *ibid.*, (56). All themes indicated in this paragraph are similar to my understanding of millenarian ideology, which Aoyagi does not associate with *Modekngei*.

<sup>140</sup> Aoyagi uses *kesekes* mainly to trace the transformations of several *Modekngei* deities and to describe characteristics of the deities.

<sup>141</sup> I would like to remind my readers that Aoyagi was present when *kesekes* were recorded; then, Aoyagi translated the *kesekes* word by word with a help of her Palauan teacher; next, she examined the *kesekes* and made her close analysis; and she transcribed them in two languages during the production of her monograph. I understand that Aoyagi was most interested in religious aspects of *Modekngei* and thus tended to interpret *kesekes* in that light; at the same time, however, she must have been conscious of the anti-Japanese nature of the movement during the above process. Thus, it is difficult for me to wholeheartedly accept that Aoyagi was completely unaware of the above mentioned aspects that are readable in *kesekes*.

Another important aspect to be mentioned is Aoyagi's neglect of an interpretation of *Modekngei* presented by Kenichi Sugiura, a government anthropologist who worked in Palau. His work was discussed earlier in Chapter 1. I have already mentioned that Aoyagi did not mention Sugiura's interpretation of *Modekngei* in any of her writings. In response to my inquiry about her opinion of Sugiura's interpretation of *Modekngei*, Aoyagi did not answer my question.<sup>142</sup> But, in an answer to my other question about theorists or scholars who influenced Aoyagi's work on Palauan religions and *Modekngei*, she indicated that Sugiura's field notes, which she read, had very little use for her research in Palau. This does not justify her neglect of Sugiura's interpretation, in my opinion. Aoyagi should have at least mentioned that there existed an assessment of *Modekngei* made by an anthropologist who was in Palau during the Japanese administration period that was different from Aoyagi's position. Aoyagi should have been explicit about the reasons why she disagrees with him.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> My question was: "In his article, '*Minzokugaku to Nan'yō Tōchi* [Ethnology and the Administration of South Sea Islands],' Dr. Sugiura wrote that *Modekngei* was an anti-Japanese movement. I do not find any response from you concernig his interpretation in either your monograph or articles. What do you think of Dr. Sugiura's interpretation?" (My translation, Nishihara, personal correspondence, 13 March 1997).

<sup>143</sup> Despite her dismissal of Sugiura's interpretaiton of *Modekngei*, Aoyagi utilized some of his information in her descriptions of Palauan religions (not including *Modekngei*). For example, *Chuodel*, whom Aoyagi identifies as a brother of the most important deity of *Modekngei*, *Ngirchomkuul*, was reported by Sugiura as a deity of the Ngeredelolek village in Peleliu, and later of the entire Island of Peleliu. The oral traditions indicating that *Chuodel* is a older brother of another deity, and the concept of ascension associated with *Chuodel*, are also discussed by Sugiura. See, Sugiura, "[Palauan Religion]," 107-154. There are several other observable uses by Aoyagi of Sugiura's study on Palauan religious concepts, practices and deities into her description of Palauan religions.

Hisakatsu Hijikata's interpretation of *Modekngei* as a religion, is also omitted from Aoyagi's text. Hijikata's view of *Modekngei* and a *keseke*, presented by him which depicts *Modekngei*'s incorporation of Buddha into their religion, could have powerfully supported Aoyagi's thesis that *Modekngei* was not an anti-Japanese movement. However, in Hijikata's case, it seems more likely that Ongesi, with his hope to protect himself and *Modekngei*, provided false information concerning the movement, which led Hijikata to inadvertently misrepresent the nature of the movement. Hijikata's characterization of a *Modekngei* leader, Ongesi, as "benevolent" would work against Aoyagi's argument that *Nan'yō-chō*, the South Sea Bureau, persecuted the leaders due to their "abuse" of people, not by their anti-Japanese activities. I suppose that this would be the reason that Aoyagi does not include his arguments into her text, though I believe that Hijikata's work suggested to Aoyagi that the religious aspects of *Modekngei* are so rich that it could be described solely as a religion. My opinion about Aoyagi's omission of Sugiura and Hijikata is that both works, if introduced, would have hampered her from bringing a cohesive argument, and thus, were completely deleted from any of her writings on *Modekngei*.

Since Aoyagi is highly critical of the speculated anti-Japanese orientation of Vidich at the time of his CIMA research, that she thought to have influenced his description of *Modekngei*, her opinions about the Americans or the American administration in Palau or Micronesia should be analyzed. Aoyagi's research of *Modekngei* was initiated by her skepticism toward Vidich's work; I think, therefore, that her entire project is her scholarly challenge toward American perceptions of *Modekngei* and the Japanese administration in Palau. I do not know whether Aoyagi consciously attempts to counter western hegemony through her representation of *Modekngei*. The way Aoyagi writes about the



American administration in her writings, however, does not clearly indicate her sense of rivalry toward the Americans or American administration in Palau.<sup>144</sup> When she expresses her criticism toward the American administration, it is mild and in a very covert manner. Rather, what is striking to me is her way of giving credit to the American colonization of Micronesia.

In her brief narrative of history of the American administration, Aoyagi points out that the American policy was directed to make the people of Micronesia psychologically dependent on US subsidy. After mentioning the excessive employment in the public sector in Palau, she states, "It is because of the US' benevolence that the Palauans today, who possess neither natural resources nor exportable industrial products, can enjoy luxury which seems more than what they deserve."<sup>145</sup> And, she concludes that these consumption patterns practiced by the Palauans greatly influenced Palau's decolonization process.

An overall impression of her description of the American administration in Palau is that the Americans did not force Palauans to do anything, but in rather indirect measures, the Americans "succeeded" in achieving their goals through "Americanizing" the people of Palau. In contrast to her implicit manner in

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<sup>144</sup> One possible exception is her article, "[fieldworkers]," published in 1992. Aoyagi discusses Americans' desire to remove Japanese existence from the western Pacific, shortly after the Japanese naval occupation of the islands in 1914. She mentions World War II, and characterizes the new political arrangement, the strategic trust, as "extremely strange," or "bizarre." (my translation, *ibid.*, 84) Aoyagi inserts these aspects in her discussion to introduce the general American sentiment toward Japan concerning Micronesia, which, she thought, influenced Vidich's sentiment toward Japan at the time of his CIMA research. See, *ibid.*, 86-88.

<sup>145</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 102.

criticizing the US, Aoyagi seems to have no hesitation in criticizing Palauan people; she apparently perceives that the Palauans have made themselves dependent on the US. In more than one place in her monograph, I sensed her condescending view of Palauan people as less capable without the help of a colonizer. With this characteristic of Aoyagi in mind, her assessment of the Japanese administration will be examined next.

Aoyagi's attitude toward Japanese colonialism practiced in Micronesia is beneficial to assess its influence on her representation of *Modekngei*. Again, Aoyagi certainly does not overtly defend Japanese colonialism, but she is not highly critical of it either. Her depiction of the Japanese colonial period lacks discussion on discrimination, land appropriation, deprivation of political power among the traditional authorities, and other socially destructive aspects imposed on the Palauan people. This is peculiar because the description of such issues would enhance her argument that *Modekngei* was a religion that emerged in the anomie created by the colonial rules.

Due probably to the way Aoyagi was greeted by some Palauan people, she seems to believe that the Japanese administration in Palau was not detrimental to the colonized people, except perhaps for the time of war. This is reflected in her short (15 pages) historical narrative of the "Japanese times." Aoyagi presents several colonial policies which she might have thought as relevant to her following discussion of *Modekngei*. The tone of her narrative assumes "neutrality." Aoyagi briefly comments on the physical punishment of school children by Japanese teachers, sufferings inflicted on Palauan people due to the war, and a statement concerning horror caused by Palauan policemen on *Modekngei* people; she largely "abstains," however, from discussing negative impacts of colonialism on Palauan people and society.

Instead, her narrative includes several affirmative comments of Japanese colonial policies. In my opinion, Aoyagi seems to attempt, in a subtle manner, to defend the nature of Japanese involvement in Palau between 1914 and 1945. For instance, Aoyagi states that *Nan'yō-chō* saw the necessity of providing education that was more appropriate for the condition of the Island children; as a result, along with the alteration of their educational policies, they changed the name of school from *shōgakkō* [elementary school] to *tōmin gakkō* [islanders' school], and finally to *kōgakkō* [public school]. This statement not only fails to point out these were *Nan'yō-chō*'s policies to racially segregate Palauan and Japanese school children and to discriminate in types of education provided to each group, but also serves to give a false impression that the policies were a result of the sincere consideration of the colonists for the welfare of Island people.

Aoyagi mentions that it was mandatory for Palauan school children to work at Japanese households after attending schools. However, she continues and presents a case of a Palauan girl, who was treated nicely by the Japanese and as a result managed to save a large amount of allowance money for herself. And, as mentioned in the earlier chapter, Aoyagi suggests that today, the elderly seem to perceive the Japanese education as more effective because of their observation of the youth and their ability to speak English. Aoyagi seems to believe what is reported in the Japanese colonial document that states the emphasis placed on the Japanese language education was for the benefit of the island people. I firmly disagree with her viewpoint. As with Japanese colonial policies in Taiwan and Korea,<sup>146</sup> the Japanese government intentionally imposed

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<sup>146</sup> See, for example, Patricia E. Tsurumi, Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan 1895-1945, Harvard East Asian Series, no. 88, (Cambridge : Harvard

on children of the colonized populations types of education which were designed to produce only manual laborers and farmers,<sup>147</sup> and that in turn were thought to be beneficial to the Japanese expansionist scheme.

Tadao Yanaihara, a Japanese colonial scholar who was in Micronesia during the 1930's, criticizes *Nan'yō-chō* for the fact that the public funds, originally allocated for the purpose of the island people's welfare, had gradually been reallocated for the benefits of increasing numbers of Japanese immigrants. The difference in the emphasis is clear in Aoyagi's account. She states that "schooling [for island children] required no fees and textbooks and other necessary learning materials and tools were given or lent free to students. Depending on the situation, clothing and food were provided, and in cases of transmittable diseases . . . , free medicines were provided to island school children from the public funds."<sup>148</sup> Yanaihara's monograph is listed in Aoyagi's bibliography, but nothing about the above information is suggested by Aoyagi.

Concerning *Nan'yō-chō*'s deployment of high chiefs as *sō-sonchō* [the chief of village heads], and village chiefs as *sonchō* [village heads], as a path to disseminate the colonial orders, Aoyagi states that this was not quite effective. In contrast to her neglect of Yanaihara, she introduces Sugiura's suggestion to

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University Press, 1977).

<sup>147</sup> The education for the Micronesian students were shorter (3 years with a potential of obtaining additional two-year supplementary education) and educational emphasis was placed on the acquisition of Japanese language and the Japanese ethics, which included hardworking and loyalty to Japan and the authority. A carpentry school, built in Palau, was only one institution that was considered as "higher education" in the all of Micronesia, in which the Island children were allowed to enter. It was aimed at training the children for skilled labor.

<sup>148</sup> My translation, Aoyagi, *Modekugei*, 90.

the Japanese administration for the better management of the Palauan people. Sugiura suggested the use of *cheldebechel*, age group associations, to better disseminate colonial instructions. Under the name of *seinen-dan*, youth associations, and other similar arrangements of associations, Sugiura's suggestion seems to have been put into effect. Aoyagi's insertion of Sugiura's applied anthropology makes me wonder about her intention was to give an appraisal to the anthropologist's involvement and its usefulness in the colonial administration.

Concerning religion, though she states that religions brought in to Micronesia from Japan seem to have had little impact on the island population, descriptions of these missions take up more than four pages. She especially elaborates on the construction of a Shinto shrine, *Kanpei Taisha Nan'yō Jinja*, in 1940, and states that Palauan people seemingly well received this grand shrine because they perceived the largeness of the building would correspond to the power of the god, worshipped. I do not believe the construction of this shrine has much relevance to Aoyagi's discussion of *Modekngei*.

Regarding World War II, Aoyagi indicates her regret that the war fought between Japan and the US involved the people of Palau. She also notes the difficulties experienced by Palauan people during the war. However, she points out that because the Japanese forcefully relocated Palauans from the islands of Peleliu and Angaur and from the town of Koror, "it was fortunate that the loss of Palauan lives was not as substantial as they could have been."<sup>149</sup> Nothing about the brutality, cruelty and thefts committed by the Japanese is mentioned;

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<sup>149</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 97.

discussion about the intensification of miseries among Palauan people due to this Japanese conduct is completely absent.

She provides figures of land areas that were used for the Japanese agricultural colonies and points out that the town of Koror was almost exclusively used by the Japanese. Yet, her account does not explain how the land was appropriated and what would have been the consequences of the land alienation to the Palauan people. Aoyagi very briefly mentions the Japanese economic activities in Palau and provides no information about manual labor, with much less economic rewards, that was assigned to Palauan people by the Japanese administration. She also neglects to mention the fact that the Japanese forced Palauans to provide free labor during and several years before the war. In my view, the exploitation of Palauan people by the Japanese and the scale of the economic activities and their impact on the people, their society, and the islands, if they were inserted in her text, would benefit Aoyagi's argument about social anomie.

In her assessment of *Modekngei*, Aoyagi states, "the *Modekngei* incident was the most unfortunate incident that occurred between Japan and Palau during the relatively peaceful *Nan'yō-chō* era [in Palau]."<sup>150</sup> This statement suggests that except for the *Modekngei* persecution, life conditions of the Palauan population under the Japanese administration were fairly relaxed. It seems that Aoyagi believes that the relationships between the Japanese and the Palauans were otherwise generally good, which differs from information

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<sup>150</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 220.

presented by a historian, Mark Peattie, who, in my opinion, is quite lenient in his assessments of Japanese colonialism.<sup>151</sup>

In sum, Aoyagi largely omits negative aspects and her criticism concerning the Japanese colonization of Micronesia. A few Palauan oral histories about their experiences of the Japanese administration are presented, despite the fact that Aoyagi conducted field research, which directly involved the nature of the Japanese administration in Palau. Her presumed neutrality obviously functions to mislead a reader who does not know much about past Japanese involvements in Micronesia, as if this was the whole truth about the historical period. It is apparent that a reader needs to critically interrogate what is not said rather than what is said in this type of colonial narratives.

The best example of the tones underlying Aoyagi's description of the "Japanese times" is her deployment of an early naval instruction, issued on October 15, 1914, stating,

During the occupation period, [the service men should] help appease the minds of island peoples and let them be at their will. . . Especially regarding the natives [sic], one should respect their customs, protect their religions, provide the medicine and other

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<sup>151</sup> Peattie cites a comment of a Palauan man which was recorded by Barnett: "Japanese officials looked down upon us Palauans, but the ordinary Japanese was friendly. Yet even with them there was a unspoken distinction—they were Japanese, an advanced, civilized people, and we were natives, backward and primitive. . ." Peattie places more emphasis on the Japanese attitudes of "insensitivity and indifference," in addition to his opinion about the Japanese "amicable tolerance," to Micronesian peoples. In Peattie, *Nan'yō*, 217-218.

On the other hand, Aoyagi does not comment on Japanese discrimination or indifference toward the Palauans. In her correspondence, she states, "The close feelings among the Palauans toward the Japanese derived due perhaps to our similarity in the physical features, but I believe that many Japanese immigrant workers had friendly and close relationships with them." (My translation, Aoyagi, personal correspondence, 9 April 1997)

appropriate measures, practice benevolence to conciliate them and pay an attention to elicit their respect and affection toward us.<sup>152</sup>

This instruction is apparently important for Aoyagi. It points out a possibility that *Modekngei* did not emerge under the condition of Japanese suppression of Palauan religions,<sup>153</sup> and implies that, at the beginning, *Modekngei* was not an anti-Japanese movement. She praises Japanese "tolerance" toward Palauan religious beliefs and practices, and mentions this "tolerance" in at least three different parts in her monograph.<sup>154</sup>

However, if Aoyagi's information is accurate, this instruction was in effect less than three years before Japanese persecutions of *Modekngei*, a "Palauan religion," began in 1917. And, Aoyagi provides information that Temedad began his god-related activities around 1917 or 1918.<sup>155</sup> Thus, it seems more relevant for Aoyagi to emphasize severe suppression of the *Modekngei* movement by the Japanese from the early occupation period. Her repeated references to the

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<sup>152</sup> My translation, *ibid.*, 83.

<sup>153</sup> Peattie reports, however, that from the very early period of the naval occupation, Japanese officials began issuing "an array of instructions and prohibitions that compelled conformity to Japanese values and customs and rooted out [indigenous] practices judged to be uncivilized, all in the name of a modernizing emperor." In *Nan'yō*, 66; also see 64. Besides, I have hard time believing that all military service men, stationed in Micronesia, respected indigenous customs and beliefs, as Aoyagi seems to believe.

<sup>154</sup> See *ibid.*, 83, 254 & 259. The longer version of the instruction and her sense of its appreciation are also presented in her article, "[The Japanese Policy on Religion]," 62-63.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 127. Accounts by Aoyagi, Barnett, and Vidich suggest that Temedad first began acting "abnormal" or sick and this period lasted for a while. Aoyagi states that it probably took about three to four years before Temedad started his *Modekngei* activities in public.



instruction and the way she describes the "Japanese times" make me suspicious of whether this is a reflection of her nostalgia toward the "good Japanese colonial times" in Micronesia.

An anthropologist and a post-modernist, Renato Rosaldo, states, "most nostalgia facilitates imperialist nostalgia's capacity to transform the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander."<sup>156</sup> In my opinion, what Aoyagi did, presenting *Modekngei* as a non-anti-Japanese religion, has a similar character. Although Aoyagi is likely unconscious of the implication, her work gives approval to Japanese colonialism in Palau. I believe that Aoyagi, in her scientific search for the historical "truth" about *Modekngei*, possesses, to certain extent, the above mentioned attribute of nostalgia; the attribute might have influenced on her representation of *Modekngei*.

I recognize Aoyagi's politics at several different levels. First, she employed particular theories to bestow validity on her work. Her deployment of Morioka and her neglect of Lanternari and Worsley attest to this strategy. Aoyagi's emphasis on Morioka's theory in her critical discussion at the end of her book appears as a deliberate attempt to apply a theory that best serves her purpose. Secondly, closely related to the first aspect, Aoyagi chose to provide her own definition of what constitutes "resistance" or what distinguishes "resistance" from "response." Despite the fact that there has been much discussion about the definition of resistance, this literature was not extensively studied by Aoyagi. The four books, dealing with religious/resistance movements and cited earlier in this chapter, apparently did not fit her purpose; they were

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<sup>156</sup> Rosaldo, Culture & Truth, 70.

largely ignored in her discussion. If she wanted to refute Vidich's interpretation of *Modekngei* from the outset of her research, it seems natural to study resistance movements as well as religions in order for her to provide a convincing explanation of *Modekngei*. Thirdly, although Aoyagi seemingly sometimes perceived *Modekngei* as an anti-colonial movement, as suggested by some of her above mentioned comments, she was determined to safeguard her thesis, particularly in her monograph, that describes *Modekngei* as ultimately a religion.

Fourth, Aoyagi avoided inserting some information, she apparently had, in her monograph. Some of this information is found in her earlier articles, as I pointed out earlier. Some others, such as Sugiura's assessment of *Modekngei*, are consciously deleted from her text. I also sense that some important aspects of her findings, particularly the political nature of Palauan religions or religious specialists, perhaps inadvertently, are not elaborated in her discussion of *Modekngei* as presented in her monograph. As discussed in Chapter 1, it is clear that she is reluctant to present fuller discussions on the Japanese appropriation of Temedad's land and the chiefly assembly called by Temedad and Ongesi, which took place in *Modekngei*'s early developmental stage. Aoyagi dismissed several more political characteristics of *Modekngei* that are readable in *kesekes*. She might have done this unintentionally, but I find it is difficult to believe that Aoyagi did not notice any of the themes that I pointed out in the above discussion. Finally, I believe that her sense of nostalgia or her positive view of the "Japanese times" in Palau was, consciously or unconsciously,

projected into Aoyagi's interpretation of *Modekngei*. In short, the politics behind Aoyagi's scholarship are highly visible.<sup>157</sup>

#### IV. Comments on Both Works

It is interesting to observe the differences between Vidich and Aoyagi in their approaches to *Modekngei*. A marked difference in the two scholars' approaches is that Vidich placed an emphasis on the secular aspects of *Modekngei*, while Aoyagi apparently viewed it as an irrational resolution for their feeling of deprivation. Where does this difference originate? Their research foci, of course, would be one simple explanation. However, I believe that their differences in cultural orientations might have more influence on the manifested discrepancies.

In the US, I have observed that people are commonly highly assertive of their rights. American people are educated and trained to defend their personal rights; it appears to be in a direct connection with the American concern for the freedom. I believe that it is generally recognized that any person in the US can argue against anyone, regardless of their social status, if one desires. The world is what we make it, not something that is ascribed by our ancestors, is recognized as ideal by many. Critical inquiries and challenges to provoke changes are a valid and encouraged means to protect one's freedom. Children challenge their parents; students rather casually question their teachers. In my view, American society as a whole is more politics oriented than the Japanese society from which I came; I think that more people in the US are conscious of

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<sup>157</sup> I should note, however, that Aoyagi's tone throughout her monograph is less definitive as compared with Vidich's tone. Phrases such as "it seems," "more likely," or "I think" appear more often in her text.

their political orientations and are involved in some forms of political activities, either in the public sphere or in a more private scope, than the people I know in Japan. Many American people are more confrontative than Japanese, who are taught to remain calm and complaisant in our dealings with others, particularly in the public.

In the Japanese language, there is a commonly used word, *shikataga-nai*. There is no English equivalent of this term. It is to express a sentiment similar to resignation in contending with or against something that is causing unpleasant feelings, troubles or sufferings. It is often used when something, which one individual cannot fully control, places a negative influence on the person. We, the Japanese, tend to perceive this something as fate; an individual cannot do much about it. Earthquakes, for example, are fate; one has to give up fighting against their cause. Orders from the president of a company are often accepted by ordinary workers, even though they might be dissatisfied with the orders, more or less like a fate that we tend not to fight against. Commitment to perceived or defined responsibility is valued by many; unrestrained assertions of one's own right is generally connected closer to selfishness and childlike behavior. We are, in general, more inclined to accept hardships that are contained in the given situation. Rather than critically analyzing reasons behind the hardships and asserting our dissatisfaction, we tend to accommodate the best ways to alleviate the suffering by other means and make the situation tolerable.

Generalization of the Americans' assertion of their right and the Japanese' acceptance of their fate is obviously a simplistic stereotype about the Americans and Japanese, but I speculate that these attributes could have been reflected in Vidich and Aoyagi's representation of *Modekngai*. Vidich's interpretation can be

characterized as politics-oriented, assertive or combative, and almost too logical in my mind. Aoyagi in her challenge to Vidich is confrontative, but she perceived the *Modekngei* to be passive, non-confrontative, and irrational in their means to mollify their suffering. In my view, both Vidich and Aoyagi reflected themselves, to a great degree, during their inquiries concerning the nature of *Modekngei*. They might have consciously or unconsciously questioned: "How would I feel and what would I do, if I were a Palauan under these colonial circumstances?" Certain aspects of *Modekngei*, which resembled their own approaches to hardships, could have been employed and stressed in their representations of *Modekngei*.

Another aspect that I suspect as influential to their works is their ages and the ages of people whom they interviewed. Vidich was in his twenties and most closely associated with English-speaking and pro-western reform oriented Palauan youths.<sup>158</sup> Aoyagi, on the other hand, was in her forties and fifties, and at the time of her publication of the monograph, *Modekugei*, she was fifty-five. Aoyagi's interviewees were mostly elderly people who remembered the "Japanese times" well enough to provide detailed information about *Modekngei* and its earlier leaders.

I do not mean to imply that younger people are more political and older people are more religious. However, I think that religion takes more meaning as a person grows older and acquires tastes of life. Perhaps to the older Palauan people who were interviewed by Aoyagi, the religious aspects of *Modekngei*, over the years, had become the most important aspect; the political aspect

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<sup>158</sup> See, "Hope and the Obstacle of Development (Papers Presented by Sakuma to the Foreign Administration)," and other papers prepared by Sakuma, in Vidich, *Political Factionalism*, Appendix I, 125-128.

perhaps might have become insignificant over time, at least to their minds. On the other hand, I suspect that to those Palauan youths, such as Joseph Tellei and Takeo Yano, that Vidich associated himself closely with, *Modekngei*'s religious aspects could have not been considered as vital as the political aspects of the movement which had tangible impacts on their lives and their prospects for the future. The religious significance of *Modekngei* could have been discounted in the minds of those youths. This, and Vidich's own age, could have had influence on his account of *Modekngei*.

In sum, I perceive that *Modekngei* as an institution, either as political or religious, is analyzed well by Vidich and Aoyagi, respectively. What I think of as missing aspects in both accounts are the actual experiences of *Modekngei* people. It never really becomes clear what *Modekngei* has meant to Palauan people, not as an institution but as something that they have lived through or with. Neither Aoyagi nor Vidich discusses how *Modekngei* influenced the life of a Palauan individual who joined the movement or faith. What kind of impact has this social phenomenon had on identities of Palauan individuals, in both *Modekngei* and non-*Modekngei* groups? I perceive that Vidich and Aoyagi's research, which reflect their own orientations and their intentions to bring convincing arguments, put their opinions at the front and left *Modekngei* people in the background, rather as silenced masses.

Peoples of Oceania have asserted, for quite a while now, that they are tired of being treated as people who are not able to speak for themselves. They say that they do not like to be objectified, categorized (labeled), analyzed through western made universal laws, and represented by outsiders who know very little about their lives and values. They indicate their skepticism about books written by scholars, who do not share their experiences, telling them who they are.

They seek out opportunities that they rightfully assert for themselves; they wish to stop being defined by outsiders, who have the power to influence their western and Japanese audiences, about who they are. This situation can be changed, as a start, if scholars from more powerful nations would drop their weapons, the beliefs in scientific neutrality and objective truth, that safeguard their authorities and that detain peoples under their studies in a silence.

*Tangohia mai te taura  
itaku kaki kia waiata au  
itaku waiata . . .*

Take the rope  
from my throat that I may sing  
my song . . .

---Mokomoko's final words  
as he was being hung on 22 May 1866 at  
Mt Deden Prison.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Witi Ihimaera (ed.) *E Ao Mārama*, preface. Mokomoko, a Maori chief was executed by *pakeha*, British immigrants to Aotearoa (New Zealand), for alleged anti-*pakeha* conducts.

## Chapter 5 Epilogue

"For us, true speaking is not solely an expression of creative power, it is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges the politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless" (Bell Hooks).<sup>1</sup>

My inquiry into the background of two prominent ethnographies about *Modekngei* involved the depiction of complex political scenes in multiple strata: Global political and economic relationships and local politics influence types of data being collected by an outside researcher at the field. Texturalization of field data involves another level of politics. Researchers quite tactfully screen the data, according to their research interests and in order to bring a plausible argument. What were once claimed to be objective truths of *Modekngei* are now revealing of their true colors. Knowledge is never neutral; it cannot be constructed in a political vacuum. The uncritical and repeated use of the constructed knowledge endows biased partial stories with further authority; the authoritative knowledge of Vidich and Aoyagi dominate people's understanding of *Modekngei*. The global power relationship renders the expansion of the western and Japanese intellectual power to Palau.

Throughout the course of my research, one aspect has constantly captured my attention. It is how an ethnography, or any writing, is a reflection of the ethnographer or writer within a certain historical and cultural context. The

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<sup>1</sup> Bell Hooks, "Talking Back," in Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures, ed. by Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, et al., (New York : The New Museum of Contemporary Art; also Cambridge, MA & London : The MIT Press, 1990), 339.



global politics, and epistemological orientations of researchers that are also a reflection of global power, profoundly affect the foci of her/his study. Because of the personal and academic orientations of an ethnographer, not only the foci of a research but also the ways the ethnographer describes an event appear to be largely determined, perhaps unconsciously, even before the fieldworker begins to engage herself or himself in the field study. What is reflected is how one grew up and how one perceives oneself as an individual living in society and in a larger framework of the world.

Needless to say, my entire project is also a projection of myself and what is at stake at this time in my life. My identity(ies), cultural orientation(s), experiences, perceptions of the world and my own place within it, academic orientations, and personalities are reflected in my construction of this academic text. I would like to conclude my chapters with a reflective essay on my own life story.

For about six years, since I first moved to Hawai'i, I lived in a household where white ethnocentrism prevails. It has been, especially in earlier times, a constant struggle for me not to submit myself to the norms of "the white" which is so powerful and because of it, so detrimental to the personal esteem of non-white people. This was my first experience as a racial minority, which is defined as "a bunch of colored people" with less of the good features, associated with the white population. It was a great shock to realize that a person is categorized by birth and regarded accordingly by race or ethnicity. I felt a strong sense of humiliation that, in my opinion, no one deserves to experience. By being marginalized, a sense of resentment toward the dominant group emerged from inside of me, for the first time. My personal resistance toward western

hegemony must be the reason that *Modekngei*, from the very beginning, has had a strong appeal to me.

In a mid-sized Japanese city where I grew up, the only people whom I knew were the Japanese. In this seemingly homogeneous context, there was no racial awareness based on my own experiences, except through occasional exposure to artificial scenes from the television in the living-room and from American movies at the theaters.<sup>2</sup> The Japanese community was the world, then, to me, where the majority is almost exclusively Japanese and where being Japanese defines what it means to be human. Because of the geographic nature of Japan, relatively isolated from the rest of the world communities, I believe that it produces a sort of greenhouse effect where very few tangible and conscious comparisons with other peoples of the world are made in our everyday

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<sup>2</sup> There is a discrimination practiced in Japan, of course. Korean people living in Japan, I believe, are the main target of such discrimination. Yet, for us, at the level of everyday life, they are more or less "invisible" because of our similarity in physical features. If they speak fluent Japanese, which I assume most of them do, there is no way that I can recognize the difference between us. I have two friends who are third generation descendants of Korean immigrants. They kept their nationality as Koreans but did not learn to speak Korean. Until we became close, they did not tell me their identities as Koreans. It should be noted that there has been discontent felt among the large Korean population, mostly descendants of immigrants (mostly, people being forced to immigrate by the Japanese), living in Japan, deriving not only from social discrimination they suffer but also from the institutionalized discrimination that exists in Japan.

There is another group, called *buraku-min*, who are the descendants of a group of Japanese, once categorized in the lowest rank in the caste system until mid-1800. Although I believe that discrimination toward them is in a process of decay, there has been discrimination in marriage and job opportunities against them. Also, after I came to the US, I learned that people of *Ainu* and from Okinawa have experienced harsh discrimination. These peoples' voices are not loudly heard in Japan.

life. There is very vague sense of distinction among people who live in Japan as compared with degree of distinctions among people that I observe in the US.

After coming to Hawai'i, for the first time, I not only realized but also have lived in the world of the divided, where every racial (and ethnic) group is clearly positioned in a hierarchy and with stereotypes. Only within this context, I think, was I able to understand the powerful crimes committed in making representations of the others, which may seem harmless, trivial and often "funny" but mostly further the pre-existing stereotypes. In the US, World War II and "yellow peril" appear to have remained as the dominant themes underlying representations of the Japanese. The most common image of the Japanese that repeatedly appears in movies or television is of faceless military men who are brutal and irrational and who have no individuality.<sup>3</sup> I cannot remember how many times those scenes reminded me that the Japanese were once an enemy of the US; and that they can be again today. The Japanese, in the US, are seen as aggressive; "they" were vicious at the time of war in the past, and are the same in the economic scenes of today.

This was truly a surprise to me. Unlike what I have learnt and become in this new context, a common Japanese person, I believe, does not grow up with a self image of the above stereotype; rather, we generally perceive ourselves as

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<sup>3</sup> What appears to be most bizarre about Japan to western audiences are the popular images of the Japanese. *Hara-kiri* (an honorable ritual of death by cutting one's own stomach with a sword with a help of a person to terminate his agony, practiced by feudal warriors), *kamikaze*, Zen and *ninja*, in distorted manners, appear very often in representations of Japanese in the west. Also, commonly, East Asians, Chinese, Korean and Japanese, are grouped together and they all fight in *kung fu* movies. Typical roles represented for East Asian women are as prostitutes or mistresses, or otherwise women of insignificance who only obey their masters' orders.

complaisant people who do not, unless being pushed to the extreme, act aggressively against others in our everyday lives. As I grew up, there was hardly any occasion to observe physical or verbal confrontations among the people around me. Rugged Individualism, self assertiveness and critical inquiries or challenge to others or existing social orders were not fostered during my education in Japan both at school and at home.

The serious realization in discrepancies in the dominant images about the Japanese in the US and in Japan provided me disturbing but tangible and thus excellent opportunity to contemplate two issues. One is that I realized how quickly the Japanese have forgotten Japan's acts as colonizers and during World War II by dismissing them as things of the past. Even worse, young people today are not properly educated about Japan's recent past deeds, especially when it comes to the wrongs committed by the Japanese. The other is how the stereotype can generate horrible effects by shaping people's perceptions which, in turn, are acted upon in everyday real life in the US. It is my strong sense of injustice toward what Japanese did in our former colonies and during the war, and toward the white ethnocentrism supported by powerful western stereotypes that is reflected in this thesis.

Becoming aware of my own self and being able to talk about myself to people who do not share my experiences has been a constant process I have gone through since I moved to the US. It was inevitable for me to recognize my "Japaneseness." When I was in Japan, I did not have as strong a sense of being a Japanese as I have today. Because of our regrets over the ultra-nationalism practiced before and during World War II and our repugnance

toward militarism,<sup>4</sup> the term "patriotism" has been identified as evil, and very few people speak of nationalism in public. The use of national symbols, such as the flag and anthem, are refused, particularly at schools where teachers are highly critical of governmental pressure to mandate the use of such symbols. The notion of patriotism is closely associated with a negative feeling toward militarism. It was largely after I came to the US that my awareness of being a Japanese heightened; through my exposure to how the Japanese are represented in the US, a conscious awareness of my attachment to Japan has emerged and developed.

Another heightened awareness concerns my religious orientation. Religion was one of many topics that I needed to explain to people who are Christian. Religions as I know them taught me that having faith is more important than knowing who or what we worship; "compassion" was the most important value being taught by my grandparents. I observed them saying prayers in chants every morning and evening and offering food at the family shrine. It was the sense of reverence toward the supernatural powers that I learned from them. In the US, however, I have encountered the attitude that if I do not believe in one god, it is a false religion. And, if I cannot explain my gods, then they are not true gods. Moreover, some people, including a Protestant minister, directly indicated to me that Christianity is the only "true" Religion in the

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<sup>4</sup> I believe that the younger Japanese people are educated to believe that any war is wrong. This teaching, however, do not emphasize the wrongs committed by the Japanese, such as extreme suffering inflicted on a great number of non-Japanese people by the Japanese during the war; on the other hand, the sufferings endured by the Japanese due to the war appear often in representations through the media and literature. Thus, for a younger people, war is an abstract concept which happened in the past and which caused many losses and misery to the Japanese.

world and others who believe otherwise are all pagans and will never go to heaven. My religions never taught me to condemn other people's religious beliefs.

Another of my awakenings was my increased awareness about Japanese ethnocentrism. As noted earlier, I did not have a keen awareness of discrimination among the Japanese when living in Japan. As a project for an anthropology course which taught fieldwork methods, and later as my senior project for my BA degree, at the University of Hawai'i--West Oahu, I conducted interviews with "Japanese-Americans," mostly *nisei*, the second generation, as to their experiences in World War II in Hawai'i and their sense of identity. Some of my interviewees were descendants of people from Okinawa. From reading historical documents, I learned how badly ethnocentric the Japanese were, especially toward people of non-white groups, including people from Okinawa. And, this led me to realize and learn how strong the sense of discrimination is today among Japanese toward anyone different from us.

In the past, Okinawans were excluded from "Japanese communities" in Hawai'i. They lived separately from the Japanese immigrants and held different types of jobs. The Japanese immigrants commonly did not marry Okinawans. Some Okinawan people I interviewed were highly proud of their Okinawan origin and asserted their identity as Okinawan rather than Japanese.<sup>5</sup> I consciously

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<sup>5</sup> It is evident that there has been institutionalized discrimination by the Japanese government toward Okinawa, by using their islands for purposes that are not desired in other areas in Japan. People of Okinawa only recently began to speak up against the Japanese government, largely due to the US bases, which are occupying more than one half of their main island, and people's resentment toward the Japanese government to place burdens on people of Okinawa.

As I grew up, I did not even think Okinawan people were anything but Japanese like I was. This could be a result of a colonial type of education that

tried to identify them as Okinawan-Americans after the first occasion, but then, I felt a sense of resentment from some other Okinawan people by my making distinction between Okinawan and Japanese. Anyway, this was the first major breakthrough in my consciousness about Japanese ethnocentrism and the ugly acts practiced by the Japanese because of it.

Another critical learning from my "Japanese-American" project was the interviewer's effects on the data being given by people being interviewed. Those people I interviewed were mostly elderly, and most of them spoke fluent Japanese. All of them welcomed me, a stranger, to their homes, and they often treated me to their Japanese dishes, and told me how they strongly identify themselves as Japanese rather than American. My findings contradicted the existing literature discussing how *nisei*, the second generation Japanese-Americans, especially at the beginning of the war, identified themselves as Americans and fought strongly against the country of their parents. These works were written based on interviews conducted by western scholars and the *nisei* themselves.

At that time, this issue was of some puzzlement to me. I observed that the people I interviewed, perhaps in their attempt to be nice hosts, said good things about Japan and how they liked to visit there. Some people were very nostalgic about their roots, about their fathers and mothers (who were Japanese) and how nice they were. Only on a few occasions, did people expressed their difficult experiences and their sense of resentment toward Japan, because of the

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does not emphasize different cultural heritages and identities that exist within Japan, and discusses the colonization of Okinawa only in the past tense. Okinawan people might have their sense of being Okinawan before being Japanese. This, I do not know.

Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and their being "Japanese-Americans" under the extremely tense circumstances of war. My first experience with fieldwork apparently stayed with me more than I consciously thought it would, at that time.

How I was first introduced to Micronesia was different. One of my earliest encounters with Micronesia was my exposure to a videorecording, portraying American nuclear testing and its effects on the people in Micronesia. Japanese colonialism in the area was depicted briefly at the beginning of the video. It was a great surprise to me because I did not know anything about the Japanese colonial involvement in Micronesia.<sup>6</sup> My reaction then, was shock to realize that there was another historical deed of the Japanese that I was not taught during my schooling in Japan. Scenes of battles fought in Micronesia and their adoption of Japanese terms in their own languages made me realize the level of Japanese involvement in the area. Clearly, as a descendent of colonizers, my interests in Micronesia began to grow. My strong antagonism toward nuclearism and militarism, which was nurtured as I grew up, also helped me to have close feelings toward the people of Micronesia.

My first research paper in the MA program at the Center for Pacific Islands Studies in the University of Hawai'i at Manoa was about the nuclear-free constitution of Palau and their struggle toward self-determination. From this, I learned how much power and influence a large and wealthy country can have

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<sup>6</sup> Japanese colonialism exercised in Micronesia is largely ignored in history textbooks used in Japan. The only sentence I found concerning Micronesia in my old high-school history textbook is: "German South Sea Islands became a Trust Territory of Japan." My translation, in Mitsusada Inoue, et al., Sōsetsu Nihon-shi [History of Japan. A Detailed Account], approved by the Ministry of Education, (Tokyo : Yamakawa Shuppan-sha, 1983), 292. There are no descriptions of battles fought or damages brought in Micronesia during World War II.



over the lives of people in a smaller country, and I clearly understood the meaning of neo-colonialism. Japanese business involvement in the Pacific, its scale and nature, which I was completely ignorant of, brought me another realization that Japan is on the side of the oppressor rather than the side of the oppressed.

At the same time, I was reading literature written by people of Oceania, which most eloquently articulates their desire and determination to decolonize their nations and their own minds. What they illustrate through this literary art are stories about their struggles against hegimonic forces which position them in an inferior place and which continue to exploit them as oppressed. They say that they have been silenced long enough and now is the time for them to speak out for themselves, to tell their own people that not being like a westerner does not mean that you are worth less than them. You are beautiful and precious as you are. This literature advocates and promotes empowerment of peoples in Oceania. My own experiences in Hawai'i, and being a woman, helped me understand what they are fighting against and I felt strong empathy toward their assertions.

In addition, a profound sense of marginality that is expressed throughout the writings of Pacific authors has had an intimate appeal to me. Authors of these fictions are mostly western educated people who left their homes for higher education. Many of them discuss how they themselves felt marginalized when they returned to their homes in the islands and realized how they have become someone who does not comfortably fit in the social environment of which they grew up. At the same time, they are minorities in the western nations and can never truly be or recognized to be a member of "white" culture. This sense of marginalization has been my experience in Japan and in the US. I found

myself being comforted by reading literature, in which Pacific writers give narratives of the similar experiences and their emotions.<sup>7</sup>

My encounter with a monograph, Orientalism, written by Edward Said, in the next semester, had an overwhelming impact on my understanding of the world. He pointed out to me exactly why I have felt discontent, when observing western representations of the "other," in my case particularly about Japan. Never once have I felt so powerless, by placing myself in the hegemonic discourse of the west, as the time I read this book. The book made me physically ill for a while and I was about to give up my schooling in the US. I was in a hole agonizing and lamenting over the ugliness of the world that Said showed to me with such lucidity, until I realized that the best I can do is to be a minute but adamant counter-force to what I perceive of as wrong. My belief in idealism suffered greatly as I read Said.

In retrospect, this period was the time of the great transition that occurred within myself. I was in a seminar dealing with the identities of "west vs. the other." A clear line was drawn between the oppressors and the oppressed. As a Japanese, being conscious of Japanese colonial and neo-colonial activities all over the world, and at the same time, keenly aware of western misrepresentations of Japan and their effects, I felt great ambiguity situating myself on one side or the other. I felt like a flying fox in one of Aesop's fable; partially a member of the Bird Kingdom and also a member of the Animal Kingdom, but in a real sense, not a full member of either party.

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<sup>7</sup> I am aware that not only people who live in foreign countries experience the sense of marginalization. I have observed that many people, regardless of their race, age and backgrounds, live with the similar sense of marginalization in different degrees.

I felt that I must choose my position. The answer was clear. As a student whose interests lay in Oceania, my job is to put Japan on the side of the colonizer and not to defend any wrongs committed by Japan. This was a rather difficult choice for me because of my awareness of western representations of my country. The choice meant that I will contribute to the negative images of Japan in western discourse (because my audience is the English reading population).<sup>8</sup> Yet, once my stand and objection became clear in my mind, there was nothing that stopped me from committing myself to what I truly desire to do; what I want is to fight against hegemonic forces, both Japanese and western. I decided to apply my understanding of how detrimental the power of hegemony is to a non-western person, which I achieved by being a Japanese in the US, and make my best effort to combat the hegemonic power of Japan and the west. If you find any ambivalence concerning my representation of Japan in my text, it is a remnant of my ambiguity, which I believe I have removed from my mind.

Finally, one more significant influence on my academic orientation should be identified. It was my enrollment in a Pacific history course, where I was introduced to various styles and natures of histories. Islander-oriented histories, not a history written solely by outsiders, was the key theme. The power relationship between the west and the Pacific was clearly indicated through how history, as being conceptualized and practiced by the people of the Pacific in the form of oral traditions, has long been condemned as "myths." Western records have been considered as the only reliable historical sources and the western conception of history has been used, to write about history of Pacific people.

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<sup>8</sup> If I criticize Japan's conducts harshly in Japan, many people criticize me back by stating that I am "Americanized."

The exclusive recognition, if given to the latter, is characterized as "academic colonialism." The class taught me that both sources are biased, but both are equally valid. Both approaches to history are equally important. Attentiveness to what Pacific people themselves say and how they represent themselves was encouraged.

The course also taught me how history and culture are an entangled whole which powerfully shapes a person's orientation and perspectives of the world. It was in this class that I realized that without positioning myself in a larger historical context, it is difficult to understand why I believe and behave in certain ways. It is the historical global power struggles that position an individual, to a certain degree, in a place, where one's identities are formed and, from which one projects oneself to grasp meanings of the outer world and the peoples in it. Histories do not die off but rather live on through us.<sup>9</sup> My understanding of history radically changed due to my enrollment in this history class.

Works of Aoyagi and Vidich became the target of my criticisms due to my interests in *Modekngei* and my inclination to post-modernism. I would like to indicate my sincere respect for their scholarly efforts and abilities. As a student, I can only hope for the aptitude and competence that both of them show in their works. I would take a different approach, but this does not necessarily mean, at least in my mind, undermining the value of the two scholars' works. I perceive that both of them greatly contributed to our understanding of *Modekngei*.

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<sup>9</sup> A book, introduced in this class, which discerns the direct relationship between history and culture, was; Lin Poyer, *The Ngatik Massacre: History and Identity on a Micronesian Atoll*, (Washington : Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).

I have consulted with several American scholars and students about my thesis project. When I talked about Aoyagi's work, some indicated their interests in her work. Yet others indicated their dismissal of her work, as soon as I gave a brief summary of Aoyagi's interpretation of *Modekngei*. Some people are in a similar scholarly climate as I, and Aoyagi's interpretation of *Modekngei* as a non-anti-Japanese religion did not fit their thoughts. One suggested to me her disrespect for works done by Japanese scholars; another indicated her disgust, in a subtle manner, about the fact that Aoyagi, a Japanese, is claiming that *Modekngei* was not an anti-Japanese movement. This individual made severe criticisms toward the Japanese administration, but none toward the American administration, in Micronesia. I do not agree with their opinions concerning her work. It seems that Aoyagi has been the only scholar who was able to make substantial contacts with *Modekngei* people and wrote about it. The rich information presented in her work deserves recognition.

In my thesis, I have made harsher criticisms of Aoyagi's work than of Vidich's. This is due to my above discussed academic and personal orientations and my criticism of Japanese education, concerning our history of colonialism and war. Colonialism entails violence through the extreme exploitation of people and their assets solely for the benefit of the colonizer, and through undermining the fundamental values of colonized people which reduces the dignity and esteem formerly enjoyed by the members of society. Many Japanese people now visit Micronesia as tourists. In order for us to reconstruct a better understanding of each other and our relationships with peoples of Micronesia, Japanese people must be aware of what happened there in the recent past and what is happening today. People should be better informed and given the chance to make our own evaluation of the history.

Because of the way the Japanese government neglects to provide any substantial information about the area called Micronesia and its involvement with the people who live there, and because of the way our government intentionally hides Japanese mistakes in the former colonies and crimes committed during the war,<sup>10</sup> I believe that it is the task of Japanese scholars who write about the area to better educate younger people. It is my opinion, as a Japanese, and an individual engaged in academia, that we should be attentive and sensitive to what Micronesian people's experiences have been. Some Micronesian people might have had good relationships with the Japanese civilian population and express their nostalgic feelings toward their past. But, I think it is only a partial story. Because we are Japanese, we should not be content with displayed smiles given to us from peoples of Micronesia. I strongly believe that it is we, not Micronesian people, who are responsible for making serious and critical inquiries about our past and present mistakes in order that there will be a better future for people in Micronesia and Japan. This is one of the reasons for my stronger criticisms of Aoyagi's work.

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<sup>10</sup> See, Saburo Ienaga, *Pacific War*; id., "The Glorification of War in Japanese Education," *International Security*, Winter 1993/1994, 18(3): 113-133; *Nihon-shi Kenkyū linkai* [Committee for the Examination of Japanese History], "Ienaga Kyōkasho Soshō 3.16 Saikō-sai Hanketsu ni Taisuru Kōgi Seimei [An Appeal: Against the 3.16 Supreme Court Ruling on Ienaga's Textbook Lawsuit]," *Nihon-shi Kenkyū*, May 1993, 369: 82-83; also "Japan and Peace in Asia," *Aliran Monthly*, 1993, 13(7): 24-26.

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