

**SIGNS OF BEING --
A CHAMORU SPIRITUAL JOURNEY**

PLAN B PAPER

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Master of Arts in Pacific Islands Studies in
the Graduate School of the University of Hawai'i

By

Cecilia C. T. Perez, B.A.

University of Hawai'i

1997

Master Degree Committee:

Approved by

Dr. Robert C. Kiste, Chair

Dr. Karen M. Peacock

Dr. Geoffrey M. White

**SIGNS OF BEING --
A CHAMORU SPIRITUAL JOURNEY**

PLAN B PAPER

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Master of Arts in Pacific Islands Studies in
the Graduate School of the University of Hawai'i

By

Cecilia C. T. Perez, B.A.

University of Hawai'i

1997

Master Degree Committee:

Approved by

Dr. Robert C. Kiste, Chair

Dr. Karen M. Peacock

Dr. Geoffrey M. White

Contents

Preface	
Situating I Manñamoru in a Pacific Seascape	<i>iv</i>
Introduction	
Situating Myself in the Chamoru Mindscape	<i>vi</i>
Hinasso	<i>Reflection</i> 1
Look At It This Way	2
As I Turn the Pages	4
Chamoru Renaissance	9
Cut Green With Envy	11
Bare-Breasted Woman	13
Finakmata	<i>Awakening</i> 16
Kafe Mulinu	17
Strange Surroundings	21
Signs of Being -- A Chamoru Spiritual Journey	24
I Fina'pos	<i>Familiar Surroundings</i> 28
Saint Turtle	29
The Road Home	35
View of Tumon Bay	42
Invisible Ceremony	47
Lala'chok	<i>Taking Root</i> 50
Bokongngo'	51
Sky Cathedral	61
Seeing Through the Rain	65
I Sinedda	<i>Finding Voice</i> 80
Steadfast Woman	81
Gi Na'an I Saina	84
Inside Out	87

Preface

Situating I Manñamoru in the Pacific Seascape

The indigenous people of the Chamoru archipelago in the Northwest Pacific are known in their language as I Manñamoru, those who are Chamoru. Both the people and the language are called, Chamoru. The islands which are their ancestral homelands, are known today as the Marianas.

From legends we know that the Chamoru people claim their origins from the islands themselves. The story is told of the first two beings, Puntan and Fu'una.

It was from her brother's body that the sister, Fu'una, made the earth, the sky, and all that we find in nature. In fact, some place names on Guam refer to parts of the human body (e.g. Urunao, the head; Tuyan, the belly; and Barrigada, the flank.)

There are fifteen main islands in the archipelago. The largest and southernmost island is Guam, neighbored by the other inhabited islands of Luta, Sa'ipan and Tinian. In the contemporary Pacific, the Mariana Islands are known as two separate political entities of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (C.N.M.I.) and the Unincorporated U.S. Territory of Guam. The past three centuries of a millenia-old Chamoru history have been marked with colonial rule by Spain, the United States, Germany and Japan.

The Marianas were held as a colonial possession of Spain from 1665 to 1898. As a result of an American victory in the Spanish-American War, the

island of Guam was taken as a possession of the United States. The Northern Marianas became a possession of Germany. After World War I, the Northern Islands were mandated to Japan.

For a period of three years during World War II, the Marianas were held by Japanese military forces. After the war, they became possessions of the United States. Both remained separate political entities under American rule.

The chronological narration of these transactions made by foreign political powers has comprised the conventional writing of the history of the Marianas.

More recently, the telling of this history has re-examined events in the context of identifying and understanding the Chamoru people. In spite of generations of oppression by colonial forces, there still persists a social, political and spiritual entity that identifies itself as Chamoru. This common identity has found expression in all aspects of life, from religious devotion, educational endeavors, economic development, creative artistic works, to linguistics, sports, mechanics, entertainment and homemaking.

The aim of this work is to articulate the mindscape of a contemporary Chamoru consciousness. In the contemporary Pacific seascape, I Manñamoru can begin to reclaim their rightful place alongside other Pacific Island nations.

Introduction

Situating Myself in the Chamoru Mindscape

This composition of poetry, prose, and commentary, is born of a need to understand and articulate the significance of the framework of what is called, "Chamoru cultural identity." A focused study on Chamoru history, politics, religion, language and cultural practices has blurred rather than sharpened the definition of what is Chamoru.

Let us start with the word, Chamorro. Traditionally, the people and language indigenous to the Marianas, have been know as, "Chamorro." In response to an increased interest in standardizing the Chamorro orthography, a political campaign was initiated to lobby the Government of Guam Chamorro Language Commission to adopt and promote the "Chamoru" spelling of the word. This spelling would have been in accordance with the Commission's approved orthography.

*when did
the name
change?*

So began the island-wide "Chamoru-Chamorro" debate of the Mid-1990s. This topic was a heated point of discussion in legislative session, television and radio talk shows, opinion sections of the newspaper, classrooms, community centers, village churches, parks, and family kitchens and homes.

What engage the community's interest was not the linguistic approach to standardizing orthographies. It is of interest that discussion over the topic of standardized orthography could be used to express a sense of Chamoru cultural

identity. Supporters of the “-oru” spelling generally were people publicly recognized as indigenous rights activists and Chamoru Nationalist. Supporters of the “-orro” spelling generally were publicly recognized as being pro Chamorro rights and having political conviction to remain part of the U.S. national identity. The commonality among supporters of either spelling, was a keen sense of Chamoru cultural awareness and pride in being Chamoru.

As I search through my memories of being Chamoru, I have realized that it is a new awareness for me. From my earliest recollections, I was identified as “Hagan Ita.” In Chamoru, this translates to “daughter of Ita” and “blood of Ita.” Ita is my mother’s name.

School forms soon found me identifying myself as Hispanic; Other; Asian and Pacific Islander; back to Other, with a notation of Chamorro; back to Asian Pacific Islander, with a notation of Chamorro; then Pacific Islander, with a notation of Chamoru, progressively. Beyond school forms I have run the range of Spanish-Chamorro; Chamorro-Filipino; Chamorro-Spanish-Filipino; Indigenous Chamorro; Taotao Tåno (People of the Land); and now, Chamoru. I know I am not alone in this process of defining and redefining myself in a Chamoru cultural context, moreso, within the cultural and historical context of Chamoru from the island of Guam.

The process and product of writing creatively in essay, poetry, and short-story, on questions of Chamoru cultural identity and Chamoru history, is

something I hope to bring to the village level and into classrooms. It is my hope to encourage new approaches to Chamoru cultural history. Currently, discussion of Chamoru cultural identity primarily focuses on the static approach to understanding culture. Perhaps an increased presence of Chamoru literature in Guam's community can help to stimulate thought on the politics of culture, and cultural identity.

There is a body of Chamoru literature that was created and used exclusively by the Government of Guam Department of Education's Chamorro Bilingual-Bicultural Program. These curricula are produced primarily for the elementary and middle-school grade levels. There is also a small number of books for children within Chamoru literature that were written in English and are available at island book and gift shops.

There are a handful of books in Chamoru literature that are written for a broader age group, including adults. It is my intent to add to this body of literature.

What has arisen from this process of writing, is a slow emergence of a community of indigenous Chamoru writers. My efforts, along with others, in soliciting critical response of our creative pieces have revealed to us fellow writers. This community is just coming into being and has, over the past year-and-a-half, had several readings of original poetry, political essay, vignettes, journal entries and occasional short stories.

This anthology, "Signs of Being--A Chamoru Spiritual Journey," is a documentary in the form of creative writing, on the politics of cultural identity and historical memory in the process of decolonization of the Chamoru mind and senses. It is written from the self-reflexive view of an indigenous Chamoru woman writer from Guam, whose sense of physical sight is blurred.

Much of my work focuses on the intangible. I bear witness to a growing Grass Roots-based, village-based political movement toward decolonization through intellectual and sensory awareness and stimulation. Sensory and intellectual engagement invoke memories of a Chamoru past that are best expressed through sensory and intellectual actions. Dancers, choirs, musicians, painters, weavers, carvers, writers, chefs, photographers, chanters, photographers, and even athletes have become the major proponents of a Chamoru presence of Guam.

I bring into play creative writing as a tool for this process of decolonization; a process that comes over time through a development and nurturing of intellectual and sensory acuity. I describe this process as a journey that travels through a Chamoru mindscape. This journey is depicted through five passages that politically sensitize me to what being Chamoru means today.

These five passages as described in this anthology are:

- **Hinasso Reflection** - From the beginning of time there has been Chamoru tradition of intellectual ability and expanding capacity for thought. Though, a millenia-old

tradition it is only now emerging as a topic in Pacific History. The writing in this section discusses how we use this tradition to understand ourselves in the context of a Chamoru cultural identity.

- **Finakmata *Awakening*** - There is an intangible presence of our Chamoru ancestors in everyday life. The writings here invoke their memories of survival, of pain, and of spirituality.

- **I Fina'pos *Familiar Surroundings*** - As a people, I Manñamoru have been wandering for a long time, detached from our beginnings, our creation and the land on which we live. The writings here look at our surroundings in a way that brings us home in all its complexities.

- **Lala'chok *Taking Root*** - I Manñamoru have many histories in these ancestral homelands we know as the Marianas. The land, seas and heavens have a memory of their own that is revealed through the Chamoru mind and senses. The writing in this section focuses on the art of remembering who we are, and from where we came.

- **I Senedda *Finding Voice*** - There is power in the articulation of thought and sense. Dialogue can only begin when you find voice. These poems and essays give voice to the process of politicization from the perspective of an indigenous Chamoru woman writer.

I present this work as an ongoing journey in Chamoru history. Through much of our colonial history, I Manñamoru have expressed ourselves in political thought and strategy within the context of the Chamoru archipelago's importance as a strategic possession for world powers.

The Chamoru mindscape is the journey of understanding ourselves within our own framework of thought and sense--*Hita I Manñamoru*.

HINASSO

REFLECTION

Look At It This Way

When you're born
on an island,

you
don't
know you're on

an island

until someone

tells you.

They ask,
"How
can you
live on such
a sma-a-all
island?"

I ask,
"How
can you not?"

and,

"Sma-a-all, as compared
to
What?"

About "Look At It This Way"

This a a gentle commentary positioning myself as a Pacific Island writer. Someone actually did ask me how it was that I could live on a small island. She intimated that it must be frustrating to have such short stretches of road to drive.

She moved in politically-correct circles, had travelled widely throughout Mexico and Latin America conducting research on indigenous food dishes, and worked as a chef at an artists' commune in San Francisco. I thought that because she was well-travelled and had lived among people from different ethnic backgrounds, she would have a broader view of the world.

She looked at me quizzically when I responded that I never got "rock fever." She could hardly believe when I told her that long drives, big spaces, too much English and the absence of salt air made me nervous.

She was speechless when I, in turn, asked her, how it was that she could live on a continent.

As I Turn the Pages

Hungry fingers
feed
searching eyes
that rummage reams of text
between the lines
map the margins,
you'll never find
recording
of Chamorro¹ minds.

Translate
all you want,
archival
old Spanish
new English
some French, German, Russian, even
the rarely-talked-about Kanji².
You'll learn of flora and fauna
mountains
rivers
streams
and valleys,
that beche de mer³
in Chamorro
is balati'⁴,
but,
you'll never
find recording
of Chamorro thought.

In the drama
of what is called,
"The History of Guam,"
severed from
sister homeland,
Northern Marianas⁵,
the stage is set:

sleepy
colonial
island,
Nanyo⁶, extension of Nippon⁷,
and
bastion of American democracy.

One of many scenes
is played:

Foreign actors walk in
float in fly in bomb in
inseminate into
the passive props.

Enter, the props:

docile
indolent indios⁸
tawny-skinned
muscle-bound
robust
thieving
ignorant
natives,
but ...
"they sail a great canoe!⁹"

I've read that script,
I've scanned those books,
I've turned the pages
one by one
forward
backward,
I've turned those pages
looking
sensing,
"Now, if those scholars,
learned men and women,
wrote,
'And in the end ...'

'in one final gasp for life ...'
'the last Chamorro died¹⁰,'
then,
who am I
who know
my self
to be
Chamoru¹¹,
and how is it
I sit here
thinking?"

END NOTES

1. "Chamorro" selected over "Chamoru" to indicate older time period of reference. Use of "Chamorro" follows suit throughout this poem.
2. Japanese form of writing.
3. French term for sea cucumber.
4. Sea cucumber.
5. Reference to the political arrangement that separated the Mariana Islands into two political entities.
6. Japanese term used to describe Japan's vision of incorporating the South Sea Islands into its national empire.
7. Japanese term for Japan.
8. Spanish colonial term for island natives.
9. Reference to consistent remarks in historical text that the Ancient Chamorro maneuvered their canoes expertly.
10. Reference to popular citations of historical text about the Chamoru people.
11. "Chamoru" selected over "Chamorro" to indicate contemporary representation of Chamoru cultural identity.

About "As I Turn the Pages"

This poem was born in the University of Guam's Fine Arts Theater during one of the lectures in a "History of Guam" class. The lecturer stood in front of a podium with the stage behind him. The topic was, "Romantic and Tragic" tellings of Guam history. The juxtaposition of the lecturer to the theatrical stage inspired me to devise scenarios that would dramatize the points of the lecture.

If this poem was born at the University of Guam, then it was seeded at the University of Hawai'i. I gathered from mental and written notes taken at classes as part of the Pacific Islands Studies program, and joined them with personal observations to compose this poem.

A couple of years ago, I sat with my mother's brother at his dinner table. He was curious about what seemed to him, my sudden interest in speaking Chamoru. He asked why I wanted to learn a language that was dying. These were his almost exact words, "Didn't some famous American anthropologist write in a book that the last Chamorro died?"

In another incident, my father's cousin scoffed at my efforts to learn Chamoru. She said that it was a dead language on Guam. Her exact words were, "It's dead. It's just dead."

Of course, if I were speaking to other than my uncle and aunt, I might have been able to respond, "If there are no Chamoru, who are we?" or "If the Chamoru language is dead, then what is it we speak at family gatherings?"

"As I Turn the Pages" identifies history books as being among the sources of these misconceptions.

Chamoru Renaissance

It's fashion
now
to claim
our roots
but yet
we cannot
face
we've stepped
across
a line
so thin
and shifted
to the other
side.

And though
we strain
to shape our
selves
exactly
to our past,
culture moves
like drifts of sand
and there is
no going back.

About "Chamoru Renaissance"

This poem was written in response to the hard line being drawn by the Chamoru community that strictly defines what is, and is not, Chamoru. In particular, there is a small but highly-visible number of Chamoru speakers who adhere to a vocabulary of what they call, "Pre-contact Chamorro." Among the members of the group, Spanish-, English- and Japanese-derived words are eliminated from the daily working vocabulary, and denigrated as "not pure Chamorro."

There is also the general perception that last names are indicative of who is more Chamoru than whom. People with last names that are comprised of Chamoru words are considered to be more authentic (e.g., "Gumataotao " person's house, "Taimanglo" no wind, "Maguadog," dug a hole, and "Taitano" no land.) People with last names reflective of marriages to colonials are not considered to be "real Chamorro" (e.g., Martinez, Howard and Tanaka.)

I contend that this obsessive adherence to recreating ourselves in accordance with the order of the colonial historical record obstructs our path in realizing our legitimacy as a thriving cultural entity.

Cut Green With Envy

While the rest of the known world
fantasized
and eroticized
life in the islands
among swaying palms
and balmy breezes,
I romanticized holding hands
in public
down crowded city streets
and exoticized
linen-covered tables
set orderly with utensils
to frame
plates of meatloaf and gravy,
battered mashed potatoes
and cut green beans.

About "Cut Green With Envy"

Even before Los Angeles' popular culture was cablecasted to Guam television viewers in the early Seventies, I had definite images of how statesiders lived. Many of these images were painted by stories of relatives who had visited the Continental United States, or "the States" as it is commonly referred to in English among Chamoru people.

The poem comments on the novelty perceived of everyday practices as seen from different sides of the shore.

Bare-Breasted Woman

“For a moment
she had forgotten
where she was,”
the daughter said
of her mother
who, earlier that morning
had walked past convention,
past the waiting cover-up shirt,
into the garden,
in to the sun,
in, to the greens,
and the feel of the breeze.

She worked with breasts swaying
like her arms in color and swing.
There was grace in her stoop
and art in her till.
She worked, stooped, tilled
and planted,
even after
neighbors’ gazes
called her
naked.

They could not see
that her skin
was their skin,
color brown
colored earth.

The sight of the woman
squatting,
close to ground,
too close to the color
of their own skin,
stripped them
and left
them
standing

naked,
brown
as the day
they were born.

Perhaps
they had forgotten
they were born
of this land
the color of earth,
born of salt sea
and born of salt air.

They
must have
forgotten,
for
as neighbors gazed
out pretty-picture
windows,
a dark
bare-breasted woman
was all
that they saw.

About "Bare-Breasted Woman"

Guam has become the new home to immigrants not only from Korea, China, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Thailand, Australia and the Continental United States; but also to immigrants from the Northern Mariana Islands, Belau, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Hawai'i and American Samoa.

The sudden convergence of large numbers of people from diverse ethnic origins, bringing with them many languages, has impacted the lives of the indigenous people of the island. In particular, there is a notable but not encompassing Chamoru intolerance of the citizens of the F.S.M., primarily from Chuuk State. There are no statistics to support this assertion but derogatory comments about Chuukese practices are heard frequently on island, from all sectors of the community.

Strong criticisms are made of the Chuukese by Chamoru people, and others, that are similar to criticisms made of the Chamoru by the Stateside (U.S.) communities from the 1960s to the present. This poem points to the irony of this phenomenon.

FINAKMATA

Awakening

Kafe Mulinu₁

Taste bitter.
Taste sweet.
We sit
sipping
coddling cups
of brown liquid
and yawn in awakening
for the hour is late.
As we drink in
the brew,
our feet hesitate to rest
on what they know
too well
to be
concrete poured thick
over compacted wetlands.

Venetian-blinded windows
encase us in
conditioned air
conditioned minds
and keep us from seeing
keep us from feeling
the surrounding sesonyan₂.

Taotaomo'na₃,
our beloved ancestors
wail.
Cries from the past
whirl in the present
are hurled at our presence
but only blow at us
like a whisper.

Our eyes perk
our heads tilt
as if to listen.
We are roused to remember
Their pain is our legacy.

We measure the weight
of our cup
grown heavy in our hands
that shake with fear
at Their memories.

We leave Them in Their pain
as we heave
and take, yet
another numbing sip.

Ai, mohon yanggen siña ta hungok,
yanggen siña ta nginge,
yanggen siña ta li'e.

Mohon yanggen siña ta siente
na ti apman esta i ora,
siempre ti man manmatâtâchong hit₄
sipping
coddling
cups of brew,
that keeps us
dazed,
in open-eyed slumber,
searching for answers.

Answers
that only leave us
thirsting,
heaving
groundless
sitting sipping
churning mixing
tasting
bitterwithsweet.

END NOTES

1. Ground coffee.
2. Wetlands.
3. Chamoru ancestors.
4. "If only we could hear,
we could smell,
we could see,

If only we could feel
that the hour is late,
we probably wouldn't be sitting ..."

About “Kafe Mulinu”

The conventional approach in the study of history has been to review the written record, oral histories, photographs, art and scientific records. This route has been taken in the study of the history of Guam, but has not engaged the interest of the grass roots community in the dramatic way sensory awakening has.

Within and around the Chamoru community, there is a vibrant interest in learning about Chamoru history by participating in singing, dancing, carving, sailing, weaving, farming, cooking, and other creative arts. There is a sensational presence of the past in contemporary Chamoru society.

This poem reflects on this presence of the Taotaomo’na and the struggle and urgency in trying to understand a Chamoru past in the context of modern-day Guam.

Strange Surroundings

There is an unfamiliarity
of my surroundings
on my island home
where I was born,
where I have lived,
where I will die.

I hang on
for a familiar tomorrow.
My eyes burn with tears
that overflow
to my heart
that drowns
in this pain.

I seek the one
who walks on water¹
to rise above tide,
past raging current.

I am lost in a wilderness
not of my making,
wrenched in my sorrow.

I seek the one
who walks on water
to pull me from
this brackish waste
and cloak me
in the finest wet air
of our deepest h lom t no²,
our deepest jungle,
to find the graces of
the Ones Who Walked Before³.

END NOTES

1. Reference to Jesus Christ.
2. Jungle forest.
3. Reference to Taotaomo'na, Chamoru ancestors.

About "Strange Surroundings"

Some places on Guam have been developed beyond recognition even to lifetime residents of the island. People were once able to walk through villages, family ranches, beaches and jungle areas to find respite in familiar verdant surroundings and the free harvest of betelnut and *pupulu* (pepper leaves chewed with betelnut), fruit, fish, game, wood, flowers, and leaves; and a moment of mediation.

Today's Guam leaves little jungle for retreat and rejuvenation. So, we find ourselves in our daily personal struggles praying to a Christian God to lead us to the healing powers only found in Guam's deepest jungles. The "Ones Who Walked Before" are the keepers of the land--the Taotaomo'na.

Signs of Being -- A Chamoru Spiritual Journey

I always come back to the idea of cultural survival. We are here. We are now. But what is it that brought us, as a people, to this point? Despite years of governance by colonial powers, our language and our ways persevere. We are not pickled, preserved, or frozen in time. We are not measurable or validated by blood quantum, ethnic breakdown, physical characteristics or DNA. We are vital, and vitalized by our tenacity and joined inner strength.

It is not in words spoken that we have been taught, but rather in the silent teachings of our *Saina*¹. What we learn is to open ourselves to the “collective memory” of our People who came before us and help us to move ahead -- *I Taotaomo'na*². They show us how to remain in spiritual love and connectedness with each other and our homelands.

Where do we go from here? We are in uncharted waters, or maybe in familiar waters, unable to recognize the signs that show the way. Am I a navigator? Am I *the* navigator? Are we moving? Are the islands moving? Have we been following the navigator, so well-guided we don't even know the navigator is here?

With my diminishing eyesight, I try to expand my vision. I have stopped looking for signs and started feeling for signs. The islands are moving, and we are being guided. I felt my first wave, felt my first star and felt my first island here in recent memory.

I was guided to Luta³. There, I was drenched in the tears and the sweat of

reappearing long-ago memories. I knelt in prayer in a field of felled *Latte*. Steam rose from the earth in answer to the heat of the sun and the blanket of rain that fell gently, straight down from Theirs eyes, fell straight down from Their sweating brows, pits and loins. With my head bent low in homage, in humility and hurt, I breathed in what rose from the mingling of our tears and sweat. Somewhere between earth and sky, in the space where wind blows and sun shines, we were one.

The signs are before and around us. It was a quarry site for *Latte*. Some pillars lay above ground, cracked perhaps in the effort to move them. Other pillars and capstones still lay embedded in the ground that bore them. It was not to these stones that I was drawn. I was compelled to walk to the corner of the field while my friends wandered in a different direction. As my friends noticed my interest in the single capstone and noisily approached, I stood. We went on to the other sites in Luta in true tourist fashion.

From then on, I was distracted, caught up in visions inspired by the *Latte*. A few days later I returned with two friends. At first the two wandered off as my other friends had days before. I started slowly toward the back corner again. My friend, Lina, soon joined me to warn me of the deep excavation I was nearing. "Did you see the capstone in that corner?" I asked. She said she hadn't and I urged her to go look. As she walked away, it began to rain.

I walked toward Lina, who I found kneeling before the capstone. The rain fell as quietly as I stepped. Lina did not notice me until I put my hand on her shoulder. "Say what you're thinking," I said as I started to kneel beside her. "Tell Them what you're feeling," I told her, "It's like praying." Her body

trembled as her words and tears broke through. "*Guella yan Guello, hafa na ti un na'fonhayon I che'cho'-miyu?* What happened to make you leave your work? Did you have to leave to fight? Did you get sick? Were You killed as You tried to finish your work?" Her words struck me, and we held each other, embraced in Their spirit.

They touched us, as we felt Them. Had They reached out for others who were trying too hard to see Them and could not feel Them? I wanted to give something of myself, an offering. I took a strand of my hair, hair I had refused to give for DNA testing, and lay it on the the stone. I wanted Them to be able to find me again.

We have been walking together through space and time. The spirit of the People who came before is in us and surrounds us. It is in the call of the wind, and the breath of our kiss. It permeates our psyche and fortifies our will to survive.

The fallen *Latte* is the sign. It is from within the row of *Latte* that we feel our strength. It is the severed capstone that gives us Their message, "*Ti monhayon I che'cho'.*" We will not rest until the *Latte* is whole.

END NOTES

1. Respected elders, parents.
2. Chamoru ancestors.
3. Also Rota, one of the Northern Mariana Islands, visible from Guam.
4. Stone monoliths which indicate the strong presence of Taotaomo'na, Chamoru ancestors. They are constructed with a vertical pillar that supports a bowl-like capstone.
5. Reference to Taotaomo'na, Chamoru ancestors.

I FINA'POS

FAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS

Saint Turtle

I pray
to you
Saint Turtle
and speak
a tree
into being.
Cousins branch
but not
of blood
so designed to be
of kin.

By
the power of
the Holy One's shell
and promises of
Holy Eggs
and Meat,
we join
in sacred silence
of our hidden harvest
from the sea.

Guella yan Guello¹
once ate
turtle flesh,
once wore
turtle shell,
once drank
freely
the turtle yolk
of life.

The turtle
is a sacred meal.
It is holy
and sacred
that our lips
are wet with the juice

of life
that fed
the People²
who gave
us life.

So,
turn your head
now
in disgust
if you
cannot
stomach
this talk
of how
a turtle
tastes,
like something
you never
ate before,
savory
soup
simmering
in the covered
pot
in the back
kitchen
under family's
watchful eye.

Each bite
of turtle
is taken
and treasured,
risking
penalty of laws³
foreign
to our
culinary ways.

Uncle says
he just wants
to eat
his turtle
in peace.

Throngs
of people
gather for
Fiesta.⁴
Biba!
Biba!⁵

Paper plates
proliferate
piled high
with favorite food fare,
kelaguen uhang⁶
gollai appan aga'⁷
pånglaos⁸
resurrected
into pen'hut⁹
everyone
can eat.
Sumptuous
but not
sacred enough
to make
family of friend
with just one bite.

Saint Turtle,
where is
Your Fiesta?

While we saint You
Turtle,
they paint you
turtle,
turtle

swim in sea
U.S. law says
you are
free to be,
be tattooed
on the leg
of any native
wannabe,
steal your spirit
take your soul,
while
all we do
is eat
your gifts
of eggs
and meat.

END NOTES

1. Reverent reference to Chamoru ancestors. "Guella yan Guello" is used in particular when directly addressing I Taotaomo'na.
2. Capitalization of the word People is a direct reference to the Chamoru people of Guam. Its use is taken from the Chamorro Land Trust hearing in 1992. At this hearing, it was argued that "People of Guam" in the "Organic Act of Guam" specifically meant the Chamoru people of Guam.
3. U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973.
4. Village observance of the feast day of their patron saint. It is celebrated with a church Mass, a procession venerating the saint, and invitations to eat and party at family homes or ranches.
5. Exclamatory expression heard at fiesta to perpetuate the veneration of a saint.
6. A savory dish made with mashed steamed shrimp, onions, lemon juice, grated coconut and red hot jungle peppers.
7. A starch dish made by boiling peeled plantains in coconut milk.
8. Land crab.
9. A complex dish, made with *pånglao*, which has become scarce on fiesta tables in the past decade. It requires captivity of dozens of *pånglao*, over a couple of weeks during which time they are fed coconut neat. It is then cleaned and disembodied. Its insides are cooked with *má'son* (a young stage of coconut), mint leaves, onions and peppers. This mixture is stuffed into the body of the *pånglao*, secured with a decorative bow made of young sprouts of coconut leaves, and simmered in a pot of coconut milk.

About "Saint Turtle"

In Kostumbren Chamoru, Chamoru Custom, the family support system has generally been extended by engaging people outside the family as godparents for the Catholic Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. These godparents maintain an alliance with that particular family.

"Saint Turtle" suggests that there is an extended family alliance among friends who share the harvest of turtle shell, meat and eggs., which is illegal by U.S. federal law as well as Guam Territorial law. The poem describes the sacredness of the turtle as a symbol of this trust.

It points to the hypocrisy of the laws within a Chamoru cultural context, whereby it is punishable by law to physically maintain the turtle but not illegal to take the turtle's spiritual essence in a sacrilegious manner.

The Road Home

He drove the same road
he had been driving
for the past 20 years.
Streets had grown
from two lanes
and pot-hole ridden
to well travelled
five-lane highways.
Where hints of tin roofs
had once pecked
at him
through boonie¹-dense growth,
now two-story concrete² houses
glared back at him,
landmarks to street-signed³ ways
and yet more concrete houses.

Even village churches, decades old,
had changed
as over the years
they closed their doors and windows,
shut them tight,
to contain
the sweet, cool, conditioned air
that kept parishioners coming back
for more⁴.

From the comfort of
his well-cooled car,
top-of-the-line
leather-seated
fully automated
fully loaded,
it was easy to laugh
as he reminisced
of his long drive
in the rusty, two-doored,
high-school-boy-packed car

that had taken him on the same road
so many years before.

He had rewarded himself
upon his victorious return, Ph.D. in hand.
It was what he had left for,
anyway.

At forty,
everything had changed for him,
everything had changed about him,
everything had changed
except the path he was on.

He drove from home to work,
work to home,
every
day,
every
paying day.

Even Saturday was a routine, of work,
for him.
With white envelopes, folded,
chenchule' and ika5 in hand,
he met his family obligations,
maseha fandanggo, baotismo pat mâtai6,
all were work to him.

Sunday was the Lord's day
seven a.m.7, front and center,
without fail,
his spot on the pew
worn to form.

I'd like to say
he had at least
one indulgence
but he had none.

As his Sundays always went,

they came and went
and then it was Monday,
time to work again.

At forty-one,
he was a self-made man,
made wholly of what he thought
a Chamorro man should be—
someone with
professional ability
financial security
spiritual responsibility
and moral respectability.
There was no lover's passion
in his working day,
no hungry kisses to tempt him from
his working way.
Nights were just his time to sleep,
home, always where he longed to be.

He never made time
for fun or play,
he always thought
it would just come
his way.

He had never planned
to be forty, then forty-one,
and single,
it had just happened
as he let it,
naturally
without effort,
the one thing
he wouldn't work at.

He was a dedicated man,
dedicated to hearth and home.
His work was his hearth
and his mother was his home.

It was she who had set his path,
not with malice or malintent,
but with love.
When the miracle of his birth
came to her
at 42
she thought it a sign
and consecrated her newborn son
to Holy Life.

She had hoped for
the family's first priest,
but his devotion,
somehow mired
in his mother's
dawn-to-dark and beyond
prayer vigils,
had founded his religion in her.
Her well-being,
her every nod, movement
and utterance
was noted,
and, as if to the rule of physics,
was met by an equal response
by him
to ensure her happiness,
for her happiness
was his happiness.
That's all
there was
to his life,
and work.

There was
no hint
of
married life
for him,
no clue
of coming crib
or baby bib

anywhere.

There was not even
speculation
of such things
in his
brand-new,
built for-
his
lifetime
beachfront home,
with sunset view.

It was build for,
this sunset view
and would see him
on that same road
driving
even at 42.

END NOTES

1. "Boonie" is Chamoru-English slang for jungle foliage. It is derived from the word, boondocks.
2. After Supertyphoon Pamela destroyed many of the island's predominantly wood and tin homes in 1976, formidable typhoon-proof concrete houses have dominated the landscape.
3. Street signs are a recent phenomenon on Guam roads. Customarily, directions are given by area names within villages or by association with a particular family.
4. Guam is comprised of 19 villages, some dated before Magellan's arrival in 1521. Each village has its own Catholic parish. There has been a trend to renovate church buildings to allow for air-conditioning.
5. In *Kostumbren* Chamoru, there is a network of reciprocity where families help prepare for significant events, such as marriage, baptism, high school or college graduation and funerals. Although gifts of food or other materials may be given, it is most common these days to give money.
The money is placed in a white envelope with the name of the donor, written on the front. The envelope is then neatly folded and handed discretely to the person who the gift-giver is most closely associated to and who helped sponsor the event.
Generally, this practice is called *chenchule'*. *Chenchule'* for a funeral is called *ika*.
6. "It doesn't matter whether wedding reception, christening party or funeral."
7. The earlier masses are frequented more by elderly Chamoru and their attending children or grandchildren. In some parishes the early Mass is said in Chamoru.
8. "Chamorro" is selected over "Chamoru" to denote adherence to tradition.

About "The Road Home"

This piece is based on the life of an actual person, and was initially intended to be a short story. I wanted to talk about the old Chamoru practice in which the youngest child was expected to remain single and live at home to care for his or her aging parents.

As I began composing the descriptive detail that would become the short story, I found the writing taking on another style. It quickly became apparent to me that to go into detail would reveal the identity of the person whose story I was telling. Even in its abstract form, as a poem, the person is still identifiable albeit to a smaller segment of the intended audience.

Some people might say that this practice of remaining single for the primary purpose of being able to devote one's time, energy and loyalty to the care of parents is antiquated and should be relegated to stories of the past. Others see this practice as a given in life and a normal part of social expectations.

View of Tumon¹ Bay

Big hotels
skew the view,
and as if what we've got
ain't enough
the gov. wants
to build
MORE! MORE! MORE!

I thought selling yourself
was illegal
in this great
Ter-ri-to-ry².

You talk about
TWO MILLION
by 2000³...

Let ME
tell you
something,
I don't feel much like waving,
I DO NOT
Welcome
All
Visitors
Enthusiastically⁴.

You WAVE.
My hands are
too busy
fanning away the stench
of tourist industrial wastes
and praying
for that
 threatened silence
"if there were
no tourism⁶"

on Guam.

It's getting
so it's hard
to find a fish⁷
anywhere
but a hotel dinner plate
these days.

Two million
is just
too much.
Since when
was the word,
vi si tor
synonymous
with industry?

Tourism,
the ONLY industry?
Now that's
a hard fish
to swallow.

C'mon now gov.
listen closely.
It's not
the ocean's roar
that's pounding
in your ear.
Can't you hear
the Peoples cry,
"Diversify!
Diversify!
Diversify!"

Maybe it's time to call
the legendary big fish⁹
to come and chomp
Tumon
back to the sea,

but you'd probably
just find a way
to sell that,
too.

END NOTES

1. Tumon is a village that is the center of Guam's tourism. Its main road that runs parallel to Tumon Bay is called Hotel Road. Between the road and the shoreline is a series of high-rise hotels that come close to blocking the view of and access to the shore.
2. This spelling denotes mimicry of former Governor Joseph F. Ada's pronunciation of "Territory."
3. "Two million by the Year 2000," was an actual desired projection by the current governor of Guam, Carl T. C. Gutierrez.
4. "Catch the Wave!" is a promotional slogan of the Guam Visitors Bureau, a Government of Guam agency. The promotion encourages Guam residents to wave at tourists to encourage the tourist industry. W.A.V.E. is an acronym for the GVB slogan, "Welcome All Visitors Enthusiastically." These slogans were broadcast frequently in the early '90s on radio, television and in movie houses.
5. There is a common complaint among Guam residents of the exhaust emitted by abundant numbers of tour buses.
6. Reference to a GVB promotional ad that depicted that there would be a silence of cash registers if the tourist industry on Guam failed.
7. As part of what is seen as support for the tourism industry, large sections of reef along the shoreline were removed. This, combined with mechanized sandsweeping, increased use of motorized water recreational vehicles and soil erosion has destroyed the fish population of the bay.
8. Specific reference to the Chamoru people of Guam as taken from a legal interpretation of the term "People of Guam" in the "Organic Act of Guam."
9. Chamoru legend tells of a time when a large fish appeared day after day, in Tumon, each time taking bites of the land away. As a remedy, the women of the village wove their hair into a big net that was used to eventually catch the fish.

About "View of Tumon Bay"

Tumon village is synonymous with tourism. The first hotels, built in the late 1960s and early '70s, were fairly inconspicuous on the horizon.

Today, the view of Tumon Bay is obscured by high-rise hotels that connect from one end of the bay to the other. Some of the only spaces left, through which the ocean can still be seen are Government of Guam parks, and homes for the elderly, as well as parcels of land still owned by long-time residents.

The governors of the past two administrations, Republican and Democrat, respectively, have strongly supported development of the tourist industry. They are single-minded in their approach to economic growth, entirely dependent on tourism to relieve Guam's financial debt.

The Guam Visitors Bureau adheres diligently to the executive directive to lead aggressive campaigns targeted at island residents to personally support the tourist industry. Local support is actively solicited through multimedia ad campaigns.

There is general dissatisfaction voiced from the Grass Roots, predominantly Chamoru, that more resources are allocated to the tourist population than to the local citizenry.

There is also strong criticism that Tumon's once-abundant fishing grounds have been depleted by recreational fishing, intentional reef destruction, mechanized beachsweeping, soil erosion and sewage run off.

Invisible Ceremony

Strangers look
beyond the shores
of our island home
to find
color and pomp
through
clouded notions of ceremony.

We don't need
seekers of Truth
and the Noble Savage
to buy plane tickets
through
our home,
the "Gateway to Micronesia¹".

A turn to the left,
a turn to the right,
will leave us
gasping
for air
in the exhaust of
hearts
travelling, minds
travelling
to find
notions of ceremony
they've only read of
in books,
while we, Che'lu²,
disguise our selves
with our favorite costume
of dumb native
so we
won't be late
to our ceremony,
invisible
only to their eyes.

END NOTES

1. Guam Visitors Bureau promotional slogan made popular in the early Eighties.
2. Sister or brother. It can also be used to address someone instead of their name, and to identify them as among your peers.

About "Invisible Ceremony"

This was written as a critique of the general perception that there is no cultural ceremony in Chamoru society on Guam. Travellers are encouraged to fly beyond Guam to find "real" culture evidenced by colorful costumes, dance, song and customs. This is evidenced in the Guam Visitors Bureau slogan that promotes Guam as the "Gateway to Micronesia."

This perception of an absence of authentic Chamoru culture on Guam is also evidenced by the curriculum at the University of Guam. Much attention is given to the Micronesian Studies program, but the university has yet to develop a Chamoru Studies program.

Guam is promoted among travellers for its modern conveniences. It is sold as a point of familiarity or exploration for those seeking contact with American popular culture.

Though Kostumbren Chamoru is comprised of complex social protocol it is often bypassed in the scholarly and leisurely search for authentic island culture.

LALA'CHOK

TAKING ROOT

Bokongngo'¹

The young girl's eyes may as well have been closed as she inched her way into the cave's darkness. Her steps, bold and quick at first, had slowed to a snail's pace as she ventured further from the light of day. The tips of her toes worked as feelers over the edges of her well-worn *yore'*.² She would have pushed her hands forward to help navigate herself through the abyss if she weren't so afraid of touching the slimy, ridged walls. Lila wanted to, but could not turn back now.

It was a game they played. Lila, her cousins and neighborhood kids would dare each other to go into the cave, alone, and then count the seconds it would take before they came running out to safety. Lila never won, but she told herself, that no matter what, today she was going to win. All she had to do, was face her fear.

This was asking a lot. Lila was not what you would call a brave girl. In fact, she was known by her family to cry at almost everything. Lila cried when she was sleepy. She cried when her mom went off-island on business trips. She even cried when she was forced to wear a frilly dress that made her itch.

Lila was good at school, but that didn't count for much out on the playground or playing with kids at home. Among the kids, she was called "*pachang*," "weakling" and "cry-baby Sally." At seven, Lila, she had cautious, down-cast eyes and a permanent frown etched on her face. So, for today, Lila just wanted to win something.

As Lila moved further into the cave, a part of her brain that she could not

control conjured images of bats hanging upside-down, in droves, just over her head. She hoped none of these bats were related to the others she had seen swimming in a simmering pot of coconut milk and *dâgu*.⁴ Would these fanged furballs hold her complicit in the making of a dish that involved stewing the pungent whole bodies of what could have been cousins, siblings or even parents?

Lila reassured herself with recollections of her older brother, Andrew, telling her in his scientific, matter-of-fact way that Guam bats lived in trees. The poor girl believed her brother to be near-genius and so, could accept this tidbit as fact. She chanted this truth several times to insure its authenticity. "Guam bats live in trees. Guam bats live in trees. Guam bats live in trees" she enunciated in perfect textbook English, so as to add to the credibility of this statement.

This strategy was, at best, only briefly successful. Moments after her words disappeared into the ringing silence of the cave, Lila's brain was busy again, screenwriting new images to frighten her. Complete and utter darkness had a way of illuminating dramatic and implausible realities in the mind of a child, especially one who, at present, was not quite sure which way was out.

She had already bumped into the mossy cave walls twice as she moved deeper into the cave. She wondered if the cave walls were really as black as they looked to her now, or if sunlight would reveal the true colors of the walls on her skin, shirt and shorts. That was something she'd have to wait to find out. For now, she tried to guess how long she had already been in the cave. She had lost count on her last brush against the slimy wall. She held her breath, forgetting for a moment she was still capable of breathing though she could not see. She started to count again, "One one-thousand, two one-thousand, three one-

thousand, four one-thousand . . .”

What Lila was actually winding her way into was not one, but a series of man-made caves cut into the foot of the San Ramon⁵ cliffline. A tree-shaded dirt road ran alongside the base of the cliffline. The cave’s entrance, just off this road, was hidden only by a thin growth of *tangantangan*⁶. Across the road sitting in the morning shadow of the cliff was a row of houses.

From what Lila came to know, these caves were dug to store ammunition of the Japanese military when they ruled Guam during the war. Later, she also came to know that “the war” on Guam meant World War II, which was a time of great suffering for the Chamorro people.

As a child, Lila knew little about the war except it was the reason she had to eat every grain of rice in her bowl, why she had to eat every piece of chicken to the bone and marrow, and why she shouldn’t be *chacha’*⁷ about what she ate. But Lila was a picky eater, skinny, too, and was used to hearing, “You’ll never survive if there’s a war, ” from some of her mom’s sisters, and from her oldest cousin, Michael, too.

The war was the reason they could never waste food, why they couldn’t cry when they were punished, why older Chamorro people could speak Japanese, why there was a Liberation Days⁸ carnival, and why she would get spanked if she were ever caught playing in the cave.

Her grandmother, Tan Chong Bino⁹, would be the one to spank her, too. Lila loved her Nāna even though she spanked hard. Lila knew she had it easy as the youngest grandchild in the house. She had grown up hearing stories about how lucky they were as kids to grow up in such a modern world. Spanking

seemed minor compared to other forms of punishment she had heard about.

There was the one where kids were made to kneel on small pebbles strewn on a smooth floor while holding their arms up at their sides, shoulder's height, palms up, holding books or other heavy objects for as long as they were told to. There were other, more horrifying stories where children were beaten with sticks, whips or back-handed slaps, to teach them discipline—disciplined ways of eating, working, praying and even sleeping. In post-war Guam, discipline was instilled in Chamorro children from an early age.* Discipline, parents thought, would keep their children alive if there were ever another war. Discipline was a survival skill.

Tan Chong was 37 when the Japanese Imperial Army seized her home island from American possession. She had just given birth to the youngest of her eight children. When the Japanese bombing started, she and her husband, Tun Kiko' Bino' were living in their *guma' hãyu yan pãpa' sãtge*¹⁰ on that same dirt and grass road in San Ramon.

Tan Chong and Tun Kiko' knew the San Ramon cliffline even before it had been penetrated by Japanese soldiers. Lila's Nãna¹¹ knew the caves differently than Lila did. Tan Chong Bino' called the cave "*bokongngo'*." It was a Japanese word. Lila thought that was a hard word to say, so she always just said, cave. Whatever Lila called it, she was in it, realizing more and more, with each passing second, she was getting deeper and deeper into trouble.

The sun was getting ready to settle into Agaña Bay. Tan Chong, who knew the time by the cast of the afternoon shadows, was well into preparing the evening meal. She glanced out the kitchen door to see Tun Kiko' meticulously

sectioning stalks of *tupu* ¹² he had just cut from their yard. The kids would be coming in from playing soon to watch their Tāta¹³ expertly at work with his pocket knife, peeling and cutting bite-size pieces for them to chew. While they ate they would listen to his stories about places he had sailed to when he worked on a big ship. But at that moment, the house was quiet except for the sound of the blade against the *tupu* and the sizzling of onions in Nāna's pot.

Butchered parts of chicken legs, gizzards, necks and wings would be boiled with tailored cuts of cabbage and potatoes to make *kāddon mānnok*.¹⁴ Chicken and potatoes first, cabbage last to keep it crunchy. Cover, simmer. Simmer, stew. Simmer, stir. Cover. Simmer, and notice that the kids are too quiet.

Within minutes, Tan Chong had found and sent Sissy, Lila's older sister, to call the rest of the kids to get ready for dinner. While the rest of the kids were playing, Sissy had been doing a homework assignment. She was only two years older than Lila. Unlike Lila, Sissy always seemed to be doing the right thing. Sissy almost never got in trouble and, to Lila's knowledge, had never gotten spanked for anything she had done. Sissy had, however, been spanked for something Lila had done. This was probably going to be one of those times, Sissy thought.

Since she was the older of the two, she was responsible for her sister's safety. If Lila were in any immediate danger, Sissy would be the one to answer for it. By the same token, if Sissy were to do anything wrong while in her older brother Andrew's charge, he would be held accountable. It was like a chain of command, but in reverse.

So Sissy searched for her younger sister with a bit of apprehension. She was also annoyed because she had just showered and was getting dusty and sweaty walking up and down the dirt road. The younger kids hadn't been in the front of or anywhere near the house.

Sissy zigzagged her way around dried-out mud puddles and road-kill frog frisbees. She made her way up a short, steep incline twisting through an entanglement of vines and brush as she trailed a narrow footpath. She was checking out an abandoned camp sites that the kids had started a few weeks earlier.

She cross-stepped over piles of loose rocks and gravel, and around tree stumps no thicker than a Coke® bottle, into the center of their secret hideaway. Scavenged pieces of wood, tin and tarp, lay under the once-green camouflage of an assortment of twigs and transplanted weeds.

The spider webs on the trail told Sissy that the kids hadn't been by the camp. She thought for a moment where to look next. She fixed her thick glasses on her face with an upward motion of the back of her hand. And, with the same hand in a downward motion, wiped the beads of sweat off her nose with her open palm. They were all in trouble already, but she couldn't go home without finding them.

She had double-backed in front of the Bino', house hoping to find they had returned safely home. No luck there. As she passed, she caught a glimpse of her Tâta feeding the chickens in the back of the house. She moved quickly past before her Nâna would have a chance to see her. She could smell rice cooking and knew it wouldn't be long now before her Nâna focused her full

attention on the whereabouts of her grandchildren.

Tan Chong, upon hearing the rice water come to a boil, moves from cutting cucumbers to uncover the rice pot and lower the heat. She looks at the bounty of polished grain as they start to plump to their full-flavored form and she says a short prayer of thanks to the Blessed Santa Maria. Tan Chong prays gratefully that her family has plenty of food to eat. Through the glass louvers of the kitchen window she sees Tun Kiko' tossing feed to their free-roaming chickens, and notices a bunch of bananas almost ready to be picked from their small grove.

Tan Chong knows *I Tiempon Gera*¹⁵ ended more than 20 years ago, but the pain, hunger and hardship of the war is still fresh in her memory. The last weeks of the war, before they knew it would end, she prayed every day, all day, even in her sleep. She prayed that she and her family would be kept safe. Safe from bayonets, beheading, bullets, bombs, rape and starvation.

There was no time to cry then. All the suffering was endured and held in. There was no room to show weakness. Sometimes Tan Chong thought her granddaughter, Lila, cried all the tears she herself could never cry, then or now. Lila often slept in the arms of her Nāna and could probably hear and feel all the painful dreams Tan Chong kept inside.

Tan Chong finished cutting the cucumbers, throwing them into a mixture of vinegar, Kikkoman^{®16}, black pepper and onions, looked at the bubbling milky rice water recede into the steaming bed of white, and then opened the pot of *kāddon mǎnnok*. She cooled the thin broth with her breath and sipped in a taste. Her eyes narrow as her lips find her tongue. Salt? Pepper. Something missing.

Inside the cave, Lila's body has become taught and rigid. Her toes are cramped from lizard-licking the damp, musty ground. She had gone far enough into the cave to feel the temperature drop. She could hear herself breathing and her heart pumping heat to her ears. She started to think she could hear someone else breathing.

Soon, her heartbeat got so loud it sounded like approaching thunder. For all Lila knew, there could be a typhoon blowing outside, or maybe even a flood. She could probably drown right where she stood.

If that was thunder she heard, that meant God was angry because someone was doing something wrong. That's what Tan Chong had always told the children. Somehow, the association of God and anger made Lila think of her Nâna and it finally sunk in with her that she was in terrible trouble.

She imagined that the air in the cave was running thin and found that a good enough reason to turn abruptly and walk, then run, from the cold of the cave. Moving toward the warmth was easier than looking for the light. Soon she could hear taunts from the kids just outside the cave's opening.

Lila stopped short of the lighted entrance to wipe the sweat from her brow, try to breathe normally, allow her eyes to adjust to the light, and walk coolly out as if nothing had happened. Maybe her cousins expected her to come out crying, because they were stunned into silence by her calm and composed exit from the unseen dangers of the portal.

"Ha! Ha! Yes. Finally! Finally, finally," Lila thought triumphantly. She wouldn't have to hear, "Weakling," or "cry-baby Sally," anymore, not after today. She was tired of being the weak one.

Then, all of a sudden, Lila got that sick, *mu'ta'*¹⁷ feeling as she saw that the kids weren't looking at her, but behind her. The tall frame of her sister, Sissy, was emerging from a side trail to the cave. Sissy cringed slightly when she saw the cave had marked Lila's feet, hands, forehead and clothes.

Sissy nudged her glasses up with her nose and a backward tilt of her head. Sister to sister, looked eye-to-eye. And the older one said words the younger one already knew to be true. "Nåna is looking for you."

The neighborhood kids and her cousins teased Lila, "*Tokka, tokka,*" and "*Magacha'*¹⁹!" Sissy looked pointedly at her cousins and informed them, "The rice is already cooked. Nåna is looking for all of you to eat."

One by one, the neighborhood kids started disappearing. They had Nånas and Tåtas of their own who might be looking for them.

Sissy waited for Lila's tears to come. The eyes of the young cave-stained girl were wide open now. She stood tall in the late-afternoon shadows of the San Ramon cliffline her skin and clothing radiated the browns and oranges of the late afternoon shadows that marked the day's passage.

Lila's tears did not come. The corners of her mouth maintained their brooding frown, and the tears were held back. Sissy led her little sister gently by the shoulder. "Let's go home now."

Sissy, Lila and their cousins moved together through the side trails to the San Ramon cliffline road. They walked quietly, together, in a cloud of dust. They walked quietly, together, to Nåna and the Bino' house.

END NOTES

1. A manmade cave.
2. Rubber slippers or thongs.
3. Cries easily.
4. Type of yam.
5. A district of Agaña village.
6. Type of legume planted after World War II as part of a reforestation project.
7. Particular, hard to please.
8. Annual commemoration of the invasion by American military force.
9. Taitano family name of branch descended from Baldevino (Bino) Taitano.
10. Wooden home raised above ground.
11. Mother, grandmother.
12. Sugarcane.
13. Father, grandfather.
14. Chicken soup.
15. World War II, literally, "war time."
16. Preferred brand of soy sauce on Guam.
17. Vomit.
18. Phrase used to remind someone of impending punishment for a wrongdoing.
19. Caught in a wrongful act.

Sky Cathedral

Nåna¹ lives
in jewelled nights,
stars
like candles
lit
in a sky cathedral
as she prays with angels
in the sound of wind,
she prays for me.

“Abe, Nānan Yu’os
sen gāgās Maria
ma’okte minaolek
yan grāsia siha.”²

Did you see that shadow pass
and pinch me on the cheek?³
She misses me
and calls me
from my sleep.
“Ñora⁴, Nåna,”
I whisper
with waiting watchful eyes.

I find her
in gualåffons⁵
dancing light
in a field of Latte⁶
singing dreams
to me.

Gently then,
she strokes my hair
with moonbeam fingers
that let my strands
unfurl
and glisten

in the wind
cascading to
my shoulders
bare
that greet
the kiss
of Nāna's hair,
shining
silver streams
that drape me
with my past.

I am Nāna's daughter
born of earth and sky
scented breath
of salted breeze
surrounding seas
receive my soul
as Nāna takes
my hand
to pray.

"Åbe, åbe,
åbe, Maria,
Åbe, åbe
åbe, Maria."8

Nāna lives
inside my poems
in the dusk-to-dawn
of life.

Nāna lives
in mornings
when I wake
before
the light.

END NOTES

1. Mother, grandmother.
2. Lyrics from a church song that translates to:
"Hail, Mother of God,
Most Pure Mary
touches people
with goodness and grace."
3. It is Chamoru practice. Pinching is an endearing gesture when done in a particular way.
4. A respectful response to the bidding of an older woman.
5. Full moon.
6. Stone monoliths which indicate the strong presence of Taotaomo'na, Chamoru ancestors.
7. The greatest sign of respect and endearment is to literally breathe in the essence of someone by touching their skin, hair or clothing with your nose and inhaling.
8. Refrain for song, "Abe, Nānan Yu'os," which translates to:
"Hail, hail,
hail, Mary,
Hail, hail,
hail, Mary."

About "Sky Cathedral"

Prayer is an integral part of Chamoru family life. Most families are associated with having a particular religious devotion to either a saint or a blessed event. This devotion is symbolized by the praying of a *nubena*, nine consecutive days of prayer, in the presence of the family. This devotion is continued to protect the spiritual welfare of a family.

It is customary that the mother of a family would select one of her daughters to carry on the devotion. It is an inheritance of spiritual strength, respect for parents, and of family history.

The sharing of prayer endears and connects generations within a family to each other. The offering of a rosary, *nubena* or a Mass of special intention for someone living or dead is considered a treasured gesture of love. The actual oral verbalization of this poem in words and in song evokes both memories of a grandmother's love and manifestations of her continued spiritual presence.

Indigenous spiritual beliefs are also an integral part of Chamoru family life. It is believed that the first Chamoru people were shaped from the land and life breathed into them by the wind of the sky.

This poem is a mingling of Catholic ritual and Chamoru spiritual beliefs. It is an expression of a grandmother's love and a granddaughter's inheritance of a legacy of Chamoru spiritual vitality. It is about connecting generations by their continued respect and love of ancestors as they manifest themselves in nature.

Seeing Through the Rain

It rained hard that day Jessie came home. She had forgotten how Guam rain could come at you from all directions and found herself soaked soon after exiting the electric doors at the new airport terminal. The flight in from Hawai'i had seemed longer than its seven-and-a-half hours and Jessie was tired. She was keenly aware of the heaviness of her wet clothes but enjoyed the warm and soothing feel of the rain.

The family had sent Jessie's cousin Millie to pick her up because they knew that Millie had always been Jessie's *kirida*₁. Jessie focused her attention on catching up with family news. It felt good to do this without having to calculate long-distance telephone charges.

As they talked, Millie expertly maneuvered their way out of the congestion of greeters and well-wishers that crowded the traffic lanes in front of the airport. Jessie was stunned at the number of cars. There had been many changes.

She looked at Millie in amazement. The last time Jessie had seen her, Millie had still been running around chasing geckos with the younger kids. Jessie was now looking at a grown woman and mother of twins.

They were clearing the worst of airport traffic and heading toward Barrigada village, when Millie told Jessie to rest. "You know my mom. First she'll cry to see you, then she'll make you eat. You'll need all your energy for that."

"Well, at least this time, no one can say I'm too skinny, not with these

chachaga2!" Jessie motioned to a hand-clenched upper thigh and laughed. "Can't deny all this family heritage."

"Not a hipless one among us!" Millie joined in with a loud slap to her leg. The two couldn't stop laughing for the entire drive through Barrigada. "Okay, let's get cereal3 now," Millie said with a forced frown that looked more like a grin.

"Anything you say, Captain Crunch. I'll be serious." Jessie giggled at how corny their old joke was. She leaned her head back and turned to look out the car window.

The sun was setting and scattered raindrops made dramatic brushstrokes of oranges, pinks, and greys across the sky. The electric reds, yellows and greens of traffic lights were dulled against the natural array of colors that filled the evening. Had Guam's sky always been this spectacular? Jessie cringed to think she might have taken it for granted. She let the headrest take the weight of her thoughts.

"Wake me when we're close to home." Jessie couldn't resist reaching over to pinch Millie's arm and then cheek affectionately.

Jessie finally managed to close her eyes, but her mind could not rest. The sound and smell of the rain engulfed her. She had not needed airline announcements to tell her the island was near. The rain had told her.

Though Jessie could not see the rain coming, she could feel it, almost taste it. Guam's rain was sweet and permeated even the stale air of the plane's cabin. Its succulence surrounded Jessie and made her feel that maybe this time she could come home to stay.

Jessie had taken this trip so many times before, so many years ago. For Jessie, travelling between home and school, Guam and Hawai'i, had been second nature. She could do it with her eyes closed and often did, sleeping soundly most of the way.

This time sleep evaded Jessie. Coming home could not and would not mean being with her mother anymore. Jessie lost her sense of home the day her mother died eight years ago.

Jessie grew up an only child in her mother's house. She had not known her father nor had he known her. She knew about him only through family photos and stories, not much more. Her life had been built around her mother and her mother's family.

During her college days, being away from Guam and her family had been bearable because she could come home at any time. How could she come home now? There would be no "Momma hug," no "Momma kiss," and no "Momma scent" to greet her. This was the first time Jessie would try to come home since her mother was buried.

Jessie clasped her hands in prayer and immersed herself in the mingling of rain, the smell of salt sea, and loving memories of her mother.

It was dark by the time Millie and Jessie reached the village of Yo'ña and Auntie Becky's house. It did not escape Jessie's notice that a spot on the lawn was left for them to park so they wouldn't get too wet. They made a dash from the car and ducked under the waterfall of rain that ran from the edge of the *siná* roofing. Instead of going into the house, they headed for the back kitchen, an accessory of most Chamoru homes and the center of family living. It was set

apart from the surrounding darkness by fluorescent lights. Jessie could see Auntie Becky stirring something in a big pot and she hoped it was her favorite dish, *estufaon mǎnnok*⁵.

Auntie Becky's back kitchen was large enough to fit three vans. Not that anyone measured it, but Jessie scaled the space in a second and guessed it to be that big. It had a concrete floor, huge wooden pillars, a pitched roof of corrugated tin, and lots of family history. Blackened cook pots hung overhead on hooks made of bent nails. Sturdy plywood benches and tables took up most of the floor space. Her uncle's fishing nets were rolled and slung across rafters. The barbecue grill sat the size of a small bathtub, as did the two-fauceted concrete-formed sink. The kitchen could accommodate cooking for hundreds at a time, or do well for coffee for two, or even one.

"*Ai!*⁶" Auntie Becky screamed as she grabbed hold of Jessie, "My girl is here! Why do you wait so long, Jesusa, to come home?" Jessie let herself melt into her aunt's arms to be rocked like a baby. She hardly felt her 28 years when Auntie Becky squeezed her cheeks between garlic hands, pressed her nose against Jessie's skin and took deep breaths.

This was how Jessie remembered being kissed as a child. Jessie giggled appreciatively and gently took her aunt's face between her open palms, pressed her nose flat against each cheek and inhaled deeply. "*Nora*⁷, Tan Becky."

Auntie Becky let her arm fall to her niece's waist, pulled her close and gave her blessing, "*Dios ti ayudi, hagǎ-hu.*"⁸ Auntie Becky nodded Jessie's attention toward the grill. "There's Uncle Lo'." Jessie took her aunt's cue and went to *nginge*⁹ her uncle.

Uncle Lo', who tried not to show he had been listening, now turned to face Jessie and slowly let open a big smile. Jessie was happy to see him up and about. It hadn't even been a year since she saw him when he had gone to Honolulu for chemotherapy. He looked and moved as if he were completely well. It was hard to believe that Uncle Lo' would be 70 this year.

As she approached, he extended his right hand to her. She took his hand in hers, and with her back bent at the waist lowered her head and kissed his hand with a touch and breath of her nose. "Ñot¹⁰, Uncle Lo'." Jessie took in a deep breath of the smoke, coconut oil, onions and lemon that had worked their way into Uncle Lo's skin. Jessie brought her head up as her uncle gave his blessing by making a small sign of the cross in the air over Jessie's forehead. "*Dios ti ayudi, hagâ-hu*. It's good to have you home."

"Thank you, Uncle!" Jessie said happily as she spied her favorite fish on the grill. She raised her eyebrows at her uncle in approval. "*Guili!*"¹¹ Uncle Lo' gave a chuckle. "So, you still know your fish! Did they teach you that in Hawahi¹²? I don't know why you have to go so far. I could teach you that right here."

Jessie laughed and turned to greet the rest of the *familia*¹³. She was anticipating the inevitable teasing. She could almost hear the litany. "Did you get lost and that's why it took you so long to come home?" "You're going to be *sotteran biha*¹⁴ if you didn't get married soon." And, worse yet, "You better hurry up and have a baby! Do you need directions?"

Her aunt and uncle had six children, including Millie. Each of the kids, in turn, had at least two kids of their own. Altogether, with cousins, spouses,

partners, nieces and nephews, there were enough of them to make a small party. It was an embracing welcome. Millie's *dinga'*¹⁵ girls were quizzing her on which of the two was Ha'ane when Auntie Becky ordered Jessie to change out of her damp clothes. "*Maolek-nā sa' tenneki pāsmo!*"¹⁶ Jessie was just beginning to get bitten by mosquitoes and jumped at the offer. "Jesusa, the water heater is on so you go shower then come and we eat. Uncle Lo' will babysit your *guili* for you."

The rain was just letting up when Jessie started for the house. As Jessie undressed she pulled her shirt against her face and inhaled. She was intoxicated by the layer of scents her breath evoked. The heavy cotton sweatshirt that had protected her from the cold of flight had absorbed the flavors of her *familia*. The fragrance of *tangantangan*¹⁷ cut, dried, stored and now burned, had to have been gathered weeks in advance. The hint of coconut oil in the smoke told her, Uncle Lo' had taken special care to make the fire with *ha'iguas*¹⁸ still bearing residue of coconut flesh left to dry for just such an occasion. She felt the smell penetrate her skin and hair. Jessie let the stream of hot water sear her skin pink. It was a habit she picked up from her mom. Almost everything Jessie did or thought she somehow related to her mom. Jessie had spent much of the past eight years mourning her mother's death. Eight years was a long time to dwell in the past.

Jessie hoped the sting of the heat would give her a sharp pull into the present. A familiar dull ache kept her from the water's beckoning. Jessie's mind ran as steady as the stream of water. Soon all that remained of Jessie in the coral-tiled room was the shell of her soul. Jessie tried to take herself home, if only in a mind's flight. Memories that took years to live were relived like flashes of lightning. Jessie was caught in the structuring and restructuring of occurrences,

until they mired her in what would have been, what should have been, if her mother had just lived a little longer. Death was inevitable she knew, it had just been hard to watch her mother die, slowly at first, then pass in a breath.

Jessie wished she could cry. She was drenched in water and drenched in sorrow, but her eyes were dry. If she could just let her pain tear out of her she knew she could find her way home. For now, she would just have to pull herself together again. Auntie Becky and Uncle Lo' had gone through great trouble to give her a welcome home party, she wasn't about to put a damper on the festivities.

It didn't take much effort for Jessie to look like she was having fun. Her cousins were a blast, just like always. Their kids were so alive with that sense of humor everyone in this *familia* seemed to have. Jessie found herself easily fitting into the round-table banter that came after some serious eating had been done.

She did seem to be the only one bothered by mosquitoes. Her cousin Frank teased that it must be her light-colored skin. "You're born in the states, anyway. That's why you have that white skin of yours *kálan Amirikána*¹⁹! That's why you don't even speak Chamoru." His words brought laughter from everyone including Jessie. He meant what he said but said it jokingly.

Frank walked past Jessie grabbing her upper arm and squeezing tight. "Ai!" Jessie burst out as she reached to pinch his leg. They both laughed lifting their heads and eyebrows at each other as if to say "*Hu gacha' hao!*"²⁰ That was just the beginning of the first round. They didn't mean any harm. They could go for hours exchanging barbs.

Days passed quickly at Auntie Becky's house. Jessie spent much of the

time with her aunt keeping up with the grandkids and keeping the household going. She was acutely aware of the way her aunt watched her. Sometimes she would glance up to look at her auntie, only to find out it was she who was being watched.

One afternoon as they worked side-by-side in the kitchen preparing dinner, the secret meaning of their staring came out. Auntie Becky was at the sink and had paused just long enough to nudge her glasses up with the back of her hand. "You know, you do that just like my mom used to. In fact, you do a lot of things that remind me of her." Jessie told her aunt in an almost reverent voice.

"You know girl, everything about you reminds me of your mother. Anytime I find myself missing her, all I have to do is look at you and she's right there."

Jessie had been away so long she never was around anyone who knew her mother. She was flattered to hear this, especially from her mother's sister.

She had caught Auntie Becky watching her while she hung up clothes, while she washed the dishes, even when she was just standing around not doing much of anything. Now she knew why she had been such a point of interest.

"Thank you, thank you for saying that. I've been wanting to come home for a long time now. I just don't know if I could stand being here without my mother. Being away from the family hasn't been too easy either. I want to come home, Auntie Becky, I just don't know how I can."

Several days later, Jessie found herself alone with Auntie Becky in the back kitchen. The sun was nearly set as the two were having coffee and

*biskuchu*²¹. Jessie had been preoccupied the past couple of days because it was coming close to the time she would have to get back to her job in Honolulu. Things had been going well on her trip, better than she had expected. Though she had been away a long time, it had not taken long for her surroundings to feel familiar again. It was like putting on an old pair of jeans you thought you couldn't fit anymore.

She didn't want to leave, but she just didn't know how to stay. She had been back for about two weeks now, and hadn't even gone by her old house, where she and her mother had lived.

As if her aunt could read her mind, she asked "Jesusa, are you ready to visit your house? Uncle Lo' says he hasn't found new tenants for you yet and that the house is empty. Are you up to it? I can go with you if you like."

"Do you always know what I'm thinking?" Jessie asked shaking her head.

"You may as well see it while it's between tenants," her aunt said.

"Maybe you're right," Jessie agreed, "How about tomorrow afternoon?"

Her aunt gave her an approving nod, "I'll tell Uncle Lo' to keep an eye on things while we go."

Jessie and Auntie Becky took a while to find the house. The neighborhood had changed quite a bit and they had even added a few new streets. "Who would think we could get lost on Guam?" Jessie shook her head.

Jessie felt strange to be at her old house. After they had gone through the rooms once, Auntie Becky went outside to check the plants. Most of them had come from her garden in Yo'ña. She and Uncle Lo' had taken care of the house for Jessie.

Memories and voices found their way out of the walls and guided Jessie to her mom's room. The carpet was as blue as she remembered it. The room stood bare, but in Jessie's mind it was as vibrant as the day her mother last slept there. Her mother's bed had been dressed in sheets of floral, rich in the colors of reef-bordered ocean, ripe watermelon, freshly plowed earth and leaves of a river palm tree. She could almost smell her mother's perfume, delicate, like sweet-smelling blossoms.

It was hard for Jessie to believe that eight years had passed since she lived in this house. Eight years was a long time. It was enough time for a whole new person to be created, birth to school age, full of dreams and hopes. It was a long time to be away from home.

Jessie pressed her hand to the window screen and felt cold air rush in against her. She blinked and the house came alive with sound. Jessie heard footsteps from overhead, then her mother calling her to come in before dark. Jessie was known to spend hours on the roof reading the endless supply of books her mom got her. It was a favorite game of Jessie's to sneak read the book her mom was reading so that they could talk about the stories as they unfolded.

She could hear their late-night laughter as they played marathon SCRABBLE®, each wanting to end as the winner. She could even hear light raindrops tap on the tin louvers. Jessie recalled the rainy days she and her mom would often spend together, eating ice cream and crying over sad movies.

Her mind wandered to how it rained the day her mom was buried. Rich colors blanketed her mother that day, too, as she lay in rest. Jessie saw it all through a veil of tears, like a muted rainbow. Feelings she had buried within

herself for eight long years now tore through the human vault she had encased them in. Jessie was overcome with grief that she had to concentrate just to breathe. She started to feel dizzy and had to lean on the cold hard wall for support.

Auntie Becky had been calling Jessie's name for quite a while now and had come in the house to see why the girl had not answered. She made her way into her sister's room and found the poor girl on her knees by a window. Jessie's large frame seemed small where she sat, shoulders collapsed to her chest. Auntie Becky knew Jessie was thinking about her mother.

Jesusa had left just days after her mother was buried. Auntie Becky had tried to talk her into staying but the girl would not waiver from her decision. She said she had promised her mother she would finish college. That was the last time Auntie Becky had seen Jesusa, though they wrote each other often. Auntie Becky did everything she knew to make sure Jesusa felt at home. It pained her to see her sister's daughter distraught. Auntie Becky wanted to give her niece the dignity of the moment so she stepped quietly from the room.

The drive home was solemn. Jessie did her best to hide her mood by asking her aunt questions about places that had changed along the way. As they neared Yo'ña, Auntie Becky asked Jessie if she'd mind going *pasehu*²² a little. Jessie wanted to compliment her aunt for all she had done to help her, so she quickly agreed.

It had been sprinkling on and off since they hit the road. Jessie drove while her aunt gave directions. Jessie was just beginning to wonder where the drive would lead to when Auntie Becky said softly, "Being at your mom's house

today made me miss her even more. It would be nice to visit with her. I wanted to go to her grave, if you're up to it?" Jessie had not visited her mother's grave since right after the funeral. She wasn't sure she was ready to return but did not want to disappoint her aunt. The cemetery was nearby and they would be arriving soon. For a brief moment Jessie thought maybe she could stay in the car.

As they drove up she looked at the rows of graves unsure of which one was her mother's. "Maybe I will go with you, Auntie Becky. I think my mom is expecting us." Jessie managed a slight smile then rushed out to help her elderly aunt out of the car. She glanced at the sky but Jessie couldn't tell if it was rain or sun that looked back at her.

Auntie Becky gripped Jessie's arm for support as they walked down the path. Her aunt walked with the same limp Jessie's grandmother had. Jessie remembered helping her Nāna²³ in much the same way in her younger days, except it was her shoulder and not her arm that had served as a crutch. Thank goodness she had grown. She had always noticed that the shoulder her Nāna leaned on was much lower than the other. Jessie thought she must be feeling better because she had her sense of humor back.

Both aunt and niece made the sign of the cross when they reached the grave. It was marked by a simple marble stone with black lettering, simple and dignified, much like Jessie's mother. Auntie Becky stood close by Jessie and held her hand as they prayed.

Then as if someone threw a window open, rain burst from the sky. Jessie's first instinct was to run, but her aunt held her there and kept praying. The rain brought her to memories of her mother, vivid and heart-wrenching. She

shut her eyes but could not escape the images. She felt the sun burn her skin as the rain cooled it. That dull ache she had carried in her now became piercing. Her eyes hurt so she could barely open them. Her body trembled, as her shoulders started to heave. She felt the corners of her mouth drop. She bit down on her lips only to find the taste of her tears that were now flowing freely. She drank of her sorrow.

Jessie gave herself to Aunt Becky's embrace and words, "*Laknos i piniti-mu, hagâ-hu.*"²⁴ Let your hurt go. Just let it go."

Jesse opened her eyes to see through the rain, a brilliant rainbow.

It rained hard that day Jessie came home. The rain had brought her home, this time to stay.

END NOTES

1. Favorite one.
2. Upper thigh.
3. It is a common practice to make use of English words out of context that sound like the word that should have been used. In this case, "serial," which, in turn, sounds like "serious."
4. Corrugate tin.
5. Vinegary, spicy chicken dish.
6. An exclamatory remark.
7. A respectful way to greet an older woman.
8. "God bless you, my daughter."
9. To respectfully kiss the hand of an elder.
10. A respectful way to greet an older man.
11. Reef fish.
12. Chamoru-English for Hawai'i.
13. Family.
14. Old single woman.
15. Twins.
16. "You'd better, before you get really sick."
17. Type of legume planted after World War II as part of a reforestation project.
18. Dark brown coconut shell.
19. Just like an American.

20. "I got you."
21. Biscuits.
22. Driving around.
23. Mother, grandmother.
24. "Let your pain go."

I SINEDDA'
FINDING VOICE

Steadfast Woman
(for Teresia Kieuea Teaiwa)

Steadfast woman
cries
with strength
gives me
strength
to cry
with her
and speak
my voice
so long unheard.

Steadfast woman
reawakens
ways to think
endless realms
of possibilities.

Steadfast woman
speaks
words strong
of thoughts
held long,
not allowed
to breathe.

Steadfast woman
my heart soars
in grateful pleasure
for your risk,
taken.

I thank you
for your
voice of tears,
for the path
you dared
to take.

I thank you
for my voice
reclaimed
for words
I've yet to speak.

Steadfast woman
your breath
of strength,
of words,
of tears,
have cleared
a path
for me.

About “Steadfast Woman”

This poem is dedicated to Teresia Teaiwa. Notes for this poem were written immediately after Teaiwa’s presentation at the Center for Pacific Islands Studies conference in Hawai’i in December, 1995.

“Steadfast Woman” was written as a personal note of thanks and acknowledgement for what I saw as Teaiwa’s accountability to her subject matter. Oftentimes, the critical examination of a history that bore you bequeaths painful revelations.

As indigenous Pacific Islanders delve deeper and broader into their histories, there is a great sense of responsibility and risk in presenting findings. As in this paper, the information shared has potential for direct impact on the lives of people whose histories are discussed, including the author.

On another level, I found it encouraging and motivating to be in the audience of a woman scholar who identified herself as indigenous to one of the islands in Micronesia.

Gi Na'an I Saina¹

For all my life and before
I've sung praises to and of
God the Father
all the while
nursed by a Mother's love,
Lord, God the Mother.

In the name of
our Mother
and of Her Child
and of the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning,
as now and ever shall be.

When I was thirsty,
I drank from Your breast.
Soft was Your touch,
gentle was Your gaze,
as You nourished my soul
day by day.

I do not mean to call You woman,
Oh, Holy One,
Holy Mighty One,
Holy Immortal One,
but neither will I call You man.

You are Lord, God,
Mother and Father of all creation.
Sainan-måmi na gaige Hao gi langet,
umatuna i Na'an-mu²
Yu'os Saina.³

Gi Na'an I Saina
I Patgon-ña,
yan I Espiritu Sânto,
Âmen.⁴

END NOTES

1. "In the name of our Parent." The Chamoru word, *Sâina*, refers to a parent or a respected elder. There is no distinction of gender in the use of the word. Customarily, the phrase would read, "*Gi Na'an I Tâta...*," which refers specifically to father.
2. "Our Parent who is in Heaven, holy is Your name Lord."
3. Customarily written "*Yu'os Tâta*," which literally translates to "Lord, Father."
4. "In the name of our Parent, and of the her/his child, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen."
"Patgon" is a non-gender reference to a child.

About "Gi Na'an I Sáina"

This poem reflects on the deliberate selection and use of words in prayer to portray the concept of a Christian God without distinction of gender. It follows a current trend in the Catholic church of imaging God without gender.

Use of the Chamoru word *Sáina*, which is a term of endearment and respect for a parent or an elder, lends itself beautifully to this imagery. It is a departure from the traditional prayers in Spanish, English and Chamoru that refer to God with the male-specific, "*El Señor*," "Our Father" and "*I Tata*," respectively.

Unfortunately, there has been no term suggested that can translate the Spanish-derived term "*Espiritu Santo*," for the Holy Spirit which engenders the term as male.

Inside Out

Thirty years ago, I sat as a young girl in the back seat of my mother's car. With my face pressed to the window, I squinted and focused my gaze on the car that sped along with us on a parallel road. We were separated only by a seemingly endless fence, which I could blur to nothing if I held my eyelids just so.

Across the fence lay another world. It was another world on the same land. A world we called N-A-S. Naval Air Station was one of several U.S. military force bases on Guam.

I was never able to follow the fence to see what it encompassed, but I learned quickly the lingo and feeling of exclusion it created. We needed an I.D., a military identification card, to go "inside." They didn't need anything to come "outside."

"Inside" lay spectacular cliffline views and expansive, well-manicured fields. "Outside," so I was repeatedly told, held nothing more than a distasteful quagmire of pothole-ridden, mud-lined roadways, indecipherable landmarks, nameless streets run rampant with wild dogs and other remnants of what some would describe as an uncivilized world.

I knew that we were "outside" the luxuries of what was contained "inside" the fence. I had visions of the houses I could never see "outside." There was an orderly world of tidy streets-neatly kept lawns, showcasing houses straight out of the home section of a Sears catalogue. We lived "outside," in a rented Quonset hut, marked by an inclined gravel roadway and a proliferation of

*tâke biha*¹.

"Inside," I had heard, kids were paid to do household chores that we did as a matter of course. I used to want what they had, or what I thought they had. I mimicked their style of dress and remember wanting a pair of faded blue jeans more than anything. I was ecstatic when, after my relentless nagging, my mom agreed that I could buy one pair of jeans. Her only prerequisite was that they bought on sale at Town House² --the Old Town House³.

I learned quickly that my success in life would be measured by how well I could emulate "inside" attributes and suppress "outside" characteristics.

The acquisition of the jeans was soon followed by the purchase of a jacket that would have kept me warm in the Tundra, but should have been illegal in This tropical climate. These things could only be followed by my newly-found desire for a Brady-inspired⁴ family room, separate laundry room and dining room. It was a tall order for my single-parent mom to fill with our typhoon-proof, compact, yet functional, Kaisers⁵ home and a teacher's modest salary.

I'm sad to say that my mother died long before I learned to value my life "outside." I grew to my adult years accumulating the material wealth I associated with being from the "inside." I've long since surpassed the Sears catalogue ideal with a blend of *Architectural Digest* ⁶ and *This Old House*⁷. A house, a condo and some acquired land later, I've had my fill of trying to mirror the "inside." I have everything they had and more; and still I find myself on the "outside."

Now, three decades later, I pass the same stretch of road. The fence still stands, although they say the base is phased out and the land has been returned.

I manipulate my gaze to send that fence into oblivion once more, but when my eyes tire, the fence still stands.

When I first heard N-A-S would be closed, I dreamt of how the fence would come down. I thought we could make a day of it. We would assign sections of the fence to different families to take down, accompanied by roadside barbecues and a freedom parade. Then I remembered the fuel line. Upon realizing that the fence was still needed to protect the pipeline, I altered my vision.

On the day of the closure we should have a million and one Guam flags tied to the fence. That would be a sight to behold. There was an idea--or even a kite flying picnic on that huge field by the main entrance, or a caravan of cars through the grounds.

Then we heard. They weren't giving the land back.

The gates would still be maintained, softened only by a color changing of guards. As time passed, they put even more fences on their side. These fences marked where they had dirtied our lands in perpetuity. They'll give the land back, they say, after sufficient time passes to prove we are competent caretakers of the land.

Where the fence once made me feel wanting for the treasures I thought it contained, it now makes me feel anger for the stolen treasures it retains. I flash back on the man who scaled that fence in protest of the land being taken. He was apprehended and shackled by the military police. While others criticized his actions, I could only see him as brave. Restrained as he was by human force and metal handcuffs, he was free. He had freed himself in that moment from the

mental bondage of our colonial existence. In retaliation, he spit on his captor.

At first I shuddered in disgust. "What low had this cultural hero sunken to?" I thought. After much reflection, my judgment changed. He showed bravery. What else could he do? What makes us believe spitting is so disgusting anyway?

Now, the landscape is changing. Whether you call it Tuyan or Tiyan, N-A-S is gone forever. As formerly military homes are remade into GovGuam⁹ offices; as the struggle continues between local government and private landowners; as the land tries to purge itself of negligent dumping; as motorists try to reclaim passage; as confusion reigns, the landscape is changing.

I've kept the blue jeans, worn in a style and meaning all my own. I've long since discarded the jacket, having found no ornamental or functional use for it. I've given up trying to turn myself "inside" out. Now, 30 years later, I can stand on either side of the fence. There is no "outside." There is no "inside." There is only what I allow to persist. The land is one. Today, the air smells sweeter and the sun shines brighter. The landscape is changing.

END NOTES

1. Medicinal plant.
2. One of Guam's oldest department stores.
3. There are actually three "Town Houses," three buildings of the same store. There is a "New Town House," an "Old Town House," and the "Old, Old Town House."
4. Brady refers to the television family of "The Brady Bunch." They represented the ideal mainstream American families of the Seventies.
5. Name of first major subdivision housing development on Guam.
6. High-gloss magazine featuring fine homes.
7. Public Broadcasting television program on renovation of fine homes.
8. In the renaming of N.A.S., traditional place names were suggested. These were the two names used.
9. Government of Guam. Territorial Government.

