

**IMAGINING THE MARSHALLS:
CHIEFS, TRADITION, AND THE STATE
ON THE FRINGES OF U.S. EMPIRE**

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Ij kammolol Anij kin kom ien otemej ij kememej kom, im ien otemej ij jar kin kom, ij jar kin lonlin. Phil 1:3.

For many years most of the letters I received from my friends and family in the Marshalls began like this: *Moktata, jen kamolol Anij kin ienin ibben dron.* [First of all, let us thank God for this time we have together.] They acknowledge that time and others are gifts, and offer their gratitude to their source. In this and many other matters, I am grateful for the example of many people from the Marshall Islands. I, too, am deeply grateful for the times shared with communities of family, friends, students, and scholars in New Orleans, in Majuro, and in Honolulu. I want to acknowledge not only my gratitude *to* them, but also my gratitude to God *for* them. “I thank my God each time I think of you, and when I pray for you, I pray with joy.” I am so grateful for your presence in my life.

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Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability – and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you. Your ideas mature gradually – let them grow. Let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don’t try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow.

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ABSTRACT

Understandings of the Marshall Islands require attention to the interplay of multiple discourses of *tradition, modernity, chiefs, development, and democracy* from multiple sources that critically interact and mutually construct the Marshall Islands. This multi-sited, multi-vocal ethnography explores the reproduction and transformation of historic power relationships between *Marshallese chiefs and commoners* who incorporate and “indigenize” foreign discourses and resources into culturally informed models and practices of authority.

In relationships of unequal power, such as that defined by the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, dominant global discourses about culture and progress enable both local and transnational hegemonies. These discourses are contextually analyzed as they are invoked and challenged in *Nitijela* [Parliament] debates, in evaluations of the Compact of Free Association, in elites’ autobiographical reflections on Marshallese-American relationships, and in foreign media representations. Historical shifts in the political and economic powers of Marshallese chiefs through three colonial administrations, and the growth of a commoner elite class since World War II further highlight the ways foreign resources are appropriated for specific local purposes that transform understandings of power and authority.

With discourse as both object and method of analysis, the agency of local actors is both foregrounded and contextualized. Simplistic characterizations of chiefs, elites, commoners, and foreigners are complicated through close attention to the ways local loyalties, colonial histories, political rivalries, and global discourses inform and frame expressions of Marshallese identities.

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PREFACE

“Truth comes in portions, some large, some small, but never whole . . .”

(Hau'ofa 1983:7)

CHAPTER 1 COMINGS AND GOINGS

COMMANDERS AND CHIEFS: THE MARSHALLESE CULTURAL CENTER AT USAKA

The View

Access to USAKA, base for the United States Army at Kwajalein Atoll in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, is usually strictly controlled. The United States Army's prime long-range missile testing facility, located approximately 5,000 miles west of Vandenburg Air Force Base in California, is off-limits, even to the Marshallese from whom the islands are leased. Those with security clearance for jobs on the base or a strictly monitored local sponsorship are the only exceptions. That Monday afternoon in February 1998 was different.

A crowd slowly gathered at four in the afternoon outside the Kwajalein Cultural Center for its opening ceremony. Since Kwajalein is located across the International Date Line, its workweek is Tuesday through Saturday, to make communication with the United States easier; the 'weekend' falls on Sunday and Monday. Kwajalein residents mingled around the outrigger canoe and the newly constructed *em aj* [thatch huts] (replete with institutional identification numbers) displayed on the front lawn.

Groups of Marshallese gathered under the huts to weave, prepare food, and set up their demonstrations. Eventually a huge crowd had gathered, with hundreds of Marshallese seated in groups near the tremendous ironwood tree.

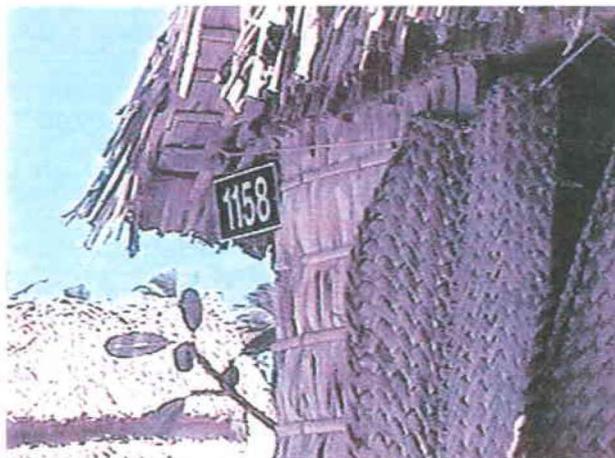


Figure 1. Marshallese-constructed *em aj* (thatch houses).

The Director of the Cultural Center, Pres Lockridge, stood to begin the program by acknowledging the guests, and participants. The base commander, Colonel Cottrell, then strode to the podium and addressed the crowd:



Figure 2. Col.Cottrell, USAKA

Welcome to the opening of the Marshallese Cultural Center. Continuing and improving the excellent relations between USAKA and our host nation, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, is a major goal of the US government and this command. This cultural center will play an active role in developing cultural exchange and active friendships...though sometimes we have disagreements, we're friends and this center will always remind us that we are friends, Americans and Marshallese, and as friends we can resolve our differences (transcription, J.Walsh 1998).

He thanked those who worked so diligently to create USAKA's Marshallese Cultural Center. His speech was then translated by the official Marshallese liaison, who reorganized it by recognizing individuals' contributions first, before proceeding with the remaining content. The program continued when a group of dancers wearing grass skirts and red armbands emerged, and a well-oiled young man blew into a conch shell. An elderly Marshallese man in similar dress stood at the podium and chanted furiously in a very rare public performance.



Figure 3. Performers at the Cultural Center opening ceremony.

The dancers walked to the VIP tent to the left of the stage and anointed the wrists of the case Commander, the Marshallese *Irooj* [chiefs], and the American Culture Center Curator with coconut oil.



Figure 4. Col. Cotrell, *Irooj* Botlang Loeak, and *Irooj* Michael Kabua.

One of the traditional landowners of Kwajalein, Botlang Loeak, then addressed the crowd in English and in Marshallese. He expressed gratitude to all those who worked to create the center and suggested that the “working relationship between the United States and the Republic of the Marshall Islands will be much easier” because of the new cultural center (transcription, J. Walsh 1998).



Figure 5. Botlang Loeak, one of the *Irooj* of Kwajalein.

The American curator followed his remarks, and began with a quotation from the preamble to the Republic of the Marshall Islands’ Constitution in which the importance and significance of Marshallese culture to Marshallese people is poignantly expressed. In addressing the Marshallese audience, the curator’s designated translator, unlike the previous translator, elaborated on some and omitted many others of the curator’s original points. The Marshallese translator’s voice strangely intensified with each sentence, speaking in the manner of a Southern preacher, in long sentences interspersed with quick gasps of air: “*Jen aikuij kile, kautiej, im dreibiji wot manit ko ad*” [We must respect, praise, honor, and hold tight our culture tight!]

Next came the distribution of awards for the children’s poster contest, followed by two songs performed by the Marshallese women’s groups -- first the old national anthem,

and a song about *Alele* Museum. Next, the College of the Marshall Islands' President, Alfred Capelle, a Catholic deacon and former Director of *Alele* Museum on Majuro, offered a prayer in English and Marshallese to bless the center and the large displays of food that were to be shared.

The doors opened, and the crowd waited in line casually to tour the museum or fill heaping plates of food from the buffet. They moved slowly as did the lazy sun gradually setting over the crowd eating and visiting on the lawn. Near the thatch-roofed huts were open-air demonstration sites. A young American boy, standing above a seated Marshallese woman who stirred the embers of burning coconut shells, called out to his mother: "Look how they make charcoal!"

The Context

A Majuro contingent flew to Kwajalein to participate in this opening ceremony and I was among the invited, allowed to represent *Alele*, the Marshalls' National Museum, Library, and Archive, if I chose to purchase a plane ticket. Employed by the US National Park Service as the Marshalls' Staff Ethnographer for a portion of my fieldwork period, I was also positioned at *Alele* as a temporary curator. I oversaw the 'borrowing' of items from *Alele's* miniscule collections and poor storage to Kwajalein's shiny, new, state-of-the-art museum. Others among the Majuro group who had accepted the invitation were: Kwajalein *Irooj* and landowner (and *Alele* board member), Botlang Loeak; Majuro mayor, Tarmile Ishoda and her assistant; Alfred Capelle, and Dennis Alessio, the director of *Waan Aelon in Majol* [Marshallese canoe] project that contributed a *walap* [large outrigger] for the opening event.



Figure 6. USAKA Cultural Center opening celebration
Majuro Mayor's assistant, Tina and I *bwebwenato* [talk story] at the opening celebration.

We were all permitted on the base for the ceremony along with numerous Ebeye residents, but had to gain special permission to stay overnight. I was grateful to be sponsored by the Cultural Center curator. The *Irooj* was permitted to stay at the Kwajalein hotel, "Kwaj Lodge," given his status, but the others stayed with the Marshallese community living on tiny Ebeye (.14 square miles) with a population density of 66,750 per square mile (RMI Census 1999). Ebeye is a twenty minute ferry ride and a world away.



Figure 7. Ferry ride to Ebeye.
Photo by Gregg Geeslin.



Figure 8. View of Ebeye, Kwajalein.



Figure 9. Housing at USAKA, Kwajalein Atoll.

The idea for the cultural center came about as World War II commemorations were planned in the early 1990s. Army leaders hoped to build a site to honor Kwajalein's significant role in the Pacific Theatre of World War II, and to create an archive, perhaps museum and research center. Part of that project included a Marshallese Cultural Center, a suggestion put forth by the American women residents who had participated in an

Asia/Pacific Cultural night with Marshallese women from Ebeye. With the commander's support, the grant was submitted and later awarded. As stipulated, it required military oversight. An Army director would administer the project and have ultimate responsibility for the buildings. The Army's Director created a Board of Directors, mainly consisting of civilian women and long-time Kwajalein residents who were members of the Yokwe Yukt Women's club, which is horribly mispronounced as "Yock wee Yuck." A dedicated volunteer staff garnered the support and contributions of Kwajalein *Iroj* who shared their limited personal collections of photos, spears, necklaces, and genealogies. The chiefs found weavers to construct the *em aj* [houses], as well as dancers, a chanter, and an anointing ceremony for the opening. The Marshallese traditional leaders' cooperation and political support clearly enabled the Cultural Center to exist.

The opening ceremony was controversial in its design and its actual enactment. First, the Cultural Center staff wanted an "authentic" Marshallese event -- which to them meant pre-missionary era rituals. Their inquiry into possible ancient blessing rituals resulted in an anointing ceremony never seen or experienced before (nor since) by this ethnographer or the Marshallese audience members I questioned later. When one influential Marshallese participant learned there was to be no prayer, he balked, "How can we have a *Marshallese* ceremony without an opening prayer?"

Another subtly controversial act involved the translation of the Curator's speech. The translator of the Curator's speech used her role to offer her own exhortation about the significance of the cultural center and Marshallese cultural preservation. Unlike the other translations that were nearly literal, she only translated a small portion of the original

¹ *Lakwe ink* is the Marshallese singular greeting pronounced, 'yock way yook', as in 'cook.' It literally means "You are a rainbow" but more frequently is understood as love, or aloha.

speech, gave her own speech, and then took the opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of many Marshallese individuals in the audience, who were previously overlooked and unrecognized.

The songs selected by the women's group were meaningful and potentially contentious as well. They sang the nation's original national anthem, not the newer official anthem composed by the late Amata Kabua. The song they sang about *Alele* was originally performed at the opening of the *Alele* Museum on Majuro over twenty years earlier, though no description was made of the songs they sang nor their reasons for each selection.

Perhaps most contentious of all was the Commander's disruption of the scheduled line up. As the emcee stood to welcome and introduce the honored guests, the Commander assumed he was the first on the list and stood up to give his speech. He interrupted and rather arrogantly, if innocently, co-opted the ceremony. Any intended deference to and recognition of Marshallese people, culture, and hierarchy was effectively denied as he stood, authoritatively speaking out of turn. Since he spoke in English, the translator who had seen the program and was thus, unprepared for this early speech making, had to be located and rushed suddenly to the stage. He later told me:

I hate doing this stuff. I hate having to kiss their ass. They won't even let the women leave the island with a Coke in their purse after working as a maid all day. We have to put up with them and can't even buy food from vending machines at the dock to take back to Ebeye (personal communication, J. Walsh 1998)?!

What is going on here? Why, after nearly fifty years of American presence on Kwajalein would the US decide a Marshallese Cultural Center was in order? Why build it on Kwajalein rather than on Ebeye, where the Marshallese people reside? Placing a cultural center on an atoll whose lagoon serves as target practice for US missiles is just the beginning of the irony. Americans pursuing Marshallese cultural preservation on Kwajalein,

where Marshallese people are not permitted to step foot on their own land, the source of their identity, without Army approval, might be construed as incredibly offensive – or not. The irony of listening to the Center’s Curator quote the preamble to the Marshallese Constitution in English: “[We] value nothing more dearly than our home on these islands,” to address a gathering of Marshallese people on Kwajalein was apparently lost on most of the audience.

The difference between the view and the context in the above descriptions is the contribution of anthropological research, and long-term relationships. Yet, participation and observation alone (like “the view” of the Kwajalein audience who participated in and observed the opening events) is insufficient to get at the constructions of meaning, the frameworks of interpretation, and a larger interpretive goal of cultural translation and improved understanding.

To explore the deeper context of this particular event, would require a deeper understanding of the personal histories of the key organizers. For example, knowing that the Commander was rumored to be exceptionally envious of the “community of distinction” award, and more than likely aware of the statistic that no commander of Kwajalein has ever been promoted at the end of his assignment might explain his desire to support and claim credit for the Cultural Center. Similarly, the Curator’s translator’s history would offer insight into her translation/exhortation. Recognizing her marriage to an American, who is a long-term resident of the Marshalls, and her residence on Kwajalein, rather than Ebeye, might make her self-designated representation of Marshallese culture more understandable. Likewise, any temptation to dismiss the curator as naive cultural missionary might be complicated by an awareness of her dedication to teaching art to high

school students on the nearby island of Gugeegue, her long-term residence on Kwajalein, her close friendships with numerous Marshallese on both Ebeye and Majuro, and her husband's long-term commitment to serving Marshallese through his position as a doctor on Kwajalein. The irony of an American reciting the Marshallese Preamble in English to a Marshallese audience on Kwajalein is only heightened by the knowledge that an American Peace Corps volunteer originally drafted the Constitution's preamble.

Where does it stop, this context building? How "deep" must one go to get at truth, truths, multiple perspectives, motivations, and interpretations? Is greater and greater personal, historical detail more beneficial than perhaps the broader perspective gained through distance? To understand the broader context of this scene is to imagine the institutions that shaped the lives of these particular actors and to examine the strategies of the other powerful people who initiated the policies and practices that resulted in Marshallese-American relationships and interactions as represented here. A more distant, less personal perspective explores themes of interaction, similarities in representations of this unique relationship, similarities with other global relationships, colonial situations, and regions of the world as well as a longer historical trajectory. And yet, while the more distant, less personal significance of what happens here is understood only in comparative context, real meaning for the people herein represented lies in their interpretations of the minute details that constitute their daily lives, and this event.

The opening of the Marshallese Cultural Center on Kwajalein reproduced frequent longstanding aspects of American-Marshallese relationships. The complexity of this event correlates with numerous issues that this dissertation will attempt to explore, dissect, and unpack at multiple levels of analysis. From "thick" contextualized ethnographic accounts

of Marshallese political action to deeply personal life histories of elites, from indigenous and foreign cultural representations to global discourses of development, cultural preservation, human rights, and democracy, the depth and breadth of US-Marshallese relations will be presented.

The focus on discourse is critical to this endeavor. By discourse, I mean the knowledge that is circulated, organized, and represented in institutions, and negotiated by particular people in specific contexts for particular ends. Discourse connects knowledge with power, as it emphasizes the ways knowledge is used, rather than its truth or accuracy (Foucault 1978). Discourse includes the broad organizing themes through which societies construct and negotiate meaning and which are recognizable to those who participate in them (Gee 1999). Study of discourse includes the ways in which certain concepts gain acceptance, are normalized, repeated, and taken for granted. Discourses have the power to shape social attitudes and influence social actions.

Instead of exploring development, human rights, democracy, and culture per se, I examine the *discourses* produced about these topics. My focus on discourse makes this ethnography multi-vocal and also multi-sited as discourses reach across geographic boundaries, and limited dichotomous representations of people, who may speak with one voice in one setting and with another in a different setting. With a focus on discourse, relationships of power emerge clearly, through examination of the construction, function, and specific contexts certain discourses are enacted. How does a discourse of development emerge? Why does it emerge at any historical moment? Who produces it? Who reproduces it? In what context? For what type of audience? How is it interpreted, challenged, contested, accepted? By whom, and for what purposes? A focus on discourse enables an

appreciation of the complexity of relationships that defy broad general characterization. Discourses intersect, overlap, and influence each other, particularly in post-colonial sites like the Marshalls, where discourses of democracy, tradition, modernity, and development are foregrounded. Concepts of 'culture', its representation, preservation, and politicization are central to this dissertation. Culture functions as a resource, particularly in the friction created at bordering and intersecting cultural spheres, which may be claimed or abandoned by the powerful. As a resource, culture is constantly reshaped, and altered as its definitions are applied in new ways, in new contexts and situations, and with new players. As icons of culture and tradition, hereditary chiefs play a pivotal role in representing culture, and well as defining, enacting, preserving, and altering understandings (Hau'ofa 1994: 2). Chiefs not only embody, but enact culture. Thus they are as capable of reshaping understandings and validating change, as they are of validating the past and preserving long-standing cultural values.

Chiefs and elites (educated and wealthy commoners) who maintain significant positions in traditional and contemporary realms of power are important foci of this study. Their positions in significant social institutions make them personal sites of intersection with international corporations, products, resources, and discourses. Understanding how their power is viewed, garnered, and maintained is a critical endeavor. While the study of traditional chiefs in contemporary societies has long been an anthropological project aimed at discovering cultural continuities, political economy, and transforming hierarchies (Sahlins 1985; White and Lindstrom 1997), studies of elites, particularly contemporary

Pacific Islander elites, have rarely been attempted by anthropologists² (Marcus 1979; Marcus 1982; Marcus 1983).

Anthropology has long-focused on the plight of the world's "peripheral" peoples. Anthropology's understandings of power and wealth are stilted by the one-sidedness of research, despite the disciplinary ideal of holism. "Instead of asking why some people are poor, we need to ask why others are so affluent," Laura Nader demands (1969: 289). The reasons for the narrow focus on the marginalized and peripheral have as much to do with the history of the discipline as well as its practitioners.

Given the increasing intersection of global economies and a growing awareness of the collaboration of local actors in the economic and political subordination of small-scale communities, understandings of power and political transformation are unforgivably incomplete without an understanding of how those with power perceive, gain, retain, and use it. Writing accurate and *adequate* histories and accounts of power requires sensitivity to local agency, and to hegemony at multiple levels. Anthropologists need to listen to the powerful as well as the powerless. Yet, anthropologists have successfully avoided the challenge of pursuing the powerful, by focusing on less-threatening communities and participants --those whose potential to negatively impact goals, and academic careers is limited. Aligned with the powerless, anthropologists may assert a moral indignation, amplify and sometimes assume the voices of the marginalized (Marcus and Fisher 1986).

Not only for personal, political, and disciplinary leanings are elites often overlooked, (and in this sense, marginalized within anthropology), but also for

² For specific studies of Tonga and Papua New Guinea see Marcus 1979; Marcus 1981, Gewertz and Errington 1999 respectively. For an early acknowledgement of pan-Pacific elites see Hau'ofa 1987, "A New South Pacific Society," for political or bureaucratic elites see Watters 1987.

methodological challenges. “Studying up” requires different methods than “studying down” (Nader 1969). With elites, the fundamental task of establishing rapport takes on new meaning as the stakes for anthropologists are higher and opportunities for access are rare.

Research on elites is perhaps more easily recognized as research *with* elites, since power is *shared* or *inverted* between the anthropologist and participants in ways that “studying down” often precludes. Elites typically bring greater material wealth, influence, to the relationship than an ethnographer living off a limited grant or salary. What anthropologists can offer elites is quite different from what anthropologists can offer *peripheral and marginalized community members*.

This work aims to illuminate how processes and institutions of colonialism work in conjunction /collaborate with local cultures to create, reinforce, and also limit the power of traditional chiefs and political elites (Thomas 1994; McPherson 2001; White 1991). Contemporary political elites include financially successful businessmen, educated politicians, influential women in the local community, as well as religious leaders, educators, and health care providers. Where land was once the *primary requisite of political power*, today’s money economy provides new means of social mobility that challenge traditional authority. Only as recently as 2000 was the nation’s first commoner President elected.

Cultural Models of Authority

This work explores the significance of local, cultural models of authority on the understanding of global alliances. I inquire into the ways both American *and* Marshallese cultural models of authority, power, and dependency construct chiefs and elites today. An

analysis of Marshallese chiefs' interactions with foreign powers through history provides insights into the ways relationships between chiefs, commanders, commoners and civilians in the present reproduce and reshape historic relations between Marshallese chiefs, their people, and foreign administrations. Cultural models of power, authority, and dependency provide frameworks for social interaction, particularly in encounters between foreign and native players. Who can speak? How? To whom? Who are the authorities? What kind of authority do they have? How is authority challenged? When is it marshaled, by whom, and for what reasons? The answers to these questions are perpetually in flux, naturally negotiated in daily interactions.

The collective experience of US colonialism in the Marshall Islands serves as a frame for other interactions between Marshallese and American people whether they reside in the Marshalls; Honolulu, Hawai'i; Costa Mesa, California; Enid, Oklahoma; Springdale, Arkansas; or Cleburne, Texas. Few, if any, Marshallese label the relationship "colonial" or "hegemonic." Both US and RMI government officials, lacking any neutral term, consistently refer to the political agreement that legally links the two as "special" in their press releases. Alternatively, average Marshallese citizens describe the relationship with the United States in metaphors of family and hierarchy -- their primary relationships characterized by power, dependency, and reciprocity.

In the event described earlier, the cooperation of Marshallese chiefs, US military commanders, Ebeye residents, Cultural Center staff, and multiple volunteers is evident. How is this cooperation to be understood? Is it passive acceptance? Is it complicity? Might it be exploitation? If so, of whom and by whom?

This work attempts to highlight local relationships of dependency and power through analysis of metaphors that describe relationships between chiefs and commoners, parents and children, and elder and younger siblings. The similarities of expectations of those with authority as well as appropriate responses and actions from subordinates in multiple categories are expressed in phrases that refer to looking after, caring for, providing for protecting and guiding. Using examples from daily interactions, I will demonstrate how power is often maintained by encouraging dependency. Those with the publicly ascribed and acknowledged authority to lead are few; others, no matter how independent and ambitious, are effectively discouraged from taking responsibility through direct challenges to their junior positions, their knowledge, or their lack of traditional authority.

Indigenization: Marshallizing America

Relationships of dependency on those above and responsibility for those below, contribute to the familiar and familial feel of the RMI/US relationship. Examples of familial or hierarchical metaphors of authority are repeated again and again in participants' descriptions of US/RMI relations. In contrast to some local leaders who view the relationship as colonial and oppressive, average Marshallese citizens portray the US as an ally, a type of relative, to call upon to step in and make things right. For traditional leaders accustomed to competing with educated commoners for authority and economic advantage, the US is the ultimate source of their opponents' strength, as well as their own. Their relationship to the US is ambivalent since the US economically empowers them through direct land payments, yet also constrains their influence indirectly through discourses of democracy, human rights, civil society, accountability and transparency, that are critical of traditional hierarchical relations of power.

This dissertation will show how powerful nations, their ideologies and practices, are indigenized and understood in local, culturally framed ways. Cultural metaphors not only provide a model for Marshallese interpretations of the US, but a means of enhancing and limiting the power of the US vis-à-vis the Marshalls. Identically, American cultural understandings enhance and limit the authority of Marshallese chiefs and the reproduction of hierarchy in the Marshalls. How power is negotiated in the midst of these frameworks/worldviews/cultural models is a central question here. While earlier studies of the Marshalls emphasize American empowerment of chiefs and disempowerment of the larger, general Marshallese population (Spoehr 1949; Kiste 1974; Rynkiewich 1974), thus an American distortion of hierarchy, I attempt to show also how American power and influence are constrained by Marshallese models of authority. The processes of indigenization and Americanization involve intercepting ideas, objects, symbols, funds, populations, missiles, ideologies, and images, in familiar culturally-patterned ways, that then in turn supplement and expand those same cultural patterns.

As shown in recent studies of 'missionization,' people are not passively colonized, but are active participants in their own history (Burt 1994; Barker 1990). This is not to underestimate the force of foreign global systems but to recognize the importance of local perspectives rather than privilege the foreign. US militarism, capitalism, and colonialism impact Marshallese lives on a daily basis. But these forces are viewed and engaged through the lens of local histories and experiences, through the collective memories of Marshallese people and society.

This study argues that many Marshallese see the US not as an exploitative, militaristic nation, but as a wealthy, generous benefactor whose behavior is much like one's

Irooj [Chief]. In return, the *kajur* [commoners] are respectful, silent, and apparently loyal. Claiming that US/RMI relations replicate *Irooj/kajur* relations is to assert, as I will show in later chapters, that these relations are contentious, involve exploitation from above and below, are based on idealized models, but in reality, are fluid, and constantly contested, challenged, critiqued, and resisted in multiple contexts.

As scholars have noted, the presence of an 'other' does not always result in denigrating the foreign and valorizing the local. In some contexts, encounters with others entail the wholesale condemnation/destruction of local culture in favor of the foreign (Thomas 1992; Burridge 1960; Lawrence 1964). The anthropological literature on 'cargo cults' contributes to our understanding of how indigenous societies denigrate local practices in the face of previously unimaginable force and wealth of foreign others (Lindstrom 1993; Worsley 1957).

The collective memory of World War II, with both Japanese and US militaries, created a deep sense of the self at the mercy of powerful others (Poyer et al. 2001). International hegemony was secured through local hierarchy. Marshallese recognized foreigners as the source of economic power as the realms of *Irooj* authority gradually diminished. While the presence of Americans marked a liberation of sorts from the oppression of Japanese military occupation and an old colonial administration, it also presented an opportunity for Marshallese to reassert and further define themselves in contrast to a new colonial power. Throughout the Pacific, the post-war era of decolonization became an era of re-valorization of tradition (Kelly and Kaplan 2001; Lindstrom and White 1993). In contrast, I will argue that for the Marshall Islands the post-war period is characterized by *denigrating* the past (and symbols and images of "tradition")

in favor of participating in the powerful discourses of modernity, development, and progress (Hanlon 1998). The US was yet another nation to *recolonize* the Marshall Islands according to its cultural assumptions, values, and priorities. With a new colonizer arriving on average every forty years, the Marshallese people were by this time well aware of the power of foreign others.

America is recognized as the source of some highly valued local institutions such as churches, schools and hospitals (Carucci 1989). American missionaries from Boston (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions) introduced Congregational Protestantism in 1857. The American government established schools, and hospitals during the 1950s. The American display of force during World War II, and the subsequent nuclear bomb testing in the islands left deep impressions about the power, wealth, and knowledge of America and Americans (Carucci 1989; Alcalay 1984; Kiste 1974). It also did little to empower a Marshallese sense of cultural pride and identification with their traditional knowledge and skills.

Many Marshallese on Majuro look to the United States for opportunities and protection (from the abuses of local authorities, as I will present in later chapters) and some view their close alliance with a world power as a source of pride (Carucci 1989). Free Association with the United States has its benefits. Yet this close relationship also provides a lens through which Marshallese view their own culture, technology, knowledge, and environment negatively. Through the high assessment of American skills, knowledge, and goods, Marshallese subtly and implicitly devalue indigenous ways of doing and knowing. Where employment and economic advancement are acquired solely through familiarity

with Western ways, words, people, and knowledge within the contemporary social world of the Marshall Islands, indigenous ways have few economic rewards and little recognition.

Preferring a progressive self-representation in contrast to the traditionalisms of other Pacific Island neighbor nations (Keesing and Tonkinson 1982), the Marshalls chooses to highlight its affiliation with the United States and thereby gain control and participation in the new social world of America. Given the Marshallese experience of World War II, which highlighted their powerlessness under Japanese military occupation, and the unavoidable strength and power of US military, this choice is a pragmatic one. Asserting ties to the United States enhances Marshallese management and control over their social world. Americans frequently condemn or bemoan this choice as cultural loss or denigration, rather than recognizing the resilient strength it reveals.

(Post) Colonial Culture

It might be argued that the process of “Americanization” is in actuality one of resistance to US representations of the islands and islanders over fifty years ago. Those who lived through World War II spent their remaining years compromising with an American administration. Their children pursued the disproportionate power of American knowledge so that they might play a more direct role in their own affairs in this new social world. Since post-war Marshallese leadership and those who interacted more closely with Americans in the political development of the islands may have internalized negative foreign judgments, ‘modernization’ becomes a perpetual and dominant national aim. Particularly among Western educated government leaders, the desire to implement policies that reward development is strong. Budgetary priorities disproportionately support construction projects on the capital, a national airline, a regionally recognized super-power

plant, etc. These 'developments' come at the expense of basic services such as a functioning health care and education systems. The discourse of development (Hanlon 1998) traps Micronesian nations into foreign discourses of modernity while further devaluing indigenous ways. It also leaves indigenous national leaders vulnerable to accusations of inauthenticity, mimicry, and greed. In a world of Western double standards of development and cultural preservation, and local duplicity of traditional reciprocal relations in development, Marshallese leaders walk a fine line as they attempt to maintain status and authority in spheres with drastically different expectations and values. This dissertation explores the negotiation and manipulations of these spheres by Marshallese leaders through analysis of elites' life histories and institutional roles, the everyday conversations about them, and the international discursive practices in which elites contribute to the imaginings of the Marshall Islands today.

Power, Agency, and Resistance

The focus on "modernity" is typical of First/Third World relations where new nations struggle to claim recognition through symbols and rhetoric of development defined by the First World. The progressivist agenda is a common byproduct of the colonial experience. Like other new Pacific nations, the former Trust Territory (TT) districts' experience of American administration fostered national development projects and actively sought Western approval by co-opting symbols of western wealth and power, recognized in local arenas as well as international circles.

Some have represented Micronesians as having an "expensive taste for modernity" (Hezel 1992). The preference for progressivism over the traditionalism of the South Pacific makes Micronesia a challenge for scholars of Oceania. A lack of locally produced materials

to challenge Western interpretations contributes to representations that portray islanders as naïve, passively colonized, or corrupt. Native views of Marshallese politics, for example, are more likely learned through conversation than in published texts. To understand Marshallese and other Micronesian political views and strategies requires more than reading the unpublished reports of a TT district anthropologist (Tobin 1953), a single volume by a political scientist (Meller 1969), and a study of the internal politics of a forced migration and resettlement (Kiste 1974). While each is insightful, there have to date been no targeted anthropological studies of politics, authority, and cultural practices of leadership. This study seeks to explain contemporary politics through cultural and historical analysis capable of generating deeper awareness of persistent, indigenous, Marshallese political practices and perspectives, especially understandings of power, authority, and resistance.

This dissertation explores Marshallese cultural, historical, and personal perspectives that consider explicit cooperation and collaboration with the United States a deliberately practical, even strategic activity. How might what has repeatedly been dubbed “Americanization” actually be understood as indigenous agency, marshalling the powers of America?

For many of the Marshallese in this study, affiliation means access to, and thus an opportunity for control over dominant foreign powers and influences. This is consistent with indigenous methods of resistance in a rigidly hierarchical society. Social scientists working with marginalized people like to talk about resistance, “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1985), and everyday passive aggression. In this work I attempt to describe Marshallese methods of resistance, how they are envisioned, spoken of, and understood within the framework of Marshallese society. While I call this activity “resistance” –

Marshall Islanders do not. The word itself is so directly confrontational it would likely be denigrated as American, or *mantin belle* [an American way/custom]. Furthermore, use of the term reduces the effectiveness of any 'resistance' practices. Thus, as I see it, Marshallese forms of "resistance" are often about maintaining ties and influence, about degrees of cooperation and participation, and rarely about confrontation, denial, and outright refusals.

This dissertation pursues these arguments and ideas by tracing the historical development of international relationships, the localization/indigenization of foreign powers, and the role of cultural models of authority and US colonialism in sustaining Marshallese political elites. Possibly unique among Pacific Island nations, Marshallese representations of cultural and national identity have been transformed by a discourse of development pioneered by President and *Irojilaplap* Amata Kabua decades ago, and perpetuated by the dominant political party, in the context of relations between US and traditional Marshallese leaders.

The lack of scholarly work on the Marshall Islands, the Marshallese people and their life ways compounds predominant recurring perceptions and representations. With few sources or advocates, those who seek to learn, write, and represent the Marshalls (particularly the foreign media) contribute to, and reinforce the inherently limited observations of very few people. Without a stronger representation of contemporary Marshallese voices, Marshallese society is understood not on its own terms, but in terms of ill-formed stereotypes, regional comparisons, and authorial biases. This dissertation aims to show that Marshallese resistance differs dramatically from Western models, or even others in the non-Western world. A lack of vocal confrontation is not necessarily an indication of complicity or collaboration (although, it sometimes may be). As human beings, we make

sense of the foreign in terms of the familiar. This work is an attempt to show some of the ways the Marshallese (and their American counterparts), use the familiar to frame the foreign throughout their historic relationship.

We bridge our foreign and familiar worlds with metaphors such as this one. Linking disparate islands of experience and knowledge eventually we create a Venice, a pseudo-city constructed of islands and bridges, indirect routes, and imperfect passages. We navigate our way, unaware that the structures upon which we tread are created and fragile, conscious only of their apparent solidity. In worlds surrounded and separated by water, bridges are as critical as boats, depending on the distance between shores. Both offer the prospect of adventure, discovery, exploration, and importantly, return. They allow comings and goings, *raal* [going] and *raaltok* [going back], *ito-itak*, [back and forth]. We are connected to others' shores, homes, and hearts by bridges we individually, mutually, and imperfectly construct and negotiate.

My Bridges

The metaphorical bridge that keeps myself and my Marshallese family and friends connected is built on mutual appreciations of faith, family, service, and community. I was raised in an environment that acknowledged disability, discrimination, and privilege. At home, I grew up constantly outnumbered by my three brothers (Tom, Mike, and Greg) and often felt lonely, excluded, and somewhat sorry for myself. Yet, in the face my own experience of marginalization, I empathized with my two older brothers' difficulties growing up with severe hearing losses. I was well aware of my blessings when I witnessed their struggles to use the phone, to hear their teachers, and to be accepted by their peers. For years, I lip synced phone calls so they could "hear" the other party by reading my lips

and repeated punch lines from our favorite television shows during commercials. When I was seven, my lively grandmother and young uncle with Down's Syndrome entered our daily lives after a tragic plane crash claimed my too-young grandfather's life. Danny became a fourth, special brother who helped my family learn to not take ourselves or our various struggles too seriously.

We were *all* privileged. A friendship with our housekeeper was among my most significant influences. Bernadine brought her vibrant stories and laughter, into my somewhat sterile, *if comfortable*, suburban existence. Bernadine Young worked for my parents before I was born, and taught me things I never would have learned as a white girl in the segregated South. Stories of her life as a black woman have shaped my life. She told them while she protected me from my brothers and taught me to fight back, as she cleaned my bathroom and mopped the kitchen floor week after week after week for all of my life in New Orleans. She was a strong, impressive, and proud black woman; I was devoted to her. I hated that she worked for us. I hated that I wouldn't have known and loved her if she hadn't. Loving her, I loved her people across our socially segregated distance. I anguished over her struggles as well as my privilege and power, questioning how and why things were the way they were.

Bernadine is the base of my bridge to the Marshalls, expanded by early international travels, numerous opportunities for study and volunteerism abroad, family support, and a lifelong Catholic education that emphasizes: "From those who are given much, much is expected." On the other side of the bridge lay Majuro and a Marshallese community.

I not only appreciated the sense of community and caring I experienced among Marshallese people but I came to connect my appreciation of wonderful, eccentric,

excessive Majuro with my experience of growing up in “the city that care forgot.” Like Majuro, New Orleans is indulgent, surrounded by water, and filled with lovely, lively, eccentric people, and incredible storytellers. Both cities appreciate ancient social distinctions, and a strange, but not surprising, blend of alcoholism and religiosity. Both are slow-moving oral societies, where face-to-face interaction and family, friends and food (preferable from the sea) are valued above most else. I believe I adjusted and adapted well to Majuro because I was raised in New Orleans. I feel equally at home in these paradoxical places that are warm and steamy; oppressive yet carefree.

In the numerous comings and goings to my water-surrounded homes scarcely above (if not below) sea level, I recognize the value and beauty of a modern life that carries us back and forth like the tides. It is a positive process -- this examination, re-examination, turning and returning. What I used to imagine as separate chapters of my life appear now as intermingled words on every page.

These days, anthropologists highlight this common experience rather than deny the intensity or frequency of this back and forth process or the integration of the personal, and professional relationships. As Clifford (1997) notes, “the field” is not out there. As the communities of research become our homes and their residents share our spheres, the spatial practices and understandings of ethnography have shifted. We study ourselves as much as we study others; our paths and lives intersect at more numerous junctures than previously possible or imagined. Anthropologists are increasingly interested in examining the sites of these intersections, rather than continuing to position others as “stationary objects to our wandering interests” (Clifford 1997), evidenced by the growing body of literature on diasporic communities, and transnational cultures (Small 1997; Hau’ofa 1998).

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Nebwij gave birth to her daughter, Melina, last year. Kakom's son, Kyle, turned seven this summer; Neibot's son celebrated his second birthday at the end of May. I first arrived on Majuro in 1990 to teach Assumption High School Freshmen Class of 1994. These former students are older now than I was then. At twenty-two, a couple of months after graduating with a BA in English from Spring Hill, a small Catholic Jesuit college in Mobile, Alabama, I went to the Marshall Islands to teach English as a Jesuit International Volunteer (JIV).



Figure 10. Assumption High School Class of 1994, Majuro 1991.
Julie Walsh, JIV, seated second row from top, right of center.

At the time, JIVs were sent to Belize, Nepal, and throughout Micronesia according to the decisions of the JIV staff and director. Since they selected only twenty-five percent of the applicants, most of us were too pleased to have been selected to really care where we were assigned. As our applications attested, we were committed to the four goals of the JIV: "Living simply, witnessing faith, doing justice, and building community." In return we

were promised to be “ruined for life.” The Micro7 subgroup of the thirty JIVs that year was the seventh group sent to Micronesia. We three women were the first JIVs to go to Majuro where we lived and taught in a world of bright red and yellow buildings and blue and white uniforms -- Assumption Parish and Schools.



Figure 11. The departure of Majuro's first Jesuit International Volunteers. (1992)

Twelve years later, I have to admit that JIV kept its promise. I was ruined, broken, humbled, and resurrected despite my best intentions. My dreams of becoming an eccentric English professor died as I grew more appreciative of the complexity of real people (vs. characters), and aware of my preference to listen to their voices rather than read about them. The Marshalls and its people remain a central focus of my life. Two years after leaving Majuro, I returned for the graduation of my “Freshmen,” with a summer research grant to do interviews for my MA thesis in anthropology.



Figure 12. Julie Walsh and the Momotaro family, May 1992.
(JIV)



Figure 13. Julie Walsh and the Momotaro family, August 1994.
(MA research)

Three years later I returned to work and pursue twelve months doctoral research.

When I left Majuro in 1992, I never dreamed that ten years later I would see my

Marshallese family on a regular basis at their second home in Hawai'i, and run into my Marshallese cousins on campus, much less be interrupted in the writing of this particular chapter by virtual chats with former students spread from Majuro to the US mainland. In a decade cell phones, internet access, and Compact migration have made these relationships much easier to maintain. Even so, I am still amazed that I encounter the Marshalls every day of my life, by choice or by chance. I am as much a site of transnational exchange, as any of the elites about whom I write. If being "ruined for life" means having one's entire world uprooted and relocated on a tiny coral atoll in the Pacific, than I can't think of a greater privilege.

Locating the Anthropologist

Anthropologists have accepted the notion that it is impossible to avoid our subjectivities in our research (Clifford 1988, Clifford and Marcus 1986). My relationship with my 'topic' is quite different from that of many anthropologists. While certainly not native, anthropologists who have served as Peace Corps or other volunteers share with native anthropologists pre-research relationships, and struggles with objectivity, representation, and a deep awareness of the implications of research on participants and local communities (Schwimmer and Warren 1993; Narayan 1993; Abu-Lughod 1988). A range of anthropologists' positions exists between "native" and "non-native."

Having maintained my relationships with Marshallese friends and family for twelve years, I intend to continue them. I couldn't claim scientific objectivity if I *had* to. In an effort to reveal how this impacts this dissertation, through my interpretations and relationships with participants, I have decided to include reflexive passages for multiple reasons. As others have noted, emphasizing one's uncertain positionality is more honest, if

also more vulnerable, than pretending to be an objective bystander (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Clifford 1988; Abu-Lughod 1988; Narayan 1993; Behar 1993). My insights and understandings are colored by my past years on Majuro, and my relationships there. Positioning myself requires an exposure that, at times, is uncomfortable. Yet, ignoring the ways my friendships and experiences shape this work would be even more uncomfortable. This sort of authorial collateral only seems fair; I am as vulnerable as my Marshallese friends, family, and their culture, in this process of inscribing, and fixing.

Not only is my relationship to this topic personal, so is my research methodology. I agree with Pacific Islander scholars and others for whom disciplinary distinctions between personal and professional, home and work, field and academy deny the whole humans that we are (Smith 1999; Thaman 2000; Clifford 1997; Narayan 1993; Bruner 1993).

Anthropologists have constructed their authority on notions of distance; asserting that coming and going to and from particular positions, spaces, cultural frameworks is an essential component of the interpretive process (Clifford 1997:84). As others have noted, the particular positions, spaces, and frameworks we travel back and forth from may not be as broadly defined as previously imagined (Clifford 1997: 86). Within our own "home" communities, we travel back and forth between spheres and sectors where we are at one moment "strangers" and at other times "natives" (Narayan1993; Abu-Lughod 1988). The circles about which we might be acknowledged as authorities and about which we might feel comfortable representing are frequently (un) admittedly quite small. I admire those who can admit the limits of their social spheres (Hezel 1998).

The interpretive process inherent in "comings and goings" is as much about shifting identities, and relationships as it is about place. When I write about these

movements I do not mean to prioritize the coming and going to and from Majuro or Honolulu, but to emphasize the border that is crossed between America and the Marshalls a million times a day, in Honolulu, or in Majuro, or in cyber space.

In stressing the significance of mental/symbolic/cultural travels, I do not want to deny what I see as a significant contribution of anthropology to understanding others. Living among, accompanying, and “being with” are critical means of forming relationships that enable certain types of knowledge unavailable to those who pass briefly through. While typical anthropology graduate programs consider a year of “fieldwork” adequate to distinguish the anthropological endeavor from other traveling observers (Clifford 1997), local hosts would scarcely concede that difference. When I was a volunteer, two years seemed quite a long time, considering most of my prior travels had not exceeded 4 months’ residence. Now, after twelve years, and numerous return trips for extended visits, I see how insignificant two years are to host communities, and how hard it is for them to maintain enthusiasm for the perpetual cycles of orientations, introductions, and farewells organized for group after group of foreign teachers, doctors, workers, etc. Through interactions with current Jesuit volunteers on my return visits, I realize anew how isolated, and removed from local communities volunteers are, how limited their social spheres, and opportunities to learn more deeply. I critically question the value of research in which a neophyte anthropologist spends a year gathering data. Linguistic ability, general social awareness, political understandings, and relationships of trust and mutuality take a long time to form. After over forty months on Majuro, I am most frequently made aware of my ignorance.

I not only question the length of time spent in communities of research, but also the methods and means of interacting with the community to explore a research topic. As

many have written; funded researchers wandering about and asking questions are not easily understood by locals whose lives are occupied with family, work, and personal commitments (Hymes 1969; Walsh 2001). Meaningful interaction is difficult when the spheres of potential reciprocity are exclusive. Anthropologists gain from the information participants provide; what do participants receive? Is it possible for anthropologists to give back to participants in equally meaningful ways?

During the course of my years on Majuro, I have attempted to reciprocate the time and energy others have contributed to my livelihood by freely offering technical assistance, English lessons, exercise classes; writing grants; teaching summer school and giving piano lessons; playing the organ at church; preparing and serving food; videotaping family events *for friends and relatives*; tutoring; chauffeuring; etc. These actions are merely gestures of appreciation, but essential ones, no matter how time-consuming they sometimes may be.

A second way I attempt to reciprocate and make myself accessible and vulnerable is by seeking local employment if possible, rather than an externally funded grant. In this way I feel that I have a locally understood role, I am part of a larger system in which I am as dependent on others as they are on me, and I am accessible and approachable in real, locally meaningful ways, not solely interacting with others in the service of my research and interests. In a locally meaningful context, the interaction between myself and my coworkers, students, and others is more significant than if I were wandering about asking questions, unavailable for observation in the context of normal daily interaction.

Research Period and Methods

I arrived on Majuro in August 1997 with a teaching position for the Fall semester at the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI) as an adjunct instructor of two sections of

Introduction to Literature. Having arranged housing with the Maryknoll Sisters at Assumption, I had offered to contribute teaching hours in addition to the minimal rent they asked. The Sophomore Literature class of thirty-five students became my daily morning contribution -- the CMI classes were Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons. Upon my arrival, the Historic Preservation Office (HPO), where I had inquired into a possible position months earlier, contacted me with an offer to be their "Staff Ethnographer." Since I had made previous commitments, we negotiated my hours at ten hours per week in the mornings at Alele Museum, after my Assumption classes, and twenty hours per week after the semester ended.

I was "funded," but had very little time after grading papers and planning lessons to pursue my research agenda the first three months. I was grateful to find a replacement teacher for the high school literature class after the first quarter. In the CMI literature class I was able to interact with my new (and some former Assumption) students and to hear their reflections on topics that were indirectly relevant to my research questions.

Reconnecting with my former students, their families, and my friends was a priority. I spent those first few months listening, and getting to know my colleagues, housemates, neighbors, and students. My part-time work at Alele allowed me to explore the museum's resources and participate in the planning of cultural events and new displays.

As "Staff Ethnographer" for the HPO, I was assigned to assist in the writing of grants for equipment and projects and to pursue a pre-approved and funded study of the Marshallese clan system. Were I not hired, the HPO would have lost all the funding associated with the projects they had proposed to justify an ethnographer position from the US Park Service, Department of Interior. Hiring me 'on-island' and part-time provided

extra funds for other HPO projects and budgetary needs since funds could be “re-directed.” The HPO Director assigned me to Alele Museum and hired a temporary curator who happened to be a former student of mine from Assumption. I was to work with the new curator in reorganizing the collections, planning for the annual culture week festivities, and imagining ways to ‘liven up’ the museum.

In January, Alele became my sole steady commitment beyond my own research interests. I worked Mondays, Tuesdays, and half of Wednesdays at Alele; in the remainder of the week I pursued interviews, browsed through the museum’s archives, wandered the halls of the Nitijela offices, went to community meetings, and political events. When the curator accepted a position with the newly budgeted tourism office, another young woman, who happened to be part of my extended Marshallese family, replaced her. After two months, she too left for a new position but was never replaced. The HPO Director then designated me “Temporary Curator.” Short-staffed, the assistant curator and I spent most of our days at Alele selling books and resources to increasing numbers of American couples, who walked over from the courthouse next door after adopting Marshallese children. Between interacting with these visitors, and assisting the Alele video production staff, collaboratively designing interviews and identifying topics for future programs, and offering staff training on the new computers and digital media, and internet access a recent grant had enabled, my twenty hours per week were almost exclusively devoted to Alele rather than other HPO assignments. I realized after some frustration that my placement at Alele, with a wage paid by the US Park Service, served to free both Alele and HPO funds for other needs, though I never quite determined what they were.

My research included attending and videotaping community events, including those that I helped organize through my community role at Alele. The discussions and planning of cultural representations and reactions to these events intrigued me as they often centered on procuring funds, rather than participants or cultural resources. During my 'off' hours, I *bwebwenato*-ed (shared stories) and interviewed politicians and community leaders. When a major debate developed over gambling on Majuro, my involvement included participating in the strategizing with Majuro community leaders who gathered at weekly evening meetings at the Assumption library. I often spent whole afternoons talking with retired politicians, the elderly, and long-time friends working at Assumption. Attentively, I followed the RMI's international affairs, local reactions, government activities, and news. The results include ninety hours of audio interviews with political elites, community leaders, and average citizens about Majuro, local politics, and their views of the relationship between the Marshall Islands and the United States. I gathered over sixty hours of videotape of family and community events, cultural programs, footage of historic sites and interviews about particular moments in Marshallese history elicited around particular historic structures remaining from earlier colonial administrations. In addition I took over one thousand photographs, maintained a log of events, and kept detailed fieldnotes from August 1997 through August 1998.

Layout of the dissertation

The dissertation is written in a form that allows for interruptions and discontinuities for such is the hermeneutic process of back and forth, *ito-itak*, that balances *breadth and depth* and attempts to be true to the relationship between researcher and communities of research as they come to know each other more deeply.

Particular topics are re-visited for more specific levels of analysis at various places in this dissertation. The back and forth format also quite intentionally mirrors life on Majuro, where residents travel a single road back and forth over the course of a day, and a lifetime (see Chapter 2). This style is also an attempt to express the dialectic process of asking questions, finding answers, and asking again.

In an attempt to make this dissertation relevant and accessible to a non-academic audience, my writing style is deliberately narrative. Providing a sense of place, history, power relations, economics, and authority in the land and sea scapes of Majuro is the purpose of Chapter 2. Chapter 2 locates the Marshall Islands historically and geographically through a virtual tour of contemporary Majuro that uses culturally significant landmarks and contemporary structures as points of intersection with Marshallese history in order to convey the depths of memory, experience and meaning, as well as the power associated with particular plots of land over generations. The connection to and meanings of land to Marshallese, as a source of identity, community, economic opportunity, and political power are foregrounded here. Further this chapter will give the reader a 'feel' for contemporary Majuro and life on a coral atoll.

Chapter 3 begins with an analysis of Marshallese social relations, cultural forms and practices as they have transformed through history. Foreign representations of power relations between commoners and chiefs, foreigners and natives as well as persistent cultural models of authority are the focus here, as traced through the missionary, German, and Japanese colonial eras.

In Chapter 4 I apply chiefly models and examples of authority presented in Chapter 3 to the American administration of the island, and explore their transformation under the

influence of Amata Kabua during the periods of political development and early independence. This chapter continues historical analysis of the current American “compact” era, including a close reading of former President and *Iroijlaplap*³ (high chief) Amata Kabua’s five term administration and its role in shaping the nation -- its goals, policies, and current models of leadership. This chapter explores Kabua’s selective use of Marshallese culture and global discourses to expand his authority. The aim of analysis is to understand how Marshallese, under the guidance of a high chief and President, indigenized aspects of American culture through discourses of “development,” “tradition,” and “progress” to shape a uniquely Marshallese modernity.

The individuals who have the most influence in defining this modernity are those who had the most personal experiences working with, or being educated by, Americans during the US Trust Territory administration. Chapter 5 examines the rise of a commoner elite after World War II that expanded the models of chiefly authority to include respect for newly formed positions of status and power linked to the Western institutions established by the US Trust Territory administration. Interactions between new elites and *kajur* [commoners] or *dri-jerbal* [workers] indicate an expansion and transformation of cultural models of authority that reinforce emerging “class” relations. A “commoner elite” implies a “common commoner” – a distinction that strengthens the contemporary

³ *Iroijlaplap* is the term used to designate a high chief. Numerous chiefly lines exist in both the Ratak and Ralik chains of atolls; the islands have never been united under a single recognized ruler, instead, leadership and ownership was persistently claimed and contested in battle through the early 1900s. Thus, multiple *Iroijlaplap* exist today, with no single leader given a position higher than the others, except through democratic election to the national Parliament where two *Iroijlaplap* have served as President of the RMI.

preference of the label *dri jermal* [worker] as perhaps more apt, not to mention specific, than the broadly defined *kajur* [commoner, non-royal].⁴

In addition, Chapter 5 examines the process of American socialization and the impact of US education on the Marshalls through biographical interviews with elites who serve as gatekeepers and key figures in institutional sites that connect the Marshalls to broader global issues, institutions, and discourses. In these interviews, elites shed light on their educational backgrounds, their understandings of Marshallese identity and nationhood, and their views of the Marshalls' relations with the United States. This group of powerful individuals, informed by their collective educational experiences and past interactions with America/Americans, continues to shape the development of the nation. In the process, they serve as embodiments of contemporary cultural and national identities.

Elites, like the missiles fired from Kwajalein, are "interceptors" of fast-approaching foreign forces such as the global discourses they encounter as leaders of powerful institutions in the Marshall Islands. Their life histories and their evaluations of their own experience shed light on the ways transnational discourses of various kinds impact not only national development, but also indigenous cultural and personal identities and practices.

This chapter also highlights internal dissension and the complexity of elite positionalities in discourses of cultural and national identity in the Marshalls. Informed by clan and lineage histories, local politics are tied to land rights and generations-old political affiliations. I have used life history/biographical methods to explore the formation of leadership status and the socialization of elites living under American colonialism. In

⁴ The phrase "first commoner President" (in English) is repeatedly used to describe the current RMI President, Kessai Note. The Marshallese term *kajur*, commoner, rather than *dri-jermal*, worker, is used to describe his traditional status.

addition to their varied experience of American socialization, I examine how local loyalties and histories shape elites' divisive political positions on "development," "culture," and US-RMI relations. Majuro's dominant political divisions, alluded to in earlier chapters, are reexamined in light of contemporary political disputes and their development as explored in the life histories of elites.

Chapter 6 explores the ways power, held by these elites, is negotiated, enacted, maintained, and challenged on Majuro. *The interaction between local models and practices of authority with foreign political institutions in the negotiation of power, influence, economic gain, political capital, and development projects are targeted through close analysis of controversial and unprecedented political debates on Majuro in 1997-1998.* Examples of legislative issues, particularly a national gambling debate, point to the strengths and boundaries of hierarchical authority and methods of collaborative resistance. These methods include alliance building and the incorporation of powerful others/outside, namely *representatives of mission and churches who subscribe to ideas of "equality," "justice," and "democracy" to (indirectly) oppose local authority.* My analysis of power on Majuro intends to illustrate the tensions and connections between Marshallese conceptual spheres of *manit* [custom/culture] and modern democracy. This chapter not only highlights the sites and individuals who conduct these transnational negotiations, but foregrounds ambiguities about US relations that are made apparent as political parties take oppositional sides in local issues which intersect international relations.

I foreground the evolving local methods of resistance since these then serve as examples for future political activity that strengthen local resistance to foreign as well as local hegemony.

Chapter 7 focuses more closely on Marshallese understandings of authority through an examination of metaphoric language used to describe RMI leadership and US-RMI relations. I argue that Marshallese “Marshallize” the US as a means of maintaining power and authority over its strength and resources. By incorporating the US into familiar and familial relationships, Marshallese exercise their agency by asserting their understandings, expectations, and evaluations of US activity in the Marshalls. Marshallese metaphors that describe the US as a “parent,” “chief,” and “coach” point to persistent local methods of alliance building and collaboration with power as seen in Chapter 6. Relationships between the Bikinians and the US government, Marshallese parents and American adoptive parents, and Marshallese citizens and the US government as understood through the Compact of Free Association reveal the ways Marshallese evaluate both foreign and local authority according to criteria that are reproduced in multiple spheres of Marshallese social life. The examples analyzed in this chapter highlight the continued cultural logic of dependency and reciprocity, as well as the responsibilities of authority. While Marshallese discourses of dependency rehearse estimations of US authority, they are bolstered by discourses of human rights, social justice, democracy, independence, and sovereignty. The analysis shows that when Marshall Islanders request greater US investment, they assert a negative evaluation of US contributions to an ideally reciprocal relationship. In requesting closer ties to the US, the RMI also acknowledges its own continued commitment to the relationship.

Chapter 8 focuses on the mutual construction of the Marshallese Islands in foreign media and local productions. Representations of Marshallese culture and nation frequently intersect around themes of dependency/victimization, democracy/corruption, and development/progressivism. The analysis compares foreign and local conceptions of

shared rhetoric/vocabulary that have drastically different interpretations and meanings. By unpacking the mutual constructions of the Marshall Islands and the Marshallese people, I want to demonstrate some of the ways cultural knowledge shapes perceptions such that the foreign is understood in terms of the familiar. Americans as well as Marshallese use culturally informed models of authority to define and evaluate this symbiotic relationship. The interplay between key Marshallese individuals, who serve as intersectors (I argue for the more deliberate term “interceptors”) of international discourse and widely accessible international media works to solidify or establish particular local interpretations and understandings of various global discourses.

A ninth, and final, chapter summarizes my exploration of Marshallese models of power and authority, emerging from collisions of local and global discourses through various periods of Marshallese history. It further confirms the significance of long-term research that explores how indigenous agency and power relations are enacted, enhanced, and reproduced in a world where foreign forces fly unceasingly at their targets, like US missiles to Kwajalein.

CHAPTER 2 LOCATING THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

ITO-ITAK [BACK AND FORTH]

Ito-itak. Back and forth. *Ito-itak* is a way of life on a narrow strip of coral, where *lik* [ocean] and *iar* [lagoon] are nearly always simultaneously in view. The back and forth cycles of movement, imitating the stars, the planets, the understandings and events of our days: *epaatlok* [low tide], *aibwujtok* [high tide], *ratak* [sunrise], *ralik* [sunset], over and over, day after day, month after month, year after year, and generation after generation. Imagine it.



Figure 14. Sunrise from Assumption Convent.

The sky brightens faintly in the East as I look out from the Maryknoll Sisters' porch and head downstairs to begin my morning walk. At 6:00AM I've already called Kakom to wake her to join me when I reach Small Island. We walk three mornings a week from *Mon Bada* (Assumption) in Uliga to the Outrigger Hotel in Delap, about five miles

round trip. As we walk the sun rises on our left, *jen lik* [from the ocean(side)]. On our right, the *iar* [lagoon], is still a smooth pale blue, reflecting shades of pink. An occasional car passes in the quiet calm. My Mom, Daisy, waves at us from her car as she heads to Long Island to open the store. Our other companions are the dogs that roam in bands but usually leave us alone. At the Air Marshall Islands office Kakom pretends to throw a rock – “ssss!” -- at the infamous car-chasing dog who rises from his regular site in the center of the street to bark at us; he plops back down, disinterested. By 7 am the first of many back and forth trips of the day is completed.

By 8 am, after a shower, I’m walking again, but this time in the opposite direction -- *lik* on my right, *iar* on my left-- to work at Alele Museum. Once there, I pause for a cup of coffee and brief conversation at the open-air coffee shop downstairs, then pour some salt into my palm before heading upstairs with a hard-boiled *lip* [egg]. I punch in my card on the time clock at the Library, and head to the Museum.



Figure 15. Alele Museum, Majuro.

At my noon lunch break, I continue in the same direction toward Rita, walking two hundred yards to RRE (Robert Reimers Enterprises) to purchase some coconut oil to send home and wait in line at the Post Office. While I wait I consider my lunch options. RRE Deli? Close but a town drunk sometimes accosts me. The Tide Table? Takes too long at this hour. Mother's Kitchen? Too far and I've already used twenty minutes. Tuna! I suddenly remember the leftovers from last night waiting in the fridge at home.



Figure 16. Playing checkers at the RRE Deli.

The half-mile walk along the back road is hot in the noon sun and I'm walking unusually fast, by Majuro standards -- *ribelle* [American/foreigner/*haole*] style. At Assumption, I cut through the High School yard, around to the Elementary where I live upstairs with the Maryknoll sisters. I tug my little sister's ponytail as I pass her at recess. She flashes a fake scowl at me and then continues playing volleyball. "*Bar lo iuk, jotenin,*"

[See you later, tonight] she calls out as I run up the stairs. I'm looking forward to spending the weekend with my family.



Figure 17. Recess at Assumption Elementary.

After lunch, I head back to the main road to catch a taxi to the Glass Palace, since I have an appointment at 1 pm with the Minister of Resources and Development. I wait in the shade in front of Assumption and call a taxi traveling toward Delap on the opposite side of the street over to my side -- all with a subtle flex of the wrist and a soft hiss. I join two others passengers in the back seat of a rusty Toyota, my backpack on my lap. When the car scrapes bottom at the huge Small Island dip⁵, we smile and raise our eyebrows at each other silently, while the driver sighs, “*worrrorrr.*” Just before the Capitol I quietly say, “*Mon kien*” and the driver abruptly pulls across the road and into the circular drive. The driver and other passengers look at me with renewed curiosity as I drop fifty cents into his cupped palm. He tells me to reach through the open window for the exterior door handle.

⁵ This dip is no longer a landmark as it was filled during the Japan-funded road repaving in late 1998.

After the interview, I stand self-consciously visible and alone on the road in full sun in front of the Capitol and try to hail another taxi. The schools are letting out already. Most of the taxis are already full and they honk at me when I swish my wrist to summon them. After 10 minutes, a friend stops to offer me a ride in her air-conditioned, tinted-windowed automobile. It is an appreciated refuge from the heat, the glare of the sun's reflection in the mirrored-glass capitol building, and the dust from the road construction that perpetually blows in the trade winds.



Figure 18. The RMI Capitol, also known as the “Glass Palace.”



Figure 19. The curve at Delap, from the RMI Capital Building.⁶

⁶ The open area on the lagoon side of this photo has since been filled with Korean and Taiwanese car dealerships and stores (2002).



Figure 20. Road construction traffic in front of Alele Museum.

After I return to the arctic air-conditioned Museum, I am immediately sent on an errand. We need the Secretary of Internal Affairs' signature on our purchase order (PO) for a new printer cartridge. I borrow the keys to the *Alele* pick-up so my colleague, Terry, and I can drive half a mile in the direction of Delap, to the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (IA) before turning back to RRE in Uliga, to pick up the cartridge. It is out of stock. We continue to Rita to see if Bing's store has one. They do, but we can't purchase it since it is more expensive than the amount on our PO. We decide to head back through town to an office supply store unfortunately named "The Tourist Trap" in Delap. By 4:45 we're back at Alele, cartridge in hand, to close the Museum.

I walk home to *Mon Bada*, again, along the quiet back road that is by this hour shaded. Most days I pause to watch a few minutes of the neighborhood children's baseball game in the backyard of the former Peace Corps building. When I'm nearly whacked with a tennis ball, I feign anger -- "*I-guk!* [Hey!]" -- and chase the children around the bases.



Figure 21. Back road baseball.



Figure 22. Assumption Convent, above the Elementary School.

The Sisters are finishing dinner as I climb the steps above the seventh grade classroom that lead to the convent porch that has one of the best ocean views on Majuro. Framed by tall coconut trees, a small bay exists where once two distinct islets were

connected courtesy of the US Navy. On clear days the view across the ocean is of a slightly raised and quivering plateau of coconut palms, Arno Atoll, ten miles away.

I sit appreciating the sisters' companionship and the evening view before reappearing to say goodnight and catch a taxi to Jenrok, Rita. I'm anxious to catch the sunset and *bwebwenato* [talk story] at Dennis and Daisy's house.

It's getting darker now and the sky above the lagoon on my left is brilliant. Abba sings "Dancing Queen" over the radio. The taxi is empty and the driver is curious. He asks where I'm going: "*Kwoj etal nan ia?*" "*Mon Momo,*" [Momotaro store/house], I respond. He asks me where I work, how I learned Marshallese, how long I have lived here, if I have a boyfriend, and if I want to meet him later at The Pub. I explain myself and jump out at Jenrok to join Jima Kalemon, one of my grandpas, and my dad at the picnic table for a dark Lowenbrau, a treat from Dennis's own stock. We *bwebwenato* while my two teenage brothers start a fire with coconut husks in the metal rim of an old tractor wheel. Daisy pulls up in the Jeep with my two sisters (ages three and ten) and a cooler of fish someone dropped off at their Long Island store. The boys toss a couple of fish from the cooler on the grill for dinner. With rice, green salad, and cantaloupe we have a meal, blessed by Daisy before it's shared.

After we eat, Komju and I head to Delap to rent a movie and eat a soft-serve ice cream cone. Twice again we pass through town -- the final back and forth of the day.

~~~~~



Figure 23. Dennis and Daisy Momotaro, my parents.

How many times in a day does a Majuro resident travel that road, back and forth, back and forth, between Gibson's and RRE, between the airport and the dock, between Delap and Rita? It's not a long road, about five miles from the end of Rita to the bridge at the beginning of Delap. Traveling that same route again and again, day after day, by taxi, by foot, in an air-conditioned car, or in the back of a pick-up, impacts the way one sees the world.

Attentiveness is somehow both sharpened and dulled. One knows every inch, but grows oblivious to most things except changes – a fresh paint job here, a missing row of ironwood trees there, a new speed bump. One grows more unmindful of the more or less constant features—the lagoon, the ocean, the low clouds in the sky, and the histories of particular places. Sometimes places trigger memories as one passes them by in the comings and going. These are memories of people, events, empty spaces now filled, once full spaces now empty: a car dealership at the weather station, a string of stores at the old Delap

runway, or three water towers removed. The past is always there, history laid out linearly along the road before and behind, when one chooses to acknowledge it.

The road itself changes sometimes. It may be crowded, empty, flooded, or under construction. One rides along when the dips are flooded and the taxis stall, when the bottom of the car scrapes against monstrous speed bumps on the back road. One sits in line as traffic creeps downtown more slowly than anyone could walk, as children jump out of pickups in front of schools. One watches the road fill with traffic in the mornings and evenings as all those who live in “suburbs” near the airport commute, and those who live in town scramble for rides to work and home. At rush hour it is nearly impossible to cross the street; on Sundays scarcely a vehicle is on the road. A walk at 6 am is cool, calm, quiet, and peaceful; at 6 pm it is noisy, dusty, hot, and dangerous. In the early evenings, the road feels friendly again, as residents now refreshed, sweep their doorsteps, greet their neighbors, and wander toward the take-outs. The road has a rhythm of its own.



Figure 24. Majuro traffic, morning rush hour.

## **Metaphor as Method**

*Ito-itak* [back and forth] along this main road serves as a metaphor for the hermeneutic process and reflexive methodology of turning and re-turning to the questions posed in this work, to the positionality of the researcher, to the relationships that reflect and define understandings and identities, and finally, as a metaphor particularly suited to long-term researchers who may grow, like long-term Majuro residents, perhaps more obtuse than aware over time. This research aims to explore the places, people, and activities alongside the road, and also to shed light on the rhythms, bumps, dips, and the myriad vehicles anthropologists use on the road/research process itself. Metaphor is here a method to convey the form and content of this research.

I present here an introduction to Majuro by providing a cultural/historical/political tour of the atoll. The aims of this tour are to introduce the institutions of local and foreign power that are integral to this dissertation and offer an overview of the Marshallese past in a *local context* that convey how these institutions are situated in the landscape of Majuro and in the *ordinary daily lives of Marshallese people*.

Rather than focus on external portrayals of Majuro (of which this work is yet another) that describe the islands relative only to foreign interests, this chapter will represent Majuro and its past through a virtual tour of the atoll's contemporary sites, and their relevance to Marshallese history, politics, and lives. The introduction will highlight how institutions of foreign power intersect with local forms and sources of authority on specific plots of land that have economically, and politically shaped the history of the Marshall Islands. This chapter offers a glimpse at these institutions, their histories, and

those who lead them, setting a framework for the issues of land, power, chiefs, and colonial negotiations that are explored in later chapters.

In small places every parcel of land takes on incredible significance and meaning. In the smallest places, the intensity of collective relationships to land is even greater. Centuries of communities are metaphysically (symbolically/mentally) present on these coral atolls where residents claim they belong to their *wato* or plot, rather than their *wato* belonging to them (Tony deBrum 1994, interview with author). Where history is repeated and remembered in land -- its perpetual use -- ties to land, family, genealogies, and ways of living are long and deep. On 'outer islands' (i.e. peripheral to urban 'centers') histories of generations are embedded in the daily interaction with the land upon which multi-generational families reside. On Majuro and Ebeye, the youthful urban centers where over 60% of all Marshallese reside, these histories are less visible. There, the continuity of traditional communal activities has been interrupted and replaced with a lifestyle less based on interaction with land, than construction upon it. The daily activities that occur on urban centers today differ remarkable from those that occurred only a few decades ago. History is created, recreated, torn down and rebuilt more rapidly than on any other plots of land in the nation.

Physical remains from earlier eras are often incorporated into contemporary relationships with land. For example, on Wotje Atoll, an atoll that served as an air base for the Japanese in the early 1940s, residents relocated their village after World War II. The cemented areas that once served as hangars for Japanese planes had been bombed in neat rows by the United States beginning in 1944. The large bomb craters offered plots in which

to plant trees in the midst of the cement parking lot. The homes are built upon the cement area, bordered by rows of coconut, breadfruit, pandanus and banana trees. In one particularly large crater uplifted slabs of broken cement encircle lush banana trees that surround a simple plywood home.



Figure 25. Trees now grow in World War II bomb craters on Wotje Atoll.



Figure 26. A Wotje resident rolls sennit in front of his home in the main village situated upon on the former Japanese hangar.

In examples like this, the past is tangible, yet, for the most part, the cultural significance of connections to land, clan, and history are largely intangible and certainly not readily accessible to visitors to overpopulated urban centers. Many of the first-time visitors to Majuro complain about the garbage, the densely populated areas, and the surprise of discovering a busy urban environment in the “middle of the nowhere.” What I hope to convey in the contextual description of Majuro to follow is its feel, its part in the larger scheme of the Marshall Islands, and its connection with larger, dominant global powers. I hope to evince an appreciation for the rich, intangible histories that comprise place according to local understandings and values.

Each building constructed, each grave that is dug, is made on land that holds multiple meanings and memories. The land, its owners, its former inhabitants, the relations between owners and current inhabitants, gatherings held there -- each inch on such a small place is infused with memory and meaning, relationships to the past viewed and re-experienced in the present. Layer upon layer of memories, like coral skeletons, constitute the Marshall Islands.

In the description to follow I hope to create an appreciation for the apparent physical limitations of atoll life, but consequently the nearly infinite possibilities of site-specific meaning and memory-making that arise uniquely on a well-crowded, coral atoll.

### **Creating a Space**

My description not only *locates* the atoll in the minds of readers, but in effect *creates* Majuro, given the general Western unfamiliarity with the nation or its capitol. Creating a *space* for alternative forms of representation is an equally formidable task. I attempt to write

in a less formal tone with accessible vocabulary, so that the people portrayed here will have a greater chance of recognizing themselves, their islands, and their way of life. Pacific Islanders involved in academic pursuits very rightly claim that most of what they read written by outsiders is not only inaccessible or irrelevant, but they often cannot even recognize themselves in these representations (Smith 1999). I don't presume to claim that my representation will coincide with local understandings. My hope is that my "thick" description (Geertz 1973) of this most thin place will be accessible and recognizable to the Marshallese community who call Majuro their home.

### **MEJRO MEJIN ARMIJ**

Locating Majuro can be a challenging task; coral atolls appear as specks in the vast blueness of maps. Even Marshallese people acknowledge this difficulty with a sense of humor, and even irony. "Where the Hell is Majuro?" t-shirts are commonly sold and worn around the nation. *Dri-Majol* [Marshallese people] are accustomed to the ignorance of outsiders about their region. The Marshalls' newspaper quips about the nation's identity problem in Washington D.C., where "American leaders and officials say informed things like, 'Marshall Islands? Where's that?'" (*Marshall Islands Journal* 33(20): 10). It is generally more shocking to discover awareness instead of ignorance of the RMI.

*Mejro* [Majuro, literally "many faces"] is an atoll well-known among Marshallese people for the many and diverse "faces" to be encountered there. Majuro is a gathering spot where people of all clans, races, and nationalities intertwine. It is *the* place where Marshallese go to see and be seen. The ancient idiom, *Mejro mejin armij* [Majuro is the face

of the people] remains applicable today since Majuro is the capital and most populated atoll of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Surrounded by ocean and lagoon, Majuro inspires its residents and its guests with a great variety of emotions, meanings, and memories. It's pleasures and pains are commemorated in many popular songs. By outsiders, Majuro has been described in terms of its beauty, its gaudiness, its strategic location, its kind-hearted residents, and its leaders. A former Peace Corps volunteer once described Majuro as "an odd blend of Gauguin and K-mart. . . a place where you bounce from glory to squalor a dozen times a day, so often that you wonder if there isn't a linkage between the two, some weird symbiosis between lagoons and diapers, sunsets and beer cans" (Kluge 1991: 44, 46). Fanny Stevenson, the wife of Robert Louis Stevenson, admirably described Majuro as "a pearl of atolls" (Browning 1972) during their travels through Micronesia a century earlier. In the one hundred years between these contrasting descriptions lies a history of three colonial administrations and finally, self-governing autonomy. Majuro – the ancient volcano, now coral atoll – has transformed for millennia, but the developments of recent decades appear most dramatic: "Everything is different now. Language has changed, culture has changed, people have changed, living has changed. Everything has changed. The ocean is still the same" (E. Latak, interview with J. Walsh 1994).

### **In the Beginning**

Geologists explain the formation of atolls by describing the build-up of coral polyp skeletons in warm surface waters along the outer fringes of an ancient sunken volcano. Marshallese describe their beginnings differently:

Long ago when all was water, *Lowa*, the uncreated, was alone in the sea. “*Mmmmmmm*,” he said, and islands rose out of the water. “*Mmmmmmm*,” he said, and reefs and sandbanks were created.

“*Mmmmmmm*,” he said, and plants appeared. Again he uttered the creative word, and birds came into being.

Then *Lowa* made four gods for the four directions in the sky and a white gull to fly encircling the heavens forever.

*Irooj drilik* was the one who was to preside over the west, the land of *Eb*, and to be in charge of life and increase and all living things. *Lokomran* was put in charge of the east. The people say he is the one “who twists the daybreak.” *Lorok* was given the south and told to regulate the winds. *Lalilikan* is the north-man, who brings death.

Then *Lowa* sent a man into the world whose name is forgotten. This man put all the islands in a basket (a big *i* woven of coconut leaves) and started to put them in order. He put the Carolines to the westward, where they are today, and arranged the Marshalls in two long chains in their proper order. One island fell out of the basket, but he did not stop to put it straight. This is *Namodrik*, which is still out of line. The last two to be put in their places were Jaluit and Ebon. Then he threw away the basket. It floated here and there in the ocean and then stopped and became the island named *Kili*. It is named this for the *kilok* that formed it.

When *Lowa* looked down and saw that the world was now ready, he sent two tattooers into the island to mark every living thing with its own mark. And every plant and fish and bird, every animal, every man and woman bears these special marks today (Leach 1956).

*Lowa*'s creation is today known as the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The entire Republic consists of approximately seventy square miles of land spread over either 750,000 square miles of ocean (*RMI Statistical Abstracts* 1996: 3) (Appendix A). The *total* land area is approximately that of Washington, D.C., or Ni'ihau, Hawai'i. The RMI is among the most urban (66%), youthful (over 42% are under age fifteen) and densely populated of all Pacific island nations (Connell 1991). Over *thirty-three thousand* of the fifty thousand Marshall Islanders reside on less than *five square miles of land*, on two of the total thirty-three coral atolls and islands that constitute the nation. These two sites are Majuro Atoll (3.75 square

miles; 23,676 people) and Ebeye Island, Kwajalein Atoll (.14 square miles; approximately 10,000 people) (RMI Statistical Abstracts 2000).

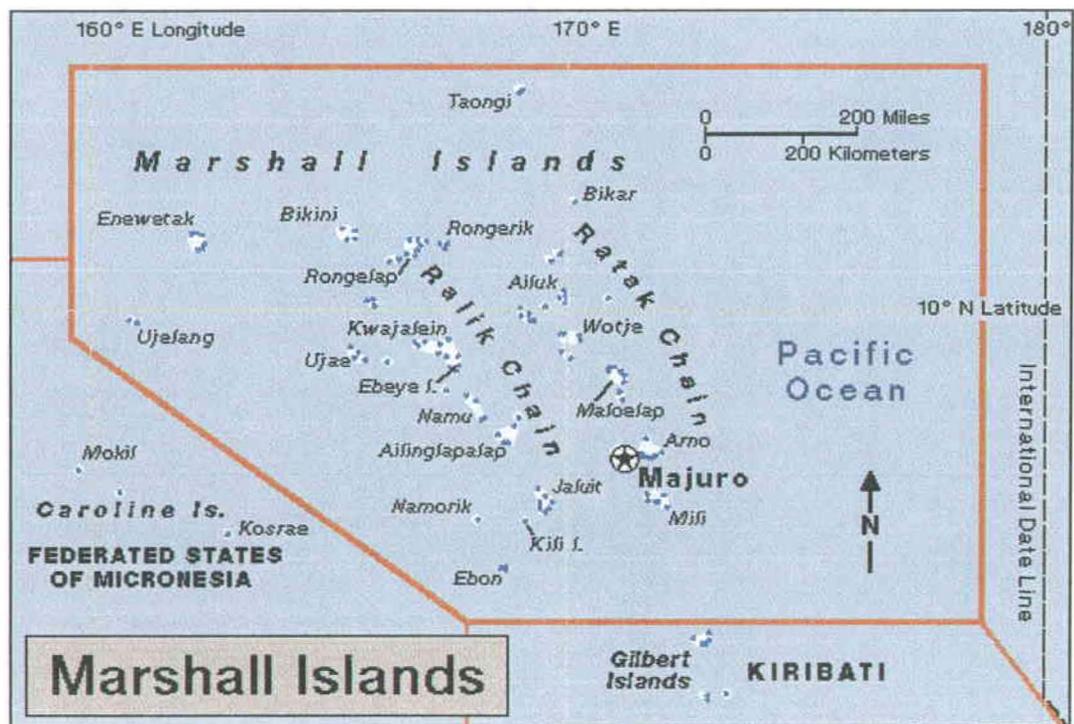


Figure 27. Map of the Marshall Islands.  
Source: [www.discoveryschool.com](http://www.discoveryschool.com)



Figure 28. Map of Majuro Atoll.  
([csu.edu](http://csu.edu) Dirk Spennemann)

Majuro atoll is located approximately seven degrees north of the Equator. It consists of 65 islets, (the US Navy constructed a road that connects fourteen on the South

side); a lagoon area of approximately 113 sq. miles; and a land area of 3.75 square miles (RMI Statistical Abstracts 1996: 4). It's largest islet, approximately one-half mile wide, is named after the atoll itself, as is the custom on most Marshallese atolls. Today, Majuro, Majuro, is called Laura – a tie to the US military code names assigned to the various islets during World War II. Legend claims actress Lauren Bacall as its inspiration, while Jarrej<sup>7</sup> was named Rita in honor of Rita Hayworth. In truth, each islet of the atoll was given a woman's name as code for the US Navy occupation of February 1944. Majuro was labeled, "Sundance."

### Laura

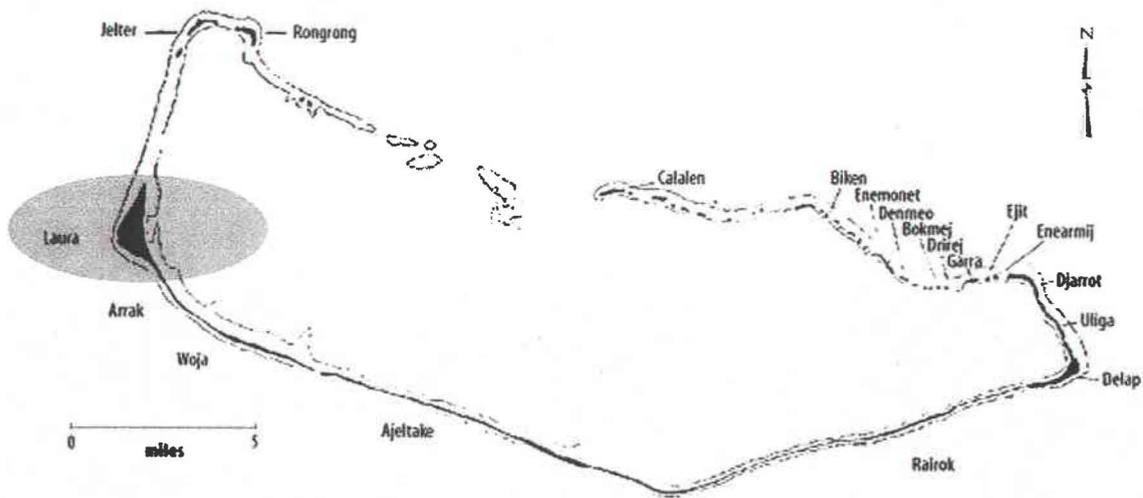


Figure 29. Map of Laura, Majuro.

**Laura** is the original prehistoric settlement of Majuro, and the largest islet of the atoll, located at its western end. Laura has been continuously occupied for over 2,000 years (Riley 1987:248). In 1947 Alexander Spoehr conducted research for an ethnography of the

<sup>7</sup> Jarrej, sometimes spelled Darrit, is spelled Djarrot on the maps in this section reflecting a confusing array of non-standardized place-names. (See Appendix B) "Rita" is the military code-name and locally used title for the island once called Jarrej.

village (*Majuro: A Village in the Marshall Islands*), while the US Army initiated its settlement on the opposite, eastern end of the atoll in what they called D-U-D, for the three islands that comprise it Jarrej, Uliga, and Delap. In 1947, the entire Marshallese population of Majuro all in Laura village and Ronron, numbered between 837 to 1,214. fifty-five years later, Majuro's population is nearly twenty-five times that figure.

Laura is a busy, productive village whose residents are still able grow local foods such as taro, breadfruit, papaya, pandanus to supplement imported staples of rice and canned meats. In the early 1990s, 92% of the Marshallese diet depended upon imported foods (Kiste 1993:77). Schools, churches, small stores, family compounds in the midst of lush greenness, give this village at the farthest end of the Majuro road, a strong sense of community that is still tied to their land.



Figure 30. Laura Beach.  
(Photo courtesy of MIVA, ©2001.)

Today, Laura is (still) famous for its wide, lovely beach. Navy officers bragged that no other site in the Pacific had beaches as fine as Majuro's (US Navy Civil Administration Handbook 1950:5) At low tide, it's common to find old coca-cola bottles, presumably from the many American soldiers who enjoyed the islands and beaches of Majuro. Many celebrities came to the Majuro to entertain soldiers, among them Bob Hope, Betty Hutton, Frances Langford, Carol Landis, Jackie Cooper, Martha Tilton, and Jack Benny (US Navy Civil Administration Handbook 1950:7).

Micronesia's longest road begins in Laura, continues for nearly thirty miles to end in Rita. Thirty miles of paved road connect islands once accessible by foot at low tide. Navy Seabees built the original roads that were later enhanced during the US administration of the islands. In places this single long road exists on a band of land less than ten yards wide, too narrow for flora -- lagoon on one side, ocean on the other. When the high waves come, the road is covered with debris.

Today Laura is home not only to a vibrant Marshallese community, but also to a Chinese garment factory and housing compound. In 1997, the People's Republic of China (PRC) brought employees to Majuro where they were housed in a shelter in which they worked, ate, slept and played volleyball, unable to leave.

The Marshall Islands had established relations with China in 1991. Its embassy opened in 1996. Fisheries agreements, economic assistance, development grants, and the garment factory are products of the accord between the two nations. Yet, disappointed by PRC funding, the RMI sacrificed its relationship with PRC to pursue ties with a generous Republic of China (ROC) that was desperately seeking international political recognition.

When the relationship with Taiwan was established in late 1998, and the PRC Embassy staff left Majuro, the garment workers were left behind to fend for themselves by selling plastic trinkets door-to-door to Marshallese consumers.

Driving from Laura, eastward, vehicles are scarce and the road winds through jungle – a paved path lined with coconut, breadfruit, and flame trees. It is shady, cool, and quiet. Residents along the route sell local foods at small produce stands attended by their children, especially on Sundays, a favorite day for residents in the more crowded urban areas to drive out to Laura for picnics. Most often passengers to and from Laura sit in the back of a pick-up truck, enjoying the breeze and company during the hour-long drive from town.

The communities that live in the twenty miles between Laura and the airport are small and scattered. Passing through *Woja* and *Ajeltake*, one passes a crook at the southern point of the atoll, and reaches a narrow stretch where the Japanese government built a commemorative monument at a site known as the Peace Park. The cement walled structure erected in 1984 marks the violent conclusion of the Japanese colonial period in the Marshalls by honoring the Japanese and Marshallese who died during World War II.

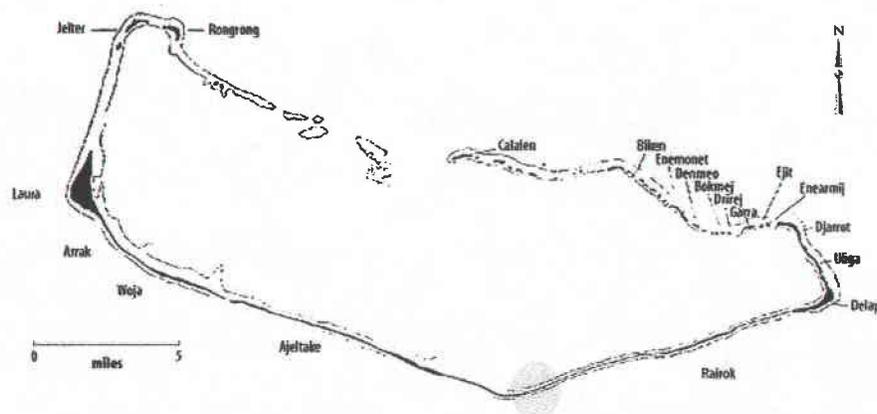


Figure 31. Map showing the location of the Japanese Peace Park Monument.



Figure 32. Japanese Peace Park

### ***Ien an dri-Japan* [Japanese times]**

A Japanese military presence in Micronesia began in 1914 when naval forces occupied the German administered Micronesian islands with British encouragement predicated by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902. Japan occupied all German islands north of the equator while Britain planned to control all German islands south of the equator (Fluker 1981: 37). By 1915, the Japanese created six administrative regions with main headquarters located on Truk (Chuuk) in the Carolines. The Japanese presence was significantly established long before the League of Nations mandated the islands to Japanese in 1920 – a result of the Versailles negotiations after Germany’s defeat in World War I.

When Japan first entered the region in the late 1890s during German rule, Japanese shopkeepers and settlers bolstered German economic development. In the early 1900s the

most influential trading company in Micronesia was the *Nan'yo Boeki Kabushikigaisha*, the South Seas Trading Company, known as *Nanbo* or NBK. As a merger of the two most profitable trading companies in the region, *Nanbo* by 1913 controlled eighty percent of all trade in German Micronesia (Peattie 1988: 24). With headquarters on Jaluit Atoll in the Marshalls, they replaced the Germans in the copra trade and they worked to develop the larger Micronesian region. "Commercial fishing, inter-island mail, freight transportation, and passenger service, ... together provided the basis of a commercial network that by World War I had gained a near monopoly of trade in central and western Micronesia" (Peattie 1988: 25). NBK is still in Micronesia today, although to a far less extent. The locals exchanged copra, turtle shell, and mother-of-pearl, which were sent to Japan for processing for cloth, axes, cooking utensils, weapons and liquor (Peattie 1988: 21).

A fascinating trend that developed through these interactions was the influx of Japanese nationals as trade and profits gradually increased. In 1915, there were only some 220 Japanese in Micronesia (Fluker 1981: 40). Another estimate is lower: "On the eve of World War I there were scarcely more than one hundred Japanese living in Micronesia, divided almost evenly between the western Carolines and the Marianas" (Peattie 1988: 25). With either estimate, it is clear that the presence of Japanese nationals in this early period was more limited than their economic success suggested. The incredible increase in Japanese population in Micronesia and the subsequent cultural influence were yet to be seen.

In August of 1919 the recommendation of the Supreme Council of Allied Powers that the former German islands north of the equator be awarded to Japan as a Class C

mandate was approved. Japan was required to demilitarize the territory (in contrast to the US possessions of Hawai'i, Guam, and the Philippines which were fully militarized) and its influence in the Pacific was strictly limited to Micronesia. The mandate was approved in December of 1920. In March of 1922 the withdrawal of Japanese naval garrisons was finally completed.

The civil administration, known as the South Seas Bureau, or *Nan'yō-chō*, maintained its capital at Koror in the Palau Islands and the governor's administrative responsibilities were divided into five departments. These were concerned with: local administration and public works; police, prisons, and sanitation; public revenue and taxation; commerce and industry; and communications including posts, telegraphs and shipping (Clyde 1935: 67-68). There were six branch offices located at Saipan in the Marianas, at Yap, Palau, Truk, and Ponape in the Carolines; and at Jaluit Atoll in the Marshalls.

In the 1920's, the Japanese presence was further established as the government opened three-year schools, which taught Japanese language in the first through third grades. The Japanese, using native labor, also built roads, water catchments and harbors. Life under the Mandate was systematic, well organized and efficiently administered, if not in accordance with the guidelines of the League of Nations' mandate. Discrepancies between Japanese self-interest and its mandate obligations, particularly in the areas of native education and labor, were obvious. Within five years, the Japanese population had grown from approximately two hundred in 1915 to nearly 4,000. By 1944, the Japanese population increased over 2000 percent to 77,980 while the Micronesian population increased by just under six percent during this same time period (Fluker 1981:40).

Certainly this rapid increase in Japanese migration did not reflect the intent of the League of Nations mandate. In fact, in the later years of the mandate, the population of the Japanese was so great that the League of Nations Commission on Mandates became concerned with possible annexation of the territory. The commission was also concerned with rumors of Japanese militarization of the region. It was impossible to verify the rumors as foreigners were all but prohibited through bureaucratic means that required lengthy paperwork and the pre-approval of all traders and merchants by Tokyo before entering the region. This inconvenience virtually halted all foreign trade and Western influence and also effectively limited external surveillance.

Improvements in facilities to foster trade ultimately aided the Japanese in the military use of the islands. The administration systematically constructed docks, airstrips and roads that were used as stepping-stones for Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. There were very few defensive fortifications built, though the sturdily constructed school buildings were later used in this capacity. In fact, the greatest role Micronesia played in the war was its function as a way station that permitted Japan to dominate the Pacific. The militarization of the islands served as a successful Japanese offensive, rather than as a defensive stronghold.

The Japanese Peace Park memorial is a site for picnics, family parties, and late night drinking. Just a bit further down the road is a curve that marks the end of the Majuro runway, at which point the road follows just feet from the lagoon until one reaches the airport terminal and parking areas.

## Amata Kabua International Airport

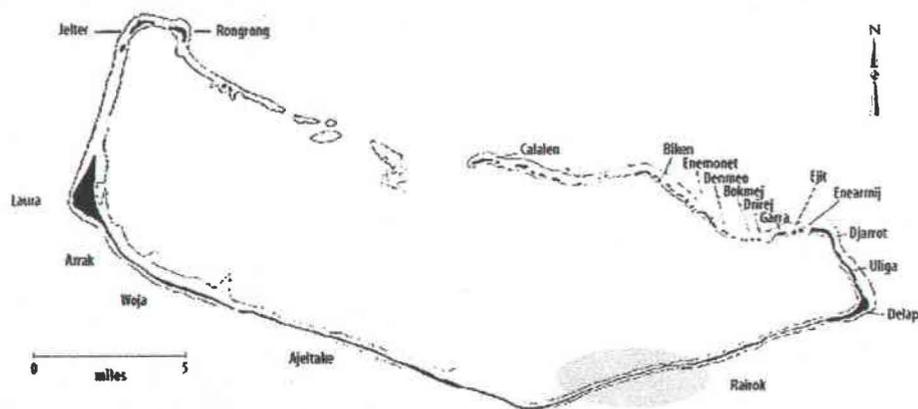


Figure 33. Map showing Majuro International airport approximately ten miles from Uliga.

Approaching Majuro by air, particularly just before touching ground, is an act of faith. Looking from the window seat or across the aisles through the opposite window, one only views ocean – all land disappears. The experience, to me, is often surreal, having approached through this apparently empty vast blueness of sky and sea, descending upon the extended airstrip that is the main road of Majuro, and yet still surrounded by the open blue. Out of this, a fantastic, bustling, urban metropolis emerges.

The Majuro International Airport is named after the nation's first President and *Iroojlaplap* Amata Kabua. The US Navy Seabees built the original airport on Delap, so Majuro could be a jumping off spot for people like John Glenn who flew the bombers that strafed Japanese-held atolls daily during 1943 and 1944. As larger and larger planes needed longer and longer runways, the current site was selected and enlarged with landfill so that by the 1970s Continental's Air Micronesia flights could safely land. Today, Air Mic and Aloha Airlines are the sole international commercial carriers in the Marshalls. Three return Air Mic island-hopper flights per week pause at Majuro while traveling between Guam and

Honolulu while Aloha operates one return flight between Majuro and Honolulu weekly. A large plane lands at least once a day, every day.



Figure 34. Aerial view of Majuro (Delap, Uliga, Rita)  
Courtesy of David Huskins.



Figure 35. Majuro from air just before landing.  
Ocean side at top, lagoon at bottom.

Beyond serving as a site for the exchange of passengers, and the resources they carry, the airport is information exchange central. It is a place to see and be seen, to send

and receive cargo, packages, coolers; to hangout and watch the foreign passengers briefly disembark before continuing West to Kwajalein, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Guam, or East to Honolulu; to watch restrained farewells and exuberant greetings, to witness American couples leaving with Marshallese children. It also makes visible the international travels of RMI leaders who arrive and depart through the VIP lounge, separate from the other travelers.

Airports have a central function in the redistribution of resources and the *maintenance of cultural and family ties to migrant communities*. In my experience on Majuro, not a week goes by without two or more trips to the airport to see relatives off, to find someone to hand-carry a letter, to collect relatives or packages sent from relatives through friends, or to send a package for relatives through friends. Without actually going to the airport, the process of sending packages is a major part of one's weekly activities – *gathering items, finding a box, packing and taping them securely, identifying people who are traveling, and finally meeting them at the airport for check in, then calling Honolulu to tell someone to meet the plane (at 2:30 am)*. Only Continental and Aloha airlines can document the incredible amount of goods exchanged daily on their Micronesian routes, and the crucial significance of airports as sites of global exchange.

At the airport *small handicraft businesses thrive, and on Saturday mornings the restaurant and bar are filled with hungry passengers and their retinue*. “Where are you going? When will you return?” and “Will you hand-carry for me?” are followed by handshakes, not hugs, and goodbyes are proffered from dark glasses that hide private tears.



Figure 36. A farewell at Majuro airport.  
Loved ones are loaded with handicrafts and flowers for the journey.  
(Dennis, Komju, and Daisy Momotaro.)

The main road down the atoll is only a very few feet narrower than the coral on which it sits; the road is particularly narrow where it parallels the airport runway. The runway is used to gather rainwater for the islands' residents, since rainfall is unpredictable (6-11 inches per month) and inconsistent from year to year. From the runway, it is pumped into a nearby reservoir to be used during water hours, when the Marshall Islands Water and Sewerage Company (MWSC) pumps highly chlorinated water to Rita at the far end of the atoll.

Leaving the airport and continuing into town, one first passes the reservoir at the end of the runway, and then follows a green tree-lined route dotted with small take-out stores, apartments, video rentals, and a few restaurants.



Figure 37. The road in Long Island.

### **Long Island**

Long Island is Majuro's suburban strip. Home to many American residents and Majuro elites, Long Island is green, fairly quiet, and offers an exceptional view of the 'unconnected' (by road) islands of Majuro across the lagoon. It is a peaceful place away from the densely populated area of town. The US Embassy, its employees' luxurious (by Majuro standards) housing, and its private tennis courts are located here. As this part of the atoll began to develop into an American suburb of sorts, the larger grocery and retail stores opened businesses. In 1994, Robert Reimers Enterprises (RRE) established its store in this area. Just across the street, on the lagoon side, Momotaro Corporation (operated by my Marshallese sponsor family, Dennis and Daisy Momotaro) followed suit and added a laundry mat. Further down the road, closer to *Rairok*, Gibson's opened its own Quick Stop, a smaller version of its main store in town. Residents no longer needed to drive to town to shop. The community in Long Island thus became a true suburb.



Figure 38. US Embassy in Majuro 1997.



Figure 39. Robert Reimers Enterprises, Rairok.

From Rairok toward town the population grows gradually more dense. At a very narrow juncture of islands, the dump begins on the oceanside, continuing as an extended wide stretch of landfill for approximately 3 miles. If you stop to throw a bag of garbage

into the dump, often a group of young children will offer to do the dirty task in return for a small payment—*juon kwoda* [one quarter].



Figure 40. The Majuro landfill.

Driving on, one passes the Stone House, a Japanese restaurant, (on the lagoon side) and the numerous signs with Chinese characters and English words advertising car rentals, take-out cuisine, and rooms for rent. The writing is distinctive, and the signs are evidence of the growing population of Chinese and Taiwanese nationals, including some who purchased RMI passports, and now reside on Majuro.



Figure 41. Advertisements for foreign owned businesses.



Figure 42. Chinese operated take out store.

Just past the Stone House lies the uninhabited home of Majuro's late *Iroojlaplap*, Joba Kabua, the older brother of Amata Kabua, son of Lejelon Kabua. In line with the custom of deference and silent respect toward chiefs, the road was diverged deliberately to prevent traffic from passing indiscreetly and disrespectfully in front of the *Irooj's* home.



Figure 43. Joba's curve

### ***Manit* [Custom]**

In traditional times, *Irooj* (chiefs) commanded complete authority over the lives of the commoners, or *kajur*. Marshallese society consisted of royalty and commoners. The word *kajur* literally means 'strength,' emphasizing the mutual dependency of chiefs and commoners. Within the *Irooj* class existed various levels of authority, from the highest, an *Iroojlaplap* down to the *Bwirak*, the offspring of an *Irooj* (male) and a commoner woman. As a matrilineal society, Marshallese inherit their status and clan membership through their mothers. Female *Irooj* (*Lerooj*) are the true holders of the authority that is delegated to brothers and sons to administer as *Irooj*. Today, the word *Irooj* is conflated with Christianity, since the first missionaries translated the term as Lord. Chiefly succession is based on historical understandings of the sacred origins of the islands, and the origins of the chiefs who are descendants of creator gods, and sacred sisters (Pollack 1976).

Unlike other Micronesian cultures, where structures for community gathering created a shared space for decision-making and discussion, the strict hierarchical structure of power in the Marshalls prevented formal communal decision-making. An *Irooj* held ultimate power and could enforce his proclamations through the heads of the various family lineages on his land. Family lineage heads are generally men, since women typically designate administrative authority to their brothers. *Alabs* serve as liaisons between the chiefs and the commoners, limiting direct social interaction, and thus fostering the prestige and mystery of chiefs.

Ethno-historical accounts generally describe Marshallese chiefs as autocratic (Mason 1947; Spoehr 1949; Erdland 1914; Yanaihara 1939). *Irooj* held the power of life and death over the people who lived on their land. They were accorded extraordinary

deference, and commoners were only allowed to approach on their knees, heads as low to the ground as possible (Erland 1914, in Pollock 1976: 94).

Respect for authority is no longer expressed by crawling, though lowered heads and postures are common in an *Irooj's* presence. The parents of a generation born fifty years ago taught their children to walk their bicycles when passing an *Irooj's* residence.

When I was young, when we would ride our bikes past an *Irooj's* house, or if we were passing by with our friends, we would be very quiet, even stopping to walk our bicycles, as we neared his place. Our parents told us this was how to respect the *Irooj*, and we must not yell or scream or sing or play in front of his house. We couldn't eat anything or help ourselves to the food there either, since it was rude to eat the food from the chief in front of his home if he didn't give it to you. When we passed his house and were far enough so that we couldn't be heard, we would resume our playing, or get back on our bikes (Dennis Momotaro, Interview with J. Walsh 1994).

Today, these prohibitions are frequently ignored or neglected. The curve at "Joba's place" has been redesigned to be less severe, given the number of fatal accidents that occurred at that curve over the years.

Passing from Joba's former residence toward town, one crosses the highest point of Majuro. Built with Japanese funds in 1983, the bridge stands twelve feet above sea level at high tide (Stanley 1994: 64) The bridge is a favorite recreational jumping spot for local teens; my former Assumption students were known for celebrating and surfing there and sometimes took me with them. Among other conveniences, the bridge offers fishermen a relatively safe, clear, and convenient southern passage to the ocean. Because Majuro's only other ocean pass is situated in the northwest corner of the atoll, the bridge pass saves tremendous amounts of time and gasoline for small boats heading south to Arno and Mili.

When continuing on toward town the family compound of the late President Amata Kabua lies on the *iar* [lagoon] shore just beyond the bridge. An impressive speed

bump rises directly in front of the shrub-shielded entrance. With the abundance of cars today on Majuro (and a dearth of bicycles), speed bumps have become an alternative means of ensuring respect and recognition. Besides their appearance in front of schools, they are constructed outside the homes of chiefs, government ministers, and some local businessmen. After the results of the 1991 elections were announced, three new speed bumps were immediately erected in front of senators' homes, to the surprise of Majuro drivers<sup>8</sup>. This speed bump's significance is collectively understood, though not frequently vocalized as in this contemporary illustration of proper behavior in front of a chief's residence:

When we pass Amata's place, I tell the children to put their snacks down when we are sitting in the back of the pick-up, and to be quiet until we pass. I want them to know to respect their *Irooj* (R. K. interview with J. Walsh 1994).



Figure 44. The grave of *Iroojlaplap* and President Amata Kabua.

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<sup>8</sup> The new road project eliminated dips and speed bumps on the main road from town to the airport, except at schools.

Just past Amata's place lies the "old new dock," distinguished from the "new old dock" in Uliga. Matson shipping container storage, an oil tank farm, the Chinese fishing base, and *Tobolar*, the copra processing plant are all situated along the old new dock, witness to international trade of imported goods, and exported coconut products and fish. Like airports, docks are significant sites of intersection with regional and international commodities, forces, and institutions.



Figure 45. Chinese fishing base at new old dock, Majuro

The incredible volume of trade goods entering the Marshall Islands is clearly evidenced in its increasing trade imbalance. Over the past decade, annual RMI export revenue has paid for only ten to twenty percent of the nation's imports (US Census Bureau data in *Marshall Islands Journal* 33:19:11, 32; *Economist* 364(8282): 34) In 2000, the RMI spent \$60 million on imports and earned \$8 million in exports; the following year was more typical -- the RMI exports totaled \$5.5 million and imports totaled \$26.6 million (US Census Bureau data in *Marshall Islands Journal* 33:19:11, 32). I have yet to see an economic

report that documents US benefits from the dependency enabled by the Compacts of Free Association.

In the German era, copra skewed trade tallies in the Marshalls' favor while copra-makers thrived on the revenue earned from this primary cash crop. After World War II, the Marshalls' desire to hold tight to its exceptional copra income and Kwajalein taxes led to its separation from the rest of the Trust Territory in the 1970s and separate Compact negotiations.

### Copra and Tobolar

According to legend:

Tobolar was born of woman, but different from all other offspring. He was small and green; his eyes and mouth were close together – a coconut! Tobolar was the first coconut tree. His older brother was jealous of the attention their mother, Limokare, gave to Tobolar. But Tobolar promised the mother that although he looked strange he would be the most useful of all his siblings. He would be eaten, worn and used, by the entire world (Downing et al. 1992).

The bounty of the coconut is not only evident in the multiple and varied useful products that are critical to life on islands, but also its ability to provide producers with access to imported resources. Copra links family histories, economics, traditional politics and tributes with foreign markets, commodities, and imported goods. The generous Tobolar is a tremendous resource, even in a declining twenty-first century oil market.

*Tobolar* is the name of the government owned, yet privately operated, processing plant for dried coconut meat, or copra. Copra has played a long and integral role in the culture and history of the Marshall Islands and remains one of the few cash crops for Marshallese people. The RMI on average produces 5000 tons of copra per year, but weather conditions and shipping impact that figure as in 1995 and 1999 which resulted in

levels of production that were the highest and lowest in over fifty years -- 7000 and under 3300 tons, respectively (Asian Development Bank Memo 2000:121). Tobolar is heavily subsidized by the RMI national government at nearly one percent of the national GNP in order to redistribute funds to outer island communities; even so, the average price per pound in 2000 was fifteen cents. Contemporary copra makers earn approximately twelve cents per pound once Tobolar deducts shipping costs from outer atolls and subtracts tributes for *Irooj* and *alab* shares.

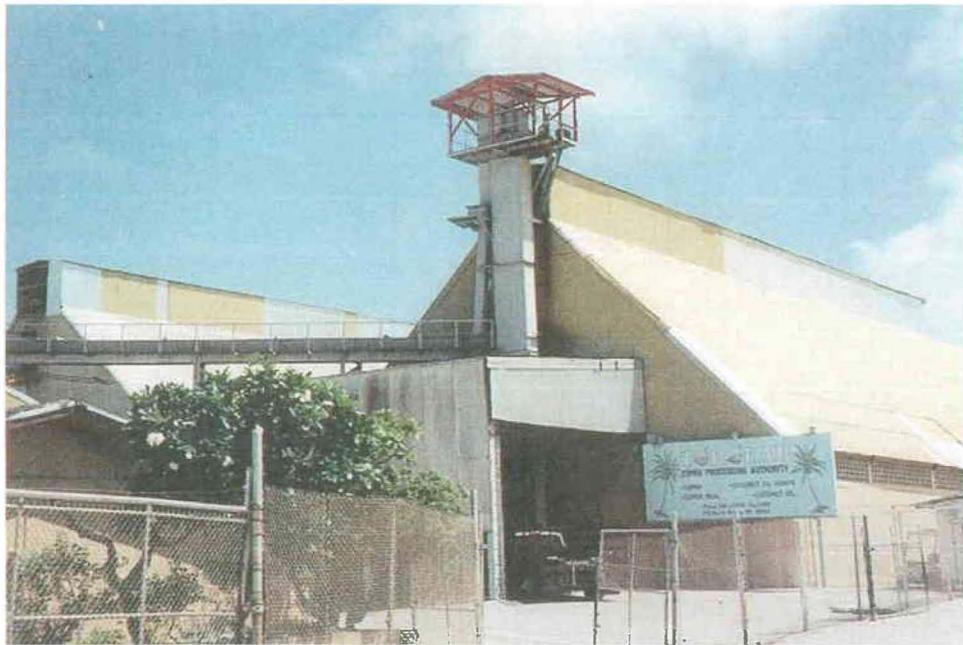


Figure 46. Tobolar Copra Processing Authority

The formula for dividing profits among *Irooj*, *alab*, and *dri-jerbal* [workers, formerly *kajur*] has its basis in the traditional tribute systems that allowed a German administration to collect taxes, paid for in copra, through Marshallese chiefs. Because a head tax paid for by individuals would be difficult to determine and collect, tax districts based on traditional land divisions were required to produce a set amount of copra as tax per year. In order to ensure the tax was collected, the copra produced during the first half of the year went

toward paying the German tax. The *Irooj* were responsible for its collection, and they received a share (approximately one-third) of the collected copra tax in return. The *dri-jerbal* kept and sold all copra produced in the second half of the year, according to German regulations, with no *Irooj* tributes or shares deducted.

### **The German Era**

In 1860, three years after the first foreigners -- American Protestant missionaries -- had settled in the Marshalls, Adolph Capelle, a German, opened the first copra trading station on Ebon, the southernmost atoll in the Marshall Islands. This was the beginning of a period of economic development in the Marshalls, led mainly by German traders. The Germans paid Marshall Islanders German marks to plant coconut trees in rows on their *wato* and to dry and store copra. In return, Marshallese purchased clothes and iron tools. By 1886 Germany annexed the Marshalls in an effort to expand its global influence. The German government administered the islands through a German trading company, the Jaluit *Gesellschaft* that held a monopoly on trade. When the Spanish-American war ended in 1898 and Spain's Pacific territory was divided, Germany purchased the Carolines and Northern Marianas from Spain for \$4.5 million to expand its foothold in Micronesia beyond the Marshalls (Hezel 1983: 8). The remaining Spanish holdings in the Pacific, the Philippines and Guam, were ceded to the United States.

As German influence and economic interests in whaling and copra grew stronger in 1898, missionaries and government officials settled in the region. Initially, German administrators and traders expelled the few Japanese nationals they found trading in the newly acquired islands of the Carolines and Northern Marianas. Later the Japanese were

allowed to return and resume their former activities, as their experience and efficiency were found to benefit and stimulate economic activity.

In the early 1900's the German government, primarily motivated by economic gain, took over direct administration of the islands. The introduction of money into the subsistence economy and the establishment of the copra trade were the greatest influences of the German period. All of Micronesia except Guam remained under German occupation and administration until the advent of World War I in 1914.

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The practice of dividing copra profits three ways persists today. During the post World War II US Trust Territory, courts upheld the breakdown with *Irooj* copra shares set at six percent, and the *alab* and *dri-jerbal* combined shares at ninety-four percent (Spennemann 2000c).

On Likiep Atoll where Adolph Capelle and Anton deBrum established a copra plantation, the division of profits between landowners and *dri-jerbal*, known as *kanaks* on Likiep, was fifty-fifty. Landowners had the responsibility of providing tools, paying copra shipping fees, and medical expenses for the workers. As recent as 1996, this division was publicly contested when Likiep workers supported by the eldest surviving deBrum family member attempted to alter the arrangement for all of Likiep so that the "*Irooj*" share was set at one cent per pound, rather than fifty percent of the total (11/22/96 MIJ: 1, 15).⁹

Continuing past *Tobolar* and the dock and storage areas, past The Pub, Majuro's famous nightspot, and proceeding along a slight curve, the Capitol building gleams in the distance like Oz at the end of the yellow-brick road. This is the beginning of the area of

⁹ Other descendents of Capelle and deBrum opposed this effort.

Majuro known as D-U-D, an abbreviated reference to the three main islands connected by the US Navy at the close of World War II: Delap, Uliga, and Darrit/Jarrej.

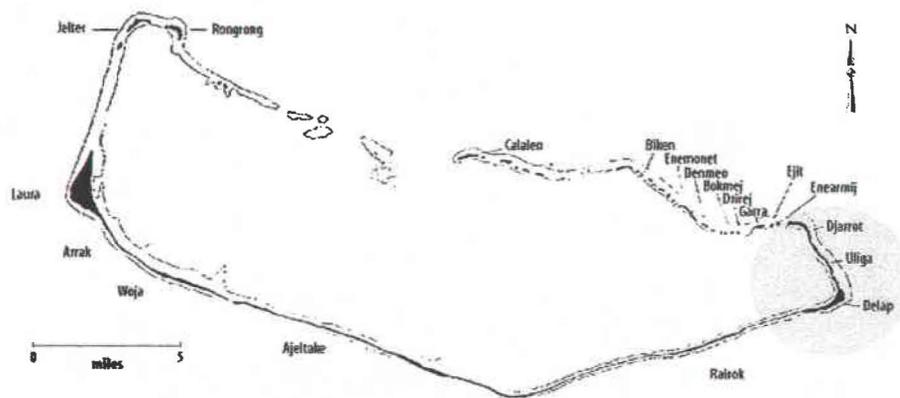


Figure 47. Map of Majuro.
Shaded area shows Delap, Uliga, and Jarrej (Rita).

D-U-D

Because this area is so densely populated and the central institutions of government, power, authority, are so intimately connected within this short area, I will turn and return to D-U-D throughout the course of this dissertation. The brief introduction and description provided here are intended only to offer a feel of the area, and an overview of the loci of power as experienced in daily life on Majuro.

But first, it is important to stress that most Marshallese do not use the term “D-U-D”. It is more common to hear each island identified by name. The US military and civilian administration coined the term to refer to the location of its administrative and housing district. Following local custom, I will identify particular islands when possible. I prefer to call the center of trade, commerce, government, and population “town,” rather than use the older acronym.



Figure 48. Satellite image of D-U-D.
SOPAC 2001.



Figure 49. Approaching DUD in 2001.

Arrival of Americans

Delap, Uliga, and Jarrej [Rita] became “D-U-D” as a result of the arrival of waves of American pilots on February 1, 1944. US interest in the Marshalls was responsible for the preliminary taking of Tarawa Atoll, one of the bloodiest battles of World War II in late November 1943. Once taken, the lessons learned in the horrible slaughter of US Marines landing on coral reefs in that battle enabled the Marshalls to be overcome twice as fast and with half the casualties of Tarawa (Alexander 1993:14). Majuro was selected as the site for a base from which to bomb and strafe the Japanese-held Marshall Island atolls, a safer strategy than approaching them directly from sea as had occurred at Tarawa atoll. The necessary airstrip was immediately built along the widest portion of Delap. (See Figure 51). Subsequently, Majuro lagoon was filled with naval units, including submarines. Majuro played a significant role in the Pacific Theatre in that it allowed an initial base from which to venture out for aerial attacks on Japanese held atolls in the Marshalls, and from there, as stepping stones across the region to Japan, in a reversal of the process the Japanese military used to attack Pearl Harbor three years prior.

The crucial runway at Delap led to the establishment of military headquarters on Majuro and the necessity of providing infrastructure to support the personnel and equipment housed on the atoll. The Army selected Uliga as the locale for administration and housing, then relocated the few island residents not already living there to Majuro village (Laura) at the far west end of the atoll.



Figure 50. US Army at Delap, Majuro 1944.

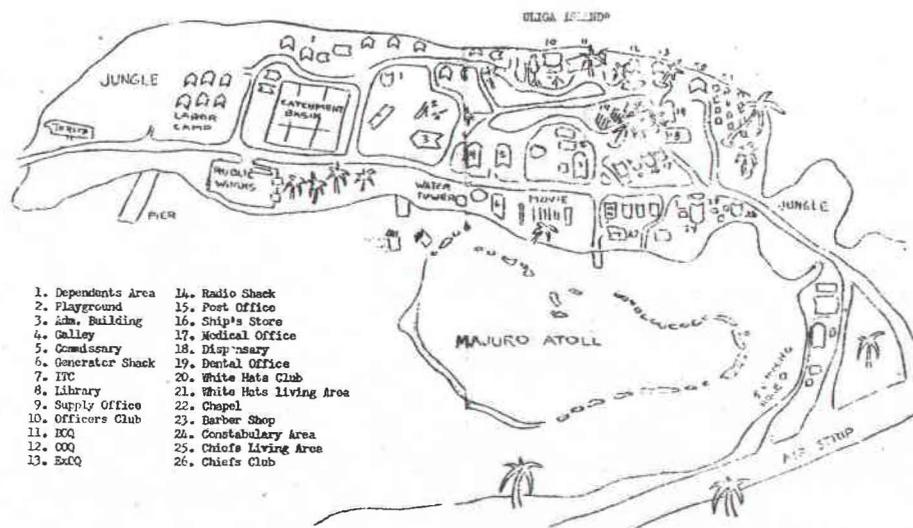


Figure 51. 1950 US Navy Civilian Administration map of Uliga. See Delap Airstrip at lower right and "jungle" areas.

Delap

That crucial runway began at what is now Gibson's shopping center and continued to the area that is the Marshall Islands Water and Sewage Company (MWSC) today, opposite the Outrigger Hotel. Since 1990 the open field that characterized this strip steadily has been filled with multiple car dealerships, Korean and Taiwanese businesses, an Assembly of God Church ("Part II"), a Japanese-funded auditorium/gymnasium, a Majuro Atoll Local Government (MALGOV) building, a small shopping center that temporarily housed a casino, a handicraft store, a construction company, and an office supply store among a scattering of other commercial buildings.

These developments mirror the availability of Compact monies and shifting national priorities during the Amata Kabua administration. They also reflect historic political rivalries. Delap is also home to the majority of government offices and agencies on Majuro. The hospital, once located on Uliga, was moved to Delap when the Japanese government funded its reconstruction in the early 1990s. The dominant structures in the Majuro skyline -- the large, mirrored-glass, four-storied capitol building and the *Nitijela* parliament chamber are situated here. Additionally, the large, shiny, "modern" Outrigger Hotel, and Gibson's Shopping Center (both begun by Amata Kabua) are located on this particular island. Delap experienced a massive burst of construction beginning in the early 1990s that has steadily drawn Majuro residents away from the historic "downtown" district of Uliga, centered around the services of Robert Reimers Enterprises, to competitors at Delap. This competition is much more than business acumen; the roots of this rivalry lay in the history of Majuro's chiefly lines and a distinctive division of authority and land rights at the turn of the twentieth century.



Figure 52. Gibson's development area, 1994.



Figure 53. RRE "Downtown."

Historic Divisions

Marshallese know that Amata Kabua as *Iroojlaplap*, held control over the land rights for Delap. He was able to make his land available for numerous public and private

enterprises during the course of his presidency. While this is a great offering for the nation, particularly where land titles and leases are hotly contested and often constrain development projects, it also ensured that long-term lease payments would ultimately also be of financial gain to the President and his family.

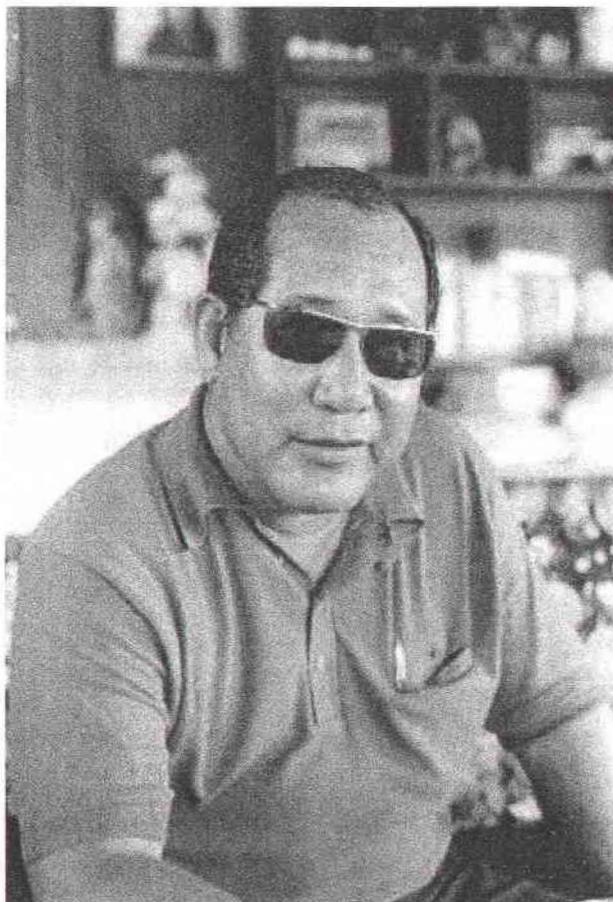


Figure 54. Amata Kabua 1970s.
TTPI archives #278501.

At least five generations prior to Amata Kabua's leadership, the *Irooj* Lerok served as the hereditary *Irooj* of Majuro atoll. Amata Kabua's mother (Tarjikit) was the eldest of her generation directly descended from Lerok. Her eldest son, Joba, (whose house is responsible for the curve in the road) exercised authority over her land before authority was transferred to Amata at his death. Since Amata's death, the eldest son (Jurelang

Zedekiah, current speaker of the Nitijela) of Tarjikit's younger sister (*Lerooj Atama*) now exercises authority over the same lands.

The family line described above controls only half of the land holdings on Majuro; they are descendents of Lerok's nephew Rimi. The remaining land on Majuro is under the direction of a corporate landholding group commonly known as Twenty-Twenty, but more accurately recognized as the descendents of Lerok's nephew Jebrik.

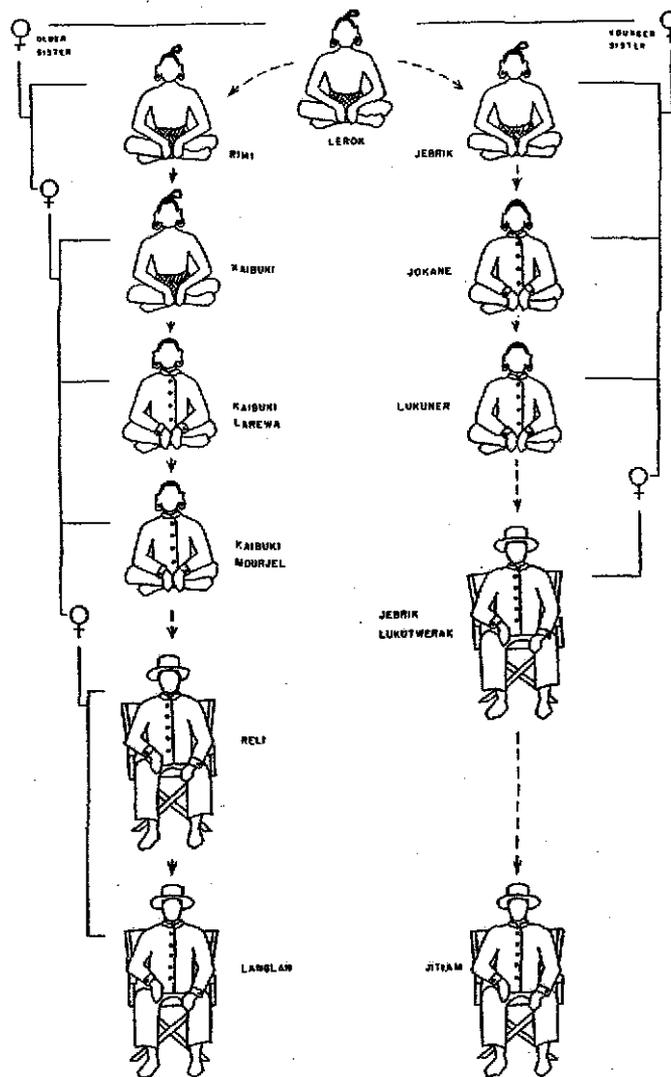


Figure 55. "Succession of paramount chiefs of Majuro."
(Spoehr 1949:83).

Before his death, *Irooj* Lerok divided his land between his sisters' sons who were his *Irooj edik* [literally, small chief; liaisons and administrators]. The child of the elder sister was Rimi; the son of the younger sister was named Jebrik. After Lerok's death the two battled for total control of the atoll, with Remi's nephew, Kaibuki, continuing the battle with Jebrik for years (Spoehr 1949; Mason 1947). Early Marshallese missionary converts sent from Ebon to Majuro wrote accounts of the battles and their dangerous attempts to negotiate peace in their letters to the American missionaries (Bliss 1906).

Ultimately, the Germans prohibited internal wars among chiefs in the islands, thus fixing the distribution of land of Majuro. A direct line of descent continued for both Rimi and Kaibuke's families, though successors had to be named twice in the Jebrik line, due to a lack of direct heirs to the *Irooj* title. In 1947, Langlan led Remi's line and Jitiam headed Jebrik's. The hostilities and competition between the two lines were still strong (Spoehr 1949).

The two lineages were known to compete for recognition among the Navy visitors and commanders. Langlan's side considered themselves the true owners of Majuro, having held continuous possession and a direct line of descent since *Irooj* Lerok's time. Jitiam's selection as paramount chief of the Jebrik line is not without precedence. A lack of heirs frequently resulted in the selection of an alternative heir to continue the family line. In Jitiam's case, the timing of Jitiam's designation and the legitimizing influence of the American administrators, who may have been fooled or influenced by Jitiam's followers, aroused suspicion (Spoehr 1949; Tobin 1953).

Jitiam's followers organized an executive committee composed of twenty men and twenty women (Twenty-Twenty) -- the only political association on the atoll. They operated in contrast to Langlan's "feudal administration," in an efficient and enthusiastic manner, non-characteristic of the more 'traditional' collaborative methods (Spoehr 1949:91). The competition and division between the two groups was manifest in separate cooperative stores, leaders, the division of labor for community activities such as school construction, and even in the greeting and entertaining of visitors. The US Navy publicly acknowledged both Jitiam and Langlan, often being entertained in separate parties and ceremonies by the groups. The presence of the US Navy and the opportunities for handicraft sales to the soldiers increased economic rivalries and a desire for political recognition. Distinct ways of interacting with the foreigners, revealed subtly in Spoehr's evaluative descriptions, contrast the democratic structure of Jitiam's group with the hierarchical organization of Langlan's group. Similar distinctions continue through the present in references to the descendents of these two groups.

Land holdings of the two groups are scattered throughout the atoll. The atoll is not divided into two large divisions, but rather, *wato* are scattered into small clusters of various ownership throughout. The historic political and land divisions that were strengthened under the early US administration at Laura in the creation of the cooperative stores and subsequent village competitions is still felt to this day, and continues to play a role in the political maneuverings of chiefs, commoners, businessmen, and elected officials.

When individuals have political or economic conflicts with the Kabua family, they sometimes seek to locate themselves on land belonging to Twenty-Twenty, and vice-versa.

For example, the relocation of Robert Reimers Enterprises from Delap (Kabua land) to Uliga (Twenty-Twenty land) in the 1970s resulted from political disputes and economic competition between Robert Reimers and Amata Kabua. Similarly, shortly after the signing of the Compact of Free Association, the deceased President gradually relocated TT era government offices from Twenty-Twenty land in Uliga to Delap. The US role in supporting the “democratic” Twenty-Twenty, while enriching *Irooj* is yet another of the US ambivalent and conflicting interests that impact Marshallese understandings of American and Marshallese authority.

Today, in central Majuro where the land holdings of either group are less scattered and more linear, historic land divisions and disputes are contemporarily re-enacted and recreated on a physical plane with two polarities — the Kabua-affiliated businesses and government buildings in Delap, and the “opposition” (Twenty-Twenty/Jebrik) associated offices and businesses in Uliga and Rita. The development of DUD reflects this historic tug-of-war. Land remains the basis of all political power in the Marshall Islands.

Assumption

At the western tip of Uliga, Assumption Mission (*Mon Bada* [Father’s house]) is located in a series of bright yellow buildings accented in deep red. Assumption Cathedral and schools are situated on land that *Lerooj* Tarjikit (the mother of Amata Kabua) offered to Fr. Leonard Hacker, S.J. to establish this school and church in September of 1954 (Hezel 1991: 277). Tarjikit, also known as Dorothy, was among the first converts to Catholicism, marking a division among the chiefly ranks who were almost unanimously

affiliated with the Marshalls' first Christian church established by the American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions in 1857.



Figure 56. Assumption 1960s.
TTPI photo archive #2783-11.



Figure 57. Assumption Church, 1994.

Assumption is the home of the Catholic Church in the nation, which has small communities on eight atolls, (Majuro, Kwajalein, Arno, Likiep, Namorik, Wotje, Jaluit, Ailinglaplap) and a disproportionate representation in elite circles of Majuro. Assumption is the site of the first Catholic mission, a symbol of privilege and prestige, and a source for *western discourses of democracy and human rights*, spread through the education of the nation's elites. The formative community of Marshallese Catholics comes from Likiep where the descendants of Europeans Capelle and deBrum were among the first to receive a Catholic education. The democratizing effect of mission education enhanced oppositions between traditional authorities and Western educated commoners.

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### Uliga

Like Assumption, Uliga is my home in the Marshalls. While employed at the Museum, I would walk the back road to and from work each day. While a Jesuit Volunteer, I walked it to reach the since demolished Social Service Building where I taught aerobics. On Saturday mornings I'd walk it to the Post Office to send letters home and chat with friends also shopping at *Mon Robert* [Robert Reimers Enterprises; RRE].

I walked the back road to the Reimers' house to play piano. I stopped to photograph the children I played with each day along my walk. I threw rocks at the same dogs that came to me each day, coming and going. I remember walking home on weekend nights with my former JIV roommates holding rented videos from DAR after eating pizza out. We often joined friends for beers at Uliga's Charlie's Tavern.

Perhaps the most exhilarating are memories of climbing the water tower -- our favorite adventure. It offered such an exhilarating perspective when we were bogged down

in papers, difficult teaching situations, and homesickness. It offered elevation, inspiration, and an opportunity to see Majuro relative to the endless vast ocean -- to feel my own concerns shrink into that sea. Nothing compares to watching the sun rise gradually out of the ocean, shade-by-shade, completely unobstructed, from a two hundred foot water tower on a coral atoll. But you'll have to take my word for it. Majuro's three water towers, one each in Delap, Uliga, and Rita, were removed in 1997.



Figure 58. Sunrise from the Uliga water tower facing North toward Rita, 1994.

Fifty years prior, the landscape of Uliga was more drastically altered. In 1943 when the Navy decided to send the native inhabitants to Majuro and set up their own small headquarters at the East end of the atoll, Uliga was cleared for the necessary military structures administration buildings, just as Delap was cleared to construct the Navy runway. The Navy built a dock at Uliga (today, the “new old dock”) that allowed for convenient off lading of supplies and men at an ideal harbor location.

From 1943 throughout the Trust Territory (TT) years (through 1970s) Uliga was central to the American administration, and central to many Marshallese as the primary site for employment, education, and other opportunities. In addition to the administrative buildings and the dock, the Navy, and then Trust Territory administrators established a hospital, a movie theatre, an Officers' Club, the infamous Coconut Rendezvous club (where no locals were allowed to drink), and the fine housing of the district administrators on the back, oceanside, *dri-belle* road. Many links to America and the colonial administration were centered on Uliga, the heart of "D-U-D."

The US Navy administration left more than buildings – it left a penchant for acronyms that was embraced by Marshallese:

Are you aware that the Marshall Islands is hard to beat when it comes to the abbreviation of company and organization names and that a typical conversation could be: "Students from SDA, CMI, and USP were told that representatives from RMI's NTA, MEC, MIMRA, MIVA, and MALGov flew back from the United States on AMI and one member celebrated the trip by first having a G&T at RRE and then a XXXX at the MIC (*MIJ* vol. 31(13): 24 March 31, 2000)?"

The quote above is scarcely an exaggeration of the sprinkling of acronyms in local language. In addition to those mentioned above, nearly every government Ministry, or agency is known by its acronym or abbreviation. Many of these organization and offices are clustered in Uliga.

As Uliga developed, other local institutions chose to locate within the sphere of the 'democratic' institutions of the US and the Twenty-Twenty landowners. Robert Reimers (RRE) located his store there in the early 1970s, as did other leading businessmen. US institutions such as the Peace Corps, and US Federal Programs – JTPA (Job Training and Placement Act), Historic Preservation Office (HPO), and the Elderly lunch program out of

Social Security all based their services in Uliga. Micronesian Legal Counsel, the National courthouse, the Alele Museum, and local import businesses such as MIECO, and KITCO (more acronyms) recognized the value of being near the administrative institutions. The old TT hospital in Uliga became the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI), the police station, the jailhouse, the now decrepit TT tennis courts, Continental Micronesia (Air Mic), the Majuro Bowling Alley, the US-linked main Post Office, as well as the radiation-affected “Four Atolls” offices are strategically located in Uliga.

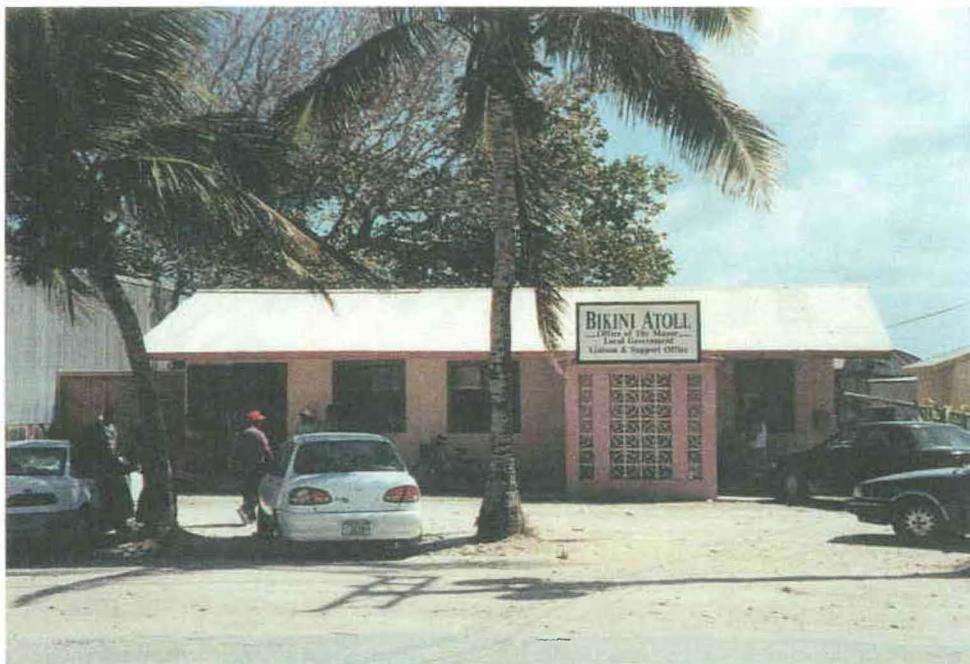


Figure 59. The old Bikini Office, 1997.  
(A larger structure was completed in 1998.)

The majority of Western (American) affiliated or empowered institutions were, and are, located on Uliga. In addition to these, the island is dotted with hotels, restaurants, shops, churches, and a handful of residences.



Figure 60. *Mon Ekajet* [House of Justice] The RMI Courthouse, 1998.



Figure 61. The Trust Territory Courthouse, date unknown.  
US TT Archive photo #2842-02.

## Jarrej [Rita]

The island referred to as Rita, or Darrej in the D-U-D designation, is the most densely populated island of Majuro atoll. The 1999 census data reveal a density of 30,365 people per square mile, in contrast to the average 6,314 per square atoll density, and 726 for the nation (RMI Census 2000).

Like Uliga, small retail stores line the front and back roads, but mainly, Rita is residential and overflowing with children. On the oceanside road, children jump on the back bumpers of pickups that slow down for speed bumps. Rita also has innumerable churches (Mormon, Baptist, Protestant, Seventh Day, Assembly of God [Part III], Bahai), numerous church and government affiliated schools, and Majuro's only public high school (MIHS). Rita's large, full breadfruit trees offer shade and a sense of intimacy and community that contrast sharply with stark, cemented Uliga.

The atoll's main road stops at a cul de sac at the tip of Rita, the northeast edge of Majuro atoll.

## The Small Islands

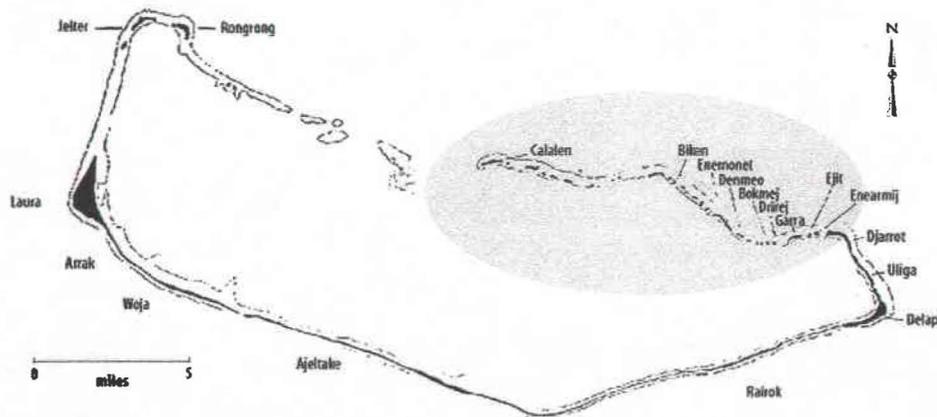


Figure 62. Map of the small islands of Majuro Atoll, East to Northwest.



Figure 63. The small islands of Majuro Atoll from opposite the lagoon.

Thirty-six small islets, some only 15-20 yards across lie in a series of dots and dashes -- Morse code-like -- from Rita to Calalin. The gap between Calalin and the next islet, Irooj Island, is the ocean pass<sup>10</sup> that allows a northerly exit from the lagoon.

From the end of Rita, at low tide during the full or new moon, it is possible to walk to seven or eight islets, stop for a swim, lunch, and nap before the tide rises too high to walk back. Communities on these small islands consist of extended families that usually engage in a subsistence lifestyle supplemented by items purchased in town. Living an “outer island” lifestyle without electricity or running water, families fish, make copra, and gather pandanus to sell. Families exchange imported resources for local foods produced by

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<sup>10</sup> This single pass is one of the reasons Majuro was selected by the military as its base. Unlike Jaluit that has four passes, and the other atolls that had previously been bombed and damaged in battles with Japanese (Enewetok, Kwajalein), Majuro saw no fighting, and thus, no damage, and was easily protected. Further, the impressive lagoon depth of Majuro provided a safe harbor for American subs patrolling the region. Numerous Marshallese shared their memories of subs and periscopes, before encountering the first Americans who arrived at night via submarines.

the few who reside on the 'small islands'. Yet, among these small islands Ejit is the exception.

### **Ejit**

Ejit is the third islet past Rita along the reef. A cement pathway covers the electric lines that travel across the center of the first two islets to reach Ejit. The nuclear testing program conducted on Bikini and Enewetak from June of 1946 until August of 1958 resulted in the displacement of various populations. In 1996, approximately 250 people, of Bikinian descent settled on Ejit (Jack Niedenthal 2002:13).

After twelve years of continuous destruction and exposure to radioactive fallout (see Appendices C, D, E, and F), the Bikinians' home was contaminated and uninhabitable. The US attempt to repatriate the islanders in the 1960s resulted in extensive illness from the consumption of local food items. The resettlement trust fund for the people of Bikini (US Public Laws #97-257, #100-446) provided for the resettlement of the Bikinian people to Kili Island and to *Ejit*, Majuro. The resettlement funds provide for local government operations, scholarships, a medical plan, and attorney's fees, among other community necessities.

Today the Bikinians' "home" is Kili Island, available because of its general undesirability – it has no lagoon, an inhospitable climate (very little rainfall), and difficult accessibility (Kiste 1974). Kili had neither prior inhabitants nor an *Irooj*. Like Bikinians on Kili, those on Ejit are provided housing and other amenities, such as a basketball court, tennis courts, a school, and running water and electricity.



Figure 64. Children of Ejit 1994.



Figure 65. Ejit island, Majuro atoll.

### Nuclear Tests

In 1946 the US promised 166 islanders on Bikini that if they moved to allow for weapons related testing, the US would take care of them forever. The island has since

become a “nuclear graveyard” (*Bikini: Forgotten Paradise* 1992). Over 40,000 scientists came to watch what was called, “Operation Crossroads:” the testing of two twenty-three kiloton nuclear weapons, Able and Baker, in the summer of 1946 (see Appendices C, D, E, and F). A B-29 dropped “Able” from 520 feet to bomb sixty-three American and enemy warships - - the sixth largest fleet ever assembled -- lined up as in battle. Seven hundred fifty-one cameras filmed the live broadcast bombing of the *Nevada* (Nuclear Claims Tribunal Report to the Nitijela 1993: 22-23). Three weeks later a second test, “Baker,” was conducted with a twenty-three kiloton bomb detonated ninety feet underwater (Nuclear Claims Tribunal Annual report 1996: 20-21). In less than one second a million tons of coral and water were carried a mile high into the air, creating a one hundred foot tidal wave. The shockwaves from the blast traveling at the speed of sound hit Bikini at 3,500 miles per hour (Nuclear Claims Tribunal Annual report 1996:21).

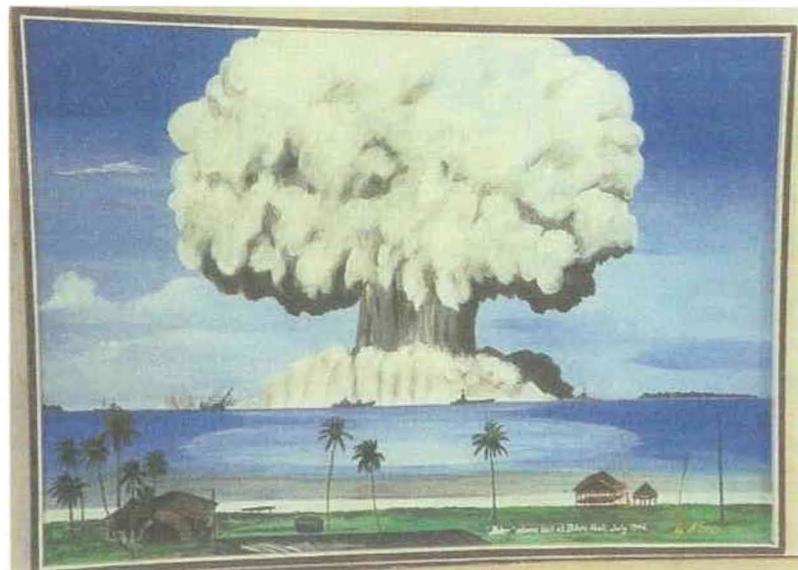


Figure 66. Amram Enos's painting of the Baker shot.

Unfortunately, the zeal with which American scientists pursued their knowledge of nuclear power left no room for the consideration of the health of the native people or the

fact that their home of centuries was being permanently destroyed. The most destructive of the sixty-seven bombs tested in the Marshall Islands was the "Bravo" shot. This fifteen megaton hydrogen bomb was 750 times more explosive than the bomb that fell on Hiroshima and vaporized an islet of Bikini atoll in seconds even as it spread radioactive fallout for thousands of miles (*New York Times Magazine*, May 1, 1994: 46). Detonated on February 28, 1954, "Bravo" is now recognized as *the largest nuclear test explosion ever conducted by the United States*. It produced a crater 6,000 feet in diameter and 240 feet deep along with a cloud top reaching 114,000 feet high (*Nuclear Claims Tribunal Annual Report to the Nitijela, Republic of the Marshall Islands*, 1993: 22). Hundreds of Marshallese on atolls downwind from the blast were affected immediately by acute radiation sickness and beta burns, and later thyroid abnormalities responsible for numerous serious medical conditions, including thyroid and other cancers. This catastrophic day is remembered annually on March 1 as "Nuclear Victims' Day," a national holiday in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Bikini was not the only atoll affected by the nuclear testing. Enewetak atoll was also the target of forty-three tests, though these were of a lesser intensity than the bombs exploded on Bikini. Recent radiation studies throughout the Marshall Islands suggest that more atolls and individuals were affected by the nuclear tests than previously recognized. Despite recently declassified documents that reveal the extent and intent of the testing program, the US Department of Energy recognizes only residents (and descendants) of "The Four Atolls" (Rongelap, Utrik, Enewetak and Bikini) as exposed, and only they qualify for compensation and medical treatment.

## Enemanit

Beyond Ejit along the northern side of Majuro lie the popular picnic islands where the local elite and US expatriates flock on Sundays. Among these, Enemanit [literally “custom island”] is by far the most popular. After Sunday church services, the boats are loaded with food and people at the new old dock in Uliga. From there, the slower boats make their way to join the smaller faster boats. Many small motorboats, some “Yachties” passing a typhoon season at Majuro, sailors, and the ever-faithful Kurt Pinho barge loaded with families and any visitor who cares to come, all congregate in Enemanit’s crescent beach.



Figure 67. Unloading picnic supplies at Enemanit.

The picnics are incredibly elaborate affairs -- requiring cases of raw, marinated chicken for barbequing, and coolers full of beer, soft drinks, potato salad, rice, and fruit. In the calm cove boats anchor; children play; and beer, barbecue, and BS overflow. The men gather off to the side talking politics, drinking beer, and fishing; the children play in the

water, diving, and jumping off the anchored boats; the women barbecue or care for babies as they gossip; and the teenagers play volleyball or hang out under the trees away from the adults. All ages gather here to relax away from the constant stream of traffic and activities of densely urban Majuro. After a Sunday at Enemanit, the “Blue Mondays,” are a bit brighter.

Calalen and Bikarin are also popular picnic islands, while Irooj Island functions as a nature preserve where birds and turtles thrive and may be hunted with permission. Most of Majuro’s small islands are surprisingly inaccessible – mainly frequented by their residents and elites. For many Majuro residents Enemanit is as close as they get to “outer island” life and activities. The nearly 25,000 residents of Majuro live disconnected, even freed, from many of the realities of atoll life.

Coral atolls are among the most sensitive eco-niches in the world. They lack land, a stable fresh water supply, rich soil, and plentiful flora, yet they are rich in marine resources that one brief dive at Enemanit or a gentle walk past Rita at low tide recalls – warm clear waters, flashing fish, gliding eels, and crunching coral. The amazing thing about Majuro is that it is possible to spend weeks at a time traveling the three linear miles from Rita to Delap, surrounded by ocean, and yet living as if it weren’t there. Most people live on rice and chicken; they work in offices, schools, or stores; they travel in automobiles, watch TV in the evenings, and hide from the heat. Living on Majuro is like living in any densely populated urbanity, with a few impositions of Mother Nature -- like toilets that only flush during high tide, limited water hours, and occasional periods of drought or typhoon.

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As I have presented, Majuro Atoll is an integral site in the development of the Marshallese nation, and its relations with foreign political and economic forces. This chapter has attempted to provide a sense of the physical as well as cultural and historical landscapes that shape contemporary relations of authority on Majuro. Ownership of land, power over resources, and long memories shape the contemporary lives of Majuro residents and Marshallese citizens in ways not immediately appreciated by visitors to the Marshalls. With a framework of Marshallese history, and a feel for Majuro, the following chapter will take a closer look at the ways *Irooj* have served as mediators of foreign influences and resources.

## CHAPTER 3 HISTORICAL HIERARCHIES

### BWEBWENATO [STORYTELLING]

In the Marshall Islands grandparents *inoñ*<sup>11</sup> [bedtime storytelling] their grandchildren to sleep with tales about family members and mythological characters while the child's head rests on the adult's forearm. Settled together on a sleeping mat in the darkness, each evening the stories begin: "*Etto im etto...* [a long, long time ago]" forging bonds between generations while children learn the stories of their family, their history, and the values of their culture.

The phrase, *etto im etto*, distinguishes the words that follow from usual forms of communication, and separates them as a genre distinct from everyday conversation. *Etto im etto* not only marks an unusual mode of speech but also a special temporality -- a time in the distant past -- "a long, long time ago." The preface serves to mark the tale as part of the ritualized practice of storytelling. A listener's expectation of what follows is shaped by the recognition of the marked phrase, and an implicit understanding that a story serves many purposes, among which the least significant may be the delivery of factual information.

Every storyteller shares different stories, and tells them differently. Each individual selects both content and form. *Letao*, the Marshallese trickster figure, may be more evil than mischievous to one person; *Jebro* more forgiving of his brothers to another. Stories may be portrayed as fact or fiction; may be embellished or stripped of detail. They may have the ring of authority and truth or entertaining exaggeration. The tone of the teller may

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<sup>11</sup> *Inoñ* is both a category of bedtime stories and the act of telling these stories.

be marked with humor, sarcasm, or gravity depending on the purpose of the telling, be it pedagogic, or entertaining. Each teller has a particular voice: soft, scratchy, lilting, deep; each teller is influenced by age, and experience as well as status and relationship to the audience members. In every tale, both the teller and audience are critical to the story.

### **Historical Accounts**

Just as Marshallese *bwebwenato*, legends, bedtime stories, and genealogies contain history, any historical account is also a story. Narratives are shaped and limited by their authors and their audiences. Dissertations are also narratives. They are imperfect and incomplete accounts shaped and limited by author and audience. Yet their power belies these shortcomings as they fix forever, in black type on white pages, singular interpretations of ephemeral moments with multiple perspectives. The power of the written word is its permanence. Unlike oral communication, the written word denies the potential for transformation through interaction and negotiation. Without the nuances of inflection and facial expression, written accounts are limited in interpretation and interaction.

The lack of written materials by Marshallese, about their history, makes foreign accounts of past events the primary resources for most people, Marshallese included, who want to learn about the Marshallese past. Marshallese oral historians are extremely few, since so many have passed away without others carrying on their knowledge. Learning about Marshallese history requires listening to contemporary understandings of the past, not solely returning to the same foreign sources time and time again. As Geertz has pointed out, interpretation is interpretation of interpretations: "It's turtles all the way

down” (Geertz 1973: 29). Academic discourse often attempts to disguise this fact. The layers of interpretation and re-tellings are merged and hidden when ethnographers and historians inscribe oral histories, stories, and accounts. Inscribing the histories of oral societies also involves complex issues of transcription, translation, and orthographic convention (see Appendix B).

History has too long been ignored or unchallenged among anthropologists who write with contemporary breadth but lack chronological depth. In previous decades of Pacific anthropology, some succeeded at this task (Biersack 1991; Gewertz and Errington 1994). Yet, more contemporary historical ethnography that attempts to trace ‘cultural continuities’ and transformation over time are sorely needed (Sahlins 1994). Historical ethnographies reveal similarities and patterns of interactions, behaviors, and understandings that persist in various forms over generations. They support the memories and histories of earlier generations through recognition. Historical ethnographies lend strength and respect to contemporary cultures often viewed ahistorically, in the ethnographic present, in the face of often pessimistic, nostalgic views of acculturation, integration, global economic influence, and international trade.

International funding agencies, among numerous other sources, negatively represent these processes of acculturation, assimilation, globalization, and economic transformation as evidence of cultural “loss.” In doing so, they overlook evidence of continuity – even survival – through processes of incorporation that “indigenize” foreigners and foreign resources. Acknowledging cultural continuity is as important as recognizing change.

Given the power of written historical texts to *inscribe* memories and *ascribe* identities, the act of composing any text is daunting. All representation is selective. I make an effort to represent indigenous voices and perspectives where possible to provide an alternative account by giving voice to the more peripheral voices of the *kajur* that are often silenced within indigenous Marshallese hierarchy and history.

### **Selecting Stories**

This representation of Marshallese hierarchy engages issues of history and identity; continuity and change; tradition and modernity; as familiar themes that are continually re-enacted in contemporary geo-political power relations. Recognizing the limitation of relying on foreign descriptions of Marshallese interactions with foreigners, I draw attention to the vested interests of the various authors. I not only acknowledge that my interpretations of their interpretations is yet another “story,” but also that the stories I choose to examine are deliberately selected to suit my narrative.

The stories that follow revolve around chief-foreigner interactions, and chief-commoner relations from the earliest recorded encounters through two colonial administrations. The spotlight on chiefs today as symbols of power, authority, and tradition is central to understanding how the power of chiefs continues to be negotiated, enhanced, constricted, and constructed in direct relation to foreign power, authority, and discourses (White 1991). Chiefs play significant roles as identity symbols that embody tradition and cultural identity while they serve as key mediators of foreign forces and resources. In the analyses to follow, I examine historical accounts of how chiefs interacted with foreigners through oppositional or alliance-building strategies and how models of interaction with

authority, and understandings of authority per se, were transformed as chiefs and foreigners interacted. I look at the ways foreign interactions alter exchange practices, alliance-building, identity-making, and power relations locally and transculturally. A close look at foreign interactions with Marshallese chiefs offers opportunities to historicize contemporary culturally informed models and understandings of authority.

### **SOURCES OF CHIEFLY AUTHORITY**

Within the canon of Marshallese oral literature exist numerous tales of chiefs, their uncles, wives, children, and battles. Perhaps the most well-known and repeated tale in informal contexts and educational curricula is that of Liktanur and her seven sons. Like most myths, Liktanur's story has multiple meanings and functions to express cultural ideals and values on many levels. This myth explains the unique formation of the constellation known in the Ratak chain as Jeleilon, known by Westerners as the Pleiades (Tobin 2002:58), the reason outrigger canoes have sails, the characteristics of an ideal leader, and the qualities and behaviors that enable Jebro, Liktanur's son, to earn his position as *Irooj*. The folktale (Appendix G) is excerpted from a version distributed by the Marshall Islands Historic Preservation Office (RMIHPO) in a locally printed text, *Bwebwenatoon Etto* (1992). This text is one of the only two published compilations of Marshallese folktales, legends, and myths.<sup>12</sup> Both are meager, but eagerly sought for classroom instruction by teachers desperate for cultural resources.

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<sup>12</sup> In 2002 University of Hawai'i Press published former district anthropologist, Jack Tobin's text, *Stories from the Marshall Islands* that contains Marshallese and English translations of the folklore Tobin gathered while working for the Trust Territory.

The story of Liktanur's sons emphasizes recurrent cultural themes of respect for authority, rewards for obedience, and the value of reciprocity. Jebro, Liktanur's youngest son, is rewarded for his fidelity and obedience to his mother with her gift of a sail that enables him to reach his destination before his older brothers in a race for the title of *Irooj*. Liktanur recognizes Jebro rather than the elder Timur because Jebro cooperated with her desire, putting respect for, and obedience to, his mother (and eldest brother) over his personal aspirations. Jebro was recognized by Liktanur and the people of Jeh [island in Ailinglaplap atoll] as the true *Irooj*, rather than his eldest brother, Timur, who had claimed the title for himself. Jebro is portrayed as having the support of a higher authority (his mother Liktanur, who lived in the sky), as well as the people of Jeh Island.

The ideal *Irooj* who has both sacred endorsements and popular approval is manifest in Marshallese folklore. Various chiefs who are ambitious, covetous, and aggressive, are begrudgingly obeyed, while those who are kind are believed to be more sacred. The significance of *joij*, and the belief in a connection between generosity/goodness and holiness/divine ancestry remains an evaluative standard – *elap an joij* [he/she is full of grace, very kind and generous].

### ***Joij***

*Joij* is frequently glossed as “kind,” but has deeper connotations of generous consideration for others' needs. In the Marshalls as well as throughout Oceania, the most culturally valued way to express *joij* is to share food, to offer real nourishment to others, as exemplified and idealized in the mother-child relationship (McArthur 1995). *Joij* is the primary cultural ideal of reciprocity and relationships, of truth, and goodness. *Joij eo mour eo;*

*lej eo mij eo* [Kindness brings life; hate/meanness brings death] is a common expression emphasizing the importance of sharing and kindness in social relationships. *Jojj ej mol* [Kindness is truth] is another ideal. The phrase used for thank you, *kommol*, literally declares the giver as true (*Kom mol*; [you are true]), while *kin joj* [with/for kindness] is pronounced by the giver in the same way that “you’re welcome” is used in English. Someone with much *joj* is distinguished from others, and acknowledged as special.

In one instance, a *Lerooj* I was interviewing repeatedly emphasized that true royalty has kindness, *Irooj in mol, elap air joj* [A true chief is very generous/kind], implying that those who are less generous have less connection to the source of their divinity and authority. She illustrated her point by acknowledging, in a whisper, that a mutual friend of ours was likely a *Lerooj*, though not officially acknowledged as one, because many people recognized her selfless generosity. This understanding of the relationship between *Irooj in mol*, or *lukun Irooj* [true or real *Irooj*], and exceptional kindness as supernatural verification of a higher status encouraged talk about the *real* ancestry of those whose traditional status is not equal to judgments of their generosity. In this example, the circular reasoning surrounding ideal *Irooj* is evident, since popular support and recognition are used to assert sacred origins, and sacred origins work to explain popularity.

The sacred origins of chiefly clans are deeply rooted in oral histories. The origin of the Marshallese clan system is only debatable to the extent of popular knowledge of these oral records.<sup>13</sup> To my knowledge, published anthropological research on the Marshallese

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<sup>13</sup> A RMI Historic Preservation Office study concluded that knowledge of the Marshallese clan system was decreasing rapidly, and the majority of children (10-17) and young adults (18-25) tested in urban centers and outer atolls not only were not aware of their clan, but one-third did not know the word *jowz*, and over half believed their clan membership was inherited from their father, rather than their mother (Walsh 1999).

clan system is limited to *Irooj* clans, (Mason 1995), and clans' origins at Namu atoll (Pollock 1976). Despite the decreasing knowledge of the *jowi* [clan] system among Marshallese youth, certain origin tales are better known because of their publication in the two previously mentioned folklore collections. The founding of the clan called *Irooj*, is among these.

According to legends, two sisters came from the Marshallese mythical land called *Eb*, located somewhere in the west. Liwatoimour [literally, woman of life-giving land] the younger sister went to the Ralik chain and stopped at Namu atoll. Liribribju traveled east to Aur atoll in the Ratak chain. Both women were transformed into stone pillars that are considered the source of each of the leading clans in both chains (Mason 1995). In the Ralik chain, it is believed that Liwatoimour's daughter, *Irooj*, is the mother of the line of chiefs that controlled the Ralik Islands for generations. The *bwij in Irooj* [matriline of Liwatoimour's daughter *Irooj*] retain their recognition as primordially ordained and unquestioned *Irooj* of Ralik today (Mason 1995). In the Ratak chain, the Rimwejor clan controlled the entire chain until they lost Mejit atoll, and they gave control of the entire chain, except Arno, to the Ranno *jowi*. From an original 8 *jowi*, over 20 recognized sub-clans emerged (Kabua 1993). Four became dominant over time: Erroja, Erribra, Rimwejor and Raarno, and again a circularity of reasoning justifies their dominance: these clans are powerful because they have sacred origins; they must have sacred origins because they are so powerful.

### *Irooj* as Priests

The American missionaries described *Irooj* as having specialized knowledge and spiritual access, yet they were not the sole mediators between people and their gods (Sam 1988:12). The Marshallese had no temples, churches, priests or religious leaders in their worship of spirits. Chief's burial sites, *wuliejlap* were *mo* (tabu), and avoided for fear of supernatural sanctions (Tobin 2002:355). Healers (*dri-uno*) and magicians (*dri-anijni*) used medicine and chants to hurt or help others, and mediated interaction with the gods, though they held no exclusive authority to do so.



Figure 68. Larik Chief du groupe des îles Romanzoff  
Larik, the chief of the Romanoff Islands [Wotje atoll]. Louis Choris (slide).

*Irooj* did, however, have the exclusive rights to tattoo, but only practiced the art with the approval of the appropriate gods who had the authority to mark the creatures of this world. According to Marshallese legends of creation, the god Lowa created the world. Afterward, he returned to heaven and sent four gods to look after his work, each representing the four corners, North, South, East, and West. The most powerful was *Irooj*

Irilik, of the west, who resided on *Eb*, a mythical island and center of creation, from where all life spread to other islands. Lewoj and Lanej gave colors and markings to distinguish every living thing through the process of *eo*, or tattoo. When *Irooj* engaged in the spiritual practice of *eo* they reconfirmed their divine ancestry by marking and distinguishing their people's ranks just as their ancestors, the first gods, had marked the fish, birds and plants in their environment. While little is actually known about the practice of tattooing, many of the patterns were documented in the lithographs of Louis Choris, and later observers (See tattoos in Figure 68).

*Irooj* were not the solitary intermediaries in spite of their unique heavenly affiliation. Though a chief's gods were considered more powerful than others', and his high status made his prayers and intercessions more easily heard and favored by the gods, each family and clan had their own spirits to worship and honor. The *Irooj* served as one of many mediators, yet a notably more powerful one, between the gods and his people (Sam 1988:14).

The worship of particular gods in and of particular locations as explained in examples involving clan origins and chief-missionary discussions about sites of tattooing, foregrounds the mythological, historic, religious, political, economic, social and other significances of land in Marshallese ideologies.

### ***Bwij and Bwidej: Lineages and Land***

In 1956, the Marshall Islands' district legislature adopted the Majuro anthem, "*Ij yokwe lok aelon eo ao*," as its first national anthem at an *Irooj's* request (Meller 1969:61). The song is sung in the first person about the love of one's island -- its walkways, paths, the

people who come and go. It declares, “*Ijamin ilok jen e, bwe ijo jiku emmol im ao lomoren indreo*” [I will never leave my island, because here is my true place, and my heritage forever]. The song testifies to the depth of devotion and the significance of home islands to Marshallese people. A well-known Majuro politician once explained to me that the significance is about identity and ownership -- not of land, but *by* land. He said, “I belong to that *wato* [land parcel]; that *wato* doesn’t belong to me” (Fieldnotes 1994).

The Marshallese matrilineal system of descent defines the relationships between atolls, islands, plots of lands and their people. Every child born of a Marshallese woman takes his or her mother’s *jowi* [clan] membership, as well as her *bwij*, or lineage, and obtains rights to the mother’s land. Membership in the *bwij* and *jowi* supercedes patrilineal affiliations known as *botoktok* [literally, blood]. The relationship between women, mothers, children, land, and life delineate power and position in the Marshallese hierarchy. The significance of the *bwij* is metaphorically and linguistically emphasized in its etymology: *bwij* comes from *bwijen*, the navel or umbilical cord, a symbol of life-giving life (McArthur 1995:122). The related term, *bwidej*, refers to life-giving land, received from the life-giving mother, which enables her offspring to produce food necessary for sustenance and life. Thus, concepts of mothers, food, life, lineage, and land are symbolically and inextricably associated in the terms *bwijen* [the umbilical cord] and the *bwidej* [land]<sup>14</sup> (McArthur 1995:123). In determining rank and inheritance, the standard practice of primogeniture is followed and traced along the female lines. Male leaders, such as *Irooj*, inherit their

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<sup>14</sup> As evidence of this, the *bwijen* is commonly buried on the *bwidej* after the birth of a child, and the practice of pinning a small piece of the umbilical cord wrapped in cloth to a baby’s diaper to protect the baby from those outside the *bwij*, is still common today.

positions in accordance with the birth order of their mother, with the sons of the mother's eldest female sibling holding power before the sons of her younger female sibling. An older generation always has priority over younger generations, when determining who will serve as *Irooj*. The youngest sibling within a generation is senior to the eldest sibling within the next generation, a fact that has led to the frequent situation in which uncles and their ambitious nephews struggle for dominance (e.g. the Kabua-Loeak rivalry discussed later in this chapter). The expression “*enwore manadren*” is used to suggest that a *bwij* is best served when an uncle fishes for his sisters' sons (McArthur 1995).

Clans are linked to particular atolls and islands as delineated after the cessation of inter-atoll warfare required by the German colonial administrators. Landholdings previously contested on the battlefield thus became permanently fixed. Clans define the structure of authority, inheritance, and use of shared lands. Whoever holds the position of *Iroojlaplap* is responsible for the land that is controlled or “owned” by the chiefly family. The *kajur*, commoners, who also hold rights to the land, engage in (ideally) reciprocal relations with their *Irooj*.

On a single parcel of land exist multiple *bwij* (matrilineages) that may be chiefly or common, delineated by known female ancestors. The *bwij* is identified by a particular ancestress, yet the *jowi* (clan) consists of multiple *bwij* presumed to be related matrilineally through a more distant, perhaps even legendary, female ancestor. Certain clans (e.g. *Ijidik*, *Iribra*, *Erroja*, etc.) maintain the status of senior lineages; various matrilineages within the clan are considered junior and acknowledged as commoner lineages.

The relationship between *Irooj* and *kajur* is based upon land, its ownership, and use. Chiefly families are acknowledged as the primary owners of the land since the colonial period and commoner families have usufruct rights. A *wato* [land parcel] consists of land that runs across the width of an island from lagoon beach to ocean reef. Matrilineages hold rights to many *wato* that may or may not lie adjacent to each other. The commoner families live off the land and consume the food they produce. They offer the chiefly families food and other resources as requested, and they support, participate in, and contribute to the activities directed by the *Irooj*. In return, the chiefly families provide necessary assistance to the families, such as contributions toward funeral feasts, medical expenses, and occasional transportation costs. If the commoner families do not maintain the *wato*'s productivity, avoid responsibilities toward the chiefly families, or oppose the *Irooj*, the *Iroojlaplap* may evict the people from the land. This understanding critically influences contemporary local politics, as will be discussed later in this and successive chapters.

Senior family representatives mediate interactions between chiefs and their people. The position of *alab* is held by the head of each commoner lineage, the eldest living sibling within a generation, preferentially held by the eldest male. The *alab*'s primary role is to enact the dictates of the chief. He has no authority in the determination of succession, and no formal means to sway chiefly directives. He may, however, lead his *bwij* to withhold or offer support for a chief or his rivals, particularly in battle, although this practice ended in the early 1900s. The remaining commoners are, since the German copra era, commonly referred to as the *dri-jerbal*, or workers, rather than the former, *kajur*. A distinction between the descendents of female and male lineage members further delineates relationships to

land and authority. Female offspring have stronger rights to the land as their rights are perpetual. Male offspring (and their children) have *botoktok* [literally, blood; describes lifetime use rights] rights to the land that may not be inherited by a third generation. In this hierarchy of land rights and responsibilities, communication between *Iroojlaplap* and *dri-jerbal* is mediated by the *alab*. At the twice-annual tribute feasts, *alabs* gather the required family contributions and deliver them on their behalf. In contemporary times these practices persist.<sup>15</sup> In some cases, the *alab* has direct contact with a lower status representative of the *Irooj*, known as *bwirak*, rather than the *Iroojlaplap* himself. The designation *Irooj edik* [small chief(s)] distinguishes the *Irooj* who are next in line of succession to serve as *Iroojlaplap* or as the leading *Irooj*. *Irooj edik* function as liaisons for the chief, as *alabs* do for commoners, particularly in regard to land issues and responsibilities.

As in the case of *kajur* families, distinctions are acknowledged within the *Irooj*, or royalty. The child of an *Irooj* father and commoner mother, is designated a *bwirak*, as is the child of two *bwirak*. The offspring of a *Lerooj* (female *Irooj*) mother and an *Irooj* father is an *Irooj bwao* [two shouldered] or double *Irooj* with exceptionally high status since the ties to sacred sources are bilaterally direct.

### **Irooj as Warrior**

The ascribed status and rank of chiefs that was once proven through successful battles and territorial claims was also dependent upon the number of warriors an *Irooj* could garner. The *kajur* [strength; commoners] of an *Irooj* was his *kajur* [strength; commoners].

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<sup>15</sup> Today the *kajur* tenants are called upon to contribute to the *Irooj* during holidays, *Irooj* family events such as a marriage or *kemmem* [first birthday], or on a quarterly (or regular) basis. For example, each family might be told to contribute a case of chicken, a bolt of cloth, a 25 lb. bag of rice, and \$100 to a family event in addition to the two ritual first-fruit offerings for the breadfruit and pandanus seasons (Fieldnotes 1997).

Yet, chiefs were expected to lead the warriors in battle, and to protect the people from invading chiefs, and foreigners.

The notorious ferocity of particular Marshallese chiefs, such as Lamari and Kaibuki, who manipulated and massacred foreign whalers, mutineers, and treasure seekers contributed to the extended isolation of the islands (Hezel 1983; Lay and Hussey 1828).

While both men and women played roles in battles, they were commanded by chiefs they chose to support. *Women shrieked and threw stones while men threw spears* (Kotzebue 1830). The power, or potency, of chiefs was determined in battle and those with the strongest divine sanctions were the victors. Warrior chiefs such as Kaibuke and Kabua expanded their domains and rewarded their warriors with gifts of land. In some cases, chiefs awaiting attack would escape to other atolls to avoid confrontation (Lay and Hussey 1963:100-101) while others assembled fleets and supplies for months for a battle that lasted only a day or two. At the turn of the twentieth century, as Germans attempted to ban warfare, the "battles" became more demonstrations of fierceness and threats than actual combat. Loeak, for example, abandoned the final battle with Kabua after days of displays of weaponry made his pending defeat obvious (Hezel 1983). Even earlier accounts of warfare describe the limited loss of lives (Kotzebue 1830). In colonial times, political rifts and land disputes were also resolved with the help of foreign liaisons such as missionaries, traders, or military representatives (e.g. Majuro 1870; Arno atoll 1880; Majuro 1912) rather than by battle.

In sum, the potency of an *Irooj* was displayed in successful gathering of warriors and resources, victory on the battlefield, fair distribution of new lands, and kind treatment

of the vanquished survivors. As Keesing describes, chiefs' roles include those of priest, warrior, and feast-maker (1985). The ability of an *Irooj* to accurately gauge the will of the gods, and his power to enact their decrees and offer ritual tributes all contributed to the recognition of divine chiefly origins and power. As contact with foreigners and access to new resources increased, the authority of chiefs was validated in new ways even as it diminished in other arenas.

### **RATAK AND RALIK**

Marshallese, like other Pacific Islanders, had no singular term to describe their shared culture, language, and identity. They recognized and distinguished only Ratak and Ralik, the east and west archipelagos, and the names of their atolls, islets, and *wato*, the landholdings that ran horizontally across an islet from ocean to lagoon. They identified themselves by their lineage, *bwij*, and their clan, or *jowi*, through which their land was matrilineally inherited. The first explorers to extensively interact with the Marshallese (in the Ratak chain) labeled the islanders people of Radak [Ratak], presumably the locally salient term, which they anglicized as Radakians and Radackers. The transformation of the people of Ralik-Ratak into *dri-Majol* [person of the Marshalls] identity is charted here much as earlier foreign interests charted the atolls. Today, the people of the Ratak and Ralik island continue to identify themselves among themselves by home islands and atolls, but use *Majol*, the collective term for the islands, as the base of their collective identities -- ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and national. *Dri-Majol* [Marshallese people] speak *kajin Majol* [Marshallese language], observe *mantin Majol* [Marshallese custom], and are citizens of the *Republic eo an Aelon in Majol* [the Republic of the Marshall Islands]. Representations of the

history of the “Marshall” Islands subtly discount the significant on-going histories of Ralik and Ratak.

### EXPLORERS

For nearly three hundred years European contact with the Marshall Islands was extremely rare. The only evidence of interaction between Europeans and Marshall Islander is limited to the logs of six ships, passing briefly through the archipelago, resting and trading en route to other destinations. The only revelation of Marshallese understandings of these first explorers is the term still used for foreigners, *dri-belle* [people with clothes, possessions, or wealth].

Although at least eight Spanish ships sailed through the islands not yet known as the Marshalls in the sixteenth century, less than half of those made landfall or traded with the Marshallese (Hezel 1983). There is no record of western contact in the Marshalls for over two hundred years after 1568, when Captain Mendaña of the *Los Reyes* and *Todos Santos* sought the remains of Spanish mutineer Lope Martin who had disappeared at Ujelang atoll in 1566.

In 1788, after depositing hundreds of British convicts at the first British settlement in the Pacific at Botany Bay, Captain William Marshall (*Scarborough*) and his companion Capt. Thomas Gilbert (*Charlotte*) attempted an unfamiliar northeasterly route to China. Along their route, they sighted and charted the archipelagos that currently bear their names (Hezel 1983).

Because the route from Australia to China charted by Marshall and Gilbert was safer than others that passed closer to Palau, the number of foreign vessels passing through

eastern Micronesia along the “Outer Passage” increased (Hezel 1983: 65). Still, only three are known to have stopped to trade: the *Brittania* at Namu in 1797, the *Rolla* at Ailinglaplap in 1803, and the *Elizabeth* at Jaluit in 1809. The trading of cloth, beads, iron hoop and hatchets for water, food, and coconuts is described as friendly in their accounts (Dye 1987:10).

### **The Romanzov Expedition: Kotzebue, Chamisso, and Choris**

Among the first Western accounts that offer insight into Marshallese interests, politics, and leadership in the nineteenth century are the volumes produced by Otto von Kotzebue, and Adelbert von Chamisso, (complemented by the drawings of artist, Louis Choris) upon their return from a voyage around the world with the Romanzov exploring expedition in the years 1815 to 1818<sup>16</sup>. Romanzov, a Russian nobleman and statesman, financed the global expedition, though the captain, crew, and vessel were of the Russian Navy. The *Rurik* was technically a Russian man-of-war (Kratz 1986: xii). The ship’s captain, Otto von Kotzebue, was a lieutenant in the Russian Navy and the son of Germany’s most successful playwright of the era. He began the voyage at the age of twenty-eight, and was credited with the discovery of atolls in the Marshalls group hitherto unknown in Europe, that is, uncharted by Captain Mendaña in the mid-1500s (Kratz 1986: xiii). (See Appendix H for an accounting of Kotzebue’s travels in the Marshall Islands.)

Accompanying Kotzebue were Louis Choris, who gained renown for his paintings of their travels, and the botanist and author Adelbert von Chamisso, among others. The

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<sup>16</sup>This was nearly 40 years after James Cook had been killed in Hawai'i. The Marshall Islands had had no foreigners among them and only two atolls were even noted on European maps at the time. Kotzebue was credited with the charting of the Ralik and Ratak chains though he only viewed nine of the twenty-eight atolls.

voyage was Chamisso's first at age thirty-four. His detailed descriptions of daily interactions with the peoples they encountered are rich with vignettes and anecdotes. Chamisso's attention to detail and literary sensitivity to relationships and emotion make his two-part document rich and rewarding reading.<sup>17</sup>

Kotzebue and Chamisso's accounts, while paternalistic and self-serving, are the first written records of extended European-Marshallese encounters. Among all the people they encountered in their world travels, Chamisso and Kotzebue enthusiastically claimed the people of Ratak as their favorites.

Kotzebue's descriptions are the first examples of Ratak hierarchy, warfare, leading chiefs, and commoner relations with those chiefs. As the initiators of foreign discourses about the Marshall Islands, Kotzebue's interpretations of Radakian affairs predict persistent interactions and interpretations throughout the next two hundred years. These travelogues are examined with particular attention to interactions between various chiefs and Kotzebue, and Kotzebue's accounts of Marshallese accounts of chiefs. Of particular interest are the impact of the relationship between Kadu, a Carolinian living in the Marshalls who joined the expedition for eight months and Kotzebue, and the impact of Kotzebue's visit on Ratak political economy.

The interactions between Kotzebue and the people of Ratak reveal the significance of foreign resources and foreign support for local interests (conquering other atolls and chiefs), personal status, and political resistance. They also show an appreciation for foreign

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<sup>17</sup>Chamisso's *Tagebuch* (Journal) was written nearly twenty years after the voyage and included notes and letters written during the period. *Bemerkungen und Ansichten* (Notes and Opinions) was published as an appendix in Kotzebue's three volume account; it contained scientific notes distinct from his Journal.

power that inspires fear, similar to the fear inspired by the warrior *Iroojlaplap* Lamari among the *Ratak* people.

At the start of his voyage on the *Rurik* in 1817, Kotzebue was directed to a little known archipelago for exploration and possible charting. To that end he was successful. While Kotzebue's is credited with geographical knowledge of both *Ratak* and *Ralik*, he charted only a few *Ratak* atolls himself, and relied solely upon islanders' information for the remainder as well as for his charts of *Ralik*. Kotzebue's faith in the islanders' accounts resulted from the exceptionally accurate directions he was given toward various *Ratak* atolls beyond Wotje or "Odjia" -- as the Russians transcribed -- the site of his first landing. Kotzebue never viewed the *Ralik* atolls, despite his attempts, and likely would not have known of them at all if not for Radakian<sup>18</sup> informants.<sup>19</sup>

### Approaches

Upon Kotzebue's initial approach to the various islands, Radakians often approached the large Russian ship in their sailboats and canoes to view the *Rurik* from a "shy" distance.

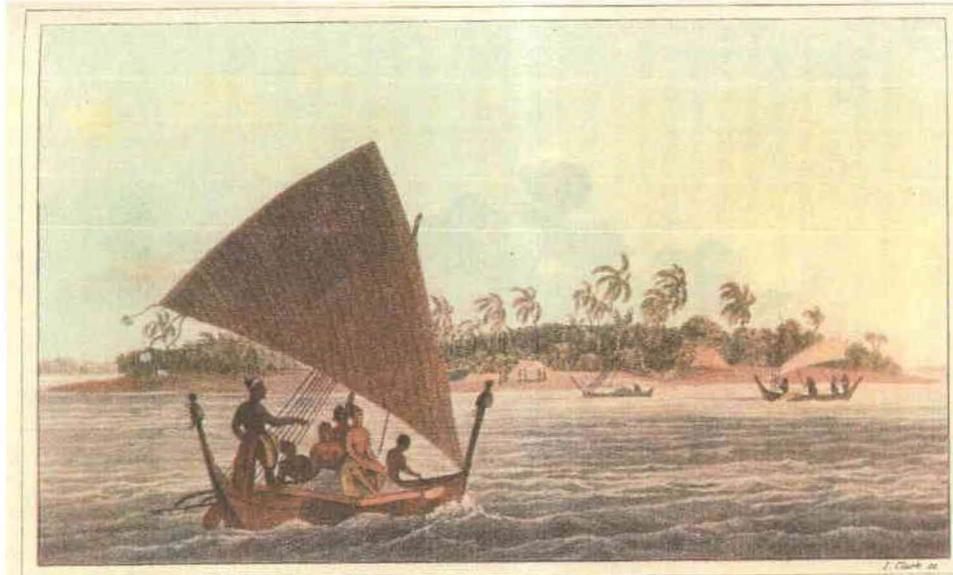
The Russian crew attempted to trade with the islanders from smaller crafts. The islanders obviously already knew iron in small pieces, possibly obtained from wrecked ships' remains. When Kotzebue's crew offered iron, Radakians would excitedly share the news by yelling, "Moll! Moll!" [*Maak; aen.* Iron]. The Radakians then exchanged shell necklaces, woven mats and headbands, and other decorative items for the pieces of metal.

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<sup>18</sup> Radakian/Radackian is the Russian term for the Marshallese people the encountered, most of whom were in the *Ratak* chain.

<sup>19</sup> Kotzebue's informants were Lagediak, from Aur, and *Irooj* Langedju of "Kawen" (now called Maloelap Atoll. Langemui, an *Irooj* of "Ailu" (Ailuk Atoll), is credit with explaining *Ralik* geography to Kotzebue.

Once invited on shore, the islanders and the expedition leaders greeted each other, exchanging names and gifts.<sup>20</sup>



*View of the Island of Airick, belonging to the Group of Kawen, in the Radack Chain.*

Figure 69. Radakian sailing canoe or *walap* at Maloelap atoll.  
“View of the Island of Airick, belonging to the Group of Kawen in the Radack Chain”  
Louis Choris, p. 111.

After the leaders acknowledged each other’s positions thereby establishing relations, the expedition leaders pursued their research projects and interests with the apparent cooperation of the islanders. Chamisso and the other scientists gathered floral and faunal specimens, while Kotzebue’s officers mapped the islands. They also offered assistance and gifts that were intended to improve the quality of life for the islanders. Kotzebue shared goats, chickens, pigs, cats, taro roots, watermelon seeds, and other plants with the Radakians with various consequences.

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<sup>20</sup> The practice is referred to as “Polynesian style” in Kotzebue and Chamisso’s writing. Kotzebue (Totabu), Chamisso (Tamiso), and Lt. Schischmareff (Timaro) earned new pronunciations of their names in this process (Chamisso 1824).

The islanders assisted with the crew's rations by offering coconuts, coconut shells filled with fresh water, and *mogan*, a log of preserved sun-dried pandanus pulp. The Russian crew were greatly impressed by the generosity of the islanders, who often gave abundantly from their meager supplies, even on resource-poor islands, and when there seemed no ulterior motive of hoping for iron or other gifts in return: "Chief Laergass [of Wodmej island, Wotje atoll] was magnanimous and unselfish beyond any person I have known. He wished only to give, to bestow, and did it at a time when no counter gifts could be expected any more" (Chamisso 1836:137). The Russians expedition felt the Radakians traded honestly and fairly: "We did not trade on Wotje. We gave gifts and received gifts in return" (Chamisso 1986: 277). The authors are quick to dismiss any expectation of reciprocity that might partially be explained by cultural values of cooperation and practices of alliance building.



Figure 70. Rarick, Young *Irooj* of Wotje.  
"Kotzebue's Voyage of Discovery Vol. II. "Rarick." Facing title page.

### **Kadu: “Marshallese” Informant**

Kotzebue spent a full month at Wotje atoll, and another six weeks visiting and charting the Northern Ratak atolls in early 1817 (See Appendix H: “Kotzebue in the Marshalls”). The ship anchored and interacted with islanders at Wotje then Maloelap, Aur, and Ailuk. On Aur atoll he met Kadu, a Western Carolinian, from Woleai atoll. Kadu and his companions drifted nearly two thousand miles from Woleai to land at Aur about four years before Kotzebue’s arrival. *Irooj* Tigidien protected them and Kadu, who was afforded some status as a knowledgeable foreigner, married a Radakian woman (Kotzebue 1821: 120, Chamisso 1986: 264).

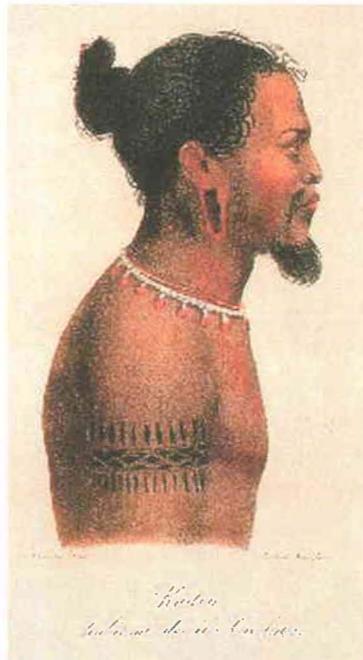


Figure 71. *Kadou* [Kadu] *inhabitant des îles Carolines*.  
“Kotzebue’s Voyage of Discovery Vol. II. “Rarick.” Facing title page.

According to Chamisso, when the *Rurik* first appeared the islanders sought Kadu for advice. Kadu, among all the islanders, had seen white men, their ships and their munition-inspired authority before. After seeing the Russian ship and crew, Kadu was

impressed enough to insist that he be allowed to accompany Kotzebue and his crew on their voyage. Kadu would not change his mind despite the attempts of his fellow Carolinian friend and Kotzebue to dissuade him.

Kadu's interaction with Kotzebue and his crew offers a more intimate look at foreigner/islander interaction, from the Europeans' perspectives, since he was their most intimate informant. Over the course of the following eight months, their deepening understandings of each other allowed mutual insight into their respective worldviews. In the Russian expedition, Kadu sought a way home, and an elevation of status -- evident in his changed behavior toward the Radakians after he was allowed to stay on the boat even the first night at Aur. Traditional leaders also saw an opportunity for increased wealth, access to resources, and improved military strength through affiliation with Kotzebue.

Lamari [*La mare*, literally, spear] was the dominant *Irooj* in the Ratak chain at the time Kotzebue and Chamisso interacted with the Marshallese. From Kadu, the Russian crew learned that Lamari rose to power through the murder of other influential chiefs, and through numerous raids on unsuspecting atolls.

We learned that there was still another chief of the name Lamari, under whose power the island-groups from Aur to Bikar were subjected, and who was now absent to assemble a military force with which he intended to seize upon the group of Mediuro [Majuro], lying to the south of Aur: its inhabitants often make incursions upon Aur, Kawen [Maloelap] and Odjia [Wotje], to seize provisions, of which they are in great want, on account of the numerous population. An incursion on Lamari's island, by which a man lost his life, was not to be unpunished. Kadu told us that the most shameful pillage was committed upon Otdia; the enemy destroyed everything they could not carry off: by this information the riddle was solved, why we everywhere had found newly-planted trees (Kotzebue 1821: 127-128)

The days before the crew left Aur, the islanders came to barter for iron at the ship, and the *Irooj* brought gifts of *mogan*, (sun-dried pandanus pulp) a common departure gift.

Kotzebue describes the chiefs' ulterior motive and secret proposition to participate in a battle against Lamari:

As soon as I was alone with my guests in my cabin, they examined very carefully whether anybody could overhear us; they entreated, with an air of mystery, but very earnestly, that I would remain here till their military force was assembled, to kill with them, all the inhabitants of Mediuro [Majuro], and then, laden with coconuts and breadfruit, return to Aur; they would give me for it an *Eb* [honorary song/dance performance] every day. This proof of their confidence astonished me, but willingly as I would have defended these poor islanders against their foes, and perhaps even secured them from future attacks, merely by my appearance, the approaching spring would not allow me time. My refusal dejected them very much; but, to assist them as far as lay in my power, I made them a present of some lances and grappling hooks, which made them inexpressibly happy. Everything was immediately shown to the people in the boats, who unanimously set up a loud "O--h!" Tiuraur danced and sang to it a war-song, showing us how he would throw his enemies down; the people roared for joy, and had their foes appeared at the moment, these valiant men, inspired by martial ardour, would certainly have gained the victory (131-132).

Kotzebue supplied the people of Aur with hatchets and iron as contributions for their war, since the schedule of the voyage prevented his participation. Chamisso ominously wrote of the negative implications of their gifts:

The real wealth of iron, which we expended with pleasure on Radak, can stir up a ruinous war between the south and north of this chain, and between it and *Ralik*, and blood could be the fruit of our generosity (1986: 282).

Before leaving Ratak, Kotzebue decided to look for Lamari. The crew left Aur, en route to Ailuk and the northern atolls before continuing on their voyage to Alaska. They were able to meet briefly, on the open ocean, between Uirik and Taka.

I resolved to remain here only one day under sail to speak with Lamari. Four canoes soon appeared with their chief, ... when they, to their great astonishment, recognized Kadu. Lamari remained only a short time with us on board, because his people were afraid that we might keep him. He was distinguished from the other islanders less by his dress than his tall and robust person. His face indicated much sense, but his right eye, smaller than the left, gave him a sly look. Kadu afterwards told us that Lamari was now about thirty years old, a native of Arno, and came some years ago to Aur; had murdered its chief without any provocation, and

usurped the dominion; thence he had gone to Kawen [Maloelap], and continued to proceed farther to the north with his partisans, to Utirick, had everywhere murdered the most distinguished chiefs, and now rules with unlimited sway over the whole chain from Radak (sic) to Aur (1821: 151).

Kadu remained aboard the *Rurik* for nearly eight months and learned to communicate with the crewmembers in Russian, and to teach Chamisso some basic Marshallese vocabulary, which Chamisso appended to his account of the voyage. Kadu significantly influenced Chamisso and Kotzebue's written descriptions of life in the Marshalls since he was the sole source of much of their knowledge of aspects of the Radakians' lives that they did not personally witness. Kadu's presence aboard ship at that time enhanced their interaction, and no doubt elevated his status in Lamari's eyes.

After eight months aboard the *Rurik*, sailing to Alaska, and Oahu, Kotzebue's ship returned to Wotje in October of 1817. Once 'home,' Kadu's decision to abandon the expedition and to rejoin his family on Aur caused the crew much grief:

As he intended to leave the ship today, because we sailed tomorrow, we all collected presents for him. He looked at his treasures with mute astonishment, and was only afraid that the Radakers could not resist the temptation of robbing him. I did not doubt that Lamari, as soon as he heard of it, would not fail to take from him the greatest part,<sup>21</sup> and to avoid this, left some very considerable presents for him also . . . To protect Kadu as much as possible against such an event, I intended to make an exhortation to all the savages (216-217).

They devised a ceremony for Kadu's protection. First, in a formal speech Kadu claimed the Russian monarch had called upon him to care for the plants and animals left by the expedition. Kadu was to be honored and protected, and assisted in caring for these things. Kotzebue publicly added that in ten months another Russian ship would return to

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<sup>21</sup> Lamari immediately raided Wotje after the *Rurik*'s departure to collect all the iron and other material items given to the people by the crew.

the island to see how Kadu fared, and to offer iron. If Kadu was robbed or injured the criminals were to be punished with death -- and at that point in his speech the ship fired two guns and a rocket, which illuminated the whole island (219). "Lagediak [an *Irooj* of Wotje who befriended Kotzebue] threw both his arms round me and begged me to put an end to this terrific scene (219).

Kadu benefited by invoking the power of a foreign monarch or chief to maintain his status on the island. Kotzebue gladly contributed to Kadu's status with gunpowder to invoke the islanders' fear and respect of that foreign *Irooj*, whom he represented. Not until Kotzebue's return trip did the impact of Kadu's daring social climb become clear.

#### **Kotzebue's Return to Wotje: 1824**

In late April of 1824, Kotzebue again returned to Wotje, this time for a single week. He arrived in an even larger ship, the *Predpriatie*, which was specifically designated for his second world voyage. His reception at Wotje was marked by the special treatment accorded chiefs -- his needs were anticipated, he was offered the best foods, and treated royally by the community of Wotje.

Four islanders lifted me from the boat and carried me ashore to where Lagediak awaited me with open arms, and pressed me most cordially to his bosom. The powerful tones of the muscle horn now resounded through the woods, and our friends announced the approach of [*Irooj*] Rarik. He soon appeared running at full speed towards us, and embraced me several times, endeavouring in every possible way to express his joy at our return. Though the friends to whom I was thus restored were but poor ignorant savages, I was deeply affected by the ardour of their reception; their unsophisticated hearts beat with sincere affection towards me, -- and how seldom I have felt this happy consciousness among the civilized nations of the world (Kotzebue 1830: 303-4).



Figure 72. "Reception of Capt. Kotzebue at the island of Otdia."  
Source: Kotzebue 1824: Facing Title Page (Volume I, 1830).

Rarik's mother:

very diffusely related that Lamari, soon after our departure, had come hither with a fleet, and forcibly carried to Aur all the animals, plants, tools, pieces of iron, -- in short, whatever we had left on the island. Lagediak confirmed this tale, and added, that Lamari had demanded of every islander, under pain of death, the last piece of iron in his possession (Kotzebue 1830: 307).

Kotzebue learned that Kadu was still caring for the plants, garden, and animals contributed in 1817. Kadu was raised to the position of great commander, married the daughter of the chief at Wodmej island of Wotje atoll, and gave over half of his treasured gifts to Lamari (a gesture recommended by Kotzebue).

Kotzebue inquired into the campaign Lamari had led against Majuro, the one that Lagediak had asked Kotzebue to join before his previous departure. Lagediak himself had been in the battle and he pantomimed an account of the war.

Lamari's fleet, as I understood my informant, consisted of forty vessels; and therefore, judging by the size of the boats here, the whole army could not be above four hundred strong, including the women, who, from the rear, lend assistance to the combatants by throwing stones at the enemy, and by assuming the surgeon's office. This force was collected from the Radack chain; the war was bloody, and lasted six whole days. Five of the enemy were slain, and Lamari gained a splendid victory with the loss of one man! The fleet returned triumphant, laden with cocoa-

nuts, bread-fruit, and pandanus. Kadu had especially distinguished himself: he was armed with a sabre and lance, and wore a white shirt, and wide trowsers, which formidable attire was completed by a red cap on his head. All the hatchets, above a hundred in number, which I had given to the Radakers, and which Lamari afterwards appropriated, were fastened on long poles and distributed among the best warriors; this gave the army of Lamari a great advantage; so that I might take credit to myself for the happy issue of the campaign (Kotzebue 1830: 317-318).

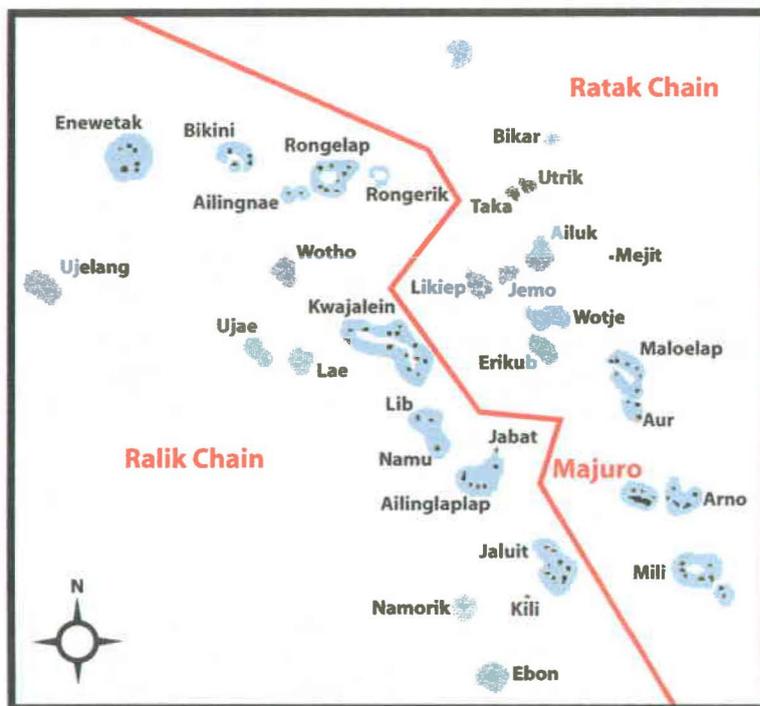


Figure 73. Map of the Marshall Islands showing the two parallel chains of atolls spread southeast to northwest. The Ratak chain is to the east; the Ralik chain lies to the west. (Adapted from “Magnificent Micronesia” - <http://Skin-diver.com/pata/section4.html>)

Further, Lamari planned an attack on a *Ralik* atoll, which the Russians referred to as Oda [now called Ailinglaplap] in retaliation for an attack that was made against the people of Kawen atoll [now Maloelap]. Chamisso’s statement about the potential impact of the Kotzebue’s gifts was prophetic, as warfare apparently ensued within the Rataks and between the Ralik and Ratak chain. Interest in foreign weapons (iron), and their associative powers inspired battles and assured victory.

The inhabitants of these Odia [Ailinglaplap] group of islands had heard something of the treasures which the Radackers had acquired by my visit, and their rapacity being excited, had made an attack on the Kawen group of the Radack chain, without the usual declaration of war, and thus taking the inhabitants by surprise, had beaten and plundered them, and returned home laden with booty, though the Kawen people had made a valorous resistance, and killed two of the Odians without losing a man themselves. This appeared to have happened a year before my arrival, and the vengeance of Lamari had been hitherto delayed; the levying and provisioning an army being here a work of time (318-319).

The explorers' descriptions offer insight into the practice of warfare in the Marshall Islands in the 1900s. The weapons (spears, lances, rocks) and participants' roles are well described by Kotzebue. The blowing of shell horns, the singing and shrieking, the wild mannerisms indicate supernatural beliefs associated with elements of battle (Kotzebue 1824: 319-322). The accounts also explain the effect of foreign resources on historic local rivalries. The presence of the foreign materials and costumes lent extra authority to Lamari's soldiers, according to Lagediak, and Kadu was well rewarded for his role in battle, a role enhanced by his use of the foreign costume and weapons. The numbers of such novelties as hatchets, and the presence of foreign goods, portrayed Lamari's association with a wealthy foreign 'god' and the support of that source of strength that led to the defeat of their opponents on Majuro. Thus, Lagediak tried very hard to persuade Kotzebue to remain on Wotje:

He left nothing untried to procure my acquiescence in this wish: love, ambitions, glory, were successively held out as lures: I should have the most beautiful woman of the islands for my wife, should kill the tyrant and usurper Lamari, as he had killed his predecessor, and should reign in his stead Tamon [Irooj] of Radak. (314)

The following day, Lagediak appeared on the ship with many presents and, "he brought with him his son, about thirteen or fourteen years of age, to present to me" (315).

Lagediak soon recurred to his yesterday's project of making me chief of Radak. He sketched the plan of its execution, and entered upon the further measures which

would be requisite to give power and stability to the new government. We were first to sail to Aur and vanquish Lamari, and then to attack the hostile group of the Mediuro (Majuro) islands, the conquest of which would render me master of the whole chain of Radak. (316).

Lagediak [was] perfectly secure of the success of this undertaking, . . . he continued sanguine -- for the hatchets with which his brethren were armed, the sword and dread-inspiring costume of Kadu, were sources of confidence which could not be abated. (319)

When Kotzebue explained he could not stay:

He [Lagediak] led his son to me, and begged I would take him with me to Russia. I was then obligated to explain to him that I should never return to Radak, and that if his son accompanied me, he must take leave of him for ever. This was too much for the father's heart; he embraced his son, and would no longer think of a separation. He was also overcome with the idea of seeing me for the last time; and a little self-interest probably mingled in the melancholy look he cast upon a hatchet which I had given him, as he exclaimed -- 'I shall never get any iron again' (316)!

This passage sheds light on the ways Lagediak viewed Kotzebue and his influence in the islands. Kotzebue was expected to reciprocate their generous offerings, and hospitality, by collaborating in political/military maneuverings of the time. He had already contributed much iron to their campaigns, and was recognized for his role in the success of Lamari's Majuro campaign through Kadu's relationship to him, revealed by his costume, and the hatchets previously given. The Radakians hoped to retain his assistance, and protection. Lagediak also hoped to benefit from sending his son with Kotzebue, recognizing Kadu's social promotion through the affiliation, and the opportunity to access the foreign knowledge that was linked to highly valued iron, and that had access to such wealth. This passage highlights the ways Marshallese have used foreign resources (as weapons) in battles with local chiefs over local animosities.

Just before Kotzebue left the islanders they:

expressed their fears that Lamari would again plunder them, when he should learn that we had been there. I therefore commissioned Lagediak ... to inform Lamari that if he took their belongings, whenever white men should visit Radak they would take vengeance upon him (335).

This pronouncement is quite different from Kotzebue's final comments in his accounts, that perhaps the islanders would, after his visit, retain fondness and positive attitudes toward white men. Kotzebue concluded his notes about Radak with these remarks:

I was much pleased with observing the cordial goodwill that subsisted between the natives and my crew, and with the reflection that this second visit would also leave on the minds of the Radaker an impression favourable to white men (1830: 334).

### Summary

Though the Russian expedition's interaction with the Marshallese in the Ratak chain occurred relatively late in the region's history, it is the first recorded extended contact between Europeans and Marshallese. The expedition arrived intent upon gaining scientific and geographic knowledge, while offering assistance and making friends with the inhabitants. In the process they described a gentle and modest people, whose manners were judged more attractive than other Pacific Islanders they encountered, and whose navigational skills were considered superior to those of Europeans.

The Radakians, while both initially frightened and curious, experienced the foreigners as wealthy visitors who traded and generously gave precious gifts of iron, hatchets, and other useful tools. While the islanders were unfamiliar with the plants and animals given to them, they did not reject the gifts. The islanders were likely awed by the wealth of the foreigners who arrived with an apparently limitless supply of iron, an

imposingly large craft and crew, and knowledge of unfamiliar, if not irrelevant, goods, plants, and animals.

In their interaction Captain Kotzebue, the leading scientist, Chamisso, and the ship's officer, Schitschmaroff, were treated with the same familial respect that the islanders offered their chiefs. They were given places of honor in canoes and at feasts, their needs were anticipated, and their requests met. In return, the island leaders sought the protection and support of Kotzebue. The Ratak people offered rewards of power and dominion in return for his support of their inter-atoll rivalries. They sought his powerful backing in their endeavors -- an endorsement that would threaten other island chiefs without access to such foreign power and wealth.

Kotzebue's close relationship with Kadu, the affection that grew, and the gifts that symbolized it, functioned ultimately to elevate Kadu in the eyes of the Radakians. Through his public patronage, Kotzebue lent foreign authority to Kadu, and protected him from harm. Cannon fire reminded the islanders of the power the foreigners possessed, but did *not* use against the islanders. This evidence of *joj* [goodness, generosity] may have strengthened any understandings of Kotzebue's foreign and sacred connections.

The Russian expedition ultimately "made a chief" of Kadu, even as the islanders sought to make a chief of Kotzebue. This case emphasizes the models and the methods of creating and reinforcing authority in interactions between foreigners, chiefs, and commoners as mutually beneficial processes. The expedition gained the knowledge it sought, Kadu found social mobility, Lamari took advantage of Kadu's association with Kotzebue to put him at the front ranks to frighten and defeat the warriors of Majuro.

Other islanders received gifts of iron, and new stories to pass along of white strangers and their interesting novelties. The long-term impact of Kotzebue's visit is evident in the alterations of inter-atoll rivalries as new weapons and resources were introduced and incorporated into local warfare.

Further, the ethnographic accounts emphasize the relationship between resource availability and social relations through descriptions of hierarchy, warfare practices, and social maneuvering. The symbiotic relationship between gift-givers and recipients is integral to Marshallese understandings of authority. Possession of resources is the surest indication of wealth, power, and supernatural approval. Distribution of resources ensures service and loyalty from subordinates, since the provider with the greatest number of dependents can rely on the greatest number of supporters. The distribution of wealth, which secures loyalty and dependency, is the most practical means of elevating status. For commoners, service and loyalty to superiors secures necessary resources. Reciprocity is the *integral social* cohesive where the exchange may be loyalty, service, or material goods. Each offering requires reciprocity, according to one's means and abilities. Where commoners are not compensated for their services adequately, their loyalties shift and they seek to affiliate with someone who might better provide for their needs. A wealthy, powerful foreign leader is preferable to a dangerous local overthrow given the long memories and potential backlash when attempts at overthrowing the dominant powers are unsuccessful. Kotzebue's gifts *define* him as a provider, whose gifts forge expectations of protection and support in their recipients, who then offer their services and loyalty in return.

## WHALERS

In the same year that Kotzebue bid his final farewell to the people of Ratak, believing Marshallese would now be receptive to other white men, American whalers made their first ominous introductions. This first recorded encounter is quite the opposite of Kotzebue's. A crewman aboard the mutinied whaleship *Globe* describes the cruel event and his understanding of its lasting impact:

February 8, 1824. In the morning [we] passed through the channel between the Marshall and Gilbert Islands; luffed to and dispatched a boat to Marshall Island, but did not land, as the natives appeared hostile, and those who swam off to the boat endeavoured to steal from her. When about to leave, a volley of musketry was discharged at them, which probably killed or wounded some of them. The boat then gave chase to a canoe, paddled by two of the natives, which were fired upon when within gunshot, when they immediately ceased paddling; and on the boat approaching them, discovered that one of the natives was wounded. In the most supplicating manner they held up a jacket, manufactured from a kind of flag, and some beads, being all they possessed, giving their inhuman pursuers to understand that all should be theirs if they would spare their lives! The wounded native laid down in the bottom of the boat, and from his convulsed frame and trembling lip, *no doubt remained* but that the wound was mortal. The boat then returned on board and we made sail for the Mulgrave Islands [Mili atoll]. Here was another sacrifice, an innocent child of nature shot down, merely to gratify the most wanton and unprovoked cruelty, which could possibly possess the heart of man. The unpolished savage, a stranger to the more tender sympathies of the human heart, which are cultivated and enjoyed by civilized nations, nurtures in his bosom a flame of revenge, which only the blood of those who have injured him can damp, and when years have rolled away, this act of cruelty will be remembered by these Islanders, and made the pretext to slaughter every white man who may fall into their hands (Lay and Hussey 1824: 22).

Two conflicting experiences, one largely positive, the other extremely negative inform Marshallese notions of the foreigner, the *dri-belle*, by mid 1824, according to foreign accounts of these events. The arrivals of increasing numbers of foreigners occurred during -- and likely influenced -- a period of inter-atoll warfare. Lamari, as described by Kotzebue, was the dominant *Irooj* of Ratak, a warrior accustomed to battle and fueled/inspired by the

hatchets, and novelties introduced by and obtained through Kotzebue. At his side Kadu, the publicly designated representative of the Russian monarch, functioned as a powerful symbol of foreign support. The *Globe* arrived in the midst of battles among Ratak chiefs and vengeful attacks between Ratak and Ralik.

### The Whaleship *Globe*

The events associated with the American whaleship *Globe* are broadly significant for Marshallese, for American whalers, for American understandings of the Marshall Islands, and to the Pacific Island region as a whole. The mutiny and murder of the *Globe's* captain at sea, followed by the vengeful murder of the lead mutineer at “The Mulgraves” [Mili atoll] and the subsequent abandonment of the remaining mutineers by six of the crew was only the beginning of a series of dramatic events. Once stranded on Mili, all the remaining sailors (but two) were massacred by Mili natives. The two survivors were rescued by the first US man of war in the region, captained by well-known War of 1812 hero “Mad Jack” Percival. The publication of the survivors’ account of these events and their life among the Marshallese for the two years leading to their rescue contributed to the *Globe's* and the Marshalls’ notoriety.

As word spread of the massacre in the whaling towns along the US eastern seaboard, the Marshall Islands developed a reputation for ferocious natives, who were to be avoided at all cost. These events indirectly impacted the histories of many Pacific Islands, particularly whaling ports, which began to see United States warships protecting merchant ships in the aftermath of the *Globe* events. Mad Jack Percival’s presence in Hawai‘i marked the first American military warship in its waters. On a smaller scale, but no

less important, are the accounts of William Lay and Cyrus Hussey, two young men who the Marshallese deliberately saved from harm, and put to work in the service of their *Irooj*. For two years they lived as captives until they were dramatically rescued by the first US warship in the region, sent specifically to discover the whereabouts of the *Globe's* mutineers and survivors. Because Lay and Hussey learned to speak and understand the Marshallese language, their published descriptions are rich in detail that enhance and support much of Kotzebue's and Chamisso's accounts, while providing the first attempt to explain/translate their understandings of Marshallese social practices. No other foreigners are recorded to have lived among the Marshallese people prior to Lay and Hussey. Unlike Kotzebue's and Chamisso's accounts, Lay and Hussey neither wholly romanticize nor demonize their Marshallese hosts/captors. Their stories provide insight into Marshallese religious beliefs, attitudes and understandings of foreigners, political interactions, strategies of warfare and aggression, and means of harnessing power – foreign power -- for political and economic gain. Their accounts also highlight the precarious existence faced by atoll dwellers who live with unpredictable rainfall and food availability, and depend upon close, reciprocal, inter-atoll alliances to ensure their survival.

Lay, who was taken aside by an elderly couple, describes the first recorded instance of Marshallese violence toward foreigners:

My ears were astounded by the most terrifying whoops and yells... a massacre commenced but little exceeded by the one perpetrated on board the *Globe*. Our men fled in all directions, but met a foe at every turn. Lilliston and Joe Brown fell within six feet of me, and, as soon as down, the natives macerated their heads with large stones. The first whom I saw killed was Columbus Worth. An old woman, apparently sixty years of age, ran him through with a spear, and finished him with stones!

My protectors [the elderly couple], for now they were truly so, shut out the scene by laying down upon me, to hide me from the view of the merciless foe! I was however discovered, and one of the natives attempted to get a blow at me with a handspike, which was prevented by them, when after a few words, he went away.

As soon as the work of death had been completed the old man took me by the hand and hurried me along towards the village . . . Believing myself the sole survivor, the reader must pardon any attempt to describe my feelings when I saw a number of the natives approaching the hut, and, in the midst, Cyrus Hussey conducted with great apparent kindness (Lay and Hussey 1828:42-43).

### Early Ethnographic Accounts

Lay and Hussey were separated and sent to live on different islands of Mili atoll, under the protection of two *Irooj* to whom they considered themselves slaves. Lay lived with *Irooj* Lattuon/Ladjuon and his son-in-law Luckiair, while Hussey lived with *Irooj* Lugoma. When allowed to see each other, their visits were brief, since the Marshallese believed if they were together for too long they might call upon their god to bring other foreigners or calamity among them (Lay and Hussey 1828:47, 54).

Lay describes the islanders' fears when a mysterious ailment that spread through the islands was blamed on the two men:

A small boy came running towards us, and exclaimed, '*Uroit a-ro rayta mony la Wirrum,*' [*Irooj ro renaj mone la William!*] that is, the chiefs are going to kill William. Ladjuan, seeing that I understood what the boy said, he said, '*reab-reab!*' [*Riab, riab!*] it is false. From the pains taken by the natives to keep Hussey and myself apart, it was evident that they were in some measure afraid of us; but from what cause I had yet to learn. . . About midnight I overheard some of the natives in the tent talking about me, and I was now convinced that some injury was contemplated. I then asked them what I was to be killed for. I was taken back to the hut and communicated my fears to my old mistress [wife of Ladjuan], who sympathized with me, but said if the chiefs had determined it, there was no hope for me. I [later] learned that the principal chief had said that it would have been wrong to kill me, firmly believing that the disease with which they had been afflicted had been sent by their God, as a punishment for having killed Payne and the others! The malady having now entirely disappeared, they considered that crime as expiated (1828: 55-56, 57)!

Marshallese ambiguity about these particular foreigners is recorded in the Lay and Hussey account through examples such as those above. Hussey also describes local beliefs that the terrible drought they suffered was a punishment for either allowing the foreigners to live, or for killing their shipmates (1828:98). Yet, despite local fears and uncertainties, the men were highly valued and sought for information, guidance, and forceful foreign weapons.

Many times the Marshallese would ask Lay to fire off the various weapons left ashore by the *Globe*. Their reactions to the weapons were a mix of fascination, fear, and envy:

I frequently fired a musket to please them, but their request; and told them if they would let me have some powder, I would fire off the swivel, left by the *Globe*. They consented, and collected in great numbers, and after I had loaded the gun with a heavy charge, I told them they had better stand back. They said I must set her on fire, and tell them when she was going off, and they would run! I, however, touched her off, when they instantly fell on their face in the greatest panic. When their fears had subsided, they set up howling and yelling with ecstasy! They said, if they should have a battle, I must carry that gun with me, which would alone vanquish their enemies (Lay and Hussey 1828: 60-61)!

The foreign men were sought to participate in battle with a chief of Alu island, Mili atoll, who was in dispute with another *Irooj* of Mili. They were specifically told to prepare their muskets:

One day while fishing, a canoe came to the island; and as soon as the canoe was near enough for the natives in her to be heard, they commence hallooing and making dreadful noises, which is their practice when war is declared. They informed us that the high chief had killed several of the lower chiefs who belonged to the island called Alloo [an islet of Mili atoll]; that *Longerene* had fled to Alloo, his own island; and that the high chief was determined to pursue and kill him. We were ordered to go immediately to his assistance; according we set sail for Milly [Mili islands, Mili atoll], where we found a great number of natives collected for war. . . [Lay] informed me that they were going to fight the other party at Alloo and that the chief had told him that he and I must prepare two muskets, and fight with them. Luttuon sent for me and Lay, and informed us he was about to have a battle,

and that we must prepare to take a part in it. . . The next morning we launched 15 or 16 canoes, containing in all about 200 natives, and set sail for Alloo; where we arrived and landed, and proceeded to a village in order to give battle to the enemy. On learning that the chief of Alloo and his family had fled in a canoe, we returned to our canoes, made sail in pursuit of the chief, but did not overtake him. After returning and spending a day or two at Alloo, we launched our canoes and went to out respective homes, and heard no more of the war (Lay and Hussey 1828:100-101).

Both Lay and Hussey contributed to the families with whom they lived by working to produce food, such as preserved breadfruit and pandanus for daily consumption and for tributes. They admiringly documented fishing and cooking methods, as well as sailing techniques, in their accounts. Word of their integration into and contributions to their host families had spread to the highest chief: "The king had long before heard of our being at the Mulgraves [Mili], and told Hussey he had been repairing his canoe, in order to go to those islands with a view to induce us to live with him" (1828:72).

Perhaps one of the most insightful examples of Marshallese interactions with foreigners is shown in Lay and Hussey's accounts of the islanders' reactions to the US warship, *Dolphin*, which appeared at Mili to rescue the stranded *Globe* crew. The Marshallese sought and questioned each man about the ship's appearance. In addition to considering their responses, the islanders' proposed actions were ultimately brought to their gods for approval or rejection. Both Lay and Hussey were aware of the invocation of the gods upon the foreigners' arrival, though neither man witnesses the secret process of divination.

Hoping for rescue, Lay and Hussey deliberately misled the islanders about the foreigners' intentions and suggested strategies intended to aid their own escape:

There was great excitement in consequence of the appearance of a ship! Seeing the natives were very much displeased at the circumstance, I concealed as well as I

could the gladdening emotions which filled my breast, and surrounded by about three hundred of them, went round a point of land when I distinctly saw a ship standing for land. The displeasure of the natives increased, they demanded to know where she came from, how many men she had in her, etc. I was compelled to tell them that she was not coming to get me, which please them much as they appeared determined I should never leave them (57).

Early in the morning of that day [November 23, 1825], I was awakened by a hooting and yelling of the natives, who said a vessel had anchored at the head of the Island. They seemed alarmed. . . Their God was immediately consulted as to the measure to pursue, but as I was not allowed to be present when he was invoked, I cannot say what was the form of this ceremony, except that coconut leaves were used. Their God, however, approved the plan, which was that they should go to the vessel, or near her, and swim on board, a few at a time, until two hundred were on board, and then a signal was to be given, when they were to throw the persons on board into the water and kill them. Two large canoes which would carry fifty men each were put in readiness, but at first they refused to let me accompany them, fearing that I would inform of their having killed our men, and they would be punished. I assured them that the vessel having but two masts, did not belong to my nation, and I was certain I could not speak their language.

They at length consented for me to go. We arrived within a few miles of the vessel at night, and early the following morning were joined by a number of canoes, which made in all two hundred men. I had only time to see that it was really an armed schooner when I was secreted with their women, about forty in number, in a hut near the shore and the women had orders to watch me close, that I did not get away. Night came, and I was sent for by the principal chief, and questioned closely concerning the schooner.

[On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November] early in the morning, we discovered a boat under sail, standing directly for the place where we were; the natives were considerably agitated with fear, and engaged in planning some method by which to overcome the people in the boat, if they should come where we were. . . The boat was not within one hundred rods of the shore, and *Luttuon* called me to him, oiled my head and body with coconut oil, and gave me my charge how to conduct. I went to the beach accompanied by about 100 of the smartest natives, whom I charged not to manifest a hostile appearance. I hailed the boat in English, and told the crew what the calculations of the natives were, and not to land unless they were well armed. The officer of the boat replied that he would be among them directly and in a few minutes they landed, and when within a rod of us, I ran to Lieutenant H. Paulding, who took me by the hand, asked if I was one of the *Globe's* crew, and inquired my name, etc.

We then retreated to the boat, facing the natives who all kept their seats, excepting the one I called father, who came down among us, and took hold of me to carry

me back, but desisted on having a pistol presented to his breast (1828:57, 63, 64-65).

Although Lay writes about this experience in terms of his own escape, his account includes his understanding of native perceptions of foreigners, their plans to vanquish the unwelcome guests, their fears at the arrival of the large ship, their curiosity about the numbers of men and their purpose for arriving at Mili, their fears of retribution for the murder of the *Globe* crew, and particularly, the significance of securing the God's approval before pursuing any course of action. This is the only account, albeit a foreigner's account, of Marshallese reactions to the arrivals of foreign ships in their midst.

In a few days, Captain Paulding was able to meet with the chiefs of Mili. Lay and Hussey served as interpreters:

The Captain told them he had been sent by the *Head Chief* of his county, to look for the men that had been left there by the ship *Globe* – that he had been informed they murdered all but two – that as it was their first offence of the kind, their ignorance would plead an excuse – but if they should ever kill or injure another white man, who was from any vessel or wreck, or who might be left among them our country would send a naval force, and exterminate every soul on the island, and also destroy their fruit trees, provisions, etc., and that if they would always treat white men kindly, they never would receive any injury from them, but would have their kindness and hospitality reciprocated (67-68).

The story of the *Globe* ends as it began, with westerners' imaginings of their own self-importance in Marshallese perceptions and understandings.

### **Lt. Paulding Makes History**

Lieutenant Paulding's account of the rescue of Lay and Hussey adds important ethnographic information about interactions between Marshallese chiefs and commoners. In an incident that mirrors that of Kotzebue, Lugoma (Hussey's benefactor and master)

tearfully begged Paulding not to take his "son" Hussey away, explaining that he could not get along without his labor.

Later Lugoma pulled Hussey aside and requested that he bring an axe, some cloth, and guns with him upon his future return (Paulding 1970:133-134). Lugoma also attempted to encourage Paulding's protection and military support with the promise of elevating his status and obeying him, making him a chief:

When we were preparing to return on board, Lugoma came to me several times, saying, that I might just as well cut his throat, as to take Huzzy away from him. 'I have no one,' said he, with a distressed look, 'that is equally capable of assisting me, to work my canoe, and now, he is going away with his musket, my enemies can come and kill me.' Finding, at last, that he could not prevail upon us to leave Huzzy, he said, we must bring him back very soon. That, if we were long absent, we should not find him living. He said, that we must bring him clothes, like ours; guns and axes; and that we should share the government of his islet with him, promising to have an abundant supply for us, of all the fruits and vegetables we had planted (160).

In addition, just as Kotzebue experienced, a chief attempted to send his young son away with Paulding, before reversing his decision when he understood that the son would likely never return:

The high chiefs son, who had visited me a number of times before, and to whom I had made presents of trifling value, but important to him, came on board with his father, and expressed a wish to go with me. His father gave his consent, being perfectly willing that he should go; but as there was great probability an opportunity would never offer for him to return, I thought it would be cruel to take him from his native islands, where, in his father's inheritance, he would be so well provided for (162).

### **Significance of the *Globe* Incident and Accounts**

William Lay and Cyrus Hussy's depictions of Marshallese politics, warfare, social interactions, and religious beliefs repeat many of the observations of the Romanzov expedition authors. In these biased stories, Marshallese chiefs are represented as warriors,

priests, and even tyrants. Marshallese appeared to the foreigners to be both frightened and awed by the weapons, clothes, and material wealth brought by their ships. Marshallese leaders enlisted their protection and military support against other Marshallese *Irooj*. The chiefs offered loyal support and generous amounts of food in return for valuable weapons. They further attempted to forge relationships (with stronger ties and greater access) by offering to send their children away with the various captains. The pattern of affiliation with foreigners to gain access to iron, weapons, clothes, labor, and knowledge that serve local priorities and agendas is repeated, and diminished in foreign accounts. The disputes over these valued resources could easily have sparked violence against foreigners, particularly those who arrived as the *Globe* did -- violently.

It was only eight years after the events on Mili that Marshall Islanders attacked the crew of another foreign vessel. From 1833 to 1852, approximately twelve ships and/or their crewmembers experienced violence at the hands of Marshallese. The most violent of these recorded attacks occurred at Ebon, Jaluit, Kwajalein, Namodrik, and Bikini – all Ralik atolls under the control of warrior chief *Iroojlaphap* Kaibuki. The only Ratak attacks occurred at Mili. The influence of inter-atoll politics is absent in these accounts, but surely comes into play. Kotzebue's second visit nearly coincided with the arrival of the *Globe* and its crew. Kotzebue's gifts of 1817 had already been used to wage war on Majuro, and preparations for attacks on Ralik were under way at the time of Kotzebue's return in 1824. The weapons on the *Globe* were desired for battle, according to Lay and Hussy's descriptions. Ralik ideas about foreigners might not have been as positive as those of Ratak, who largely benefited by access to weapons that were used to obtain territorial

victories. Mili, a Ratak atoll closely affiliated with Majuro and its chiefs, might have shared a less positive understanding of foreigners than Wotje, Aur, or Maloelap where Kotzebue's gifts were more directly appreciated. The attacks that occurred at Mili and throughout the *Ralik*s might have easily resulted from inter-atoll rivalries previously impacted through foreign tools, trade, and affiliation. I do not think it insignificant that no attacks ever occurred on atolls where Kotzebue landed.

If Marshallese people were as aggressive as the whalers, sailors, and missionaries feared, why were there not *more* attacks on foreign ships and crews? Significantly, only twelve attacks are recorded to have occurred in over one hundred landings over the course of twenty-four years (1831-1855). Considering the rapid increase in foreign interactions after centuries of relatively little outside contact, the reputation of the evidence of widespread Marshallese brutality is exaggerated.

### MISSIONARIES

Capt. Ichabod Handy, an American captain, was able to trade for coconut oil in the Marshalls despite the Marshallese reputation for fierceness that was broadly proclaimed among sailors. Captain Handy had befriended Ralik *Iroojlaplap* Kaibuki and traded with him and other islanders for nearly seventeen years before he offered to help Rev. George Pierson make contact with the islanders.

Pierson represented the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), an organization formed by the Congregational church and incorporated in Boston, Massachusetts in 1812. By 1820, the ABCFM, had established the first mission in Hawai'i. Approximately thirty years later, in 1852, the ABCFM, along with the Hawaiian

Missionary Society, a branch of the original mission established in Hawai'i by the ABCFM, sent three American couples (the Snows, Gulicks, and Sturges) and three Hawaiian couples (the Oponuis, Kanoas, and Kamukaulas) to Micronesia.

They traveled first to Kosrae (then referred to as Strong's Island, after a Massachusetts governor) where they asked the paramount chief, 'King' George, for permission to set up a mission. The Snows, Oponuis, and Kanoas were granted permission to stay. The Sturges, Gulicks, and the Kamukaulas proceeded to Pohnpei (referred to as Ascension Island. There, with the support of one of the island's most powerful leaders, they were given a prime parcel of land on which to establish their mission (Hezel 1983: 144; Ward 1967: 511-512).

Once the American Board had a toehold in the region, the missionaries' interest in the Marshalls increased. The missionaries believed the Marshalls were in need of being saved from their violent and savage ways: "No people in Micronesia are so badly spoken of by foreigners, especially by commanders of vessels" (in Hezel 1983: 197). They also considered the absence of other foreign influences a great advantage. In September 1855, the Honolulu *Missionary Herald* noted:

[Captain Handy] is very desirous to have missionaries settle upon both these groups of islands especially upon the Radack and Ralick Chains. There are no foreigners residing upon them, and we might preoccupy the ground, and so avoid many difficulties that come from wicked foreigners who have gained influence before the arrival of missionaries (quoted in Browning 1972:33).

When Pierson accompanied Capt. Handy on a trip through the Marshalls in 1855, it was by chance that they came upon the notoriously fierce *Irooj* Kaibuki at Ailinglaplap atoll. Surprisingly, he granted them his protection and support (Browning 1972: 34).

By 1857, only two years after the first meeting with Kaibuki, the missionary group sailed aboard the ABCFM's newly built mission ship, *Morning Star*, to make their home on Ebon atoll. On board were Pierson, Doane, their wives, as well as Hiram Bingham, Jr., the son of the famous missionary to Hawai'i, and a native Hawaiian missionary, Kanoa, and his wife Kaholo. Pierson and Doane were to begin a mission on Ebon, while Bingham and Kanoa were en route to begin a mission in Abaiang in the Gilbert Islands (Crawford 1967:103).

### **A Home on Ebon**

Ebon was selected as the site of the first Marshall's mission for many reasons. First, Ebon was the home of the Ralik chiefs, and was central to the political and economic life of the Raliks. Further, Kaibuki had promised his protection and sent his sister *Lerooj* Neimara with the missionaries to ensure local cooperation and support for their work. Neimara and Mrs. Pierson developed a friendship that was central to the development of the early mission (Ward 1967:438). Ebon was also known as a fertile island that received much rainfall and therefore would have fresh water and more resources for the missionaries new to atoll living.

When the passengers aboard the *Morning Star* arrived at Ebon in November 1857, the Marshallese Pierson befriended at Kosrae a year before surprisingly greeted them.

As the *Morning Star* approached Ebon's harbor, several native canoes came out to meet the ship. The missionary party standing on the rail was amazed to hear a native in the leading canoe stand up and shout, 'Doketor, Doketor!' and 'Missionary!' Then presently, Dr. Pierson recognized the man as being one of a party of Marshall Islanders that a year or more before had been wrecked on Kusaie [Kosrae] and had been befriended by the Snows and Piersons [missionary families] there. Except for the intervention of the missionaries, these 'foreigners' coming from another island would have been killed by the Kusaie natives. During their stay

on Kusaie the party constructed a canoe and in due course of time they returned to Ebon Island, whence they had come on that ill-fated trip, and now one of them was in the welcoming party as the *Morning Star* arrived. Thus did a friendly act prove to be like bread cast upon the waters. Pierson had learned a little of the Marshall language from the ship-wrecked party and now was able to talk with his friends in their own tongue (Crawford 1967: 106).

By 1857 when the first missionaries established a home in the Marshall Islands, they had secured the support of the highest chief, his respected sister, and the general good will of many Ebon resident through their previous interaction on Kosrae. This combination of significant precedents contributed to the initial success of the Protestant mission in the Marshalls.

Similar to earlier Marshallese interactions with foreigners, the ambiguities of fear/respect and desire emerge. Local religious practices centered on avoiding angering the spirits of one's relatives, or *Anij*, who were frequently described as angry and vengeful. Prayers and offerings were made to appease angry spirits, and various sites and landmarks were known to be inhabited by *ekjab*, the spirits the missionaries termed idols. Marshallese fears of angering foreign gods, as well as being simultaneously impressed with the technology, medicine and materials goods of the missionaries, could easily have contributed to the increasing numbers of Marshallese converts. Missionaries translated the ever-present *Anij* (which refers to many gods) to refer to a singular omnipotent God, and chose the term *Irooj* to refer to Jesus as *Lord*, given their understandings of the feudal social structure they perceived. Sermons in the Marshallese language about retribution, punishment, eternal suffering ('sinners in the hands of an angry god') must have strongly influenced a population in which such concepts were prominent and illustrated regularly by all-powerful, sacred chiefs.

Missionaries discouraged native dance, dress, sexuality, violence, idolatry, economics, and challenged the autocratic powers of chiefs. They insisted on observing the Sabbath, which was particularly impractical during breadfruit seasons when the task of preservation required all hands. The Sabbath also prevented the *Irooj* from commanding labor. This practice set boundaries on chiefly authority, and separated chiefs from sacred affairs. Over time, chiefs' roles as mediators were limited to secular, rather than ritual worship matters, particularly as missionaries labeled earlier practices as sinful, and idolatrous.

A small printing press enabled the missionaries to print Bible translations, stories, and school lessons. The Marshallese language was reduced to the fourteen letters of the Hawaiian alphabet (Johnny 1978: 37). Creating a Marshallese grammar, teaching English, basic math, sewing, and music to any student of any age initially, and then later in a classroom setting. They were taught to add, subtract, manage sums, and measure. These skills were taught to everyone, and thus they provided skills and opportunities for Marshallese who wished to trade with or work for foreigners as they arrived and established trading posts and stores. The interest in foreign knowledge and skills served to attract many "converts" to the mission. Dr. Luther H. Gulick, one of the first missionaries to work in the Marshalls (1859-1860), explained in a lecture:

The Missionary is the sole representative of civilization on the Marshall Islands, and is yet the eighth wonder to the inhabitants. His house is the great center of attraction; it is the lodge, the lecture-room, the lyceum, the store, the market house, the exchange, and even the hall of whatever legislation there is (Gulick 1860: 41-42).

## ***Irooj* Relations**

Despite Kaibuki's promise to protect and support the mission, he would never publicly endorse its message, nor convert. The *Irooj* were not always pleased with the work of the missionaries. Upon the Pierson's arrival at Ebon, Kaibuki offered them servants, whom he later dismissed since they were given clothing and dressed better than the chiefs, according to missionary accounts (Bliss 1906: 74-75).

In some cases missionaries and chiefs clashed directly. After Kaibuki's death from typhoid that ravaged the islands in 1863, successive *Irooj*, particularly Kabua Labon *Laplap* (The Great), were more hostile to the missionaries and their followers. One threatened to make *bwiro* [preserved breadfruit] out of his people if they did not continue to produce *bwiro* as tribute during his absence (Crawford 1967:130; Hezel 1983:209).

In another instance, chiefs showed respect for missionaries, even though they disagreed with their views. The act of tattooing held special spiritual significance for Marshallese, who could only perform the art with the approval of the appropriate gods. With the arrival of the missionaries, and a shifting in spiritual understandings, a high chief asked a missionary if tattooing was allowed on Ebon. Since the missionaries didn't understand the religious beliefs associated with the act of tattooing, Rev. Pierson (in the Marshalls from 1857 to 1859) asked the chief why he asked for permission. The chief replied:

This island belongs to Jehovah, since missionaries live on it, and if He forbids our tattooing ceremonies, we will go to another island, where there are no missionaries and which has not been given over to Jehovah, there we will worship the gods of these islands, and will tattoo. They [the chiefs] were then told it was just as wrong to worship false gods upon another island as on Ebon; that Jehovah is the God of all islands and of the whole earth, and no part, or island, belonged to any other god. But this they denied, saying, that as our God [the missionary's god, Jehovah] has no

missionaries and no subjects on the other island, it does not belong to Him. So about seven or eight hundred people left for Jaluit (Bliss 1906: 73).

At times the missionaries were more directly confrontational, as they discouraged local beliefs in *ekjab* by destroying these sacred sites with the challenge that if the spirits were so strong they would rise again. The most well known example of this occurred on Namu atoll when the missionary, Rev. Clinton Rife, (who arrived in the Marshalls in 1894) tipped a sacred basalt pillar, believed to be one of two ancestral sisters that founded the Ralik clans, into the sea (Buckingham n.d., in Pollock 1976: 86; Sam 1988:3).

Missionary successes were also linked to the influence of Hawaiians who worked closely with Marshallese people in the establishment of the mission. According to Bliss (1906) a total of 17 American missionaries and 13 Hawaiian missionaries worked in the Marshalls from 1857-1881 (Appendix I). Of that group, the Americans stayed for one-two year periods and only five *total* worked in the years from 1860 through 1881. The Hawaiians were the backbone of the mission, and each served from 6-11 years on numerous atolls. By 1875 there were churches at 7 atolls, and approximately 200 converts (Hezel 1983: 209). Most of the Hawaiian missionaries had died or left by 1872, and the Marshallese church was Marshallese-led only 15 years after the initial arrival of the American missionaries.

The interactions with the missionaries are important as the first *sustained* foreign interaction in the Marshall Islands, particularly because they were apparently received so positively. In contrast with curious explorers, and violent whalers, missionaries were relatively peaceful and generous. In keeping with models of authority, missionaries, like chiefs, were supernaturally and politically sanctioned. They were foreign, unchallengeable

authorities whose gods were unknown and therefore feared. Yet also, the missionaries displayed great generosity, demonstrating one of the highest valued chiefly traits – *jōj* – that both demonstrates and justifies sacred connections. The redistribution of resources—land, knowledge, food, and material goods – is evidence of access to resources, blessings, sacred approval and status. Missionaries came to redistribute and share; they brought women; they brought Hawaiian missionaries; they worked with the chiefs. The model of incorporating powerful (wealthy) outsiders as tools, weapons, and resources in localized rivalries certainly began before the missionaries’ arrival, and was clearly not challenged in the Marshallese experience of missionary others. Unlike earlier interactions with foreigners, *any commoner* could gain direct access to the resources the missionaries offered.

Eventually, the relations between some chiefs and some missionaries were competitive and antagonistic, even if the economic activities of the missionaries ensured the chiefs’ support for their presence (if not their message of conversion). The economic and social gains of newly educated commoners contributed to missionary popularity in the lower ranks as well. Chiefs appeared uninterested in the proselytizing efforts of the missionaries, and underestimated their economic and political influence on local affairs. The autocratic powers of *Irooj* were gradually restricted, as missionaries and their foreign gods offered previously unknown alternatives. Missionaries constrained chiefly rights over the life and death of their people; they forbade the worship of “idols,” they eliminated religious practices performed by chiefs; they interrupted labor for chiefly tributes, and encouraged commoner education.

## COPRA AND KINGS

Within two years of the missionaries' arrival, Adolph Capelle, employed by the German firm *Stapenborst and Hoffschlager*, established the first trading station and coconut oil factory in the Marshall Islands at Ebon (1859). Within a year, eight German ships had traded there.

The copra economy transformed the Marshalls in the next two decades as numerous foreign traders and ships arrived to purchase and transport the valuable crop. Marshallese *Irooj*, particularly the Ralik *Irooj* were central in the development of the industry. When Kaibuki died of typhoid fever in 1863, Loeak replaced him as *Iroojlaplap*. Thus ensued a generations-long battle for leadership between Loeak and his younger parallel cousin/brother, Kabua, in the Ralik chain while perpetuating practices of using foreign resources and recognition to fuel local rivalries. With the trading center located at Ebon, and then Jaluit (in the 1870s), the Ralik chiefs' influence and authority expanded considerably. The 1880s brought cutthroat competition and the urbanization of Jabor Town, Jaluit atoll. Over thirty vessels made over one hundred calls per year at Jabor in the 1880s -- Jaluit was the busiest port in Micronesia (Hager 1886:121 in Hezel 1983).

Chiefs played a central role in mediating relations with foreign traders and administrative representatives. And foreigners, in turn, deeply influenced chiefly rivalries and opportunities to expand their political and economic influence. The competition between Loeak and Kabua had a dramatic effect on the political and economic development of the islands as the numbers and types of foreigners expanded from the initial American missionaries, to include German, Portuguese, and British traders, and

culminated in Germany's administration of the Marshalls as a Protectorate from 1885-1914.



Figure 74. The hotel at Jaluit.  
TTPI Archive # 2788-06.

### **Final Battles**

The decade saw the last of the traditional territorial battles among *Irooj*. These were largely non-violent displays of modern weapons, purchased from traders, during standoffs between long historic rivalries, particularly over land rights that brought copra profits in the evolving cash economy. On Arno as on Majuro, a violent battle was ended with the negotiating influence of a British captain. That same year a three-year war broke out on Arno atoll between Lijwirak and Lekman 'David' that was finally ended when a British ship captain negotiated a peace arrangement (Hezel 1983:293).

In 1880, Kabua and Loeak staged a final battle that ended when Loeak sailed from Jaluit back to Ebon. Although guns were waved and drums and shrieks filled the air, not a weapon was fired, or a person injured (Hezel 1983:297).

The German pacification of the Marshalls fixed the Marshallese hierarchy forever. An 1886 German report noted that only four 'true' *Irooj* remained in the *Ralik* chain:

Loeak, his younger brother Rijjino, Kabua and his brother, Leit. The remaining chiefs were all *bwirak*, children of *Irooj* and commoner women.

The significance of the Loeak and Kabua rivalry and their interactions with foreigners recalls the interactions of earlier chiefs, and Marshallese conceptions of the nature of these foreign relationships and interactions, in light of very local rivalries. Even more, the patterns and results of their interactions reverberate in contemporary *Ralik* relationships with the United States, particularly in the lease of Kwajalein atoll. Subtle shifts in the extent of chiefly authority and land tenure relations as dominant patterns of interaction with foreigners persist today.

It was under the direction of Loeak and Kabua that key events in Marshall Islands history occurred. From 1863 when the fierce Kaibuki died, through the turn of the century and the death of Kabua in 1910, the Marshalls experienced its most dramatic recorded transformation. To grasp the basis of the rivalry that fueled this transformation requires insight into local understandings of hierarchy and authority, the genealogical foundations of authority, and how it is typically challenged.

#### ***Bwij-in-Irooj* [The Irooj Clan]<sup>22</sup>**

According to the most comprehensive review of *Ralik* chiefly succession available to date (Mason 1995), Lamijwe was mother to three key figures: Kaibuki, the fierce chief who threatened foreign ships, and two daughters, Loj the elder, and Libokean, the younger. Kaibuki fathered a son, Nelu, with Neimakwa, a commoner, which gave Nelu the less-

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<sup>22</sup> The genealogical information which follows is taken from an unpublished report by Len Mason (1995) produced in support of Kabua Kabua's claim for Kwajalein land rights against his cousin then-President Amata Kabua. Dr. Mason's data (particularly about Kwajalein) corresponds closely with Japanese, and German accounts of the post-Loeak inheritance disputes, and defines land rental payments for Kwajalein to this day.

than-*Irooj* status of *Bwirak*. Nelu (also known in German records as Letabalin) became one of the richest landowners on Jaluit with an annual income of 30,000 *marks*. Loj, Kaibuki's sister, was the mother of Loeak, while his younger sister Libokean was the mother of Kabua. Nelu, Lajutok, Loeak, and Kabua were all of the same generation; as parallel cousins, Loeak and Kabua were considered brothers. With Kaibuki's death, a significant event occurred. Not only did Loeak, whose mother was next in line after Kaibuki, inherit the title *Iroojlaplap*, but Kabua, his younger "brother" married Kaibuki's widow, and adopted Nelu. In this way, Kabua attempted to oust his elder brother by seeking to perpetuate the reign of their uncle Kaibuki.

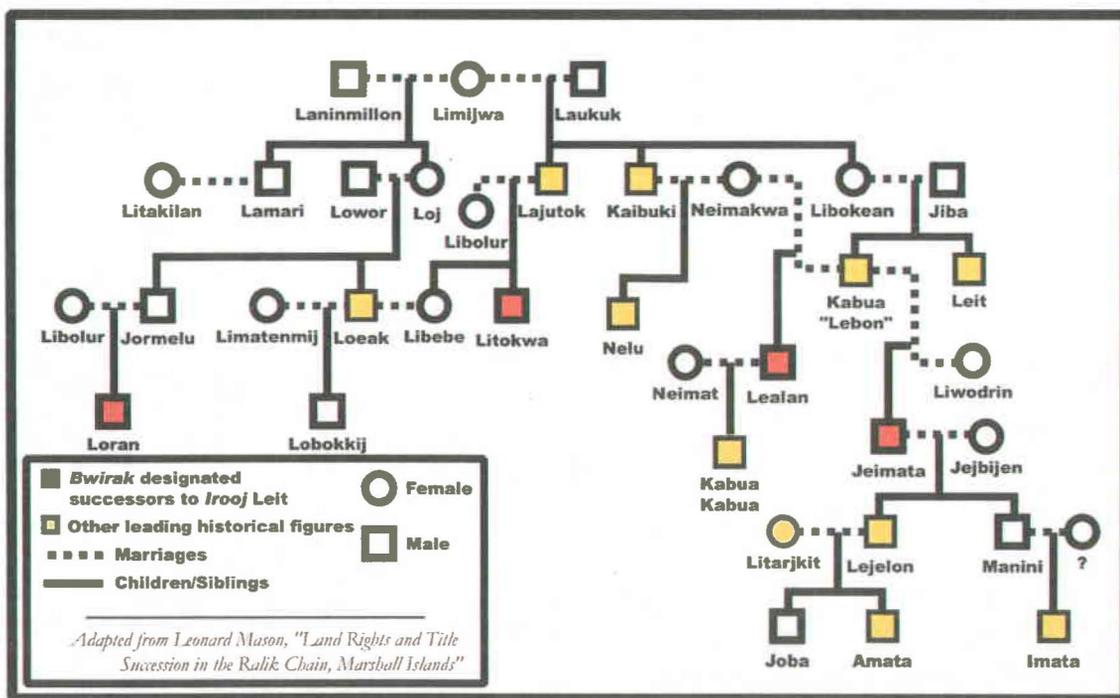


Figure 75. Key traditional leaders in the *Ralik* chain. Genealogy of the *Bwij-in-Irooj*, circa 1820-2003.

In 1885, "King Kabua" and the "other chiefs" of the Marshalls signed a "Treaty of Friendship between the Marshallese Chiefs and the German Empire" (1885). In English, it reads:

King Kabua, as well as the chiefs Lagajimi, Nelu, Loiak and Launa, guided by the desire to protect the legal trade, which is predominantly in German hands, and to provide the German traders with full security, request the protection of His Majesty, the German Emperor, so that they may be enabled to maintain the independence of the area. His Majesty, the German Emperor affords His Protection subject to all legal rights of third parties (Spennemann 2002).

Each section of the treaty begins with the phrase, “King Kabua, as well as the chiefs Lagajimi, Nelu, Loiak and Launa,” stressing the primary significance of Kabua in German-Marshallese relations. This is the *English* equivalent of the German phrase that specifically mentions, “*König Kabua sowie die Hauptlinge*” [King Kabua and the other chiefs]. The Marshallese translation does not explicitly elevate Kabua’s status. The Marshallese document states that the agreement is between Germany, through its named representative, and “*ibben iroj ron in ailing kein. Ekan an iroj Kabua, Lagajimi, Nelu, Loiak, Launa*” [“with the chiefs of these islands: Kabua, Lagajimi, Nelu, Loeak and Launa”].

German recognition of Kabua as “King”, above the other *Iroj*, corroborated Kabua’s own ambitions, and validated his position vis-à- vis Loeak, despite Kabua’s inferior position. Kabua and German interests were mutually supported.



Figure 76. Kabua  
Source: (Kraemer 1896: 214)



Figure 77. Loeak  
Source: (Kraemer 1896:215)

Before his death in 1904, Loeak determined that his land use rights (*en jermal* [work] vs *en lala* [look after]) should go to Litokwa, his wife's brother, (in the same *jowi*, or clan, as Loeak's own children) who was his ally against Kabua, and his brother Jormelu's son, Loran (also of the same *Erroja* clan). Kabua claimed the lands in a court case and won in 1907, though the outcome was overturned when it was learned that Kabua had pressured witnesses -- including his younger brother Leit, an older relative, Jeimata, and others to testify on his behalf. Though the disputed lands were then in Litokwa's hands, the Germans ruled that tribute must be rendered to Kabua for his *Irooj* rights since Litokwa was not *Irooj*, but *Bwirak*. Kabua still continued to threaten the people and traveled around the islands to collect Litokwa's copra share. The people feared him and could not refuse to pay him, despite the rulings of the German government. A year later, the decision was changed again. The land would belong to Kabua, until his death, and then it would be transferred to Litokwa's care.



Figure 78. Litokwa  
Source: Kraemer 1896: 215.

Two years later, in January of 1910, a final ruling altered the arrangement once again and set a pattern for *patrilineal* inheritance for particular plots of Ralik land that continues to the present. The lands in question were divided into four parts, temporarily under the care of only three prominent men: Loran, Kabua, and Litokwa. The land on which Loeak had use rights would be inherited by Loeak's children and watched over until then by Loeak's nephew, Loran. These seventy-five parcels were scattered on Namorik, Jaluit, Ailinglaplap, Namu, and Kwajalein. Kabua was given twenty-five parcels of land on Jaluit, Ailinglaplap, and Namu to care for until his death in the interest of Loeak's heirs. Additionally, he was given twenty *wato*, land plots, to care for that would belong to Loran, Loeak's children, and either Laelan, or Jeimata, Kabua's two sons. *Wato* on Ailinglaplap would belong to either Laelan or Jeimata; land on Kwajalein went to Laelan; and land on Namu and Rongelap went to Jeimata. Finally, the fourth portion of land was designated for Litokwa. It included all the Loeak land in Ebon, and some land on Ailinglaplap.

Six months after this settlement Kabua died. Leit, his younger brother, succeeded him. After Kabua's death, the Loeak land that Kabua once watched (*en lalé*) was separated from the *bwij-in-Irooj* lands that were matrilineally inherited. The land Kabua watched for Loeak went through Loeak's nephew, Loran, to Loeak's son, Lobokkij. Although Lobokkij and Litokwa were both *bwirak*, they assumed the title of *Iroojlaplap*. Thus two new chiefdoms' were formed: that of Loran, who was quickly replaced by Loeak's son Lobokkij, and Litokwa (Mason 1995, Yanaihara 1938). Leit was the sole remaining *Irooj* of the *bwij-in-Irooj*, and the designated leader over the largest landholding in the Ralik; all the *eon-in-meto*, the islands North of Ailinglaplap were under his domain.

### **A GERMAN PROTECTORATE**

Capelle and Co. were pressured to sell their company to "the Firm" that had by the mid-1880s merged with Hensheim and Company. After the establishment of a German Protectorate over the Marshall Islands in 1885, the newly enlarged Firm was renamed *Jaluit Gesellschaft*, (Jaluit Company), and given the responsibility for the islands' administration. The Company collected taxes, made and enforced regulations, and gathered demographic information for the German administration.

#### **Protectorate Policies**

Kabua, Loeak, and other traditional leaders were leading lives of luxury, and debt, as the Germans ruled the Protectorate indirectly through the *Irooj*. Because of the strong ties to the Jaluit Company the *Irooj* grew prosperous and extremely wealthy, making more per year than the single German commissioner stationed at Jaluit (Hezel 1983). Both Loeak

and Kabua owned schooners and dressed their wives in fine silks. They hired Europeans to captain their ships and collect their copra share from the other atolls.

The focus on copra production and the economic exploitation of the islands, through native labor and enticements, altered relationships to the land, which, in turn, altered social obligations and responsibilities. Prior to the cultivation and production of coconuts for processing, the land was viewed as the source of life and food. As time and effort were put into harvesting crops, land took on an increased economic value, and relationships to land were altered. Ownership, possession became more significant when the producers were earning individual profits from their labor. Produce was sold to foreigners, as well as shared as part of a local hierarchical system of mutual reciprocity and obligation.

Where land took on this added economic value, land disputes occurred, and land management became more important. The commoners, or *kajur*, were re-designated *dri-jerbal* (those who work); the head of each lineage, the *alab*, took on the role of land manager responsible for the workers, and served as a liaison between the *Irooj* and the *dri-jerbal*.

The German administrators strengthened the power of chiefs, and ensured their sustained economic and social dominance, by instituting a tax on all copra produced, with a significant portion (approximately one-third to one-half) going to the chiefs to secure their favor and support. Only in the Marshall Islands were these taxes paid in copra. In order to distribute the income and encourage steady native labor, and incentive, the proceeds from the first half of the year's harvest went to the chiefs, as tribute and tax, and the second half of the year's harvest went to the workers to be distributed.

## **Empowering Chiefs**

Germans empowered chiefs by increasing their control over the land. According to early accounts, *Irooj* and *kajur* held equal rights to land, and it was considered an abuse of *Irooj* power to sell or give away land independent of the other landholders. Whether this power was deliberately or unintentionally enhanced, chiefs were granted more power over the land by being permitted to make land deals with the Germans and traders without the consent of the commoners. Despite chiefs' greater economic power, their political power was strictly limited by the German authorities whose regulations succeeded in eliminating warfare among the islands, and limited some of the 'despotic' or 'autocratic' powers of chiefs (e.g., the power over life/death).

Warfare, which had been previously prohibited as noted above, resulted in a calcification of land claims in the late 1800s. Prior, the distribution of land among powerful *Irooj* was fluid and constantly negotiated through changing alliances, the availability of resources, and through battles. German records of land ownership, which also later served the Japanese administration, are the basis for US payments for the rental of Kwajalein atoll, war reparation funds, and explanations of contemporary land rights in the Republic today.

## **Traditional Leaders and Continuing Disputes**

At the turn of the century, and in the decade that followed, the Marshallese people suffered great losses. Bwirak Nelu died in 1902, leaving his matrilineal inheritance to his younger half-brother Laelan (of the same mother, Neimakwa). Two years later, in 1904, Loeak died and was eventually succeeded by his own son, Lobokkij, after his younger brother's son, Loran, was deemed an unacceptable leader. A year later, a typhoon destroyed

all the taro crop on Arno, which then became another copra plantation. The number of foreigners on Jaluit grew to thirty and then, due to British protest, the Jaluit Company's administration was made subject to the German governor at New Guinea (1905). In the midst of these dark days, Kabua's youngest son, Jeimata, fathered two children: Lejelon, and Mannini. These two men were future fathers to the first two presidents of the Republic of the Marshall Islands: Amata and Imata Kabua, respectively.

On July 4, 1910, Kabua *Laplap*, also known as Kabua "The Great" died. Laelan's wife had just given birth to a son, Kabua Kabua, who was named in honor of his grandfather. Kabua Kabua was later to dispute claims to land rights with Amata and Imata, his younger relatives who succeeded in usurping his claim using the modern RMI nation's western court system (Mason 1995; cf. Kabua v. Kabua case in chapter 4).

Kabua *Laplap* was succeeded by his younger brother Leit, the last of the *Irooj* in the Ralik chain. Kabua's portion of the disputed Loeak inheritance was then distributed to Loeak's son, Lobokkij and Litokwa, (Loeak's wife's nephew) and Leit (on the Kabua side). Leit received this portion of the formerly disputed lands as well as his matrilineal inheritance formerly under the care of his elder brother, Kabua. All the *Bwirak* (Litokwa, and Lobokkij) were redesignated *Iroojlaplap* (See Figure 75).

The first decade of the century also brought some attempt at land purchase by the Germans who desired to increase their copra production even more. The German Station director, a new designation in 1911 that linked the administrator to German New Guinea and the governor's authority, approached Leit to purchase five atolls for the sum total of 18,600 German marks. He intended to purchase Rongerik, Rongelap, Ailinginae, Bikini and

Wotho. Instead, Leit refused the offer and demanded 40,000 Marks for Bikini alone. German authorities believed that he was counseled by German traders and missionaries in his resistance and belligerence. They haggled over prices and Leit finally decided not to sell a single parcel of land to the Germans, even though they had raised their offer substantially (Merz 1912; Mason 1995). Leit's refusal to sell land to the Germans shows the agency of Marshallese leadership in protecting themselves and their land.

### **A JAPANESE ADMINISTERED MANDATE**

At the close of World War II in 1914, the German governor was pressured to formally surrender all German territory to the British. Japan was mandated the Pacific islands North of the Equator; Britain was to receive those to the South (Peattie 1988). Within two weeks of Germany's surrender, Japanese Naval forces occupied the islands.

One of the first tasks of the Japanese in the Marshalls was the settling of land disputes that followed *Irooj* Leit's death in 1914.

Small chieftains who have not the right to succeed as great chieftains when all the persons who are legitimately in the order of succession are dead [is an occasion for breaking the regular order of succession.]. An instance of this kind occurred when the great chieftain Rate [Leit, Kabualaplap's successor] of the western group died [1914] and left no successor so that the four chieftains of the order of *Bwirak elap* or *Bwirak*, namely Rairan [Laelan], Chemata [Jeimata], Ritkwa [Litokwa] and Roran [Loran] took the late great chieftain's land and divided it among themselves and each assumed the position of great chieftain. These great chieftains, being in direct *paternal line* [emphasis added], could not have assumed the position if the step had not been initiated by the Japanese government, which asked them to follow the Japanese system of inheritance in this case. This incident took place at the time of the Japanese military occupation of the islands (Yanaihara 1939:166).

According to Japanese records quoted above, when Leit died in 1914, without an heir, or clansman to inherit the lineage's land, it was divided among "Rairan [Laelan],

Chemata [Jeimata], Ritkwa [Litokwa] and Roran [Loran] in a *patrilineal* line of succession.” Laelan was Kabua’s oldest child. Laelan thus inherited this land through his father’s lineage, in addition to land he had obtained through his mother’s lineage when his older half-brother Nelu died in 1902. Jeimata was Kabua’s youngest son by a different woman. He inherited the original Loeak-Kabua-Leit land patrilineally. Litokwa and Loran, close allies of Loeak a generation prior, finally received their share of the inheritance that Loeak had requested for them, now that it was no longer in the care of Kabua or Leit. Two Loeak allies (Loran and Litokwa) and two Kabuas (Laelan and Jeimata) shared the ownership of the largest portions of the Ralik islands.

Although not stated in the above quotation, a land dispute among the ancestors of these individuals had been settled by the German government just four years prior, that established a precedent among these ‘chiefs’ for patrilineal inheritance. Leit was the last “true” *Irooj* in the Marshall Islands. Those who succeeded him were *Bwirak*, and born of commoner mothers.

### **Mandate Methods**

In 1917 the League of Nations granted Japan a Class C mandate over the former German territory of Micronesia. The Class C Mandate had three main requirements stipulated by the League of Nations. First, the region was not to be militarized; second, the mental and material welfare of the native populations were to be protected and developed, and third, an annual report was submitted to the League of Nations.

In compliance with these requirements, the Japanese administration initially modeled itself upon the prior German leadership that used a system of indirect rule to

administer the islands. They further sought to improve infrastructure with native labor (roads, docks, administrative buildings, school) and established a public education system for islanders in December 1915 (Yanaihara 1939, 241). Separate schools were created for islanders (*kanaka*) and Japanese children. The islanders' public school was compulsory for three years with a possible additional two years for excellent students. Students between the ages of eight and fifteen were required to attend. Fourteen mission schools supplemented the public schools in 1936. In the Marshalls, the district base was located at Jaluit and the entire Marshalls district was known as the "Jaluit administrative area." Since not every atoll had a school, transportation to and accommodations on atolls with schools significantly affected attendance. Also the value of a Japanese education was low to the islanders. For a very select few, education (namely, fluency in Japanese language) was an opportunity to improve the standard of living through access to employment, wages, and material goods. Public school students were taught Japanese language, arithmetic, geography, science, painting, singing, gymnastics, handicrafts (*amimono*, a Japanese word is still used to refer to these items), agriculture, and domestic science. Half the school's total hours (twelve per week) were devoted to the teaching of the Japanese language (Yanaihara 1938).

The requirement for education impacted the traditional social hierarchy because it allowed commoners to gain skills and opportunities for social advancement unattainable otherwise. Successful students went on to work as teachers, policemen, or employees of Japanese businesses. The Japanese administration's policy of *legal* equality and thus "universal" access to education among islanders contributed to the disruption of the social system that had already begun during the German era.

Following the German model, the Japanese administration prohibited the sale of land to foreigners, and established regulations that also prohibited the transfer, sale, or mortgage of land between Marshallese people without the approval of the Japanese administration. Continued also were the functions of chiefs and *alabs*, and the requisite poll tax they collected. Gradually the Japanese government instituted changes in their administration that negatively impacted the authority and status of the *Irooj*.

### *Irooj* Impacts

As noted, according to Japanese law, chiefs and commoners were legally equal. This meant that chiefs were as punishable for their offenses as commoners. *Irooj* were publicly reprimanded for their crimes, as were the *kajur*. Chiefly authority also declined through policy shifts in 1922. Whereas prior to that year, Japanese ruled 'indirectly' through the chiefs, afterward, they ruled more directly through their own designated islander leaders. In the "Rules for Native Village Officials," each village was to have a village chief and a village headman, whose duty it was to pass along rules and orders from the Japanese, and also to record births and deaths for government reports (Yanaihara 1938: 262). Village heads were considered minor and subordinate to chiefs, though their administrative functions were identical to them. The Marshall Islands had sixteen headmen and only two chiefs.

The village chiefs and village headmen of the Kanakas are in most cases the old chiefs or great chieftains who have been appointed to these new posts by the government. As far as their positions in the political system is concerned, these village heads are no more than monitors, subordinate officials of the government, but there are those who retain the power of the chieftain or great chieftains, although, it is much reduced compared with former days . . . Of the 16 headmen in the Jaluit administrative area, there are three who were former great chieftains, six who were chieftains, six common clansmen and one of mixed German and native

blood. The administrative policy of the government is approaching direct rather than indirect rule. (Yanaihara 1938:262-264)

There were some inherent difficulties explored in the creation of these positions.

First was the question of jurisdiction. A chief's jurisdiction as a village official was not always the same as the sphere of his influence as a traditional chief.

In the Marshalls a single island was often ruled by several chieftains whose territories overlapped and elsewhere in the same group a number of islands were under the control of a single chieftain. Village headmen were appointed for each of the atolls regardless of the former spheres of influence of the old chieftains. The village headman whose old social status was that of a great chieftain has not necessarily the traditional power of a great chieftain over the new area under his jurisdiction; he is merely an organ in the new administrative system. The entire Marshall Islands are under the jurisdiction of two village chiefs, one for the eastern and the other for the western group. The eastern group was under the village headman of Maloelap, but after his death the position became vacant; the western group is now under the village chief Rairan who is also the village headman of Jaluit. Neither the eastern nor the western group had ever been organized into a confederation of tribes or villages, and the present appointment of a village chief for each of the two groups of the Marshalls is not based on native custom. In other words, the spheres of jurisdiction of the village chiefs and village headmen in the Marshalls were determined arbitrarily by the government. The system was actually originated by the German government in 1878 when it concluded a protective treaty with Kabua who rules over Jaluit Island and made him Great Chieftain of the *Ralik* (western) Group of the Marshalls. According to native custom this treaty did not bind the other chieftains of the group, but it vested Kabua with nominal control over the whole western group and gave Germany full sovereignty over the territory. (Yanaihara 1938:264-265)

Of primary importance was the question of jurisdiction and authority. Second was the fact that some of the chiefs selected as headmen were unskilled bureaucrats and thus needed assistance, and interpreters, to perform their designated tasks. With local administrative approval, chiefs were able to select a policeman and secretary to assist them in their tasks. The high status of chiefs also prohibited them from performing the tasks required. The assistants served as intermediaries between chiefs and villagers, and between chiefs and Japanese administrators. Since the assistants, paid only by the chief and from his

salary, performed nearly all the chief's duties, the chief himself was for the most part, superfluous as the Japanese moved from indirect rule through chiefs to a more direct administration of the villages.

Villagers had little choice but to obey the regulations brought to them by the village head, even when conflicting with those of the chiefs, since any offense was reported and punished by the Japanese authorities (often enacted by the Marshallese policemen). It was quite difficult to ignore, or disobey Japanese regulations, and according to participants in my research who shared their experiences of the Japanese administration with me, they lived in fear of either being beaten in school for not doing their homework, or being paraded around the village as punishment for an offense (J. Walsh 1994, fieldnotes).

Further weakening of the *Irooj* occurred when the Japanese administration prohibited the practice of commoner tribute to chiefs. Tributes had changed drastically over the years when a monetary economy altered traditional relationships between chiefs and commoners, and the people and the land. Before, the produce of the land was brought to the chief for distribution -- the chief was offered the best, the "first fruits" of the land but the remaining produce was distributed among all those who worked and lived there. Once the amount of produce changed, since many consumables were able to be purchased, and more effort went into the production of copra for sale instead of the cultivation of food crops, the commoners often had little to bring to the chiefs, and thus they only brought the "first fruits" to recognize the rights of the chief to the produce of the land. They no longer depended on the chief to distribute what was grown. In this way, tributes became gifts, rather than obligations. Yet, still at the time of the tributes, chiefs

would provide gifts of canned foods, rice, biscuits, and bread to offer the people in return (Yanaihara 1938:76). Yanaihara notes: “gifts are often brought unwillingly, as at Jabor, a town in Jaluit, where the people sell all of their important catch from the sea and bring a small share to their chieftain” (1938:76). Since people had stopped bringing their produce to the chiefs for redistribution on a regular basis, the chiefs then took all things brought to them as gifts. To insure popular support, they also give gifts in return, an alteration of the traditional redistribution process, and then entertained clansmen with gifts and expensive, huge feasts. The Japanese government, concerned that the cost of these feasting events was too much, prohibited the tributes on Jaluit as of 1925 (Yanaihara 1938:172). Yanaihara claimed that since that time the feasting ceased to be practiced except in rare instances and in secret (Yanaihara 1938:172). While the cessation of tributes was meant to assist the chiefs, it ultimately destroyed yet another traditional means of chiefly interaction and reciprocity with their clan folks.

In another misguided attempt to assist chiefs, the Japanese administration altered the one-half year copra production division set up by the Germans. As *dri-jerbal* [workers] grew shrewder about the copra tax collection, the chiefs' incomes shrank. The workers found ways to reduce the amount submitted toward the chiefs' incomes and to increase their own incomes by holding back crops to reduce copra in the second half of the year. The chiefs were unable to pay their debts to the merchants since they were unable to stretch their income from the first six months of the year into the second. Considering the chiefs unfairly treated, the copra tax was altered so that merchants paid one-half the value of the copra they purchased directly to the chiefs and the other half to the workers. In

return, the chief paid the whole amount of the tax charged upon those who worked on his land (Yanaihara 1938:174). The market price of copra was fixed at eight *sen*, during the German era; the chief was paid four *sen* per kilo, half the value of the copra. In the 1930s, despite rising copra prices, the four *sen* per kilo amount was set as the maximum per kilo amount for the chiefs (Yanaihara 1938:174). They no longer received fifty percent of the copra share.

The further distribution of copra income in 1938 varied considerably between chiefs and commoners. How the *Irooj* redistributed his share varied by island chain. In the Ratak chain, the chief shared one-half half of his share with the lesser chiefs, and in the *Ralik* chain, the amount was not set, but given as a gratuity to the lesser chiefs (Yanaihara 1938:174). Yanaihara estimated that the commoner earned approximately fifteen *yen* per year, while members of chiefly families gained about 420 *yen* per year. *Iroojlaplap* incomes varied from four hundred to several thousand *yen*, while lesser chiefs' earned 100-400 *yen*, or as much as a few thousand *yen* per year (Yanaihara 1938:174-175).

The Marshall Islands was the only site where the poll tax was paid in copra, not cash, from the natives. Only in the Marshalls, the poll tax was an 'island tax' instead of an 'individual tax' as it was in the other administrative areas. The tax funds were received directly from the chiefs (Yanaihara 1938:270). The poll tax of 220 tons of copra during the German era was increased to 234 tons during the Japanese administration. This flat rate of 234 tons did not increase, despite the increase in copra production during the years of the administration. In 1914, 2,940 tons of copra was produced; by 1936, even though copra

production rose to 5,470 tons, the percentage collected as tax dropped from eight to four percent of the crop.

The Japanese also recognized the change in chiefs' responsibilities in a monetary economy, and determined that chiefs must provide for the medical expenses of his people, as a variation of his traditional responsibility for native welfare. With the improved transportation system to and from Jaluit, the number of patients treated at the hospital in Jabor increased. Chiefs were discovered to have occasionally rejected the certificates guaranteeing payment (required in advance of treatment, somewhat like modern health insurance) because of the heavy burden of so many individuals coming for treatment at Jaluit. In the late 1920s chiefs agreed to pay half the bills of those who stayed at their home atolls or visited one of the four smaller health facilities among the atolls. Yanaihara noted that at this point, "The feudal system of the *gens* society is costing the chieftain a great deal more than it is benefiting him" (Yanaihara 1938:175).

A further obligation of chiefs imposed by a foreign money economy, became the provision of transportation for family and clan members with whom he traveled on the Japanese vessels. *Hosting relatives is a chiefly obligation, but with the increase in transportation provided by the Japanese boats, chiefs also were in many cases obligated to pay for boat fares*<sup>23</sup>. Commoner understanding of these chief's obligations are important to note:

In many cases the clansmen are themselves meeting their own expenses, for to receive benefits from the chieftain implies a corresponding obligation on the part of the clansmen to offer tribute or render manual service. (Yanaihara 1938:176)

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<sup>23</sup> This practice continued to this day and will be examined in greater detail in later chapters, particularly when comparing new chiefs, government officials, and elites in Majuro today are sought after for airfare, medical assistance, school tuition, etc.

While chiefs still maintained control over their land, they had lost much political and economic power in these changes. Many of the chiefs could scarcely make ends meet with all their new Japanese-designated cultural obligations that required money. They were losing the respect of the populace as they served Japanese interests through their bureaucratic roles. Their original autocratic authority was at the mercy of Japanese laws and administrators, and they were held accountable to Japanese laws to the same degree as the commoners beneath them.

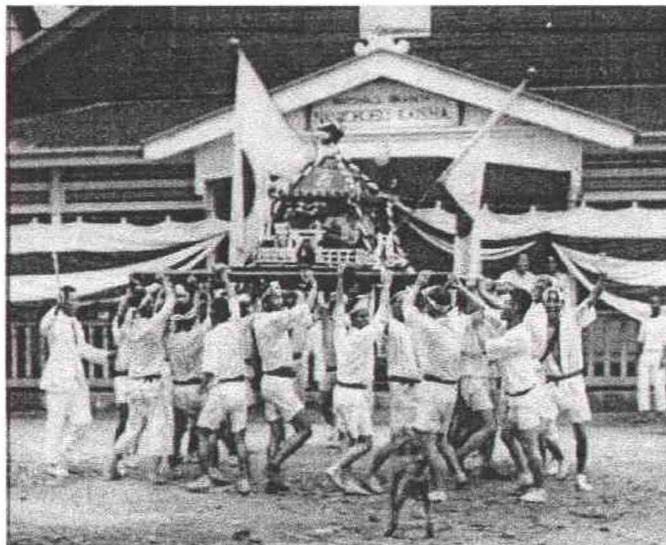


Figure 79. NBK sponsors the celebration of the Emperor's birthday on Jaluit.  
TTPI Archives 27-8810.

The Japanese administration contributed to the monetization and structural development of the islands. Administrative policies gradually reduced the power of chiefs to figurehead bureaucrats. Commoners, while not considered equal to Japanese, were given legal equality with chiefs. They were educated and given positions of responsibility in the communities, and in some cases held more power in their islands than traditional chiefs.

The continued exploitation of the land for copra, more deeply engrained the changing meaning of land that began during the German era. Land had monetary value,

and the cultivation of land was the main economic activity. Land disputes increased, while tributes to traditional leaders nearly ceased. The incentives for increased involvement in the monetary economy were difficult to resist. The comparative value of the subsistence economy, of fishing and providing for one's family, offered few opportunities to explore the new commodities available, or to take advantage of easier, more convenient modes of transportation such as the *tima* [steamer].

### **BAR BWEBWENATO [TELLING STORIES AGAIN]**

These recorded events in Marshallese history over the past two hundred years inform the contemporary political relationship between the RMI and US in the early twenty-first century. Long-established patterns of hierarchical interaction between chiefs and commoners, and between third-party foreigners and chiefs or commoners persist. The use of the foreigner and foreign resources to serve local ends and rivalries is as apparent in Kabua's "the Great's" relationship with Germans, as it is in a different Kabua's relationship with the United States. The local use of Kotzebue's axes, and tools to enhance inter-atoll warfare resonates in the competition and jealousy that emerge today between the "Four Atoll" recipients of nuclear testing compensation and the rest of the nation. The practice of offering children to ships for the perceived benefits to be gained from the knowledge, technology, and wealth of foreign visitors is recalled in the very recent trend of Marshallese parents offering their children for adoption by Americans (Walsh 1999).

Patterns of Marshallese interaction with foreigners clearly evolve from local understandings of their own chiefs and visiting chiefs; their ideas about appropriate interaction with authority -- the fear, awe, and curiosity -- that Kotzebue highlights and that

Lay, Hussey, Paulding, and the early missionaries echo. Yet, also present in these accounts is Marshallese gratitude for chiefly protection and guidance, reciprocated in loyalty and service, based upon a common appreciation of *jojij* [generosity, kindness].

In this sense foreigners who arrived in the Ralik and Ratak atolls prepared to give and offer their services, share their knowledge, and appreciate Marshallese skills and ways, are perceived as having *jojij*. The presence of their gifts, the wealth they bring to share, mirrors the wealth and redistribution of valued resources by visiting Marshallese chiefs. Every gift involves both giver and recipient in a larger circle of providers and recipients to which Marshall Islanders are well attuned. Accepting gifts is obligation, the beginnings of reciprocal relations, and the establishment of ties that bind. Offering gifts promises support, protection, refuge, security and highly valued dependents. If an *Irooj's* strength is literally the *kajur*, the greater numbers of dependents a chief can support, the greater is his wealth, his approval, and his power. The generous redistribution of materials and services not only elevates, but reveals -- even constitutes -- the status of the giver, while enabling subordinate others to establish loyal, dependent ties as they further redistribute wealth and resource.

The patterns of incorporating the foreign into the local schema by accepting and exchanging gifts, is the first step of affiliation. In this hierarchical context, the most generous foreigners are historically the most favored and understood, and secure the strongest ties of loyalty and service.

The German-established system of indirect rule functioned to enhance the status of German traders and administrators who controlled access to desired material goods while

further strengthening the status of chiefs who became the liaisons to those goods, and later re-distributed them among their followers. Kabua knew this instinctively, while Loeak was less interested in competing with the lower-ranking Kabua, and less interested in the foreigners, in general.

In sharp contrast to the German Protectorate administration, the Japanese Mandate after 1922 was detrimental to Marshallese chiefs. *Irooj* no longer controlled access to foreign resources, and in many cases their lack of a Japanese education prevented their access. The financial and political benefits of traditional authority were replaced with increasing responsibilities and decreased political power. The connection between culture and cash, power and prestige is evident in the ways chiefly authority varied during the German and late Japanese administration of the Marshall Islands. While it seems apparent that indirect rule encouraged chiefs toward selfish exploitation of their people, it might also be observed that colonial administrators were also more easily exploited in this model. As particular chiefs' powers ballooned with their new wealth and influence, German control clearly shrank. The reliance on a court system to proclaim regulations and to punish offenders was only as effective as the military power of German ships that circulated throughout the islands.

The decline in chiefly authority under Japanese rule, was closely tied to the chief's decline in access to the resources desired by their people, and the restructuring of responsibilities that were designated to bureaucratic representatives, rather than traditional chiefs. Chiefs were farther and farther removed from meaningful economic and political

spheres. By the end of the Japanese administration chiefs had become figureheads without any economic or political power.

These examples and those of the missionaries, explorers, whalers, and traders reveal continuing processes and patterns of forging indebtedness and dependence, of accessing foreign wealth, redistributing it, and maintaining strong ties of reciprocity, and loyalty. These patterns have framed Marshallese-foreign interactions for centuries, and continue to transform and mediate globalizing forces in Marshallese lives.

Using Western historical accounts of interactions in the Marshalls highlights foreign agendas in which particular *Irooj* emerge as “key figures” -- the prominent allies and enemies of foreign who explore, exploit, convert, or claim islands and islanders. How might the on-going historical rivalries between and among *Ralik* and *Ratak Irooj* through the centuries provide the stage for foreigners to be viewed as “key players” -- be they Russian, American, German, or Japanese -- in a Marshallese drama? In an attempt to avoid some of the inevitable disjuncture in representing Western accounts in the framework of localized histories of *Ralik* and *Ratak Irooj* (and vice-versa), I have attempted to highlight the dominant chieftainships of the period, and their relationships and rivalries to explore the ways Marshallese have also examined, exploited, even converted, claimed, and occasionally killed, many of the foreigners who appeared at their shores.

The colonial endeavors previously presented occurred in a *Marshallese society* on atolls in *Ralik* and *Ratak*, in which *Irooj* and *kajur* have lived and interacted in culturally patterned ways for centuries. Colonial practices, policies, and interactions while unequal, do not necessarily deny Marshallese their ability to choose, use, and interpret a foreign

presence toward their own ends. A closer examination of Marshallese chiefs interactions with Americans in the processes of decolonization and nation building reveals the expert ability of Marshallese chiefs to use foreign concepts and materials in an increasingly global/local context, despite foreign interpretations and imaginings.

Within a time frame of approximately 150 years, *Irooj* in the *Ratak* and *Ralik* island chains have served as warriors, priests, feast makers, bureaucrats, businessmen, and finally, presidents. Acknowledging changes in chiefly authority and spheres of influence is a common endeavor; it is equally important to recognize that *Irooj* continue to serve as intermediaries who access and redistribute resources for their people.

## CHAPTER 4 *IROOJ RO AD* [OUR CHIEFS]

*Irooj in jela.* An *Irooj* knows (best).

*Irooj elan lojilnin.* An *Irooj* has many ears (spies).

*Irooj elan lonin.* An *Irooj* has many mouths (to feed; is responsible for many; also, greedy).

*Irooj elan jilu lojen.* An *Irooj* has three stomachs: one for food, one for goods for his people, and one for gossip.

*Jede ak eo.* Look up to the frigate bird, pay attention to the *Irooj*, the one that flies highest. (*Amata Kabua Customary Titles and Inherent Rights*)

*Jab alkoj pien ak.* Don't twist the wings of the frigate bird. This proverb is used when someone is about to refuse a present or actually refuses it. Every gift, no matter how small must be accepted; refusal is a serious insult to the donor. One does not mistreat a person he is counting on. . .and whoever twists the wings of the eagle of the sea makes it impossible for him to fly in the upper regions. This is similar to 'Don't bite the hand that feeds you'; and 'Don't look a gift-horse in the mouth.'

(*Jabonkonnaan in Majel* [Wisdom from the Marshall Islands] 2000).

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Today Marshallese talk about *Irooj* is as contradictory as ever. Like the diverse characterizations revealed in the *jabonkonnaan* above, chiefs are trusted to know, to provide for, to look after, and yet are also known to be jealous, easily offended, and spiteful. One is well warned to be careful how one speaks in public, and who one might offend. Yet, more and more, Marshallese people are speaking out about their chiefs and the others who fly, like the *ak* [frigate bird], in the upper regions of Marshallese society today.

These more frequent and more vocal criticisms take many forms. People play with the proverbs of the past, in jokes such as, *Irooj innuk* [*Irooj* don't know], and reinterpret

them in informal conversation, noting that the expression *Irooj elan lonin* is more about the difficulty of satiating a chief's own greed, rather than his people's hunger. Talk about chiefs, whether critical or constructive, emerges from collective and contested understandings and expectations of chiefs' rights, roles, and responsibilities.

What are the origins of today's expectations? How can one examine or explore the multiple sources of chiefly authority in contemporary societies without glorifying an idealized past, or even constructing one? How do we get at the cultural models that shape current beliefs, values, and opinions of traditional leadership? Recognizing the limitations of cultural representations, and the importance of historicizing cultural phenomena and social change, this chapter draws upon the previous chapter's exploration into interactions between chiefs and foreigners to historicize the revision/transformation of Marshallese chiefly models as American colonial administrations interacted with powerful traditional leaders.

This chapter has multiple goals. I highlight the ways idealized models of chiefly authority are engaged in shared, popular understandings and expectations of *Irooj* that continue to be contested, contradicted, and transformed through colonial experiences and political development. The chapter explores the ways the Marshallese experience of World War II influenced evaluations and understandings of the US, as a powerful protector, and generous benefactor. Further, I examine how transactions between the United States and Amata Kabua, the nation's first President and *Iroojlaplap*, broadened chiefly jurisdictions as various American colonial administrations (Navy and Department of the Interior) reinforced or deliberately challenged the powers and roles of chiefs, and how America's

*economic relationships with particular chiefs (through land leases) ultimately enlarged the economic and political spheres of 'traditional' chiefly authority. Finally, the chapter offers conclusions about the ways ambiguous and conflicting American interests in Marshallese cultural assimilation, preservation, militarization, and democratization enhanced the agency of Marshallese leadership who persistently challenge American influence in Marshallese political spheres.*

### **FOREIGN CHIEFS**

#### **US Lomoren [American Saviors]**

Marshallese refer to the period during which American forces bypassed, invaded, and fought the Japanese on their islands as *ien bata eo* [wartime]. The experience of World War II in the Pacific left an indelible mark on Pacific Islanders' understandings of their place in the world. Serving as a battleground for large, powerful, opposing nations, the entire Pacific felt the effects of World War II at various levels. From the personal experiences of loss -- of land, of cultural artifacts, of family members killed in battle as scouts, soldiers, or innocent bystanders -- to the recognition of powerlessness in the face of unimaginable destruction and force, Pacific Islanders' previous notions of power, strength, and terror were almost literally blown away. Never before had the islanders witnessed first hand anything near the magnitude of the battle of World War II in the Pacific (White and Lindstrom 1989; Poyer, et al 2001; Carucci 1989).

Carucci notes that the source of the powerful American force(s) may be linked to cultural models in which chiefs are viewed as foreign, distant, powerful, sacred, and mysterious (1989). Like the warrior chiefs of the pre-German era, American forces that

landed on Japanese-held atolls after months of near-daily bombings were fearfully met. Not only were the Americans potent warriors, whose victory might be interpreted as evidence of supernatural support, but they were also protectors, who revealed their *joj* through generous provisions offered to starving people. Many elderly Marshallese talked about the American soldiers as their *lomoren*, saviors. Americans were not only “saviors,” but also warriors, and generous benefactors to a degree never before witnessed in the islands.

### ***Ien Bata Eo* [Wartime]**

The United States’ official presence in the Marshalls began in early 1942 when the US initiated its westward campaign toward Japan via well-known battles beginning at Midway, Tarawa and Makin in the Gilberts (Kiribati), and Kwajalein and Enewetak in the Marshalls continuing westward through Micronesia. The primary US interest was to gain the Marshalls as a stepping-stone toward Japan. The Allies focused their attention on Kwajalein, Enewetak, and Majuro atolls. The plan (Operation Flintlock) provided that Majuro atoll be taken first to provide an anchorage for the fleet from which to support bombardment of Kwajalein. Future plans (Operation Catchpole) called for Enewetak and Ujelang atolls to be attacked about three months later to allow the Allies to consolidate their positions. Having learned from the experience at Tarawa, the islands were subjected to heavy and sustained bombardment beginning in November of 1943, and intensifying in the weeks just before the landings on Majuro, Kwajalein, and Enewetak.

Admiral Chester Nimitz’s “Joint Expeditionary Force” comprised of nearly three hundred vessels and over 84,000 men captured these atolls. Majuro was taken unopposed on the evening of January 30, 1944. US Army and US Marine Corps troops landed on

Kwajalein atoll the next day, and fought in hand-to-hand combat in one of the bloodiest battles of Micronesia. An officer, who was present at the battle over Kwajalein, noted that an average of one hundred pounds of steel from bombs and shells plowed into every square foot of the island (Moore 1945). Within a week, on February 8, the atoll was entirely under US control. A month later, B-24s were flying out of Kwajalein for the first time. Within three weeks of the capture of Majuro and Kwajalein, Enewetak was also under complete US control.



Figure 80. Marines storm a pillbox on Namur, Kwajalein atoll. February 2, 1944. Photo number: NWDNS-127-N-70216, taken by Corporal John Fabian. Source: Department of Defense. United States Marine Corps, Collections of the National Archives.

The significance of these attacks for Marshallese lies not only in the degree of force used -- the hundred of tons of bombs, but in the thousands of US troops, tanks, and planes that invaded their islands. Of even greater significance in the daily lives, though, of Marshallese who lived through that period were the aerial bombings that became near daily occurrences. On the atolls with Japanese bases -- Mili, Jaluit, Maloelap, and Wotje --

Japanese and Marshallese were gradually decimated. Cut off from supplies and bombed day after day for many months, those who survived can never forget. While the survival rate of these near daily raids for Marshallese is unknown, *fewer than half* of all the Japanese who were stationed at these islands survived.



Figure 81. Majuro lagoon with battleships.  
National Archive photo #04-0314a.

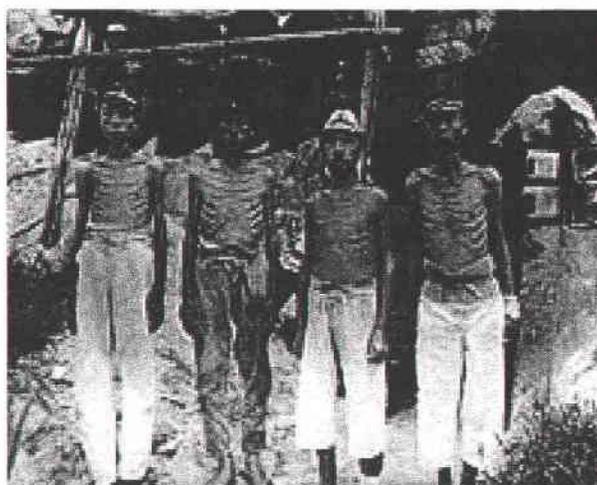


Figure 82. Japanese survivors at Wotje atoll, upon surrender.  
Photo #: 80-G-347131 US Navy photo, National Archives.

When the frequent strafing began, living conditions for Marshallese deteriorated. Although conditions varied in severity from atoll to atoll, in most cases Marshallese were sent to live on smaller, less developed islands of those atolls, in order to produce food for the Japanese army. On each atoll, Marshallese were forced laborers where living conditions and treatment depended upon the amount of fresh water available and the scarcity or abundance of food at the time. The Japanese ordered the young men to fish, while women and children gathered food and shellfish in order to meet quotas. In order to avoid starvation, Marshallese men risked their lives to fish for their families at night against Japanese orders. Many individuals survived on less than a coconut per day (Poyer et al 2001; J. Walsh field notes 1994, 1998).

During the war, Marshallese people constantly relocated by choice or by force in efforts to protect their families. They left their homes and their land – their greatest possession. Many were compelled to hide, and they found themselves serving alternately the Japanese and the Americans. The Japanese told them that the Americans would kill them. Yet the Japanese did the same, according to oral accounts of executions. Marshallese men were secretly recruited to serve as scouts for the United States to spy for the US military. Others came out of their hiding places after US bombing raids to help bury the Japanese dead. In some instances, Marshallese were even more direct victims of the war. Stray bullets killed innocent people while others suspected of serving as US informants were condemned to death, particularly those of mixed blood who spoke some English.

The impact of the wartime events is engraved on the memories of generations as experiences are remembered, retold, and repeated. Commemorative stories, stories of

valor, suffering, shame, powerlessness, heroism, rescue, are the stuff of grand epics. Shared memories constitute a collective sense of identity and cultural/self understanding. Stories about first encounters with American soldiers reveal some of the ways Marshallese interpreted American force, intentions, generosity, and how they later evaluated these strangers.

### **First Impressions**

The following interview is excerpted from a much longer conversation than can be reproduced here, and I have chosen to include it as characteristic of the numerous accounts of first interactions with US forces. This account was elicited when I was interviewing Jinnie deBrum about the numerous changes she has witnessed in her life. Jinnie is the manager of the Assumption Schools cafeteria. She is in her mid sixties and is well respected as a church and community leader. She is married to Oscar deBrum, the Second District Administrator of the Marshalls under the US Trust Territory, a former Compact negotiator, and acknowledged founding father of the RMI.<sup>24</sup> Jinnie was among the first girls selected for nursing training in Saipan at the end of the war, and her life has been filled with American associations. This account described her first memories of Americans, and her reckonings of the impact of Americans on her own life, on the life of the Marshallese people.

### ***Bwebwenato in dri-tarinae in Amedika [A Story of American soldiers]***

Jinnie deBrum was ten years old when Kwajalein was taken from the Japanese. Her father was a navigator, with traditional status, who had worked for the Japanese. The family

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<sup>24</sup> Oscar deBrum passed away on Majuro in the summer of 2002.

had been living on Jabor, Jaluit, when a Japanese friend informed Jinnie's father that he should take his family to Kwajalein, because the Americans would be coming soon.

Submarines had been sighted again in the lagoon, and in the surrounding waters.

En route to Kwajalein Jinnie's father was told to ask his wife, and the children to remain on the deck of the ship the entire passage, since a periscope was seen and the ship was being followed. They arrived safely, but the following day the ship was sunk. Jinnie's family went to one of the small islands of Kwajalein where her father held land rights, and tried to settle themselves there. Shortly thereafter, the US bombed and invaded Kwajalein (February 1944). The experience is one that Jinnie vividly recalls, and has shared with me on more than one occasion. Her account highlights the otherworldly experience of US force, and the very personal experience of war for Pacific Islanders, who themselves were not at war. My words are printed in italics; Jinnie's are not.

JdB: Kwajalein had already been taken, but now they came to the other small places and maybe look for Japanese and that day we were still living in the bunker and my father came and said, 'Everybody out to the Church.' 'What happened?' 'I don't know what kind of boat is coming on the island from the water.' You know the tank? (Laughter)

JW: *Oh, yeah*

JdB: They crawl all over the island and they

JW: *Tanks all over the island?!*

JdB: Yes all over the island, all over, all over around the place,

JW: *And they had a church there too?*

JdB: Yes, we had church, we had our church, I mean on our place so he said, 'Everybody out of here and we go to the church.' And he said, 'If we have to die, we have to die in that place, not anywhere else. So we went there and he said, he said to my mother, 'You and my older sister and my young, the baby sister, will have to stay here and if something happen they will be with you but I'm taking

Jinnie and my[her] brother. We'll go and meet the, the, we'll go and meet whatever those thing are that coming on land and water.'

So he took, and you know, he said goodbye to them and we left. My grandfather, my brother and one of my cousin and myself. We went to the other side because they were coming you know, and they were already on the other end of the island so we went we went there and wow, well, it's a good thing I was still young and I wasn't really scared but I was so excited you know, and I was really excited, and they were holding my hand, my father and my grandfather, and they don't said any word, just keep walking, 'What are those things? What are those things?' Something, Something, I haven't seen anything like that that goes on water and on land.' But then there were about, from high school here, [reference to distance from cafeteria where interview occurred and high school, next door, about fifty yards] and someone uh, pastor, was using this (gesture for megaphone) and he said, 'Please do not afraid we come in peace,' but he was say it in Marshallese.



Figure 83. Amphibious tank on Kwajalein atoll.  
Source: <http://www.angelfire.com/hi2/palmtrees/zhisd2.html>

JW: *Ab!*

JdB: Yeah! He said you know one of one preacher was on Jabor, [Jaluit] before, before everything was you know, so he went back to State and they were planning to, they were planning that to take Kwajalein and all these place so they sent him to that man who was on Jabor to train him in few Marshallese [words], that's why I say, 'What? There's Marshallese on those things!' and he said, 'Please do not be afraid, we come in peace.' And you know all the guns and everything were pointing to us (chuckle--chuckle)!

(Laughter) and I could see that my father and grandfather were afraid because when they hold my hand they were you know...(gesture) sweating.

But I didn't I didn't really know what's going on I knew something was not right but (chuckle) so we went there and as soon as we got to the side, everything stopped, because he was in front of his tank. So they all stopped and he came down and my cousin speak little English, so you know they were communicating and he said they were asking him if there were Japanese because of those two ship that came to... He said, 'No, they already left.' And so they took me, you know I rode on one of those things! (laughter)

JW: *Did you really?*

JdB: Yeah! (laughter)

JW: *They took you?*

JdB: Yeah, they took me and we went to the place where my mother and everybody were. And when they look at, they were really afraid and you know some of them were crying, the old people, and some of them passed out, because you know what, you could feel that those thing would just come and run over you and (laughter)

JW: *Like a monster or something...*

JdB: Yes, ummhhh, but when they look and saw me they say 'Worr' and just ran and you know they were...scare, then we went there and we said, 'Well, it's ok here. But I don't know how they, where they supply their food. We were out of food because there were so many people on the island.

JW: *So many Marshallese?*

JdB: Marshallese, umhmm, they came from Kwaj [Kwajalein], you know when they heard that my auntie told my father to get my brother and sister before the month was over, I don't know they just got on the boat and came to our place.

JW: *The small island on Kwaj.*

JdB: Taruij. (We can see it from Ebeye and see that place up close to Kwaj). So before they [the Americans] left the island they gave us food -- rice, and flour and everything. (Laughter.) And fill our cistern and water container with water, coffee and sugar and even candy and

JW: *Wow!*

JdB: (Laughter) So that's why I, how I remember my you know, [childhood]

JW: *Growing up was the war...*

JdB: Was the war. But none of my family were killed during the war.. .Yes, so you, sometime, you know, I, I could look back and see those times and still remember the war and....

JW: *All these people coming onto your land when you had nothing to do with it.*

JdB: Yes, umhmm, (chuckle) It's very hard when you don't have anything to do with this war and everybody coming, you know, this war the people were in war with each other but I think we were fortunate that its not really bad like other places nowadays. But some people on Kwajalein where they experience the war and it was really-- they could still see today, they could still remember.

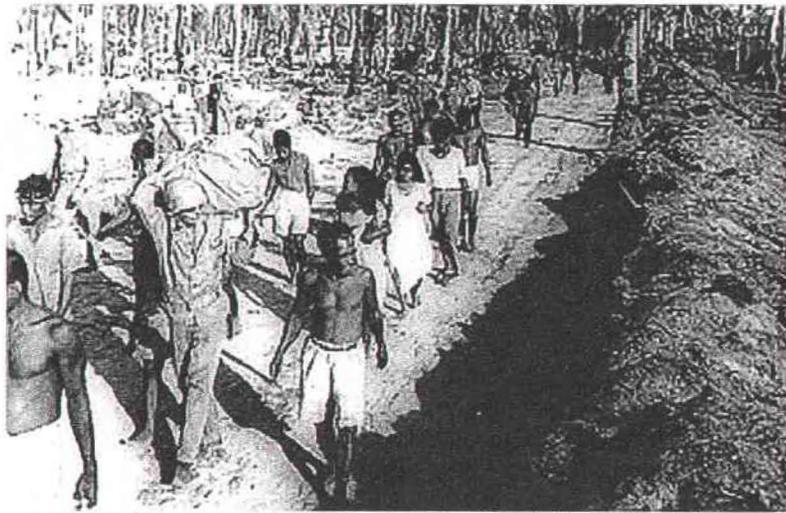


Figure 84. US soldiers removing Marshallese at Kwajalein.  
[www.angelfire.com/hi2/palmtrees/zhisd2.html](http://www.angelfire.com/hi2/palmtrees/zhisd2.html)

Jinnie's descriptions of the reactions of the older people, her father's decision to meet the strange machines head-on, and the surprise of discovering a Marshallese speaker coming from within an amphibious tank, reveal the depth of the impact the battle for Kwajalein had on her, and her family. Expecting the worst, they were met by a tank with a Marshallese speaker and soldiers who freely distributed not only necessities (food, fresh water, clothing), but also luxuries such as candy and coffee.

The power of this first very positive impression of American soldiers cannot be erased. Jinnie stressed that her family wanted nothing to do with the war. Her surreal

account expresses how foreign the whole experience was to her family, especially on their own land. The results of the events she recounted played a critical role in her life. Jinnie's father later went on to work with the Americans at Kwajalein. From that day in 1944, Jinnie deBrum's interactions with Americans and their impact on her daily life only increased.

The amphibious tanks and the Marshallese phrases pronounced by American soldiers also amazed Ato Langkio, of Kwajalein. His account was provided in translation, and delivered for an audience of Kwajalein military base residents at an event sponsored by the Marshallese Cultural Center in March of 2002. He explained:

They bombed so heavily the ground shook. We could feel it... American soldiers landed on Namur (Kwajalein atoll) and they started shooting – not at people – people just froze and didn't know what to do. Then a soldier came off of the amphibious vehicle and ... talked to [me] in Marshallese and said, 'Peace be with you.' The Americans then came ashore and brought a pile of food, a pile larger than this building, of K-rations. From that moment we knew the Americans were kind and good and helped people. If the US didn't come the Japanese would have killed all the Marshallese (Marshall Islands Journal 3/22/02: 25 emphasis added).

The incredible supplies of food, freely distributed, made the most profound impression on Marshallese. As noted previously, the offering of food is the primary means of demonstrating *joi*, generosity, and kindness. For suffering and starving people, the overwhelming amount of food proffered by this foreign conqueror enabled Marshallese people to interpret the actions of the US as exceptionally positive using common cultural criteria. Like representations of idealized leadership, the US was apparently, not only powerful, and resource-rich, but provided for and protected Marshallese people. Like Jebro, the kind, obedient, mythological *Irooj*, (Chapter 3; Appendix G) the soldiers brought calm and peace, and 'loved humanity' – all evidenced in the endless offerings of food and

supplies for Marshall Islanders. As Langkio pointedly explained: "From that moment we knew the Americans were kind and good and helped people."

### **COMMANDERS AND CHIEFS**

The Americans had a different understanding of their role in the Marshalls made clear in the statements of the US military leadership at the close of the war in a *National Geographic* article entitled, "Our New Military Wards, the Marshalls." Despite the paternalistic rhetoric ("wards") to the contrary, Americans were not there to provide for and look after the Marshallese. Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King justified US military presence in Micronesia through American loss of life:

We must have bases; these island harbors paid for by sacrifices of American blood,' while Army General H.H. Arnold added: "These key islands – the Marshall, Palaus, Volcanos, Bonins, Ryukyus, and others – are vital to our future security. Their use by the United States must be unrestricted. How else can we defend ourselves from an enemy who could destroy our cities by long-range bombing? The future peace of the world; indeed, the fate of mankind may depend upon it (Moore 1945:329)<sup>25</sup>.

The primary interest of the United States in the Marshall Islands is strategic.

Marshallese are US wards<sup>26</sup> only insofar as US security priorities require.

#### **"Na Dri Kien elap in Manwa"**

After the fighting ceased in the Marshalls, the US Navy set up temporary administrative headquarters at Majuro and the Pacific Fleet Commander spelled out the policies to be observed. In July of 1944, Admiral Nimitz issued the US Navy's first proclamation (Appendix J) to the people of the Marshall Islands (US National Archives,

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<sup>25</sup> There is an almost timeless quality to this rhetoric, particularly prevalent in contemporary discussions concerning 'rogue' nations such as North Korea, Pakistan, and now, Iraq.

<sup>26</sup> Moore's article is entitled, "Our New Military Wards, the Marshalls." *National Geographic Magazine*. 88(3): 325-352.

document declassified 14 November 2001<sup>27</sup>). The document demands cooperation, and promises peace by conveying images of the expansive power of United States' military, soldiers, and weapons. Intentional, or not, it is strikingly reminiscent of early accounts of powerful, foreign invading chiefs, and Marshallese patterns of shifting allegiances.

The formal English version was translated and distributed in three languages: Japanese, Marshallese, and a simplified English that is nearly a literal translation of Marshallese. In the original English document C.W. Nimitz is designated "Admiral, United States Navy, Commander in Chief, United States Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Area, Military Governor of the Marshall Islands." The simplified English document names him, "High Commander of American Warships and Fighting Forces in the Pacific Area and Governor of these Marshall Islands." The Marshallese version declares Nimitz, "*Dri-kien elap in Manwa kein im jar Tarinae in Amerika ilo Pasifik Lomoto, in na, Komissar in Ailin kein Marshall.*" The significance of the Marshallese translation is the emphasis on the powers vested in this American leader. He holds the highest civil authority (*dri kiien elap*), as well as commands the strength, technology, and abundant force recognized in the *manwa* [Marshallized pronunciation of Man of War], the *jar tarinae* [fighting forces; interesting since *jar* is also used for 'prayer'], the vast territory in the *Pasifik Lomoto* [the entire ocean], and the familiar title of a former foreign power, *komissar*, from the German era.

The Marshallese translation of the original English document is a fascinating example of the ways Marshallese interpreters/translators attempted to convey (and/or

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<sup>27</sup> I would like to acknowledge Keith Camacho who discovered this document while conducting doctoral research at the National Archives, and brought it to my attention.

understand) the power and authority of the US in terms of Marshallese cultural paradigms.

The English document explains that the US soldiers would not:

make war upon the civilian inhabitants of these islands but [will] permit them to continue their normal lives and occupations in a peaceable manner, so far as war necessities and their own behavior permit.

The Marshallese translation points out that the soldiers do not intend to cause suffering among the Marshallese. It further adds, *Dri Amerika re konan bwe dri Marshall ren joij non kim* [the Americans would like the Marshallese to be kind/generous to them]. This added appeal expresses the implicit idea of the original document that if Marshallese are well behaved (good and kind) to the Americans they will not be disturbed or bothered. The explicit directive in the Marshallese proclamation initiates a familiar Marshallese inference of hospitality, and reciprocity – *Jojj eo, mour eo* [kindness brings life] – in the context of American/Marshallese relations.

The first point of the proclamation states the degree of US power more clearly, which likely has the (intended) effect of emphasizing the value of cooperation. The formal English text explains the extent of Nimitz's authority and how it will be enacted:

All powers of government and jurisdiction in the occupied territory and over the inhabitants therein, and final administrative responsibility, are vested in me as Admiral, United States Navy, Commanding the United States Forces of occupation, and Military Governor, and will be exercised through subordinate commanders by my direction.

*Ilo ailin kein kajur otem kajur ao, na dri kien elap in Manwa kein Amerika im Jar in Tarinae re ber ijn, im Komissar in ailin kein. In ro dri kien ao re naj Irooj kin kien ko ao.*

The Marshallese translation uses biblical expressions, such as *kajur otem kajur* [each and every power] to ascribe divine leadership and authority to Nimitz and his soldiers – “*Ilo ailin kein kajur otem kajur ao*” [In these islands each and every power is mine]. Again the

range of his powers is represented in terms of battleships, numerous troops, and expansive territory – “*na dri kien elap in Manwa kein Amerika im Jar in Tarinae re ber ijin, im Komissar in ailin kein*” [I, the highest leader of the battleships, of the American fighting forces staying here, and the highest leader/Kommissar of these islands]. Yet the final sentence is, to me, the most intriguing, for its use of the word *Irooj*. “*In ro dri kien ao re naj Irooj kin kien ko ao*” [my governing people (leaders) will ‘*Irooj*’ my laws/commands]. If this is an error of translation, as I suppose, it is a fascinating one. *Irooj* is not a verb, which the structure of the above sentence indicates. A more appropriate and grammatically correct substitution might be *kantiej* [respect]. Use of *Irooj* in this context explicitly suggests that the combined kommissar-military-governor-admiral is treated by his subordinates with the respect and obedience of *kajur* toward any *Irooj*. Marshallese are thus compelled to subordination to US law and governance.

The significance of Marshallese first encounters with Americans and Marshallese interpretations and understandings of America(ns) informed relationships that persist today. The cultural models of authority that shaped *Irooj/kajur* relations for centuries also framed early encounters with Americans and were further transformed by those encounters. US colonial relations enabled the re-formation of *Irooj/kajur* relations as American administrators established new political and economic practices and structures.

### **THE TRUST TERRITORY**

In 1947, the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement that established the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands’ (TTPI, or TT) technically delegated the Marshalls, Carolines, Marianas (except Guam), and Palauan islands to a United States civil

administration. Simultaneously US President Truman gave interim authority to the Secretary of the Navy and commissioned the Commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Fleet as High Commissioner (Meller 1969:15).

The responsibilities of the US to the Former Japanese Mandated Islands are spelled out in Articles 6 and 7 of the Trusteeship Agreement. The US was to foster the development of political institutions, promote the economic, social, and educational advancement of the inhabitants, and encourage their self-sufficiency (Meller 1969:15). Unlike other Trust Territory agreements the TTPI was designated a "strategic trust." This meant that the TTPI was under the jurisdiction of the UN Security Council, rather than the General Assembly; the Administering Authority had to consent to any proposed termination date; and most significantly, the US was permitted to have armed forces, build fortifications, and close off the area for security reasons (Fluker 1981:70).

### **The Atoll Council**

To govern the islands, the Navy followed the Japanese model of administration rather than introduce drastic changes in an already disturbed political system:

The decision to follow the Japanese set of officials, with modifications, rather than to attempt to return to a form of indirect rule through the paramount chiefs, was a wise one. The people were used to the Japanese structure of officialdom, and any attempt to return to the old Marshallese class system would have seemed a step backward (Spoehr 1949: 96).

Further, the jurisdiction of chiefs, it was learned, would not be coterminous with viable units of governments, so the Americans did not deliberately organize government around the traditional leadership, as they did in the other districts (Meller 1969:133). The American pattern for administration included many of the same positions that the Japanese

had created (a magistrate, scribe, village headman, and policeman) as well as a small governing body. An atoll council, whose primary role was to appoint policemen, consisted of the elected magistrate and scribe, the village headman, and the heads of all the lineages on the atoll.

The nobility still largely held political leadership on Majuro. The magistrate was an *Irooj*, yet other new status positions were available to commoners, depending upon their skills. In 1947, Majuro's council consisted of 135 members, fourteen of whom were *Irooj*.

Spoehr surmised that, "in time this system will probably supplant the hereditary class structure and political leadership will be exercised by persons with a superior position in this newly formed status system rather than by nobility" (Spoehr 1949:102).<sup>28</sup> Arguably, this was the intent of the US administration. The establishment of native atoll councils and courts were attempts to introduce democratic institutions into Marshallese social life that might enable commoners to outvote traditional leaders (Meller 1969: 54, 138).

In contrast to Japanese policy, the Americans did not standardize the *Irooj* share of copra, leaving the donations to voluntary agreements between *Irooj*, *alab*, and *dri jermal*. In response, the obligation of chiefs to provide for the medical expenses of his people lapsed. The shifting of policies that threatened *Irooj* was apparently an attempt to encourage democratic reform:

The American administration held the position that the Marshallese people were becoming dissatisfied with the traditional *iroij* [*Irooj*] relationships and that its role was to protect all the Marshallese people by allowing free decisions to be reached on the *iroij* status. To the *iroij*, it appeared that the Americans were encouraging the operation of the municipal councils to 'destroy *iroijs*' wills and rights or take over *iroijs*' concerns (Meller 1969:134).

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<sup>28</sup> Not until 2000 did this occur with the election Kessai Note, the long-term Speaker of the Nitijela, as the first commoner president in January 2000.

## **Taking Sides**

Contemporary divisions in Marshallese politics have deep roots in the affiliations established by American administrators, and their biases *against and dependence upon* Marshallese traditional leadership. Majuro's historic political schism was deeply exacerbated and firmly entrenched through American activities and relationships. Even as the US attempted to marginalize chiefs, and empower common citizens, it required the cooperation of chiefly authority to legitimize American interests (Carucci 1997:206).

US interests conflicted with US democratic ideals and resulted in an easily exploited ambivalence that some Marshallese leaders were *quick to use to their advantage*. Within Majuro atoll's political schism, the key elected positions of magistrate, scribe, and headman were on the majority side of Langlan. Yet, Jitiam's followers were able to hold enough political power, despite their minority status, to maintain a balance in village life. Jitiam, the leader of the minority side, was not in direct line of succession from the paramount chief Lerok, who controlled Majuro prior to the German administration. Spoehr notes:

There is some question as to when Jitiam was selected a paramount chief. Some villagers say it was not until the American occupation and that Jitiam's side 'put over' the idea with American military government officials that there were two paramount chiefs when there really was only one (1949:85).

The presence of the US military exacerbated the schism between Langlan's and Jitiam's groups. The groups were especially competitive for US attention and funds, as they independently hosted US dignitaries, managed separate stores, and competed for government positions. The rivalry pervaded village life; it was ever-present in latent form. Even so, the two chiefs maintained friendly relations and visited with other on occasion,

never threatening any physical violence or physical separation of the community (Spoehr 1949:89-90).

It was not only the US presence that encouraged local competitions and renewed rivalries on Majuro (and anywhere the US established itself), but it was the selection of Majuro as the district center that intensified these divisions. Seats on atoll councils, opportunities for land lease payments, economic and political power came with US recognition. The US attempted to establish governing institutions based upon democratic principles, even as they required the chief's participation and support to legitimize those new political positions.

At Majuro, the Navy administration's decision to treat both Jitiam and Langlan's sides as equals benefited the US, as much as it did Jitiam's group (known as twenty-twenty after Jitiam's death). In the name of balancing of atoll politics, the Navy could employ not only those of high rank, on Langlan's side, but also the mission-educated, English-speaking commoners who comprised the Twenty-Twenty leadership.

### **Institutionalizing Authority**

When the US administration proposed the first meeting of *Irooj*, followed by a conference of magistrates and scribes, it was with the intent to "support indigenous customs" (Hi Comm, quoted in Meller 1969:135) and to mobilize *irooj* active cooperation by institutionalizing their privileged status in a bi-cameral legislative body consisting of *Irooj* and elected representatives (Meller 1969:135). In the process, the *Irooj* "recognized in democratic practices and principals of the West efficient tools for the defense of their class interests" (Sandelman in Meller 1969:135).

At that first meeting, anyone who came forth as an *Irooj* was recognized. The provision for the resolution of conflicting claims was unnecessary since, according to custom, no claim was ever challenged by the *kajur*.

In 1948, Majuro district's magistrates and scribes gathered to discuss issues of interest to the entire Marshalls district. A year later, a second conference of *Irooj* convened with representation of all the atolls. While Majuro's chiefs were acknowledged, they were given no government authority. The charter the chiefs proposed in 1949 (signed by the deputy high commissioner) effectively *reversed* the policy of chiefly exclusion and the Marshall Islands first bicameral congress met the following year. One house contained *Irooj* and the other elected representatives (Meller 1969:54). Only in the Marshall Islands, among the various districts of the TTPI, did the traditional leaders refuse to give up legislative positions (Meller 1970: 327).

### **Interior Administration**

In 1951 administration of the Territory shifted from military to civilian control after much debate between the Army/Navy and the Departments of State and Interior. While the Navy administration is often criticized for ignoring the imperatives of the Trusteeship agreement toward political development, economic, social, and educational advancement (Trumbull 1959; Nufer 1978; Fluker 1981; Hughes and Lingenfelter 1974), Micronesians recall the Navy administration more appreciatively than the Interior administration: Heine explains:

The people of Micronesia became accustomed to a new life-style [after the war], a style where everything was handed out free. Massive operations in the area by the US Navy, accomplished with few worries over cost or logistical support, resulted in Micronesians' present fond memories of the military government.

However, in 1951, when the administration of the Trust Territory was turned over to the Department of the Interior, reality quickly relegated the abundant life under the military government to pleasant remembrances. The Department of the Interior did not give out anything free. It had a smaller staff, less money to run the area, fewer ships, and it showed very little experience in island government and island affairs (1974:5-6).

In contrast with the generous, powerful, savior, warrior, feast-making *Irooj in Manwa* [Chief of the Man-of-War; Navy Administration] the stingy Interior leadership was judged ineffective because of its inability to access and distribute resources.

The annual budget for the entire territory was approximately \$5.5 million. In 1957 local tax collections and other revenue added about \$1.8 million. Budgetary constraints explain, if not excuse, the lack of development toward the imperatives of the Trusteeship agreement. During the period of US Interior administration prior to a rapid influx of funding in the 1960s, the region was most frequently referred to as the "Rust Territory," or an "anthropological zoo" and characterized by "benign neglect" (Heine 1974; Nufer 1978:231). The opinions of the administering authority explain the meager budgetary allotments. High Commissioner Delmas H. Nucker defended the budget against the criticisms of the visiting UN Trusteeship Council members in 1959. He explained:

It is true that if larger appropriation had been made available we could have substantially increased our staff, could have built many buildings, could have embarked upon numerous additional economic experiments, and could so have over-administered the Territory as to have created a facade of various programs, structures, and enterprises that had no real foundation other than the subsidies paid into them.

I cannot believe that this type of false economy and over-administration would have been in the best interests of the Micronesian people. Unless the size of the administration is in proportion to the need and the economic life of the Territory and is firmly grounded on productivity, the dependency of the area is increased because it will never be able to support the artificially high standards created by over-subsidization.

The level of appropriation is, to my mind, one of judgment and balance. Opinions on the subject obviously differ. I do not, however, believe that the past level of appropriations has hampered the development of the Territory. Furthermore, I firmly believe that the amount of subsidization should and must be related to the needs of Micronesia -- not to the Administering Authorities' appraisal of the security value of the area (In Nufer 1978: 212-213).

Within two years of the 1961 release of UN delegation's report, the annual budget allocated to the Territory doubled to \$15 million in 1963 (Kiste 1993:71). By 1970, only seven years later, the budget rose to \$60 million (Hezel 1992:216).

Despite UN imperatives to promote independent governing and self-reliance while fostering political development, a team of economists led by Anthony Solomon was sent to the region by Presidential mandate to evaluate the future role of the US in Micronesia and determine appropriate methods to ensure that role. The confidential report written for US President John F. Kennedy is now notoriously known as the "Solomon Report." The report incorporated recommendations to the US President, which included explicit descriptions of how to foster dependency and curry favorable views of indigenous people toward their administrative power. Solomon suggested that the US use subtle indoctrination through American-modeled educational and political institutions to lead Micronesia to "freely choose" permanent political affiliation with the US (which would thus acquire its strategic benefits). Whether by plan or by chance, the majority of the Solomon Report's recommendations have been implemented.

### **The Marshall Islands Congress**

The Marshall Islands Congress in 1956 consisted of forty-two elected representatives in the House of Assembly, and twenty-eight *Irooj* in the House of *Irooj*. Distinctions between the members of the two houses were quite marked. The Elected

legislators were “better educated, more traveled, enjoyed a greater command of English, and through present, or former employment, were more conversant with the operations of government introduced by Americans . . . They were noticeably younger, mirrored the prevailing Protestantism of the Marshalls, and had often been prepared for public office by service as school teachers” (Meller 1969:89). Further, the House of Assembly was not a cross-section of the population, but was “heavily weighted toward persons of importance in traditional Marshallese society. Half of the forty-two were *alabs* [*alab*, lineage heads], or *iroj edike* [secondary “small” chiefs], and another ten were in the *bwij errito* (the oldest lineage), and close in line to become *alabs* upon the death of the incumbents (Meller 1969: 89).

From the beginning of its administration, the Department of the Interior opposed the bicameral Congress of the Marshall Islands and the powers it offered to traditional chiefs. The Interior administration urged a second charter, approved in 1958 that established a unicameral system. The RMI *Nitijela* documents specifically notes that High Commissioner Nucker initiated the change (Majuro District Department of Education 1977: 2; Meller 1969:137). Despite its intended effect of diminishing the influence of the hereditary membership, “much to the Americans’ chagrin, the *Iroj* basically retained their former role and, in addition, secured protections against revision of traditional rights which the bicameral body could have modified” (Meller 1969:54). The *Iroj* had not opposed the change from a bi-cameral to a unicameral congress, realizing the form of the congress would not diminish the weight of their authority (Meller 1969:137). Even so, the *Iroj* did dispute the US proposal that they not hold life terms, or vote on resolutions other than

those concerns with customary land rights. After two days of discussions the Marshallese congress rejected the US proposals, granted the *Irooj* lifetime membership, full voting rights, and exclusive jurisdiction over customary land matters.

### **Defining Authority**

The charter of 1958 designated to the Congress the power to determine which of the *Irooj* were considered *Iroojlaplap* and given lifetime membership. The district administration had rigidly defined the credentials clause, but wrongly assumed that with the few-estimated *Iroojlaplap* (14), the elected membership would easily be able to limit their numbers and influence. The administration anticipated that twenty percent of the Congress would consist of chiefs, the remainder elected representatives. Instead, when the Congress met for the first time in 1960, over forty *Irooj* had been nominated, and after two days of selections, nineteen were seated for life.

Chosen as president was an elected representative who was the son of an *Irooj* and *Lerooj*, had been a former member of the House of *Irooj*, and was a recognized spokesman for the *irooj*. He was backed by the *iroojlaplap* seated at the congress and by the older fellows from the northern and western atolls [who] followed the *irooj*, rather than voted of their own free will (Memo, acting DistAd to HiComm 10/4/60 in Meller 1969:140).

The first President of the unicameral Congress was Amata Kabua. As President, Kabua wrote to the Acting District Administrator to explain the selection of *Irooj*:

Some...are not *Iroojlaplap* in the strict sense of this hereditary title; although all have the duties and responsibilities of an *Iroojlaplap*. Each one has his or her own rights and can exercise such rights to execute business and independently decide important matters relating to land under that jurisdiction . . . In other words, the term *Iroojlaplap* has been given a new meaning which evolved out from the long and hard debates in the Congress during the examination and certification of its permanent members. While I may disagree with the decision of the Congress, in

my position, I have no choice but to be guided accordingly by the rule of the majority<sup>29</sup> (October 12, 1960, quoted in Meller 1969: 139).

The redefinition of *Iroojlaplap* status for the purposes of institutionalizing authority and power highlights the fluid nature of cultural practices that continue in the present.<sup>30</sup> In 1960, the US administration did not challenge those seats recognizing that the claims were so confused, only an anthropologist could potentially disqualify any of the competing claims through thorough study of *Irooj* clans (Meller 1969: 135).

Marshallese *Irooj* outmaneuvered and manipulated the US administration over and over again to retain and increase their economic and political powers. The following instance highlights the ways Majuro chiefs appropriated the United States TT government in the context of the Majuro schism:

A further embarrassment to the American administration was the fact that the Marshall Islands Congress named the Administering Authority as one of the *iroij* entitled to a seat. Lands on Majuro had long been disputed by two rival groups of claimants. The administration scrupulously refrained from interfering, and from the 1950 session of the congress on, representatives of the opposing forces were seated in the House of *Iroij*. The decision *designating the Trust Territory government as the iroij of the 'twenty-twenty' group*, one of the contestants, in effect eliminated any of the members of the group from the new congress. This drew an indignant rejection from the high commissioner, on the grounds that 'naming of the *iroijlaplap*, if any, is for the people concerned to accomplish within their local customs, if they want such a title within their social organization' (Message of HiCom 8/17/60 in Meller 1969:139).

The clever attempt to name the TT government as an *Irooj*, based on the US rental of Twenty-Twenty land in Uliga, recalls the numerous examples previously examined in this dissertation in which foreigners are proffered titles of authority in order to serve local

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<sup>29</sup> Kabua uses the democratic value of "majority rule" to explain and justify his collaboration in the redefinition of traditional status.

<sup>30</sup> As recent as 2001 (Protection of *Irooj* and *Lerooj* Titles Act), the RMI *Nitijela* passed a resolution that again redefined *Iroojlaplap* credentials to prevent abuses.

ends regarding competing chiefs, their people, and their desire for greater access to and control over resources. Like Kotzebue of the Romanoff expedition and Lt. Paulding who rescued Lay and Hussey at Mili, the TT administration is made a “chief” in an attempt to incorporate the foreign as an ally (and weapon) within familiar, culturally-framed understandings of power and historic rivalries.

### **Increasing Power of Chiefs**

A 1963 amendment to the charter of the Marshall Islands Congress that reduced the number of elected legislators further enhanced the powers of the traditional hierarchy (Meller 1969:54, 140). “This change is diametrically opposite to the withering away of *Iroij* influence anticipated by the Administering Authority when it first proposed a unicameral legislature for the Marshalls” (Meller 1969:140). The force behind the amendment was Amata Kabua, who explained his role in the congress in a 1972 interview:

I came and helped to develop the tax system here and otherwise helped to organize the District Legislature, influencing it to become a unicameral rather than bicameral body, and later to reduce the membership. This was the forerunner of the Marshalls *Nitijela*. There were divisions here between the common man and the *Iroojlaplap*, the traditional royal families, and the budget couldn't cover all the usual expenses when we had 60 to 90 members meeting at that time. Well, when the Navy pulled out and the Interior Department came in, it became quite obvious that there was no such thing as an adequate budget to manage such a big legislature with members coming from all over the Marshalls. If you'll recall the Territory was then run on a budget of about six million dollars. In any case, I guess I must have impressed somebody because I was selected to be in the Council of Micronesia, and eventually was elected into the Congress of Micronesia which grew out of that Council (*Micronesian Reporter* 1972(4): 3).

## CENTRALIZING AUTHORITY

### The Emergence of Amata Kabua

Amata Kabua was able to assert his traditional chiefly powers and authority, even strengthen it, through US resources, and by his clever exploitations and awareness of US strategic interests in the Marshall Islands. His model of “modern Marshallese” leadership defined Marshallese politics for decades. From his early days as a member and advisor to the *Irooj* in the Marshall Islands Congress, to his negotiations for the rental of Kwajalein by the US Department of Defense, through his influential roles in spearheading the separation of the Marshalls from the rest of the TTPI, Amata Kabua’s power and influence continually increased to the point that in 1994, one journalist bluntly noted: “Kabua has it all” (*Pacific Islands Monthly* 63:3:8 1994).

The political development of the Marshall Islands will be documented and described through Amata Kabua’s influence. Like descriptions of other powerful, Marshallese chiefs, Marshallese attitudes toward *Irooj* and President Amata Kabua, vary from pride at his ability to exploit foreigners<sup>31</sup> to criticism of his development policies and absolute control over resources. This section will examine Amata Kabua’s ability to use local understandings of authority to transform and enhance the power of chiefs, through modern political institutions that transformed models of Marshallese politics, roles for Marshallese chiefs, responsibilities of *kajur*, and understandings of the United States.

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<sup>31</sup> Tobin (2002) notes that Marshallese repeated stories of *Irooj* Kaibuki, who made Europeans pay him for permission to enter through the pass or to anchor at Ebon, with “pride that their leader could more than hold his own with outsiders despite their apparently superior power” (329). These are similar to understandings of Amata Kabua’s role in garnering US payments for Kwajalein, and securing US “tribute” in the Compact of Free Association (Hart 1998:27-28).

The Trust Territory period as experienced by Marshallese, was not merely a period of “Americanization” (which is thoroughly documented and described), but also a period of “Marshallization” -- an incorporation of American resources, knowledge, skills, structures by Marshallese chiefs. Amata Kabua has earned full recognition for making the Republic of Marshall Islands what it is today.

### **Early Life**

Born in Jaluit on November 17, 1928, Amata Kabua was the child of Lejelon Kabua (the grandson of Ralik *Iroojlaplap* Kabua Lebon “the Great”) and Li Tarjikit, a Ratak *Lerooj* from Arno and Majuro. With royal blood from both his parents, Amata was recognized as *Irooj bweio* [two shouldered].

The characteristic “foreignness” of powerful chiefs resonated in the recognition of Amata and others within the Kabua patriline, whose paternity was widely -- if cautiously -- questioned, even though, according to custom, children who are raised among the family are openly recognized and accepted as those with family blood. Rights to highly valued US-leased land have forged new definitions and reevaluations of Marshallese customs. While many of the cases of paternity are conjecture, the power of courts with American judges to determine who is eligible for land lease payments according to Marshallese tradition is highly suspect. Although inheritance of the *Irooj* entitlements by non-blood family members has been challenged in courts,<sup>32</sup> in some cases it has been upheld.

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<sup>32</sup> Loeak v. Loeak. One branch of the Loeak family was denied a share of Kwajalein land payments, and a position in the House of *Irooj* after a court decided the pale-skinned Loeak was obviously illegitimate, despite his having been recognized as a son, and raised in Loeak’s household. The controversy revolved around the testimony of Kabua Kabua who, under oath, stated that only the natural born child of an *Iroojlaplap* could inherit the title of his or her father, even if acknowledged as being in the house hold, and treated as a natural born child. Chieftly titles were only passed through blood lines, according to his knowledge. This highly

Amata Kabua was among the first Micronesians to receive a college education. When he returned from community college in Hawai'i he worked for the Marshalls District Department of Education as a secondary school teacher and later, as the Superintendent of Schools. Kabua began his political career in the 1950s as Chief Clerk to the Marshall Islands Council of *Irooj*, part of the bicameral advisory body established during the Navy administration. He held that position until he was elected to the first Marshall Islands Congress in 1958.

His role in the development of that Congress is significant. When High Commissioner Nucker changed the bicameral Congress to a unicameral body, with the intent to limit the power held by traditional *Irooj*, Amata Kabua was able to enhance those powers by recommending a reduction the size of the Marshall Islands Assembly in 1964. Meller (1969) notes the frustration experienced by the US administration, over the chiefly control of the district assembly. Americans favored the *English-speaking, educated commoners* --such as Amata's rival, Dwight Heine-- over the traditional hierarchy.

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publicized case was the predecessor to the *Kabua v. Kabua* case, that began only a few years later, lasted a decade, and saw its way through 6 judges and \$4 million in legal fees. Amata Kabua legally battled Kabua Kabua over rights to Kwajalein, to deliberately challenge Kabua's testimony – which was potentially threatening to Amata's position. In the *Loeak* case, Amata had sided with the "pale" *Loeak*. After the case was decided, when the newly recognized *Loeak* went for his elected seat in the *Nitijela*, he was prevented, citing Article 2, section 5 of the Constitution : "The *Nitijela* alone shall determine the qualifications of its members." Judge *Heffner*, in his review of the case, explained that the only response given to the courts for refusing to seat Anjua *Loeak*, came from Amata Kabua who insisted that "the Courts can't tell the legislature what to do." (March 9, 1979: *Loeak v. Nitijela*, p.19) The judge's reaction speaks to American frustrations at the power of Marshallese authorities to ignore their wishes, their laws, and their designs: "This, of course, shows how far the *Nitijela* has misconceived its role in the three-branch government system which has been in effect in the Marshall Islands for many years. It also demonstrated the attempted revocation of an established doctrine of a democratic system. That system is a government of law, not of men" (High Court Trust Territory, 1979 Civil Action No. 7-79, Marshall Islands District. Hefner, Associate Judge. p. 19).

## **Kwajalein Negotiations**

Amata's father, Lejelon, was the principal landowner of Kwajalein, the site of US missile testing. Compensation negotiation for US use of Kwajalein (682 acres), and for sixty-eight acres on Majuro was a slow, drawn-out process. The principal negotiator for Lejelon was Amata. While Amata attended a community college in Hawai'i in 1953, he met attorney E.E. Wiles, who later served as legislative assistant to Hawai'i Congressman Spark Matsunaga (Kahn 1966:79). Wiles agreed to support the Marshalls' cause in Washington D.C., and enlisted the help of Washington insider attorneys. They took on the case without retainer; not realizing the negotiations with US would last over a decade.

Prior to 1953, no land in Micronesia had ever sold for more than \$350 per acre. The TT decided the 750 acres they leased was worth approximately \$250 per acre for indefinite use. They doubled their own estimate and offered the Marshalls \$500 an acre. In response, Amata Kabua refused the "indefinite use" clause and further demanded \$1,500 per acre including interest (Kahn 1966:79). According to one account, US negotiators met with Kabua in 1957 and offered \$300,000 in cash piled high on a table. Amata and his negotiating party stood up and walked out of the room (Kahn 1966:80).

It wasn't until 1964 that an agreement was signed that provided the US with a ninety-nine year lease of Kwajalein in return for approximately \$1,000 per acre. After legal fees were subtracted the total sum received was \$712,500. One thousand dollars each were offered to the four Kwajalein *Irooj*, and the remainder distributed among the other landowners (Kahn 1966:85).



Figure 85. The signing of the Kwajalein rental agreement 1964.  
Lejelon (seated on the left) with Amata Kabua standing.  
#2845-03 TTPI Archives.

## **The Congress of Micronesia**

### **Representatives, Rivalries, Separatism**

In 1964, the US finally began to address the economic and political development of the islands with the formation of an advisory Council of Micronesia consisting of Micronesian delegates appointed by the High Commissioner. Dwight Heine was elected the President of the Council of Micronesia, after breaking a tie with Amata Kabua. In 1965, the Council was transformed into the Congress of Micronesia, comprised of elected Senators and Representatives from each of the six districts: Palau, Yap, Guam, Truk, Pohnpei and the Marshalls.

In that new governing body, Amata Kabua was elected the first Senate President (Heine was the first Speaker of the Assembly). Within a year he was also selected the Chair of the Ways and Means Committee of the Congress of Micronesia; he also drove an expensive imported American car while the other two hundred cars were inexpensive

Japanese imports (Kahn 1966:72). His reputation for expensive taste spread throughout Micronesia.<sup>33</sup>



Figure 86. Amata Kabua in the Congress of Micronesia. TTPI Archives #2785-01.

In 1969, the TTPI rejected first the territory and then commonwealth status offered by the US. Only the Marianas accepted the offer for commonwealth. In July of 1969, the remaining group began the first round of negotiations for possible future status of independence or free association.

By 1972, the fifth round of negotiations outlined the following agreed-upon goals of the Micronesian delegates: Micronesians would write their own constitutions, internal government would be the responsibility of the Micronesians and external, international and military affairs could be referred to the US. There would be two bases allowed in the region, in the Marshalls and on Palau. More bases could be negotiated in the future.

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<sup>33</sup> A Chuukese friend explained to me that whenever she or her siblings requested toys or clothes that were beyond the family budget, her mother would always say, "Who do you think you are? The child of Amata Kabua?" Not until she read about the history of Micronesia in graduate studies did she understand the reference (J. Jacob, personal communication).

## **Economic and Political Development Agendas**

In 1972, Kabua expressed his views on economic and political development in the region. While still a Senator in the Congress of Micronesia, Kabua was critical of the move for independence. He explained his views of political development that included affiliation with the United States:

I don't think there is anything wrong with any status that is chosen by the people. I think that if they choose independence, that would be all right. It's just a question of how we should realistically attain that kind of goal. If we are talking about independence in the sense that some of our youth talk about it, I don't agree with that; not, if you just want to be by yourself and just completely obliterate the presence of other people and have nothing to do with anyone else. I don't believe in that kind of independence. Independence is just a degree of a person's or nations' being able to control his or its own fate, and not always in an unfriendly way. If Micronesia were to become independent with close ties to the United States, I don't see anything wrong with that. But, if Micronesia wants to be independent and just curtail all its relationships with the United States, then I see many things wrong with that. I don't know if there is a nation in the world which is purely and definitely independent. I think we find that coexistence in the world is a much more important thing than to be isolating oneself from the community of the world (*Micronesian Reporter* 1972:4).

He further noted his views on development when asked if the TT government was doing enough to facilitate economic development:

It's a little hard to answer that question, because in this world there is no such thing as 'enough' economic development. I mean there's always a demand for more development in any field, and new fields are being sought constantly. . . I think it's quite obvious that the administration has lagged behind in this particular field of development, that is, the economy. In Majuro here I think that the greatest thing that has ever happened is the development of the new airfield<sup>34</sup>. We think this will spur the influx of tourists into this area and hopefully that will bring in fresh money into the economy (*Micronesian Reporter* 1972:4).

The tourism envisioned by Amata early in 1972 centered on Japanese tourists ("the world's most affluent") and casino gambling (*Micronesian Reporter* 1972:4, 7). These

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<sup>34</sup> That airport is now named the Amata Kabua International Airport.

remained central elements of Amata's development policies throughout his five terms as President of the Marshall Islands.

Kabua also pointed out the impact of American policy on the potential development of the Marshalls, stressing the necessity of both economic and political development:

Our economy here depends a great deal on the mentality of the United States. The real question here is whether the United States should allow us now to look for development elsewhere, continuing our trade with the US of course, where the bulk of our shipments come from and go to. But I means also seeking out new marketing area like Japan and the rest of the nations throughout the Pacific . . . We have to know whether this is possible or whether it is the US intention to close the area and hope to support us entirely in a vacuum, and shut us off from the rest of the world. I think that's the major question in our economic development . . . We don't know exactly what they want at this stage of the game, but if the US is going to create an economy where they just keep pumping in money to support us, that's one thing. But if tomorrow the Unites States would allow us to go ahead, and would back us up in our attempts to find other ways of promoting our economy that would be something else. We could do this with the blessing and backing of the United States, but without that blessing, well, we're sunk. . .

You just can't *develop the political entity in Micronesia alone. You've got to have some kind of economic base* for the political entity, or you've got no ground to stand on (*Micronesian Reporter* 1972:5).

In the above passage Kabua's consciousness of the colonial relationship is obvious. The blessing of the United States, its intentions and dominance are the primary determinants of Micronesia's future. He further acknowledges the "captive" situation of the Bikinians with some sarcasm as he describes how the Bikinians -- "enthralled" by their captors -- view the US as their *Irooj*<sup>35</sup>:

Isn't it ironic that the US comes to an atoll in the Marshalls, takes the people out, puts them in forced residence on another island for thirty years; and for those people it's the old theory of becoming enthralled and entranced by your captors.

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<sup>35</sup> Numerous references to the Bikinians' relationship to the US repeat this; see chapter 8 as well as "metaphors" in chapter 7.

The Bikini and Enewetak people now hold the Marshall Islands as a sort of third party to this little partnership. We [the RMI] are the ones trying to take the people out of their hostage situation, and mentally it is very difficult for them to accept.

At the reporter's suggestion that there must be other lands available for the Bikinians to buy and settle on, Kabua offered a sarcastic response: "And be subject to another *Irooj* other than *Irooj* Uncle Sam"<sup>36</sup> (*Micronesian Reporter* 1972:5)?

### Separatism

In 1973 Senator Amata Kabua of the Marshall Islands threatened disunity in order to gain a fifty percent rebate on all taxes paid by the Marshall Islands, the Micronesian state with the largest income due to taxation of American workers on the US Army base at Kwajalein and the greatest copra production. After the bill he proposed was buried in committee, and the Marshalls House delegation staged a walkout. Soon after:

In March of 1973 the Marshall Islands District Legislature adopted an ultimatum resolution, committing itself to separate status negotiations if the legislation [for a 50 percent tax rebate] were not passed at the next regular Congress session in early 1974. It also created a Marshall Islands Political Status Committee. This brought into the open the personal and political rivalries surrounding Senator Amata Kabua. He was promptly denounced publicly by Senator Saliu [Palau] as the architect of the district legislature initiative (probably true). He responded by publicly attacking both Saliu and Representative Silk, the latter part of the anti-Kabua faction in the Marshalls and a consistent free association supporter as JCFS- (Joint Committee on Free-Association) co-chairman. Such public exchanges are unusual among Congress members. Kabua also resigned from the Joint Committee, to which he had just been appointed.

Given his preeminence in the Marshalls, far exceeding that of any other political leaders in their districts, Kabua's defection was the biggest blow to Micronesian unity since the Marianas gained separate negotiations. Politics and political personalities seem to revolve around him to a degree unequaled elsewhere in

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<sup>36</sup> The question over the *Irooj* title at Bikini is complex and contested. In 1994, Kabua regained the disputed chiefly title he desired twenty years earlier. Despite tremendous opposition, and a large Bikinian presence in the chambers on the day of the vote, the Nitijela passed a resolution that declared Amata Kabua the rightful *Iroojlaplap* of Bikini, thus enabling his legal access to Bikini reparation funds.

Micronesia. This position of power reflects the paramount status of his family in the traditional Marshallese feudal system, which retains a strong influence upon Marshallese life, political and otherwise (1976:524-525).

According to one account, Kabua had attempted to unseat those who don't play the game his way" (opposition Senators Lanwi and Silk) in the 1972 COM elections (Dorrance 1975:432-435). Another observer noted:

Kabua wants an autonomous district, his own little 'fiefdom' where he can control all the money raised from the income tax at Kwajalein, and wheel and deal with anyone else who comes along his way. To this end, Kabua has waged a little war in the Senate with Status Committee Chairman Lazarus Salii, with behind-the-scenes backstabbing that makes 'Hamlet' look like a kiddie show.... It's in Kabua's interest to threaten disunity, so that he can get his own way when he eventually makes a deal with the rest of Micronesia (Clark 1972:5).

When the rebate bill failed, the Marshalls district legislature declared its separation from Micronesia and empowered its political status committee, appointing three *Irooj* in addition to Kabua, its chair. It passed a resolution to discourage Marshallese representatives from participating in the upcoming Constitutional Convention. Marshallese *Irooj* unanimously endorsed the resolution (Renahan 1976:526-527). The influence of Amata was felt in all realms – in the Marshalls district legislature, among the *Irooj*, and within the Congress of Micronesia where Kabua served as President of the Senate for two terms, and served as a Senator until 1978.

Although a smaller rebate bill (twenty percent) passed in a special session of the Congress, the Marshalls still continued with their plans for separation. In 1974, the Marshalls delegation boycotted the election of representatives from the various TT districts to the Constitutional Convention on Saipan. The following year fifty-two representatives signed the proposed Constitution for the Federated States of Micronesia that was to include all of the districts.

In 1975, a TT-wide advisory referendum was held requiring islanders in each district to vote on possible future status options. The Marshalls was the only district that voted pro status quo amongst a list of options that included independence, commonwealth, free association, statehood and status quo (Renahan 1976: 530).

When three years, in 1978, the Micronesian Constitution was presented to each of the remaining five districts (Saipan was under a separate administration after accepting the Commonwealth offer in 1976). Both Palau (55-45%) and the Marshalls (61-39%) rejected the proposed Constitution, and began to draft their own (Meller 1980: 83). The separation was official.

In 1979 the Marshalls developed its first national constitution and had its first elected government. The constitution called for a Parliamentary form of government with a thirty-three member *Nitijela* (parliament) from which the president, Amata Kabua was elected (Johnson 1988:72).

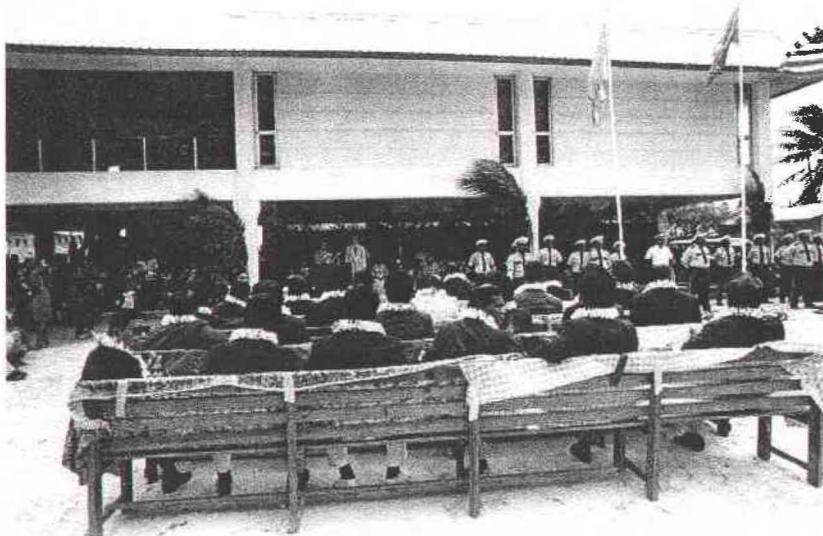


Figure 87. The Presidential inauguration of Amata Kabua.  
TTPI Archives #2835-04.

## The RMI Constitution

The Constitution of the Marshall Islands is unique among those that emerged out of the former Trust Territory (Meller 1980; 1989). Each of the other governments that emerged out of the TT have separate executive, judicial, and legislative powers that provide for checks and balances on each branch of government. Only the Marshalls established a Parliamentary government that combines the executive and legislative branches in the President and the Cabinet.

Numerous explanations abound to explain why the Marshalls, despite having shared the same US direction as the other TT districts, opted for a Parliamentary system. It could be argued that Amata Kabua deliberately crafted the document to ensure the dominance of traditional chiefs. Meller points to the influence of Amata Kabua:

Decades ago, Amata Kabua expressed to this author [Meller] his preference for the parliamentary system as more fitting to Marshallese tradition. 'President Kabua is the undisputed leader of the Marshalls, moving into his third term as President...Kabua has been a key figure in Marshall Island politics for more than 30 years. He was elected to the first Congress of Micronesia, representing the island there until the Marshalls broke away from Micronesia, and then became the first President of the Marshalls in 1979' (Johnson 1988:83). He chaired the Marshalls' Political Status Commission whose staff...was believed to have a pre-conventional draft ready. 'Prior to the opening of the [Marshalls] ConCon [Constitutional Convention] there was a workshop for the delegates who studied the basics of parliamentary government...The ConCon staff was, according to resolution, supposed to produce two drafts – one parliamentary, the other presidential. The presidential draft was never written' (Smith 1980:60).

Other explanations for the parliamentary form of the RMI government include the leaders' legislative experience; the structure of Marshallese society; its inexpensive cost relative to a presidential system; and the efficacy of international recognition for a leader who emerged from a previously recognized government (Smith 1980: 59).

The Marshall Islands Constitution contains many features designed to reinforce the dominant power structure. The President selected from among the *Nitijela* [parliament] members and the Cabinet serve both executive and legislative roles. Further, the Marshalls' President serves as both head of state and head of government. Unlike most parliamentary systems in which a chief executive has no assured term, the Marshalls' constitution uniquely returns a President to power after a vote of no confidence should the *Nitijela* fail to elect another president within fourteen days (Meller 1980: 87; 1989:7). Also, only in the Marshalls (and Yap) are traditional chiefs provided a specific role in government. The Council of *Irooj* is provided a role in reviewing legislation passed by the *Nitijela*, but its objections may be overruled (In Yap, councils of traditional chiefs may veto any legislation). The RMI Constitution neither includes Presidential term limits (though they were proposed -- and failed -- in later ConCons) nor veto powers for the President.

The lack of veto power does not deny the President's actual power to impact legislation<sup>37</sup>:

The direction the President [Amata Kabua] currently exerts over the *Nitijela's* actions practically assumes that measures he openly opposes will not be adopted. It appears that the incumbent President's registering objections to a bill before final passage in the *Nitijela* constitutes a more effective veto than resort to the formal negation process . . . (Meller 1989:9).<sup>38</sup>

Kabua's authority, as President and *Irooj*, provide a level of executive power not found in either the FSM or Palau. Hezel has noted, "perhaps because they have retained ownership of the land, chiefs in the Marshalls exercise a position in the modern

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<sup>37</sup> A similar note is heard in political analysis that describes elected Senators as more concerned with the President's views than those of their constituents (Johnson 1988:85).

<sup>38</sup> This comment is echoed in interviews to follow in later chapters. Despite exceptional opposition, the President's gambling legislation, among others, passed.

government that is not paralleled in any other part of Micronesia.” Other Micronesian leaders have similarly suggested that the Marshalls are unique in the degree of contemporary power maintained by traditional authority. John Hagelgam (of Yap) explains his perceptions of Marshallese chiefs in contemporary politics:

The exception to this general rule [of Micronesian chiefs generally not serving in elected positions] is the Marshall Islands. The first president of the Republic of the Marshall Islands [Amata Kabua] was one of the highest chiefs who had served in the Congress of Micronesia. Although his administration had been described as authoritarian and corrupt, he brought stability to the Marshalls and was widely respected and revered by his people. His legitimacy to govern was enhanced by his traditional role as a high chief.

It should be kept in mind that the customary power of the traditional chiefs in the Marshalls was absolute. Only the Kosraean highest chief was known to possess such an absolute customary power in Micronesia. In addition, the Germans recognized a previous holder of this particular chiefly title as the paramount chief of the Marshall Islands. Furthermore, the customary power of the Marshallese chiefs could expand or shrink depending on personal bravery, cunning, or other personal attributes. So in the view of the Marshallese leaders, the first president had the traditional base and legitimacy to the highest office. No wonder he governed the Marshalls unchallenged.

Two patterns seem to be emerging with regard to the influence of the traditional chiefs on governance in Micronesia. First, in the areas where no consolidated traditional leadership exists the chiefs are excluded from the government. I am not suggesting that the traditional chiefs have no impact on governance in these areas. They still wield considerable power in local and national elections. Second, the Micronesians have incorporated the role of their traditional chiefs as a part of the formal governmental structure where a strong, cohesive traditional leadership foundation exists. In these areas, the chiefs either serve as advisers or active participants in the government. In this case, they are a formal part of the government and at the same time they can still exert influence on the voting process. Perhaps it is an understatement to say that the chiefs ‘still exert their power in the voting process’. In Yap the chiefs have literally ‘appointed’ the governor and the lieutenant governor and the voters only formalized it. The Marshall Islands is an extraordinary case. One of the highest traditional chiefs has served as the head of government and head of state. Thus, he has not only influenced governance, he has governed (Hagelgam 1998).

Because of Kabua's unchallenged influence given the "heavy influence of Marshallese tradition [that] mitigates against open expression of discontent and discourages any attempt to mount a party by the fragmented opposition" (Meller 1989:11), political parties did not formally organize until Kabua's campaign for a fourth term in 1991.

And yet, opposition emerged in subtle ways within the *Nitijela*. Various sub-committees hold the power to determine which legislative measures actually reach the *Nitijela* floor. Both private member and government-sponsored bills may be stalled indefinitely in committees. Forced adjournments and last minute voting are other tactics, that either leave highly charged legislation pending or passed in the last minutes of a session (Meller 1989:13).

The parliamentary system as enacted in the Marshalls retains few of the checks and balances typical of parliamentary forms of government. The potential for the symbolic defeat of government when its proposed legislation or funding levels are defeated does not function to spur public scrutiny, opposition challenges or increased accountability. Instead, the smooth relationship between legislative and executive branches was largely attributed to the traditional status and leadership of Amata Kabua. Kabua's influence in the design and structure of the government of the Marshall Islands intentionally was built upon recognition and awareness of the traditional authority held by *Irooj*, which prevented public dissent or opposition, even *within government*. Customary practices of *kajur* respect for *Irooj* were integrated into the relationship between the Marshallese populace and President through the dual positionality of Amata Kabua.

### “Catch 22”

The attempt to protect traditional authority through incorporating it into the introduced governments of Micronesia presents a ‘Catch 22’ situation in which preservation of custom inherently serves to modify it (Meller 1980:89).

By 1979, Kabua had become the nation’s first President with executive controls the other former TT nations did not enjoy. He had no term limits; had, in effect, silenced the Council of *Irooj* by denying their veto power in the Constitution; and he held control over the nation through the government, and within the government through his traditional status.

Further, he was a major recipient of Kwajalein funding and as a Delap landowner , benefited from the leases for government buildings and operations on Majuro. With the signing of the Compact of Free Association, Kabua earned the nation internal autonomy, and eliminated much of the interference of the United States. By denying employment or government contracts to his competitors in private enterprise or his political opponents, no Marshall Islander had the economic or political clout to challenge the power of Amata Kabua.

In 1994, after twenty-five years as the first President of the Marshall Islands, Kabua’s power and fortune were widely recognized throughout the Pacific. He had no organized opposition, and dominated the Marshall Islands *Nitijela* parliament. He was able to legislate not only his political positions, but also his traditional status (Bikini and Kwajalein) through the national Parliament. Thus, after an expensive ten-year legal battle with his cousin, Kabua Kabua, over the paramount chief title of Kwajalein, Amata was awarded millions in Kwajalein rental payments when a Honolulu court, unwilling to overturn a declaration of the RMI parliament, named Amata paramount chief.

In twenty-seven years (1979-1996) Kabua had finally gained near exclusive control of the distribution of all US Compact funds not only those designated for the RMI government, but also those provided for the rental of Kwajalein, and for compensation for the victims of the nuclear testing. As *Irooj* and President, Kabua was responsible for the re-emergence and dominance of Marshallese chiefs, even as chiefs in other parts of Micronesia and the wider Pacific diminished into figureheads with very little real economic or political persuasion.

The colonial system strengthened Amata, even as his schemes weakened the sovereignty of the state and the spirit of the people whom he determined must look to and depend upon *him* --and no other -- for their survival. Thus, as will be seen in Chapter 7, many Marshallese look to the US to “save” them from their leaders, and to make things right. The source of Amata’s strength was US funds (“economics and politics cannot be separated”); he was able to use western legal practices to enhance his access to those funds. Amata Kabua actively challenged US authority as he successfully garnered and distributed US funds for his nation and for the enhancement of his status. In this sense he quite keenly “Marshallized” American resources for his own purposes as *Irooj* within a Marshallese framework of authority and power.

### **Commanding Chiefs**

Just as Amata Kabua was able to garner resources for his nation through affiliation with and incorporation of American resources, Marshallese elites mirror this strategy in their relationship with their *Irooj* and President. The extraordinary powers of Amata Kabua not only enhanced the powers of chiefs, but also altered expectations of government, as he

integrated both Western and Marshallese practices in the consolidation of his authority. Traditional status enabled Kabua to dominate the *Nitijela*, and the *Nitijela* became a tool used to legislate custom.

Contemporary expectations of chiefs, government, and elites emerged as the nation's most powerful leader, Amata Kabua, collapsed categories of tradition and modernity in the process of creating a culturally validated discourse of progress and development for the Marshall Islands. The combined political powers held by the *Iroojlaplap* and President reclaimed and reasserted traditional controls in a contemporary context by appealing to ancient understandings of autocratic chiefly authority as well as Marshallese pride and cultural identity in their new, modern, and independent nation. "Progress" was justifiable as the collective aim of the nation and its leadership even as development discourses, practices, and priorities simultaneously eroded the perceived value of indigenous ways, skills, knowledge in a 'modern' world dependent upon "green *peba*" [money; cash]. Marshallese leaders, particularly those who garnered economic and political influence through land leases, US payments, or American education, gained in previously unimagined ways through the cultural affirmation of development enabled by Amata Kabua. As the providers of and liaisons to valued resources, they transformed cultural entitlements/sacred authority into present-day patterns that continue to define understandings, expectations, and evaluations of chiefs, elites, and government in the Marshalls today.

## CHAPTER 5 THE NEW *IROOJ*: ELITES

The close of World War II marked a new regime in the Marshalls. Not only did the United States assume power over the Marshalls, but a major indigenous power shift occurred when the capital of the Marshall Islands was moved from Jaluit to Majuro. Although the foreign center of power moved from Ebon, the initial base of copra makers and missionaries in the verdant Southern Raliks, to Jaluit during the German and Japanese eras, the Marshalls “center” remained in the dominant Ralik chiefs’ domain. When the United States selected bountiful Majuro and its deep lagoon as its local headquarters on its Westward progression through Micronesia to Japan, little did American leaders know that centuries of political rivalries would be refueled and reengaged with American forces and resources as pawns.

With the selection of a new core locality, the former sub-“centers” (Jaluit, Wotje, Mili, and Maloelap) became mere “outer” islands -- peripheral powers, a fate shared by many of their traditional leaders. As Majuro’s political value increased with an American appraisal, the power of its *Irooj* similarly grew. In international relations, the Ralik chiefs had held greater influence in the German and Japanese eras, yet the selection of Majuro by the US finally allowed a Ratak chief to serve as a primary mediator between the Marshallese and foreigners. The US administration’s strategic selection of Majuro set into motion the ultimate domination of the Marshall Islands by an *Irooj* who held authority in both Ratak and Ralik, and was able to combine that power with the political institution of a Presidency to unite the Marshall Islands into an independent nation. The emergence of Majuro as the Marshalls’ capital effectively created Amata Kabua, who defined the political inspirations,

expectations, divisions, boundaries, and alliances that would shape the development of the Marshall Islands.

### *Majuro Mejin Armij*

Majuro is known in proverbs and common talk as a gathering site, a place where things happen, where one can witness new trends, see interesting things, and experience the outside world. In this sense, both today and in the past, Majuro is the face of the people -- *Majuro mejin armij*. It is the place to see and be seen, a place where appearances are important, particularly as its audience is so multifarious varied and “intra-national,” and the implications of and opportunities for interaction are so numerous.

Other historic representations of Majuro retain contemporary meanings as well. The ancient disputes between two chiefly lines who owned the entire atoll, reverberate in the politics of the twenty-first century. With development projects and population increases, land disputes are unavoidable, and often vicious, though the warfare is economic and no longer fought on a battlefield.

With nearly half (forty-six percent) of the population of the Marshall Islands located on Majuro, where very few hold land rights, the power of Majuro’s chiefs is dramatically increased. Outer island tenants must maintain harmonious reciprocal relations with their *Alab* and *Irooj* or risk being evicted from their homes. Many families have lived on “leased” land on Majuro for decades with an incredible diplomacy. Because of the land tenure system on Majuro that holds two chiefly lines, as noted in previous chapters, resident-tenants must choose their loyalties carefully. Few can afford to offer unambiguous support for one line over another. The political adeptness of Majuro residents who

maintain harmonious ties to both landholding lines speaks to the centuries of Marshallese survival and adaptability under various chiefs, local and foreign.

The reason for the link between Majuro and elites in this chapter is the unavoidable symbiosis between land and politics. Land IS politics. Majuro's historic rivalry intensifies the relationship exponentially (See previous chapter for discussion of Amata Kabua and vote for the Compact of Free Association).

For example, voting districts are so small as to essentially reveal how individual votes are cast during elections. Eviction may result from an unfavorable vote. Threats of eviction are often enough to discourage opposition, particularly on a well-crowded atoll, where land is as difficult to obtain as jobs. Government jobs may be won or lost according to votes; government contracts are rewarded or redistributed for similar reasons. *Alabs* may harness the support of tenants and family toward a particular cause or candidate and family pressure is used to intimidate dissenters.

Majuro's politics became national politics. Outer island *Irooj* shared the same fate of commoners whose loyalties were tested. The chiefs were either with or against the Majuro *Irooj*. Loyalties could impact development projects in other atolls, land leases on Majuro, and opportunities for economic and political power. The formation of the *Nitijela* and the significance of its location on Majuro enabled the chiefs with the most important resources (Majuro land) to consolidate their authority in ways that influenced local, national, and international affairs.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> For a detailed analysis of the nationalization of Majuro politics, see the 1977 thesis of Susan Russell, "Majuro: Political Entrepreneurs and Changing Basis of Traditional Authority in a Micronesian Town."

The various distinct realms of elites are transected by political alliances that revolve primarily around relationships with and attitudes toward the first RMI President, a Majuro chief. The complexity of allegiances, expectations, roles, and responsibilities aptly emerges in their life stories.

But first, who are these elites? What defines a *Marshallese* elite? I loosely define elite in terms of influence -- social, political, economic, and personal. Elites are not solely economically defined, but rather, defined by their access to and control over limited resources that include knowledge, information, land, and material wealth. Rather than exclusively exploring elites' roles within the state, its development, or larger global economic and political relationships, here I explore the ways elites are organized on Majuro, what qualities they share, and particularly how *they* perceive and describe the power relationships that shape/frame their lives whether these are local, national, and international.

To do that, I want to first examine the status categories that exist in *kajin Majol* [the Marshallese language] and explain my choice for use of the term *rutej*, [the high ones] to refer to contemporary Marshallese elites. Following that, I will attempt to provide a holistic description of elites through their own self-stories, through non-elite commentary, and through my own participant observation. The context of my interactions and interviews with various elites will accompany each interview excerpt. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of the broader significance of elites as mediators/interceptors of foreign resources and discourses.

### *Dri Utiej “Rutej”*

In *kajin Majol* there is no single word that expresses a group of influential “elite” as I have defined it. Instead, terms exist for those with the highest authority and for those who have acknowledged authority within particular spheres of influence. There are *Irooj*, *Lerooj*, the royalty, and the lineage heads, or *Alab*. Today, other titles include the *dri kien*<sup>40</sup> (government officials), *dri kaki* (church leaders and school teachers), *dri tel ilo jukjuk in bed* (community leaders), *dri business* (business owners) and *dri mweie* (wealthy people). Yet many others are influential in less formally designated ways. The *dri-bunbun*, (the popular, well-known, famous) are the trendsetters who, despite the lack of a formally acknowledged position, can dramatically influence perspectives, apply behind-the-scene political pressure, and create change in practices that often impact circles beyond their local communities.

As I sought a term to use in a free listing exercise with participants, I questioned many Marshallese scholars and linguists about the domain of “elites” since I hoped to elicit a free list of individuals who Marshallese people recognize as powerful or influential. I attempted to use the phrase *armij in elab air kajur* [powerful people] -- and each time the list included only traditional leaders and government officials. I attempted to use *dri tel ilo jukjuk in bed* [community leaders] but government officials were often excluded. No matter what broad term I attempted to use, each was too specific to encompass the range of individuals I hoped to elicit, that is the government, church, business, and traditional leaders, as well as the powerful personalities who influenced the more formally

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<sup>40</sup> With each of these terms I am referring to them in the Marshallese singular rather than add the pluralizing ‘ro’ after each. Similarly, I have kept *Irooj*, and *Lerooj* singular rather than form plurals in English, such as *Iroojas*. In common usage, omission of the plural marker *ro* is acceptable to prevent the unnecessary repetition in an obviously plural reference.

acknowledged leaders. In the Marshallese language, the word *Irooj* constitutes the domain of power and authority. Despite the lack of an appropriate term or perhaps even a cognitive domain for the type of contemporary influence and power I sought, I would argue that a group of influential elites does exist.

Just a glance at the patrons of the Tide Table, the popular downtown restaurant and bar owned and operated by Robert Reimers Enterprises (RRE), on any given night might justify use of a broadly defined “elite”. Business owners in retail and construction sit drinking beer with the President (an *Irooj*), and a few government Ministers. At nearby tables are a Secretary of a government ministry, a handful of American ex-patriots married to Marshallese women with their families, and the Women’s Athletic Club (WAC) members who meet to plan their next fundraiser. It is nearly impossible to describe the interconnectedness of those present, hardly noticeable to the casual observer, through extended family relations, shared educational histories, inter-marriage, church affiliation, and intricate political alliances among many, many other attributes.

Although *Kajin Majol* doesn’t acknowledge this contemporary group’s shared qualities, and instead defines and labels individuals by the source of their influence (e.g. popularity/personality, wealth, land rights, knowledge, or faith), I chose a word that translates contemporary influence into (traditional) cultural models of authority. My choice is *dri-utiej*, or “*rutej*” [the high].<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Rutej* is a recognized marker for “VIPs” (Bender et al 1976: 276) whether they are Marshallese or foreign. The term is not generally used in common talk to refer to a group of locally or nationally powerful individuals, but is used to designate the high people in a particular context, such as a party, or within the Parliamentary chambers.

The adjective *utiej* has multiple meanings. At a literal level, the word signifies altitude and height; in a symbolic way it represents dignity, eminence, grandness (Bender et al 1976: 276). “*Hosannab ilo utiejtata*” -- Hosanna in the highest -- Catholics pronounce at Mass to emphasize their Savior’s heavenly kingdom as the highest (*utiejtata*) of the high (*utiej*). To honor or show respect for others is to *kautiej* [*ka*, causative prefix; *utiej*, high] literally, to elevate or raise. In introductory remarks in the *Nitjela*, each speaker will *kile* [recognize] and *kautiej* [honor, respect] the various *Irooj*, *Lerooj*, Senators and Ministers. The *rutej* [people of high status, VIPs (Bender et al 1976: 276)] are offered special seating arrangements at banquets. An arrogant person has *utiej buruon* [a high heart]. The link between status and altitude is evident in the symbolic representation of the Marshallese *Irooj* as the frigate bird, the *ak*, that flies highest in the sky. In a well-known proverb, people are warned not to twist the wing of the frigate bird, that is, to not reject the gifts of those of higher positions -- *jab alkwoj peim ak*.

Respect for higher status (height/status) individuals is evident in the behaviors, physical postures, and social interactions between people of various social positions. Physically lowering oneself -- lowering heads, crouching, stooping -- in the presence of higher status individuals is common. A consciousness of height and heads prevails. Touching another’s head is taboo; being inappropriately higher than others is rude. Status is acknowledged and reproduced in numerous everyday interactions through these types of subtle gestures.<sup>42</sup> Due to the significance of the metaphor of height for status, I have chosen to use the label *rutej*, from *dri-utiej*, in reference to the group of individuals whose

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<sup>42</sup> A somewhat questionable example is the behavior of waitresses who often sit to take a customer’s order, rather than stand above them. Of course, this might also be a sign of fatigue or solidarity.

sources of authority and legitimacy are located in specific discrete realms but whose influence is felt across the nation. The *rutej* [the high] are the nation's VIPs. *Rutej* in this usage is not limited to those born with traditional status, nor just the wealthy, nor elected officials, but is inclusive of all who have the power, authority, material resources, social relationships and cultural affiliations that enable them to exercise power over subordinate others, and those whose "height" or position is recognized and respected. The term *rutej* here emphasizes a collective identity "above" others in Marshallese society, whether the source of that authority is sacred or secular. By choosing the term *rutej*, rather than the multiple distinctive terms for authority, I mark a collective elite identity in a familiar metaphor of height and power without delineating particular sources of power.

The lack of an indigenously marked "elite" category is not limited to the Marshallese. The nobility of Tonga does not simply contrast as an elite with commoners. Rather, there is also a relatively unmarked (and indigenously unlabelled) commoner elite social pool which shares much with the noble elite (Marcus1979:142).

Commoner and royal elites share characteristics that my use of the term *rutej* highlights, even if the term is not currently used in this broad sense. When social realities and their implications can no longer be avoided, appropriate terms are borrowed or born to describe the previously un-experienced. The Marshallese victims of the US nuclear testing program use borrowed English terms (e.g. "poison," "bomb") to describe the source of their "never-before" experiences and illnesses (Barker n.d. 2000). Yet, for such deeply rooted understandings as social position and status, specific authority categories -- some relatively new, such as *dri-business* -- remain dominant despite their apparent

inadequacy in describing contemporary social realities and power relations. The existence of specific referents of social and political power sources effectively prevents a critical awareness and a critical discourse of a collective entity of elites. The Marshallese emphasis on distinctive categorical status labels obscures recognition of elites' collective participation and control (to various degrees) over valued resources. Identifying those multiple and intersecting arenas of influence contributes to effectively delineating Majuro's *rutej*, their alliances, oppositions, and impact on the development of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Though this is an attempt to get at elites' views and self-stories, I cannot deny the external nature of the label, "elite." Elites are always studied by outsiders; "elite" is usually an externally applied label, and only rarely a self-reference (Marcus 1983:9). Identifying a useful indigenous term such as *rutej*, does not imply that elites on Majuro recognize or refer to themselves as *rutej*, or would even appreciate this representation. It is no more salient to Marshallese (beyond its typical use in designating high status people at specific events) than the English word "elites." I choose *rutej* in an effort to translate *my* intended definition of elites into a Marshallese colloquial context. The term is thus used here to call attention to a status that is largely denied due to cultural ideals of humility and authority and to call attention to the disjuncture of contemporary realities and cultural ideals.

### **Global Contexts**

Elites' positions as/in strategic sites of global intersection enable them to lead the replication and transformation of local, national, and international discourses and institutions. As local mediators, *rutej* translate foreign forces and resources into locally

meaningful social, symbolic, and financial capital. Elites not only *embody* intersecting transnational relationships, multinational institutions, and global trends, they (symbolically) *intercept* them.

Elites collectively and individually indigenize, “Marshallize,” and thus enculturate the very forces and discourses over which they control access and influence understanding. Their effectiveness at recognizing and revealing the local value of foreign discourses and resources is enhanced and hindered by multiple personal factors. Significant among these are facility and experience in cross-cultural communication. These in turn, are impacted by education, employment, linguistic expertise as well as historic familial influences and relationships. The self stories that follow highlight these shared skills, histories, and alliances while also significantly revealing the diversity of personal goals and perspectives, and political alliances and oppositions. While I argue for a collective “*rutej*,” the discourses in which they participate -- those of tradition, development, democracy -- are highly contested.

These self-stories are significant beyond the knowledge they reveal of development of the socio-political environment of Majuro in the late twentieth century. They contribute to understandings of the ways global processes and localized cultural and social systems interpenetrate. The discussions and reflections which follow reveal how intimately connected are global and local politics and discourses in individuals' lives. Studies of globalization frequently involve high levels of abstraction that deny the concrete ways globalization processes are embedded in the lives of individuals (J. Abu-Lughod 1997:131). These stories are an attempt to ground abstraction, and privilege people over “processes.”

Globalization is not a one-way process. Too often studies of globalization revolve around the production of global discourses, and ignore how these discourses are received, consumed, and given local meaning. "If there are globally produced cultures, then there are also culturally produced view of globality" (King 1997:x). Furthermore, finding a way to express that interpenetration, mutual exchange is a challenge. Abu-Lughod asserts that there is more movement from the periphery to the center than most scholarship acknowledges (1997:131,133).<sup>43</sup>

Even elite research which does focus on the role of individuals, tends to emphasize organization and relationships to larger systems of power, rather than the personal *interactions among elites that are so essential to elite identity and agency.*

As Marcus notes:

[The term 'elite'] evokes images of agency, exclusivity, and relationship to broader contexts. . . As causal agents behind events, elites represent a way of conceiving power in society and attributing responsibility to persons rather than to impersonal processes. The image is of actors who cooperate and make decisions which bring about effect, shaping events for others. . .Exclusivity. . . often connotes superiority, but in essence denotes separation. The elite may be separated from others in either invisible, low-profile, or conspicuous, visible ways. However, elites. . . are commonly thought to act in a discrete backstage arena that is invisible to nonelites. In elite theory and research, the degree to which elites are exclusive is determined by examining empirical phenomena such as recruitment, practices of boundary maintenance, and emblems of status that are embodied in elite life-styles. Elites are imagined as groups in relation to other groups who are nonelites.

The major emphasis of elite theory and research has not been on the biographical details of lives of the elite but rather on the empirical elaboration of the organization inherent in the concept. . . Studies of elites frequently concentrate on the ways elites' function within a larger system while ignoring their internal culture and practices (1983:9,10, 11-12).

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<sup>43</sup> Recent increases in Pacific Islander emigration might be viewed as a literal expression of that "move" from periphery to center that the mutuality of globalization processes.

This chapter will focus on elites' self-representations, their shared experiences and influence and the emergent views -- shared or divergent -- that revolve around discourses of development, dependency, tradition, and democracy. I do not intend to define here the boundaries of elites, their internal interactions and relationships, nor do more than sketch a picture of their influence in broad strokes. Further, this chapter is not intended as an evaluation, indictment or judgment -- it is meant to introduce the emergence of a powerful Marshallese elite to an external audience, to glimpse at their diverse lives and histories, and understand their shared skills and experiences in garnering the various resources that enable and empower them.

### **Elite Access**

Elite accessibility is often cited as a factor that prevents anthropologists from "studying up" (Marcus 1981, 1983; Nader 1969). Access is a tremendous issue for me because I am well aware that, like global-local processes, elite access is reciprocal. My access to certain Marshallese elites results from my affiliation with Assumption where many were educated, and where many of their family members attend school. Through Assumption, and my sponsor family, I have been welcomed in these elite circles. I have known many of the participants in this study for over a decade, prior to their election to office, or their rise to a more secure status positions. Many are long-time friends, or friends or relatives of my family, or relatives of my students with whom I have interacted on numerous occasions in various contexts for many years. From Sunday Mass to picnics at Enemanit, to work-centered interactions, family celebrations, Friday nights out, and participation in community events, our relationships have grown and altered as our

positions and roles have shifted. Although most recently I have taught at the college, and worked at Alele Museum, and occasionally call myself an anthropologist, I am most often identified as Julie, a former “JIV from Assumption” (or sometimes introduced as *nejin Dennis im Daisy*, immediately explained by “JIV from Assumption”).

Long-term research and relationships enable this sort of access, but do not ensure it. While most of the participants made themselves available for me at their offices, my office, or over a meal at a restaurant, others would schedule appointments only to be absent when I appeared, or would reschedule upon my arrival. Long-term research has its advantages as well as disadvantages.

Communicating in English is another ambiguous characteristic of this research. Elite fluency in English is greater than my fluency in Marshallese, so most of my interviews were conducted in English. In some cases we shifted languages throughout, while in other examples, we would begin in Marshallese and conclude in English.<sup>44</sup>

Whatever the benefits or constraints, research with elites ensures an anthropologist’s accountability, reciprocity, and accessibility -- three frequent complaints of indigenous communities. Accessibility is not only a matter of the anthropologist having access *to* elites, but include the accessibility *of* elites to research written about them. *Accountability and mutuality are enhanced in these endeavors.*

Even so, elites research can be politically precarious. The Marshall Islands government has declared one American anthropologist and one former American ambassador *persona non grata* (See Chapter 8). Some of what I recount throughout this

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<sup>44</sup> This is likely due to the structure of the interviews, which began with questions to elicit biographical information about early childhood, education, and employment and concluded with their reflections on the relationship between the Marshall Islands and the United States.

dissertation, and particularly in this chapter is common knowledge among Marshallese people, residents, and scholars, but it is not available in scholarly writings. Avoiding writing about significant personalities and moments of Marshallese history seems an injustice, yet inscribing transitory political information can be petty and trivial. The overbearing silence that surrounds the political oppositions and alliances of the RMI that emerged under the leadership of Amata Kabua is akin to ignoring the “elephant in the room.” In Western academic literature about the Marshall Islands -- anthropological, economic, political -- Amata Kabua is invisible, unnamed, and avoided. But he is still there, the “invisible center of power” whose influence is documented, and historicized throughout this dissertation.

### **Elite Anthropologist**

This chapter is particularly difficult for me to write. Majuro, despite its many faces, is small; its elite community is even smaller. In many ways, I am included among Majuro’s elites, as an educated American who participates in the discourses and discussions about development, democracy, and tradition that pervade social life and talk. Like many of the *rutej* I interviewed, I have held positions of influence as a teacher, and ironically, as a cultural/historic preservation employee.

Potentially damaging meaningful relationships through objectification and analytical distance is more threatening to me than the inherent professional vulnerability of “studying up.” I have struggled with the choice to attempt to disguise participants or let them speak as identified selves. Ultimately, in order to protect the participants represented in this chapter, I decided to alter their personal characteristics. While each interview transcript is cited *verbatim*, its attributed source is made deliberately vague (e.g. a businessman, a

community leader). I have little doubt that Majuro residents reading this chapter might make an approximate guess as to the identities of the participants, but I try to prevent any absolute identification, by obscuring specifying details. At times this attempt feels quite futile. I know how much everyone on Majuro knows about each other -- and their pasts. As I read numerous reports written in prior decades that described participants' positions and views anonymously, their identities were obvious -- not only to myself but to the Marshallese friends with whom I shared the documents.

When I struggled to write about my friends (see Chapter 1), and *their* friends and extended family, I went to my sponsor parents for advice. They responded: "Just write the truth." I gulped. "Truth comes in portions, some large, some small, but never whole . . ." (Hau'ofa 1983:7). The 'truths' presented in the following section are those seen and understood from the limited perspective of a middle-class-American-Catholic-woman-volunteer-teacher-turned-anthropologist. They are not full truths. I thank many people who have graciously shared their lives and stories with me, and ask for their forgiveness for any failures or errors in their representation here.

The individuals' stories that follow include those of *Irooj* from Ralik and/or Ratak, commoner businessmen, elected officials, public servants, community-based organization leaders, and active church goers of Catholic and Protestant religious backgrounds, and some with combinations of all the above. The familiar distinctions between Catholic and Protestant, *Irooj* and *kajur*, public and private sector, Ralik and Ratak, Kaibuki or Jebrik (Twenty-Twenty), are cross-cut in numerous ways, complicating simplistic representations and binary oppositions.

## **RUTEJ**

### **A Businessman**

In his late 40s, this businessman is largely responsible for the transformation of a family run business into one of the most successful private businesses in the RMI. He was born on Kwajalein, the seventh of eight children, where his father held a contract with the US military to construct boats to transport goods and provide basic services to outer island residents. Although from Likiep, this CEO spent most of his life on Majuro, where he moved with his family for school. His older siblings began their educations at the Catholic school on Likiep prior to the family's move to Kwajalein; he attended Assumption Elementary as one of its first students.

After completing Elementary school, he attended Xavier High School on Chuuk, and then spent one year at a business college in Hawai'i before heading to an Iowa Catholic college for his Bachelor's degree. There, he met his American wife, and upon graduating, returned to Majuro to work with the family business.

Within a decade, he became the CEO of the company, after a period of working with a series of American store managers hired by his father. He has held the position of CEO for approximately 20 years, during which time he witnessed and contributed to the political development of the nation, the impact of the Compact of Free Association, and the shifting cultural practices of his community.

Here this CEO reflects on the relationships between government and business, culture and development, and the various confrontations and challenges that emerge over local and transnational resources. In his position as CEO, he also speaks about the cultural,

personal, and bureaucratic constraints on business, and comments on the ineffectiveness of the Compact to produce its declared intended results, given local political oppositions.

The interview took place in his office on a Saturday afternoon in late July of 1998. I had passed him in the street and asked if he could spare an hour to talk to me about his views of the Compact and ideas for improving the new agreement. We scheduled the time in advance and I arrived with my tape recorder and notebook. At the start of the interview, he spoke rapidly, hurriedly, conducting an apparently rehearsed overview of the history of the family business. The family had earned a reputation for its success in the region and is well represented in regional and international media. My familiarity with this businessman is largely based on ties to Assumption, and to his family. He had shown great generosity to me and the other volunteer teachers over the years, particularly when I was teaching his daughter. He and his wife entertained my family when they visited the Marshalls, and like most *dri-belle*, I frequented the stores, restaurants, and various facilities the company operated. We had shared a few meals, and a few beers together over the years, but this was the first time we had held a private conversation that lasted approximately an hour -- with numerous telephone interruptions. Although it began somewhat perfunctorily, as we discussed various policies and personalities, the stories he told became more personal and emotional.

*JW: Can you point to any government assistance in the development of your company?*

**BUSINESSMAN:** No. In fact, in many cases, where we saw the government was lacking we would step in to take care of something, for example, we once had a pharmacy here. There were certain medications that the hospital couldn't keep in stock that were very important to diabetes patients, insulin and such, so we brought in a pharmacist. But the government thought we were competing against the hospital and making a profit so they passed a tax saying that a professional license would cost \$2,500 per year. You know, that law is still on the books, even though

we closed the pharmacy?! If anyone ever wonders why a professional license costs that much, it goes back to our pharmacy. . .

All this stem from one man, who was against the Reimers because of the fact that they were moving. And this us, uh, no good, to talk about it more and more because it's so personal, it's human, it's so personal you don't want to sound like you hate the guy. The more you talk the more 'they all hate him, that's why they're like that,' but people have to understand that, they have to understand the culture, they have to understand the smallness of the island, the way people are on the island, and they don't understand. It's a very small place, that personality, and it can be a real big conflict.

*JW: It can effect the entire national development*

BUSINESSMAN: Exactly. It's really hard to explain to people because you can never say that.

*JW: And everything written about the Marshalls never mentions his name...*

BUSINESSMAN: No, because of the personality conflicts. And of course the royalty, land, the chief thing. They've always been treated like a god and therefore, 'whatever I say, you do.' And then all of a sudden we're dealing with money and a commoner comes up and does something very good and he's developing the country in a sense and that's a no-no. You cannot do that. It's got to be the Irooj.

Many of the federal grants that were designed for companies like ours were denied us. We stood on our own, instead of benefiting from those programs. They [Government] think the private sector is dangerous. We pay taxes, even when building our hotel! Others [hotels] came up [after us] and they were exempted! So once that exemption passed we took advantage to build up our hotel at the beach but by that time the Royal Garden [Amata's daughter's hotel] was finished so they changed the law again and we had to pay!

When we closed our store on Ebeye we had to get rid of 120 employees. . . What happened was that KITCO, one of the coops founded by the US military had taken a Small Business Administration loan and defaulted in the 1970s. Oscar asked if we could run the store and pay off the loan. Many of the Irooj were on that board and all those guys would be ashamed to default on it. We signed an agreement. That store had a very long lease. We paid the loan but not the landowner (the Irooj [on the board] owned the land). It worked out fine, and we paid off their loan, and had build up the store, but after the old guys died, the young guys didn't want to continue the agreement so one day, out of the blue, in 1993 they closed it and blocked up the store. They had already raised all our fees and dock fees, and we decided to close everything. We weren't wanted there. You can fight it cause the

lease is still good, but you don't want to. We lost one-third of our business then. At the same time the economy was falling down. We took a beating.

Today there is lots more competition...and also Chinese. We all share a smaller piece of the pie. The laws are not followed, many businesses don't pay taxes, sell black market items. Before, it was strict, now its loose. They took their chances with passport sales and this is what has happened.

Everyone thought that the Compact would bring lots of money around, but it really wasn't the explosion that was expected. Most of the Compact funds were used outside, to purchase the power plant, and the airline, and many other things were purchased with loans against the Compact. We're still paying those. The Compact funding was not really that huge. There was payroll, and Kwaj payments, and the radiation money, but that was about it. We all benefited from disposable income, from workers, employees, and radiation funds, not government money or assistance. We're trying new things today to bring in more money, and we're using private funds to develop these industries – aquaculture, clams, pearls – and tourism. It is very expensive, and these are things that the government should support, and set up. Instead we do it on our own. We have to get new money into this country, not just look to Uncle Sam.

*JW: Why do you think there is so little funding put into education, human resources?*

BUSINESSMAN: There was a fear that they'd take over. The more you understand, the more you would think that something is not right. That was the mentality. You've got a guy who's really bloodthirsty, way up there, charismatic, high potential, power, and a small country of uneducated. He's way up there, and he can take over very easily.

The government did help us indirectly – the dock, the power plant, basic infrastructure and communication. But in other ways they won't. We took over management of the television station and want to expand it to Laura, but we need money to put a cable, a fiber optic line, to Laura. Now, NTA is government funded and could do it, and lease the cable to us but they don't want to help the private sector. Some of them are benefiting, their own pockets are benefiting, and if it makes money they want a part of it.

*JW: The accountability issues are now coming up. I don't understand how the US can step in so late and point fingers.*

BUSINESSMAN: Yes, the US spoiled the people. It's really their fault.

And even though I know the Kwajalein money is a lot, I am sure that more money was given to them to get the Compact signed. How could he become one of the richest men in the Pacific, with \$17 million to his name, his worth – from what? As

a public servant? He was a good talker. He'd say, 'The business people, they're stealing from you guys, but me, I'm a public servant.' People believe that -- he was a good talker: 'A businessman trying to sell a bag of rice and make money -- look, he's stealing from the people.' But when the politicians make money is that stealing from the people? 'No, it's good, he deserves it.' That's the kind of problem we have.

Lots of little things happened like that, that goes way back. We went through hell.

The businessman's account of antagonisms with the government are clearly personalized and focused on the policies and actions of the first President. In example after example -- the closing of the Ebeye store, the hotel tax implemented, rescinded, and re-implemented, exorbitant license fees, inaccessibility to federal grants and programs for private sector development, and other cases of lawsuits, land battles, evictions, rejected proposals offered to competitors -- the rivalry of what is often generalized as public versus private sector, is personalized here and even explained as culturally rooted antagonisms, and resulting from someone hesitantly characterized as bloodthirsty, power hungry, and cruel. This relationship, like the Majuro land division, defined much of the economic development of the Marshalls, and formed many long-term alliances.

### **Ralik Irooj and Senator**

A relative of the former President, this *Irooj* and Senator offered me an hour of his time when I stopped by his office, upstairs in the Capital Building, uninvited. We had not met, though I had attended public gatherings of the Gaming Commission, of which he was a member. I believe he recognized me from those small gatherings. He invited me into a large meeting room, with a huge window and view of the lagoon. We sat across from each other at the end of the large table near the window. He offered me coffee and came back with two mugs. He said he could spare an hour.

The Senator was born in 1949, raised in the outer islands by adoptive parents until he was ten, and came to Majuro for school at age ten. He first attended a Protestant school, until his Catholic grandmother insisted he attend Assumption. He began school in the fourth grade at age ten. After graduating from Assumption, he attended Xavier High School on Chuuk, graduated in 1970, and then went to the University of Hawai'i on an East West Center Scholarship. He majored in English.

He returned to Majuro and began to work for his father at a company called ITSCO. His description of the development of the company mirrors the dramatic increase in development projects that occurred throughout the 1970s:

*After school I help out with the family business like uh, my Dad and his family, on this side of, the Ratak side. They form a big corporation doing many things so I came home and help with that. That was called ITSCO. It started with transportation service, and taxi. They got into construction and imports, not exports, hmm... they got into making cement blocks -- that's a joint venture. Then bakery, restaurant, they got into, construction... so, basically, that was a company that I help from 1973 to about 1976.*

*After that I was recruited by the high school. I went and helped them as a student counselor from about '74 on to '77. I spent time with the Education.*

*Following that the Peace Corps recruited me -- it used to be called District Representative, Marshall Islands was a District so I worked as a rep from 1978 to 1980. I told them I'll have only two years with you guys, I don't really like this job. But it was a good experience with the State Department. And of course with the volunteers. In many ways, I dealt with so many volunteers, some crazy, some good. It was quite an experience, one that I could only last two years.*

The Senator's experience as Peace Corps representative was marked by the deaths of two volunteers, one accidentally run over by a truck, the other committed suicide because his parents wouldn't accept his Marshallese girlfriend.

After that challenging position, he and some friends began their own construction company on Majuro, but he was called away to Kwajalein by the government.

I started with them [friends in the construction company] for one year and in the middle of a major housing project the government wanted me to go to Kwajalein. Somebody wanted to warn them, let's put it that way, work with what was to become the landowners sail-in. I was naïve. I said sure I'll go but for one year, because I have an obligation to do houses in Majuro.

I went one year and then I called the Chair of the PSC [Public Service Commission], 'My contract is up.' He said, 'Hey stay one more year.' Then I'm beginning to wonder why there was uh avoidance in guys coming to work there, and this was a problem between the Kwajalein landowners and the Army, and they don't know how to deal with them.

I was more like a reporter. I was reporting development to this government as well as the High Commissioner [of the Trust Territory], it was a woman then, a lady.

Then another two years, then 1986 there was a big eruption, they went mad. That's about the same time the Compact was approved, but uh, lot of people didn't feel happy with the Army's handling of their land lease.

We contain ourselves, we didn't...act like crazy people like in Indonesia where they throw rocks, but there were close calls and some guys get drunk and there were really close calls. The Army brought in a lot of police, recruited them and deputized a lot of Americans from Honolulu and the West Coast, California. Big guys, mean guys, throw us on the floor. My job was also to make sure the Marshallese workers did not participate in demonstration, but they need to return home. They fear they will be attacked; my job was also to make sure they are safe.

1986 was a big one. There were several other events in previous years. Helicopters would take people outside the atoll at night.

Oh course, I'd go and talk to them, 'Please get up because you're in violation.' The thing was to do it peacefully. They [the Americans] may be wrong but there is another day to do it. I was afraid that they [the Americans] would hurt them [the Marshallese]. I didn't really trust the Americans to keep the peace. Those guys that were deputized never had any real proper training. I was wondering what they would do when they got angry -- if they would beat people or even shoot them.

The Senator was responsible for keeping the peace on Kwajalein, and discovering the major concerns between the US and Marshallese workers. That experience led him to a position in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during a critical period after the signing of the Compact, where the RMI busied itself establishing relations and embassies throughout the

world: Japan, Fiji, China, Honolulu, Washington D.C, membership in regional organization, etc. He talked about the challenges of representing the Marshall Islands to the world:

I tell you it's not easy [to represent the Marshalls], especially lot of people, especially from bigger countries and organization that have never dealt with these islands. They've heard of Pacific Islands as a group but they have no concept of what an atoll is like, what it is like to live in water, such things. Gradually, they learn, we are small, we are people that want to exercise our rights and government.

Our setup here is also interesting a mix up of a presidential system as well as the parliamentary model. This is what is appropriate and workable based upon our own experience because to have just one man run the country without a Cabinet is a lot of work, so we need a Cabinet to reduce the workload -- although that doesn't mean the president doesn't handle everything.

In 1996, the Senator claimed somebody nominated him to run for office, only two weeks before the deadline for the declaration of candidacy. Upon his election he was appointed Minister and has held various portfolios, including, Public Works and Resources and Development. He said, "This is my second year, and it's not easy."

I asked the Senator and Irooj what some of the challenges were; he replied:

Ok, it's the clash of uh, I like to use that word, clash. Our policies. I am very concerned that if our young generation -- the group that is in school -- if this group doesn't learn to grow food on the land, or to fish, I think we have a new breed. This is my concern. They are not Marshallese in the true sense. Although education is described as about balance I don't think it is balanced, I think we put too much stress on portraying to our people that they will be white collar workers. This is what I fear. That's why I make this projection. We're placing more emphasis on the white color model.

*JW: How?*

Senator: EVERYTHING. Everything about this island. Education is not addressing the preparation of Marshallese, forging character that blends the new opportunities as well as maintaining the connection with the, their island life. Somewhere I don't believe there is a sense of connection between the Marshallese of grade school (in private or public), that connection with their true nature.

JW: *So you're talking about identity, a sense of where you come from.*

Senator: I'm not looking at it in terms of anthropological meaning, I'm looking at it in terms of economic meaning, ok? Because if we don't teach our people to become self-reliant, to depend on the ocean, that opportunity is lost. And I'm not sure who is responsible, although I like to blame the government, I like to blame every school that is here, we take people's time, people's valuable time away from these things and we don't integrate the learning of fishery, these are not being integrated in the schools. We've learned to become consumers not producers, that's what I'm trying to say.

This topic excited the Senator who further explained and explored his ideas for the potential integration of economics, education, and self-reliance:

We've spoiled so many people. Parents do that because they have money. Some don't of course, but still the kids are coming home and saying, 'Hey, the other kids are having this and that,' and the parents feel a new type of guilt that sets in and they have to give it.

All of this is done...in the name of freedom, the name of democracy, our people have been liberated from the custom --they couldn't have money -- and now they have money. Here you spent it, you live it, but, I don't think people really knew how to prioritize things considering the amount of resources they have so the result of that is buying things just to say, 'I am a new Marshallese, I have this opportunity.'

And...some people need to maintain that status quo or their stature in society because it has become a substitute of what use to be, it used to be an equivalent. For example *Alab*, you know or an *Irooj*, will re-express his stature in terms of maybe a gold watch, or maybe a necklace, or maybe a pickup or a house. I don't need to point to you these things, you've been here since 1990 there are many things that reflect the financial strength of a person or his family....

Maybe it s cultural expression of the same, or maybe a corruption or popularization of what was then balanced but [now] is not. It's too much, you see, because we've been like that.

You see these guys [government] do not know what to buy, it's not their priority, they should put it into education, but education for what is another question. We educate our people so they go to the US and live there, or do we educate them to make these islands productive?

This is probably the deep question that is being debated time and time again and no one seem to agree on what it is that should be there. The Catholic church is part, the Protestant, the government.

But I have raised this point publicly, I have written about it, but it seems to fall on deaf ears. Everyone is so used to a procedure that starts in September through May and June the whole cycle, and I'm saying there is nothing wrong with the calendar why don't we integrate some new ideas where you don't throw out English math and science you maintain these as foundation things but bring in agriculture, fisheries, you still can use mathematics and then you can apply science as well.

I think our teachers are lazy; they don't want to improve, they don't want to change, they want to do what they've done before. We spend so much time in that environment, very little time out of it, very little time in the water.

They don't really understand it, lot of people will probably more than likely follow a new direction, if that is well supported. If the school supports and the school and the government support, then all the young people will do it. There's been no unification of our minds on this issue, everybody says, 'Hey leave the private sector, parochial schools and government alone.' I really think this is an area where, especially in this situation, small countries need to unify, the strength of their institutions ins the strength of the teachers and they just work on what is the most germane thing to do --nothing else but to work the land, work the sea.

You know in the US lots of people learn how to farm and the US started with farms. You guys never started with science. You were, your beginning was simple, farms -- growing corn, growing potato, all of that -- and you follow your seasons, you follow the growing season. We should be doing that, we should be following our growing seasons. There are seasons here for growing food for certain crops, for fishes, certain fish are around at different time of the year.

All of that was...maybe it's too late.

What a shame, it's like this is what we strive for, and it's arrive, so why change it. I think it's good but it's also degrading because it makes one's mind become lazy and the body become a case of obesity. (laugh)

The Senator's notion of development is based upon the atoll environment, and the appropriate skills and knowledge that are required to make it and its people productive. He is especially critical of schools that educate students for white color jobs, to go live in the United States. He blames the schools and the government for inappropriate priorities, all

promoted in the name of democracy and freedom, that in fact, increase dependency. He looks to the beginnings of the United States as a model for RMI development that centers on productivity, and basic survival skills. This Senator who is Western educated questions the value of this education.

The Senator's frustrations at the various churches and their rhetoric is apparent as he criticizes them for spending too much time scolding and reminding people of their obligations rather than providing services that actually help them. He explains:

The churches should no longer debate the issue of uh, moral policy because this [vocational education] is [also] a moral policy -- really. I'm talking about other issues that the church has been talking about, they've been bogged down with gambling, nuclear waste, and prostitution that come with change. If we all spend more energy, more resources, more time on preparing our own people that's another strategy. Then we will have spent our money and time wisely. We have Protestant, Catholics, other forms of denominations, all they are interested in is reminding people that they are Christian.

The Senator's views surely have been shaped by the religious rivalries that exist within his own family, where one side was Protestant and the other Catholic. The Senator told me that because his relatives are pastors in churches, if he attends one service and not the other, they get jealous and angry. He doesn't go to church because it's too political.

The Senator considered the changes in Marshallese society that resulted from the increased access to resources that accompanied the Compact:

Because of many opportunities that have come about many people have changed so they didn't want to ever consider obedience and alliance with the custom. Some say, 'Now I'm a new guy, I have my own money, my own way of way of living and I'm liberated. I'm free.' Go live elsewhere. So you have that element of dissention, disobedience -- not being one with the culture. We have established that, we have made a new seed that is growing.

I think that is a good thing, each person has the right make its own decisions. That's made in the constitution. But again it opens up another debate. We should

allow that. Even in the US. How far can you pursue, should you do it to the detriment of other people?

The Senator proceeded to give numerous and humorous examples of abused of personal rights -- from the loudspeaker used at the churches on Sundays, to the person singing karaoke at a restaurant while he was trying to eat. By this point it was noon, and we had spoke for over an hour. He stopped suddenly: "I'm hungry! Let's go have lunch, my treat." We walked down the street to a nearby restaurant frequented by the Senators.

I understood the offer as characteristic of his *Iroj* status. After our orders arrived at the table, he took a look at my tuna sandwich and his two tacos, and commented: "It looks like I ordered the better dish, why don't you share it with me? You take one, and I'll eat the other. Don't be shy. Take it, it's alright." So I did. It was hard to refuse, and definitely better than mine. The Senator's generosity and humility were endearing. While I easily could have purchased my own meal, and his, I understood the value of *joj*, and his desire to demonstrate it.

### **Kajur Senator**

I first met this Senator at a meeting for those elected officials and church leaders who organized to propose the anti-gambling bill. I had heard his speeches over the *Nitijela* broadcasts and noticed that my officemates listened intently to him and talked positively about him to others over lunch and breaks at the coffee shop. I stopped by the Senator's office on a day the Parliament was not in session. He invited me in and agreed to my recorded interview. Unlike some of the previous participants', who sat in dark offices behind huge desks, his office was small and bright. He was dressed in khaki pants and a t-

shirt and wore inexpensive green *zorrries* [rubber flip-flops]. He pulled out a chair to sit directly across from me, and propped one ankle upon his other knee in a relaxed position.

The Senator was from an atoll near Majuro, was raised there, and finally came to Majuro with his family when he was a young boy. Unlike many other elites, he did not begin school until he was ten years old. He credits the Maryknoll sisters for helping him graduate in 1962:

I was born in [island, atoll] in 1943, I didn't go to school there until I was about, ten years old, I used to travel back and forth between [two atolls] and within the atoll itself. I'm the youngest in the family and I was very close to my parents, that's why I was unable to remain in school, because they move around, and sometimes they go to the small islands where there is no school and then right there I didn't have to stay at the school like in [island] the Elementary school there, when my parents move around the islands I just went and join them, I didn't have stay in school. And also, my parents didn't care much about education, because both didn't attend any school And in a way I was kind of free to do things on my own. If I didn't want to go to school, I didn't; I had the freedom to make my own choice.

I was raised there...then later on my parents moved to Majuro and I joined them. ...I was beginning to worry about going to school. In fact I was late going to the elementary school. I was around almost ten years old when I first went to Assumption school.

My parents are Catholics and I was staying on the small island next to the Catholic mission and with that very short distance, and also my parents went to Catholic church, and my father entered me to go to school at Assumption...back in the 1950s. I started off with say, with the first grade, being that old, all my classmates were just small kids, and I don't know what the teachers had in mind, because I had to move up to the upper grade. I think it was because of my age not that I was making good grades and right then it was very difficult. I was really struggling, cause, you know, being new to the classroom situation I was --really, I was lost. In fact I was taking remedial classes with the nuns, with the sisters, with the help of them I was able to put with the kids of my age, some were , most are younger than myself, but I think that was where I fit it. That's where I was really struggling when I was going to elementary school and I was able to graduate with the help of the sisters back in '62.

He attended and graduated from Xavier High School in Chuuk before returning home and taking a teaching position at Assumption for two years. Because he was the

youngest in his family, he was responsible for caring for his elderly parents, so he left his teaching position on Majuro to return to the outer islands. There he made copra before a representative from the Trust Territory Education Department offered him a teaching position at the local public elementary school:

I was there as a copra maker, make our living on copra for about a year and while I was in [atoll] the elementary school supervisor from the Ministry of Education came down on the ship. We knew, we know each other while I was teaching at Assumption, and we met again at [atoll] so this is how I was able to get hired to be a teacher at the government school in [island]. So he saw me there and said if I was interested to be a teacher. He said that, 'After two years at Assumption, you are already there. All we need is if you are interested.'

Once established with the Trust Territory Department of Education, the Senator held numerous positions. He left his teaching position in the outer islands after his father's death, and accepted a post in Majuro. He worked in various positions within the Department/Ministry of Education: in teacher training, English as a Second Language (TESL), and the Curriculum development committee. During the many years he served the Marshalls education program he gradually worked toward a B.Ed at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa campus. He began the coursework for his degree in 1969 on a TT scholarship and completed his degree in 1983. He explains why it took fourteen years to earn his degree:

During TT time there used to be scholarships for all the districts and I was lucky enough to be picked for one of those to be given the opportunity to go off to school. On the job training maybe, whatever we call it, and I was off to school. That's where I went to the University of Hawai'i, Manoa campus.

*JW: What year was that?*

Senator: See, the policy for TT time was you don't go out for all four years, you just go out spend one year, come back and work after one year and then if you are lucky enough again, then they send you back to continue. Piece by piece, something like that.... so I think it was back in, let me see, 1969, the first time, back and forth,

back and forth. In fact sometimes we would skip three or four years and then go back again. That was tough...

JW: *You'd forget what you learned!*

Senator: This policy that you keep coming back and back. And I think that was a good opportunity, and it was a good deal, because of guys like me, who has a family back home. The family would get your salary and your scholarship would provide enough for room and board and for them while you are off to school. That's why I was able to accept this idea, this uh I was, I really care about my family, that there is nothing to feed them, but because of the salary continues on, I was really interest to go on to continue my education. But either way, it was very difficult, oh yeah.

JW: *How long until you actually finished your degree?*

Senator: Uh, let me see, I get my degree back in 1983. My B.Ed. in elementary education. I took other courses from other universities, extension courses, and I think I am halfway through for my Master's [now].

Like many other elected officials, political careers often followed teaching experience. The Senator was first elected to represent his home atoll in 1991, and was re-elected in 1995. The significance of the 1991 election helped to define this Senator's politics and personality:

JW: *I was at Assumption the year you were elected. Were you associated with the RRDP (Ralik-Ratak Democratic Party)?*<sup>45</sup>

Senator: Well, now back in that year, [my home atoll] was on the other party, was really supporting, was pro-government. But my myself, I don't want to involve with any of the two, the two political parties. I was invited to the uh, to the RRDP party, cause most of the members are all my very good friends, in fact I went to one or two of their meetings, and I did tell them, I didn't want to hide anything from them, I told them that with that kind of situation I didn't want to be involved. I was trying to save myself cause [my home atoll] was still, uh, one-hundred percent [pro-government, pro-Amata] so I didn't want to be involved on any of the two. Actually I was my own, and that's what I did. I was elected.

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<sup>45</sup> The RRDP is the Ralik-Ratak Democratic Party, the first formally organized opposition to the late President Kabua. The debates and campaigns of that year literally divided the atoll as the "government" party held rallies on the President's land, and the RRDP organized at the Reimers' compound, on Twenty-Twenty land.

But I did promise my other close friends who are the leaders of the RRDP party, I said they shouldn't be worried, I said, that if I had the chance I wouldn't be afraid to fight for what I think is right, and if what they are doing is right, I would support, them, or even if the other party would come up with something that is good for the people, I would support them. I just float around with what I think is right. Actually, I just wanted to be free on my own conscience, cause I know if I try to stick to a party, I would be faithful for it, and even if something is wrong, but because of this party I belong to, I would stick to it, so that I felt, I wouldn't do that. I didn't want to just tie myself and no freedom.

That's what I'm doing now. I'm, I just want to be on my own and on what I believe.

Speaking out, while still respecting others is critical for this Senator. When I asked his views of the Compact he initially referred me to one of the men who was intimately involved in the negotiations. When I asked if he thought the Compact was successful, he replied:

I don't think so, there's not much improvement, and when we're talking about improvement I mean, I'm just looking at it from a different aspect, I mean it's nice to be in building like this [the Glass Palace] but, what's the use? You go to outer islands, people are really ....they're having hard time, and what they depend on is copra and copra price is way down. Low for how many years? I mean, you see fancy buildings and things like this, I mean it's nice to see good buildings, but what do you think of people been suffering in the outer islands?

I mean there are good things and there are bad things. And these outside influence has changed a lot of thing. For instance there is a fishing project in [atoll] where they buy fish from the fisherman, bring them in and market, you know put them up again, and I don't see the good thing about that. I mean we end up with no fish. Over fished. There was no study of how much fish to take out, or how many pounds of fish a day, I mean it's just right there they go in and fish. And that's common sense, I'm talking about common sense. No matter how much or how many fish you get, but you know, in your own mind the more you get, the more money you're going to get, if you don't care ... that's what happening to [atoll]. MIMRA [Marshall Islands Marine Resource Authority] runs it. It comes to the government.

*JW: Why was the project set up on [atoll name]?*

Senator: I was not in the Nitijela and I was raising hell like crazy. When I was still with the Ministry of Education and you know when something is new to you, you

think it is good. But I knew, I knew, that there wouldn't be any development for [atoll], that would hurt [atoll]. And what's happening now is exactly what I said before. People now are complaining, but I can remember from the beginning, I was talking to a group of guys my age, older, they thought I was dreaming. I was in Hawai'i, I'd been to Guam, and I know what they're faced with, they're faced with this kind of problem, and I said, 'Look at Guam, look at Hawai'i, those are two examples and they've gone through this, and maybe we should, cause we're going in the same direction. They said [atoll] has plenty fish, plenty fish, we wouldn't have any problem. Now today, look at [atoll].

That project was with the support of the *Irooj*. The government, went to the *Irooj* and they said, "Go ahead and do it."

JW: *Was there money involved in that?*

Senator: Oh yeah, the place where the government is leasing, the *Irooj* get his share from that piece of land, that's the base where they have the generators and the big plant, for fishing.

But I did speak out. You know, I'll tell you the truth, when I think something is right, I don't even care who is who, even the President, I just go for what I think on my own conscience. I don't even bother.

The Senator not only values speaking his mind, he also discussed the impact of Compact funds, and America on Marshallese culture without my initiating the question. As we talked about the decrease in Compact funds that was purportedly designed to mirror the increase in self-sufficiency, the Senator commented on the changes in lifestyle and knowledge that accompany economic dependency:

Senator: The end of 2001 Marshall Islands would be on its own, one-hundred percent. And it come down to zero, with the US funding.

JW: *Is that realistic?*

Senator: I don't really think so. I think [there is] too much of this dependency. These outside influence, are again, they're very strong. I mean this generation have come to a point where they cannot stand on their own feet, like our ancestors, when there was no outsiders they would live happily, everything was provided, they got [their?] nets, they all go out fishing, not even a penny in the pocket. Strong, everything. And now that outside influence now has played an important role now and I think it is the mind of these people, well, like the USA and other nationalities

now, it's true that they have things are very fancy like the introduction of the iron, they brought in the machete that are really easy to work with I think this is what really changed the mind of the people.

*JW: Do you think they value American things more than their own?*

Senator: I would say yes. In my age, I don't appreciate this kind, I still, like the Marshallese way, Marshallese style, but like, my kids, they don't really enjoy staying in the outer islands, you know, they're glad to have ice cream, they like to see movies or TV, things like that that are happening in Majuro, as well as what's happening in the USA. Can you believe that this generation now? If you take one maybe one boy and put him on *Irooj* island [in Majuro atoll], where there is nobody, without any of this, just place him there, he wouldn't last long. Maybe up to three days you go see him, he's dead. But like my age, you can place me anywhere, no help, just drop me! I know the right tide to catch fish, I can make my own fire, I can get coconut, whatever's around the environment. And that's real Marshallese. But this generation, they don't even appreciate outer island life. And that's how you see outside influence has been played a role and for the ruin of the culture.

*JW: When a new generation speaks up, will that mean the culture has changed that much? That the young don't respect their leaders or elders?*

Senator: No, I don't think so, this future that I'm talking about probably is the future of the Marshallese will be flexible more, the Marshallese, they are Americanized in other ways, they can deal with both, with American and as a Marshallese. Two different, like you're in school you have two different person, from when you are in your house at home.

*JW: Are you hopeful about the future?*

Senator: I think so, but I hate to see the Marshallese culture fading away, I mean it happens in every society, there are changes, but I think we care more about the culture, be more, uh, get more people involved to care about it, it's gonna be okay.

The Senator speaks from a perspective that is quite different from many of the other elected officials. Despite his shared educational history, his close ties to outer island life distinguishes him -- his interests and concerns -- and frees him to speak. His only example of political caution emerged out of my question about his partisan loyalties. His home islands were within the domain of the first President, who was his *Irooj*, and he chose not to take an oppositional stance against the former President despite his ties to the

RRDP. He speaks critically of development projects he views as exploitative, and those traditional leaders who benefit from them, while he also critiques the lifestyles of the younger generation. He represents himself as a man with one foot in the outer islands and the other in Western democratic institutions. He respects traditional authority and western knowledge, and desires the freedom to make decisions according to his conscience, and to particular circumstances. Like the children who have two different personalities, one for school and one for home, he highly values the personal freedom to make his own decisions, without restriction of custom, political party, or other affiliations. This achievement is unique among those who spoke with me, and is particularly notable in the highly politicized context of the RMI *Nitijela*, especially in that unprecedented session. Despite his hopes for and criticisms of change, the Senator acknowledges the freedom that comes from being “flexible,” from being exposed to multiple sources of knowledge. His past enables him to say of the future: it’s gonna be ok.

### **An Elected Ralik Irooj**

This government Minister has held his position for over a decade and through each Presidency of the RMI. He was in his mid-forties at the time of this interview and at that time served as Acting President while the President was away. I had no prior contact with this Minister, although I had a friendship with the family of one of his brothers, and had recently interviewed another of his brothers. The interview appointment was arranged for late afternoon in a meeting room/lounge of the Capitol building, and it surprisingly continued for nearly two hours. We discovered a mutual interest in history, and discussed literature we were each currently reading. Unlike the majority of interviews, the *Irooj* asked

about my education, experiences, and family. He spoke candidly about his frustrations with America, and American society, Washington D.C bureaucrats, his experience of discrimination, his understandings of capitalism, dependency, and his culture:

I was born in 1952, a memorable year, that was the year the Korean war broke out (chuckle). I grew up on Ailinglaplap, and....I came to school on Majuro first time, 1955. That's the first time I had an American for a teacher. I didn't know anything, I didn't know what... (long silence, slow speech in contrast to earlier tone and chuckle) this guy used to write on the board and afterward he'd tell us, 'Copy what is on the board,' and I'll turn around to my friend and say, 'What did he say?' (chuckle) That was RES [Rita Elementary School]. I just spent one year there and then I went to Ebeye, Ebeye Public School.

There was a test for a school in Chuuk -- Mizpah, and when the scores that came back I was the only one who passed the test. Justina Langidrik and another boy also took the test for PATS [Pohnpei Agricultural Training School]. My classmates say, "Ah, let's not take the Xavier test, because we'll really fail the test." I don't know, maybe if we put the mark for Xavier we would have passed because it was the same test. But when the test came [back], I also passed that one. I was the only one who passed the test for PATS. I tested for MIHS [Marshall Islands High School], and there were only three of us from Ebeye who passed the test. The head teacher wanted to send me to Guam but they said no, because only tenth graders could go to Guam because we were living with sponsors. That meant I had to come to the high school here [Majuro] and spend one year before I can go. So I came here [to Majuro to attend MIHS]. I graduated in 1973.

I went to Oregon [Oregon Community College]. I was supposed to be met at the airport by my counselor, the foreign student advisor, a man from Hawai'i. He saw me there but he didn't come meet me. So I got lost in downtown Oregon, almost half a day, I was freezing, I didn't have any long sleeve, no jacket, yeah! I was asking around, I show people the address I was going to and they look at me and say, 'Couldn't take you.' That's one of the experiences I had about discrimination. Finally I got smart and I called the school and they asked 'Where are you?' 'Downtown.' 'Exactly where in downtown?' I never knew these things, but I looked at the sign and said, 'Well, there is this sign here....' They said, 'you will go one block down, one and a half block right, and you will see this bus #so and so,' and the name was different than the place I was going to. So when I got to the school this Hawaiian guy he looked at me and said, 'Hey, I saw you last night!' (laughter!!!)

I was there for two weeks and I couldn't stand it. I missed rice. And I came back to Hawai'i.

Upon arrival in Hawai'i, he was able to enroll at Hawai'i Pacific College where he earned a Bachelor's degree. After he returned to Majuro he was selected by the TT government to work in legal aid "because they wanted someone who could be trained, someone young and flexible, rather than the old stubborn people." He worked there for a while but wanted to pursue a graduate degree in political science. He dreamed of earning a PhD:

I wanted to be called 'Doctor.' The TT wanted to send me to Legal training on Guam since they wanted lawyers, but I didn't want it once I learned lawyers aren't called doctor. They called my wife and told her the plans they'd arranged for me and that's what happened. I went to Guam, then I came back and worked for legal services and they sent me to Gonzaga University Law school later.

I spent three years in law school. The toughest year is the first year. Lot of anxiety, you don't know whether you make it or not until you spend the whole year, and just mid-terms and then the final exams, if you feel lousy during those days, that's it. Then you get the exam and you have to wait two months for the results are out. The professor has to go to hundred students, and they don't give multiple choice.

I boast about that school. Bing Crosby, Tom Foley, former speaker of the house, his father was a judge in Spokane, and when I came back to Hawai'i, there is a man in our school in Hawai'i -- Hawai'i Pacific College. Lots of lawyers in Hawai'i graduate from that school

My second year my wife and sister-in-law, went to school with me. I used to babysit and wait til they come and then in the afternoon I go to school.

I did lot of things. My classmates were jealous of me (laugh) playing all day long.

Drink so much caffeine just to stay awake. One month before our final everybody would be studying staying up all night, except me. I think I was really foolish. My plan was just to maintain good grade, so long as I graduate, had I known, if I were smarter I would have really studied.

After law school, the *Irooj* came back home and ran for office from Ailinglaplap. He won the election after his second attempt in 1987 and has held office ever since. He has served in various ministerial positions, and as a Kwajalein landowner as well as government

representative, has had much direct interaction with Americans, particularly US government officials in Washington DC. He has closer ties to Compact negotiations and transactions than most RMI officials due to his traditional status, and his views voiced here reflect his frustrations.

Like every political situation, the people with more power [win]....

*JW: That's true. Look what's happening in the US Congress. Looks what's happening in Congress with the Compact.*

*IROOJ: Oh, those guys there. I go to Washington, I was negotiating with those guys. Even those staffers, they are like gods. They say that.*

*JW: What do you mean?*

*IROOJ: Uh, you don't argue with those people.*

*JW: Really. Like a big chief...*

*IROOJ: More than a big chief. A big chief you understand. In fact, a good chief, is the one who listens. That's what I think. Usually, the highest ranking chief is always, this is our belief, that the higher the chief, the more understanding he is. It's people from the lower lineages who are bad because they don't have the *jojij* they have very little chief blood in them. Because here we say that the chief blood is the thing that make you be kind, be generous, be understanding, but when you mix that with-- like the people are always out there for themselves. You watch them, you'll see them, different from the higher ranking ones.*

*JW: I see your point about the US, but I don't know why you can't argue with them.*

*IROOJ: In Washington we beg. You ask and you beg. You don't argue. You don't argue with them. You don't argue. It's only among them, you know, they argue, the Democrat and Republican. They know they are the most powerful country in the world, and part of the powerful US congress.*

*JW: I would think it's pretty intimidating to go there with those guys.*

*IROOJ: Yeah, I know. We were there for months. Senator Balos and I were there, talking with... sometimes we'd make, uh, ten appointments per day, three or four would return our call, and we'd visit them, but for the next day we also call. I ended up visiting two hundred-some offices, and we talked to maybe four Senators. Most of the people we meet with were staffers.*

*JW: You're right, American culture is really hierarchical.*

*IROOJ: When you see them on TV, you know, they look nice, you know, waving to the people, kissing babies – (Burst of laughter!) But that's politics (laughter). But you know, there are good people there, people with big hearts. Without even asking, you know, they are generous. We've been fortunate to have attracted people like that at times.*

This *Irooj* also discussed the ways the Marshalls was impacted by the Compact in terms of international recognition, and opportunities that were previously not available. He also reflected upon the cultural knowledge and loss that he interprets as resulting from US funds, urban migration, and the increased exposure to American products, services, media, and people. Commenting on cultural changes, he compared US democratic ideals with the with the Marshallese hierarchy and critically noted the hypocrisies and inconsistencies of American ideals and practices.

One thing is that people can go to the United States now for schooling, and seek health care. And on Majuro we have new things we didn't have before.

People migrate from outer islands to urban centers – for medical, schools, to be in the limelight. But their hopes and expectations are based on unsound reasoning.

They come for different reasons, and sometimes they don't know what they want. There is also displacement when they come. There is a growing sense of dependency. We used to know what to do, how to live on the outer islands. Now, they come and they don't have jobs so they look for government or relatives to fend for them. That wasn't true twenty years ago, everybody was self-reliant.

There is a change from the old economy to a money economy.

Maybe that's why they do these canoe races -- they hope to revive! People used to know, they had skills, things that were suitable to their lives, but not in a twilight kind of thing, sometimes they don't know Western skills and knowledge and they also don't know Marshallese traditional skills. Why? Changing values. Exposure to outside. We have more goods but greater dependence. We have better medical equipment, we are healthier, but not psychologically. There are young men on the street begging for beer and money. That's modernization. Crime is sign of modern society (laugh!). Because in changing values and tradition, I live in Long Island, I don't know the people who live next door. We're beginning to talk like Westerners.

Our culture is affected – people don't speak Marshallese! There is a sign at RRE done by the hospital people – breastfeeding is best for the kids -- but the word they used *jortaklik/e*, you'll see the sign at the [ACE] hardware, the word *jortaklik* is improperly used, *wawen* is the right word. *Jortaklik* is something saved for the future, for example, like Social Security, saved for rainy day. The "way to the health" makes more sense. Many people don't know proper Marshallese. We're losing our culture, our language.

Many things we're losing. It will continue to be like this.

*JW: Do you think there will there be a revival, like Hawai'i?*

*IROOJ: It depends on how much pride we have. You know I go to the outer island and I plant, and I make thatch houses and I know all kinds of traditional things., but others don't know. But for people like us, [Irooj] myself and others, people from the Irooj family, we've seen lots of things, unlike other people.*

*JW: You've been exposed to other things, and it makes you realize the value of your own ways.*

*IROOJ: Yeah. The other people, have more experience with American but it's like when you have money, when you have money right away, you don't know what to do, but when you've had money all your life, then you don't really [care?]. . . . you know that money is good for things, but you don't really. . . I've seen lots of people like that.*

People like us, you know, my parents, went back and forth between Kwajalein and Ailinglaplap, and I was exposed to the American base on Kwajalein, and it doesn't really [interest me?]. . . I myself went to the United States, I've traveled. It's better to been exposed when you are young. There is a point where you appreciate your own place.

But the young people, so many have totally lost their culture. Sometimes people here [on Majuro] are more cultured that people who come from outer islands who are cultured in the outer islands and they come here and get exposed and lose it all. I think it also has to do with education. See all the children of the people who are wealthy people? Many children are bad. They spoil them. They should be more cultured than children of those who don't have any means. They wreck the place, do all kinds of things, they have no respect. They don't think.

It's like when we go to the United States, eh?. We're so overwhelmed that we don't know what to do, we go out and get drunk . . . .it can be very overwhelming.  
(chuckle)

*JW: I know many Marshallese in Hawai'i and when they ask me to go out with them I know that I won't come home until 7 am.*

*IROOJ:* (Chuckle) You know with this relationship with the United States we're also exposed to new ideas like now the revival of Hawaiian land.

*JW:* *Is there anything you find about American culture that you particularly dislike?*

*IROOJ:* One thing, is the discrimination. I've seen real discrimination. In fact when we were kids. It happened to me here when I was in school. One thing I was also discriminated against in school by some of my teachers because of my status. School doesn't like the idea of somebody from chiefly family.

*JW:* *Reverse discrimination.*

*IROOJ:* They were trying to impose their values on us.

*JW:* *How do you balance those ideas – you had a democratic education?*

*IROOJ:* I don't see any problem. The former government was a democratic aristocracy, but if it works if it provides for the people, then it's good.

Sometimes we joke, it's not democracy, it's DEMO-CRAZY. (BIG laugh!)

Well, the United States has had a democracy for two hundred years. We've had a chiefly system for centuries based on a tolerance of people, a tolerance of their lifestyle.

*JW:* *Today there is a mix of democratic and hierarchical institutions. The US Ambassador keeps coming down on you guys, but I think there has to be more understanding of local culture.*

*IROOJ:* Sometimes there are misjudgments. Sometimes people think that government can do, or should do, but what is government? It depends on who's holding power. There's the question of the distribution of wealth, not just economic, but social, because in capitalism, in a capitalistic society you respect people with means, but in a society like the Marshall Islands, the tradition is that you respect elders, your clan leaders, your uncle because he's the head of the extended family, your brothers and sisters, older brothers and sisters, and there was a mutual thing, a mutual obligation. Well the US way is interfering now, that's why we have the breakup of families, siblings and cousins, you know, don't get along, they don't talk.

Sometimes I see the uh, chiefly rules as a symbol of respect. The reason for them to be there is to bring people together. Here [the Nitijela] is different. These guys say, 'we're real leaders' and yet, who are these guys? They say they are *Irooj* but ...

When my father [an *Irooj*], he tells me something, I, uh, I have no question.

But maybe these things come because of democratic development.

JW: *Do people still come to you to ask for things?*

IROOJ: Oh yes. Every day. Day and night, more than my colleagues in the *Nitijela*, and more than the other ministers. They come to me for tuition. What? Is it because I'm an elected leader? Not only people from my constituents, but from all over, even people from Ratak!

JW: *What do they ask you for?*

IROOJ: Sometimes they ask me to buy them tickets to go to the United States, something like that.

JW: *How do you say no?*

IROOJ: I usually only say no when I don't have it. But when I have it I give it.

JW: *That's an expensive responsibility.*

IROOJ: When you are raised like us, it's normal. ...My son, eh, he doesn't know the parents of those boys he brings in! [to feed.] I never taught him that, he just does it by himself...I don't know. He always feel sorry for them, when he hears about somebody in a bad situation he likes to help. (Chuckle.) Sometimes I have to tell him we don't have anything else to give. (Chuckle.) I think it's traditional values. My belief is that our custom and culture will continue. It's basically elements of relationship –tolerance-- with everyone.

Sometimes we have to build [use?] democracy in the name of development.

I'm talking about, at one time, in the United States there was a belief in Manifest Destiny. Might is right. And this idea comes all the way from the Greek and Romans. They needed the Hawaiian Island so they could pull out of for their fleet. They wanted to taste that nuclear arsenal, things that other countries don't.

If you mean by modern government, a democracy, than I think that these things can be reconciled because even in a democracy you have a class system, right? Elites. Class and the members of the class always find themselves together. (Laughter.) And there is social mobility. In a democracy there is better chance of moving up, but here, you know today I may chief, but tomorrow your son may be a chief because your daughter may marry... (loud laugh)

JW: *Social mobility through marriage.*

IROOJ: And if you are educated, you can move up.

I don't think there are any real restrictions on people anymore. Take Robert Reimers [the founder of one of the most successful local businesses], whenever I see him on the street I bow to him, I don't treat him just like a senile old man....

As an *Irooj*, this government Minister holds sway over a larger group of people than his own constituents. He is expected and obligated to provide for people beneath him, and he values that relationship. With a Western education and legal training, he speaks comfortably and thoughtfully about political philosophy, and speaks critically of other *Irooj*, Nitijela members, and the United States -- unlike most of the other participants. His experiences in Washington DC highlight his awareness of discrimination, and the inferior position of the Marshall Islands relative to the United States and other nations, and yet his position as an *Irooj* enables him to describe ideal chief-commoner relations, and to use these metaphors to describe US-RMI relations. Real chiefs have *joj*, they listen, and they like to help. The US is incomprehensible, acts much like lesser chiefs who are only out for themselves.

The *Irooj* uses discourses of development, democracy, culture -- loss, and tradition in ways that are actually quite uncommon in my interviews. Views only heard expressed by a small handful of Western-educated commoners. The economic and intellectual freedom afforded by education and/or traditional status enable this type of discourse.

Further, the *Irooj* highlights the inequalities of the US economy and class system, relative to Marshallese reciprocal relationships of respect based on age, rather than economic wealth. He subtly denigrates the elected officials who assume titles and powers greater than they traditionally deserve, the lesser chiefs, and the United States as he denies any contemporary rigidity to the hierarchical structure of Marshallese society by emphasizing that anyone can come up, with an education, or through marriage; no real

restraints to social mobility exist today. He also subtly defends the value of his “exposure” to both Marshallese and American customs and ways from an early age, by condemning the lack of indigenous cultural knowledge that the wealthy and their children have, despite their skills in interacting with Americans. Saying , in effect, ‘they may have money, but they don’t know their culture, or their language, or how to respect people.’

As the youngest brother in the family, this *Irooj*'s views are subservient to those of his older brothers, despite his educational achievements. He serves as more of a figurehead of the lineage than an actual spokesperson or active participant in national government affairs. It was only after my fieldwork period that this *Irooj* began to speak publicly and critically against the government administration, and he participated in the opposition's vote of no confidence, and ultimately was re-elected in the succeeding elections serving as a voice for the opposition's platform. His oppositional stance belies his conservative political views that support the traditional power structure, seek to perpetuate it, and criticize those who have wealth but lack generosity (*joj*), understand America but not their own society, or hold influential positions but lack the traditional authority with which he was born.

In the *Nitijela* in 1997 nine of thirty-three Senators were recognized as *Irooj*. Only two held authority in both Ralik and Ratak. The following participant is an elected *Irooj* with both Ratak and Ralik status.

#### **Ralik-Ratak *Irooj* and Senator**

The interview with this Senator took place unannounced in his office in the Capital building during one of the most intense *Nitijela* sessions to date. Gambling was the main topic of debate and both the Senator and myself regularly attended meeting at Assumption

that were organized by a coalition of churches attempting to pass anti-gaming legislation. The morning session has just adjourned and the halls of the Capital were unusually full of visitors, particularly along the office hallways. Among the visitors, I dropped by the Senator's office to discuss the status of the gaming bill, and some of the Senators views of contemporary political developments.

The recorded conversation was interrupted many times by telephone calls and colleagues knocking at his door so, after half an hour we scheduled another appointment for a week later to discuss the Compact and other topics. Since the Senator represented and lived on Majuro, he, unlike others, would be available after the *Nitijela* session ended.

The Senator was of an *Irooj* lineage, with ties to both Ralik and Ratak chains. At this point he was in his late fifties, a veteran politician, having served in various elected and appointment positions since his graduation from college. He served in the Congress of Micronesia , was intimately involved in the political development of the RMI, and later served various posts within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Senator reflected upon his educational background, which began at Assumption:

I was born on Majuro and adopted by a man from one of these islands here on Majuro and I grew up with him until I was nine years old. I decided that I didn't know how to write my name like the people of my age, they were able to write their name, so I figured I got to go to school. I went to school at age nine. I was a boarding student at Assumption. In those days there were about twenty students who were boarding. Most of them were from the outer islands. Since am from one of the small islands here and I had nobody to stay with in the D-U-D [*Delap-Uliga-Darrij/Drita*] area, I had to board until I finished school. Then I went to Xavier High School on Chuuk.

The Senator then explained that his education continued at the University of San Francisco where he earned a Bachelor's degree, followed by postgraduate work at the

University of Denver. Returning to Majuro after his educational years abroad, he was selected a representative to the Congress of Micronesia, then served as a Senator in the *Nitijela*, and then spent eleven years in an ambassadorial position before returning to an elected position as Majuro Senator in 1995. The Senator is sophisticated, well-educated, and highly skilled diplomat, whose reflections reveal his socialization in and to multiple American discourses.

As both an *Irooj* and a Senator, he was well aware of the contradictions and ambiguities of democratic institutions and traditional systems of power. He described the shifts in traditional obligations to (and of) *Irooj* that result from the transformation of the subsistence economy:

You respect your *Irooj* with contributions of food, etc. You respect him with your duties and obligations and money -- something foreign to us. You use it in other ways, not necessarily that whatever money you have you give it over to the *Irooj*. Right now in fact, there are questions about how to split the money of property rental. Split half and half, or divide it the way we divide copra shares? If that is the case then the chiefs really get less than half. In some examples they get half, some one-third for each the *Irooj*, *Alab*, and workers. There's no standard throughout the Marshalls. The more you give the *Irooj*, the better appreciated it is, the higher the status because that is following custom.

Some people explain, 'Because I cannot fulfill my traditional obligation to supply local food, so I give more money than I should give.'

*Irooj* realize the power of money. It's in their interest. The more money they have, the more power they have. If you think the *Irooj* are really strong now, just wait til this country is really broke, cause who's gonna have money? The *Irooj*, and everybody is going to genuflect in from of them.

The relationships and expectations of protection and provision from political and business leaders are not detached from traditional expectations of *Irooj*. Not only are the obligation to offer tribute altered, but the types of support expected of *Irooj*, businessmen, government officials -- the *rutej* -- are also transformed. He explains:

I give credit to these [business] people who are still in business! There's a lot of demand. Especially in a country where we have respect for extended family, it's tough to survive. You have so many people demanding so many things from you particularly if you are in business. People know that you are making money and they expect their political leaders can give them some money.

For myself as Senator, of course the people from time to time they come to me and ask for money. Sometimes I just have to tell them I cannot afford it. I have to take care of myself first before I can meet their demands. They're usually constituents, for instance I had somebody last night who came to my place and wanted me to buy a ticket for his daughter to go to Enewetak, that's \$260, one way. He said his daughter is going to join her husband on Enewetak. Something like you, you know, it's just crazy. I can barely feed my family and these people are asking that much. I simply told them that maybe I can provide half and she can provide half. I said I can't provide the entire amount. She said she is going to reimburse me, but I know.

It's tough meeting the demands of our constituents, sometimes it's pretty unfair. They really expect a lot of us. They have a different perception of us. They think we've got the money, we've got the means to provide for their needs. And I think that should happen. People are poor and they expect that somebody, their leaders, will look after them. So, while I disagree with their request, when they ask for help, I also appreciate their problem. Maybe we are part of the problem too.

They also of course, have a different perception of us. They hold us to a different standard, expect us to behave differently, to be model citizens. Of course, that's not what you heard this morning in the Nitijela when these guys [Senators] were saying: 'You know the people from your island, they do not care what kind of car are you driving, they don't care how much you are paid, they only care about when the fieldtrip ships are coming to your island for the copra.' And I'm saying, my God, these guys don't think that we are custodians of public funds, we're accountable for every penny that we spend. Now that's a big difference in the way the public perceives us, and the way the other countries will perceive our leaders. Given what these guys were saying this morning, they're expecting that if you are a Senator or a Minister you are entitled to this kind of privilege. I don't know where these guys get this from, cause yesterday there were lots of questions about government vehicles being used by family members for their own use and all that. This morning, they were saying that there were more important questions that government property and who's driving that car or vehicle. The people in the outer islands are saying, 'We in the outer islands, we don't give a damn whose car you are driving. Our concerns are others; those are minor problems. I guess what I'm saying is that these people [other Senators] are telling us that by right they have the right to certain privileges that none of the rest have.'

*JW: So you're saying that there is a double standard. There's external pressure for accountability, but here constituents expect leaders to use their privileges but to provide for them.*

Senator: Yes, exactly.

Although this individual is both an *Irooj* and a Senator, he is able to critique the powers and abuses of both. Diplomatically, in critiquing the power of some chiefs, he identifies himself with those who are affected by the powerful chiefs. By criticizing other Senators' sense of entitlement, he sides with the populace, and democratic ideals that hold elected officials as "custodians of public funds," even as he acknowledges that few people share that perspective. It is important to note that not all *Irooj* are equal, or have equal access to expensive land payments or Kwajalein compensation funds. Having suffered a tragic loss, the Senator was not one to frequent the bars and restaurants of the other *rutej*, and spent much time at home with his family. In this sense while he is an *Irooj*, his degree of influence, and his views, might be viewed as marginal.

In his reflections on the Compact of Free Association and the Marshalls' relationship with the United States this Senator/*Irooj* offers a unique perspective given his past roles in Foreign Affairs. He evaluates the strengths and weakness of the Compact and its impact on the Marshall Islands:

[The] US has special leverage over us. That rhetoric is true. When we were reaching out for recognition, US says to recognize them -- they're sovereign. We're accountable for our affairs, but the fact remains, what its supposed to be is a unique document, it's different from other nations.

The US policy was primary security interest, so everything else was secondary. Yes, there were interests in excluding other powers from this region. We have to be realistic, the world was really in turmoil, east and west, lot of people thought the US was doing this testing to help mankind, to stop communism from spreading all over the world. Nobody knew someday communism would come down, walls would come tumbling down – it wasn't a safe world then. The US did what they thought was.... (hello! Phone interruption) The other thing was we keep blaming the US, we should blame the [UN] Security Council who agreed to let the US to use this area as a testing ground. Other members of the UN – Australia, etc. had something to do with it.

*JW: At the close of the Compact the US points fingers. What would you argue are the successes?*

Senator: Well, we have some things to fault ourselves on – when we came into being the basic infrastructure wasn't there to gain progress economically. The hospital, the power plant --we did it on our own. We made loans from other countries. The transportation system – we inherited – they're still around, these ships. We had no money coming in, we need to do some repairs, but at the same time, some of the money we were given were not put to good use, not invested right. We were not diligent in making sure we were doing something beneficial for the whole country. . . I guess the bottom line is that we didn't do a good job with what we're supposed to do as a sovereign nation and we're responsible for our actions.

*JW: How do you judge the impact of the Compact?*

Senator: It's both good and bad. We are able to go to school in the US, to work, etc. Yet right now, communities exist outside of our home islands. Majuro is a city, like it or not, with all the problems associated with getting crowded, with overcrowding. People do many things and resources are limited. It's too much for the culture of the island to have that kind of [pressures?] So that's one example of negative impact. Bringing so many people to a small place, creating Majuro and Ebeye, where living conditions are so terrible. These are the social problems we encounter.

*JW: Do you think the Compact has affected a sense of identity or culture?*

Senator: People want show modern conveniences not traditional things...it's unfortunate there are people with no sense of the past . . . I don't want to get philosophical about it. People lose their sense of identity without appreciation of past, and culture. At the same time, we have to face the fact that changes in our own society have brought that about. In the old days, you asked [earlier] what clan I'm from. That's the first thing is clan, not where you work. 'Oh, you're from Arno...' but now I'm introduced to someone -- 'Where's he work?' -as soon as he walks out...With changes in society, our values change. We value someone for where he works, for example.

We value [being] Americanized – people here are caught in between. Marginal man? Right now they don't know. They want to make a jump from their way of living and take a western way of living. Caught in between two cultures here. Some want to go all the way and forget about the culture; others like to combine them both, and others don't know which way to go. They're lost....we have those kind of people.

*JW: What do you think is the future of the Compact?*

Senator: That's a hard question. We really don't have the right to say or decide. US will do anything that's in it's national interest. Then forget.

The Senator's remarks are echoed by others who, perhaps only to an American anthropologist, highlight the local "failures" that accompanied the Compact. He states explicitly that the US/RMI relationship is primarily about US security interests. He uses the examples of the nuclear testing, and the Compact's future to emphasize his point. He points fingers at other nations, even his own, for not standing up to the US, yet he also rationalizes the US's weapons testing as a result of frightening times and fears of communism. His most pointed criticism is that the basic infrastructure necessary to meet the Compact goals of self-sufficiency was not there. His pride is evident in the ways his government sought to develop those things on their own. Like others, this is a very common refrain. The "lack of infrastructure" is cited as one of the major drawbacks of the Compact of Free Association, particularly as the businessman explained, most of the Compact money was invested outside the country to establish the airline, the power plant, etc. He describes people who are caught between two cultures, and confused, as "lost." The overcrowded conditions caused by wage labor on *Majuro* and *Ebeye* and the subsequent decrease in cultural knowledge (e.g. clan awareness) are cause for sadness. The self-critique of government, the looming financial concerns, the increasing power of particular *Irooj*, weigh heavily in his reflections. Though these responses might easily have been influenced by my American identity, the Senator's reflections seem extremely critical and bleak. In my fieldnotes, I wondered how he was able to serve his nation with such apparent hopelessness for its future.

He is not alone. Many others *rutej* share this bleak, even negative appraisal of the future of the Marshall Islands. Bombarded with criticisms from inside and out, how challenging it must be to resist the negative, colonial discourses that prevail, as well as the constant stream of gossip and criticism from constituents and colleagues. While other Pacific Islanders have begun to challenge the economic and political assumptions and criticisms of the West in order to assert an indigenous perspective that offers hope (Hau'ofa 1993), I rarely found that perspective among the elites who spoke with me.

***Kora in dri-tel eo ilo jukjuk in ber* [Woman Community leader]**

The woman whose story follows is a leader of various women's groups on Majuro. She is represented here as *Kora*, the Marshallese word for woman. At the time of the interview she was a housewife, and grandmother, who had just turned fifty. Through my sponsor family I had come to know this woman and her husband, and interacted with her frequently at picnics, social events, and church meetings at my parent's house. She came to my office at the museum with her grandchild for the interview and we sat for about an hour as she told me about her education and upbringing. During that time she sent her grandchild out into the museum, and then downstairs to the coffee shop to wait for her. She shared much personal history in that first hour, and seemed to enjoy reflecting on her past. She was proud and grateful for all that had happened. When I asked if she wanted to do the interview another time, she suggested she return after lunch without her grandson. We spoke for another hour about her views on contemporary events and changes in the Marshalls.

*Kora* was born on Majuro, but three days after she was born her parents took her to be raised on another atoll by the family that had adopted and raised her mother. En route she became very ill, and nearly died. She describes what happened:

I born here and they took me on a field boat to Arno cause that time there was no big boat, ... so they took me, and I got really sick, and there was. . . [the sister] of the wife of the man that adopted my mother. . . she was one of the ladies from Arno ... who really knows Marshallese medicine and she doesn't have any children. She's the one that makes medicine to all the wife of the *Irooj*, when the wife of the *Irooj* deliver... So she's the one they give me to her so she can give me medicine. I was really sick, there was really something wrong, all over my body. She took me to a small island, that they don't see the family, to ...the island is belong to the family, and they said when somebody really get sick they take them... And then it really you know, took a long, long time for me to cure from my skin disease. And by that time she was she used to... [me] and when I was really get well...from time to time, they send somebody to see if I get well, so they [can] bring me back to them. And when they found out that I am really happy, and she said, 'No, I won't let her go, she's my daughter.' She got me and three other girls and two boys, all [of us] had skin problem. And we all ended up staying with her like our mother.

*Kora* was raised on a very small island, by an old woman, until at age twelve she was taken by her brother who was a ship captain, to go to school on Majuro:

I go to school here and that was the first time to sit in the classroom and hear people speaking English. There was nothing I can do but cry everyday, I was really sad. I grew up in the outer island, a small island, with an old woman and then come here try to go to classroom and my teacher she was Kosraean and one Palauan and you know they speak in English and every day I cry to them and really embarrassed. Really, I didn't know what they were saying. I was really lost.

*JW*: *What grade did they put you in?*

*Kora*: They put my in third grade, so I started in third grade!

*JW*: *And were you the oldest?*

*Kora*: Yeah. I was oldest one, but it was not that bad because I was short. That was the thing that make me feel more comfortable because I was short! (laughter!)

After graduating form seventh grade, she attended the Protestant mission intermediate school on Ronron, Majuro, where she was often teased because of her

nickname. She and two other girls were named after branches of the US military, and their teachers and classmates were amused by constantly grouping the three together. The teachers selected her to attend Bethania High School in Palau.

I remember it was not really excited about that, because I didn't have any money, and I grew up in the outer island, and all we did was make copra so I knew I couldn't make it...my parents heard that I was selected to going out, they were help. I didn't go with the group that they went on the plane, cause I was late, I wasn't ready yet to go, we had to make copra so I could have money to go, so I missed the group. And luckily there was two girls that they here for vacation and I was able to go with them, and that was my first time to go on the plane. DC-10. They had flight to Guam and then Palau.

And all those years I didn't come home. No money. I stayed almost five years. When I was there one of the sisters, our sisters, she's from Germany, she's like my sponsor, she helped me out and I worked with her and she was the one who taught me cooking and everything...Because there, you know, they have a regulation that you're not allowed to see your report card until tuition paid, and there were two semester that I could not pay, so those who could not pay their tuition they use to have them work part-time, after school, you used to see them working in the kitchen or gardening in garden work. We do the dirty jobs so we can make money to pay our tuition, stuff like that.

Five years, including the summers I didn't come home. Almost five.

And you know when you say everybody doesn't have money to go home, and it's really sad because at the end of the school everybody received their tickets or money to go home and only a few on the campus, most of the Marshallese come home for vacation. Only me and ?, we stayed until we graduated. I was lucky. All I know is that God helped me out. And I was proud. All my life, the story since I was born, all I heard is that God look after me.

*Kora* returned home and worked at the mission school at Ronron, Majuro for one year before she had a family and had to leave. She found work as a single mom teaching at one of the public elementary schools on Majuro, and later through a training program met her husband, a Peace Corps volunteer. At the time of this interview they had been married for twenty-six years and raised three children.

*Kora* spent many years teaching small children at a private school on Majuro founded by a group of American ex-pats who had married Marshallese. She worked there until all of her children graduated, and then enjoyed being a housewife.

*Kora* has always been an active leader in the community, particularly in women's organizations. During the period of Compact education, *Kora* was among those who traveled to the outer islands to explain the proposed Compact prior to the national plebiscite. With her familiarity with the Compact, with the politics of Majuro, and women's issues, *Kora* offered her critique of the Compact era:

I'm talking about the, you know, the money that were allowed to us from the Compact, but what I see is not like, it was misused. The most thing I can see is now really clear to me that the reason why the people in power government and everything in town is from the misusing of the funding from the US government. Yeah, like the federal programs always, you know, when you heard that the reason why we disconnect from here to there is from the misuse of the federal money.

Where is the money that's for the old age program and adult education that was from when? Basic adult education? That's no longer here. Like that. We used to have a strong program for adults, you know, basic adult education. I heard that the problem was that they just take the money and for me it was really *nana* [bad].

One thing I know it's kind of involved in the culture because, you know Marshallese, they really know if somebody is doing something bad. It's really hard to go and tell the person not to do it. Only [a] few people [would do this], you know. For example, we knew that the development ... won't be long ...for here the former President say do this, do that, and then we say OK. The problem with us really is we cannot say no, it is our custom. Because he was both chief and also President. People lose their jobs and lose their land, because he's both the chief and also the President.

*JW: Do people think that it's going against the custom if you challenge him?*

*Kora:* Maybe both afraid and also against custom, because in custom you cannot. I don't know, our custom, what I learn from my older people, they say the custom is *Irooj* is not allowed to make decisions. The reason why they say *Irooj, alab, dri-jerbal*, cause *alab* is the one is like the chief, the one telling the *Irooj* what is going on, and

between the *Irooj*, the *alab* goes to the *dri-jerbal*. Nowadays the chief controls the three. He controls. Looks like the chief is the one controlling everything.

I think things change now, people are starting to speak up, I'm talking about now, after the former president.

*Kora* explains the political resistance toward the women's organization by the former President, and how sensitive the interactions between government and the community organization became. Like the businessman who described the ways government actively competed and hindered his business interests, *Kora* describes the ways government opposed women's organizations. She also considers contemporary chiefs' powers distorted.

At the time of this interview one women's group had collected enough donations to purchase a mammography machine for the hospital. The group requested a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Minister of Health that would release half the funds for purchase in advance and the remainder upon the arrival of the machine.

*JW: Is the MOU a way to speak up?*

*Kora:* You know what happened? Some of the club criticize us every time we bring up something [such as the mammography machine], they say you women are competing, jealous. You know, really this is the biggest problem. Jealousy. You know there was one rumor that we heard about us, our project about the mammogram, because they say the former President really didn't like [a women's organization], because most of us are with the opposition party. And they said that the reason we didn't come up with the project [earlier] was because we knew that he wouldn't support us, but we waited until this [second] President because he's easy! (laughter)

*JW: Is the MOU is a way to limit abuse of funds?*

Yes. This is our way, as I tell you that we can come up, we speak and really come up with what we see now. The first thing we did with the Minister [of Health], we told him verbally and then he said, 'Why don't you guys put in writing? Most of you are married to lawyers. You [go] tell them everything you tell me now. No

problem.' He's like that. So we put that in writing and give it to him and he said, 'No problem. That's your project. You do whatever you feel is right.'

Wow. I cannot think. [shocked] Like, you know what? For example, [another women's club], they dissolved that. When [name] was President for [women's group], you know they fired her at [government ministry]. And then a year later they come up with [name, a close relative of the President], and herself quit because she didn't know what to do.

That's an example of what will happen to us. We will go back to our home island. Maybe we involve our husbands. Dangerous.

*Kora* points out ways local politics and "jealousies" impact women's attempts to improve their lives. She expresses shock at the difference between the response she received at the MOU request, and contrasts it with the women's organizations experiences in the past. She speaks about abuses and misuses of funds, and the manifestations of cultural relationships in work environments that are difficult to challenge. She here predicts the political alliances then being formed, and like one of the Senators, she both hopes for and criticizes change.

Marshallese don't really know how to work by themselves, sometimes they are lazy, and sometimes they are not honest, I think all people sometimes are not honest, all people on earth, Marshallese are the same, if there are people with him, he's *lukun* [really] good, but when people go he doesn't take care of it. Like, we always need someone to check on us, watch us. It's bad. Control when it comes to money.

*JW: Why do you think that people know they are crooks but they are re-elected over and over?*

*Kora.* Yeah, I know. I think they are coming to one group now, as a whole. They have something together under the table, that everybody is sharing. *Mol.* [True.]. And one cannot speak because if he speak and everybody [will] say, "*Ak kwe, ak kwe ak kwe!*" [And what about you, and you, and you!]" Now they point fingers.

*JW: The uneducated people trust them. The money goes to the wrong places.*

*Kora.* *Mol.* [True.] You know, they take, put it there, they don't follow, but like Marshallese, they don't follow the rule, like they take the rule and they break the rule. All the *Nitijela*, they make *kien* [government], and then watch who breaks the

*kien* [government] -- him. That's why we end up , nowhere, in the middle of nowhere.

JW: *Has relationship with the US changed the culture?*

*Kora*: Little bit. Not really ok with me. I don't know because I brought up in the outer island and I don't know. Something I really, I miss. Some people think they are really poor because they don't live in the big houses and dress nice and eat rice and bacon, things like that, get job and this is the saddest thing according to my opinion, it's really true, if I think back about the old days, we never had rice or nice dress or nice houses or sleep on the mattress on a bed, but we didn't complain, we didn't go hungry at all because we had coconut trees and we didn't drink from the Waterman[local purified water], we drink from the well and also we build our own water catchment. They are sad, people think now that they are poor, *ejjelok* [nothing], there's no poor people, the reason why they think is because they come to here [Majuro], they come from the outer island, from the outer island they come here and they don't have money to buy rice and flour and that's why they think they're poor. If they're back home they eat fish, banana, taro, and drink coconut. The values, maybe no money that's the end of the world, no money. And that's the thing I really I wish I could really, break. Money is nothing, you can live without money. Yeah, that's my belief, because me I didn't, honest I grew up in the outer island with one old lady, no husband, and now I'm still healthy.

In this excerpt my participation in these dialogues is influential. Well aware of gossip, the histories of the various women's rivalries and the common complaints about particular government Senators and Ministers shape my questions and responses to *Kora*. At times *Kora* responds to my statements, and provides examples and evidence. In this way, I, like other elites, promote and participate in, pervasive discourses about corruption, development, and culture.

The significance of women in *Kora's* life is evident in her choices and causes she supports. She was raised by an independent older woman, attended mission schools, was assisted by a kind German woman in high school, and was devoted to children and teaching. Having been a working single mother, having been raised on an outer island, having struggled through school, she identifies and sympathizes with other women in

similar situations. Her life choices reflect her independent spirit and her faith that God has helped and guided her. *Kora* doesn't hold any elected positions, serve in the various government ministries, or run a family business, but she leads the women of Majuro toward projects and causes that serve the larger Majuro community and women in the outer islands. Her independent example is a model for the women's groups' members, as they learn to "speak out."

### SUMMARIZING STORIES

#### Coming Up

The rise to power -- coming up -- in these accounts is shaped directly or indirectly by colonial forces, US military support of economic endeavors, private religiously-affiliated schools, Western-modeled education systems, government employment, knowledge of English, perseverance, and traditional status.

Themes and shared experiences emerge in these accounts about the significance of education, and employment, and connections to American power structures. For some, early employment with the US military, or a long-term family focus on business -- importing goods for local consumption and distribution -- led to positions of influence. For others, the entitlements of traditional status and a desire or expectation of leadership ensured the role. For others, religious affiliations, and discourses of human rights, social justice, and democracy inspired service. Each holds direct or indirect transnational connections to resources that (have) enabled their influence. These connections may be culturally defined -- and bolstered by US funding, or a function of employment, and/or educational achievement.

Not only do these individuals maintain ties to various transnational resources, they enact them locally, and share them with each other. Each person represented here is connected to each of the others through marriage, education, employment, religious affiliation, or clan relationships. A Catholic businessman is connected to a Protestant community leader through marriage of their sibling's children. A Protestant Irooj's wife chairs a national women's organization with her. A Catholic *Irooj* Senator was formerly her boss. The businessman grew up playing with the *Ralik Irooj* as a child. Not only are their ties to one another intricate and deep, but their affiliation with Amata Kabua's development agendas and rivalries are just as complex and ambiguous. Loyalties are shifting, fluid, and vary according to contexts. Few, if any, Marshallese could afford to unequivocally oppose Amata Kabua's (government's) development agenda. Cooperation with him was required in order to achieve one's own interests. The consolidation of power and the lack of opposition explains that lack of "culture-talk" in the Marshalls as a discourse to challenge American hegemony. Instead, cultural discourses emphasize national and local hegemonies, rather than the broader American power structures.

What does emerge, and also contributes to American hegemony are dominant discourses of cultural loss, shock, depression, and insecurity, even defeat. Many *rutej*, educated in the United States, who attempted to challenge the development agendas of the first government, faced constant defeat. As the practices and policies of earlier decades reap their results, and the nation's schools, health, and economic systems decline, these talented, now middle-aged idealists struggle to retain hope for their country's future. They acknowledge that democracy doesn't work, their islands are "Americanized," their culture

and values have shifted with increased access to TV, and other resources. They shake their heads, point to the cultural constraints and intense political environment of previous decades, and place the blame for their current conditions on themselves. This is how globalization works in the Marshalls. Presidents and chiefs borrow the discourses of development and democracy to expand their traditional power sources, forge the dependency and loyalty of clients, access greater material resources and wealth in a way that consolidates nearly all power in the nation in the limited arena of a culturally validated traditional leader who heads a modern, democratic, and independent government. The educated opposition is blackmailed and threatened into silence or complicity, which leads to resentment and repression that, when voiced, has as its target, local actors more frequently than transnational -- American -- forces. The lack of an indigenous term for elites -- for a collectivity of powerful individuals, seems somehow linked to an absence of a critical voice or awareness of American hegemony in general. The Marshallese *Irooj* remain central to Marshallese imaginings of power, authority, responsibility, and obligation.

### COMMON(ER) VIEWS

In an attempt to encourage discussion about elites, and learn opinions about how political affiliations and popularity might be connected, I wrote the name of those individuals who emerged on the free lists on an index card and asked people to sort them into piles, any way they chose. I generally did this at the Laundromat, or at the coffee shop beneath the Museum, or with my former students from the college or from Assumption, or their friends. I asked neighbors and co-workers for their views, as well. When they finished, I asked what distinguished each pile, as I wrote down their selections.

The dominant qualities that emerged centered around status measured in education or tradition; greed/generosity; and bravery/fear. The *rutej* were judged according to the source of their power, and on whose behalf it was exercised. These categories are strongly tied to the idealized qualities of traditional chiefs -- who are expected to help people, work on their behalf, take care of others, peacefully, lovingly. Some of the elites, interestingly were almost invisible, despite their positions and influence, they remained unknown and undistinguishable. Other participants distinguished the behavior of the elites in their interactions with one another.

A retired government official who no longer actively participated in local politics due to health considerations distinguished the elites as “ambitious -- those who will follow anyone,” “those who will stand for what is right,” “those who kiss ass,” “crooks,” and “those who don’t know.” The “don’t know” category is a salient one, as in many cases, the card sorter acknowledged the leader was unprepared, and unable to lead, or, in other cases, the card sorter wasn’t able to make a judgment about the individual.

As interesting as the content of the piles were the categories upon which they were based. One male in his twenties formed these five categories: “party animals,” included seven; “those who care but are crooks,” consisted of eleven; “people who speak up and are not afraid,” were twelve; “statues -- those who never speak,” included four; and nine *Nitijela* members were among “those who don’t know.” Similarly a young woman in her thirties separates the individuals along their level of generosity, *joj*, by using the categories she described as: “taking care of people, peaceful;” “greedy;” “do nothing;” and “always helping *armij* [people].

Another participant grouped them alphabetically, while another young man's categories were: *nana* [bad]; *nana im jermal jidik* [bad and work a little]; *emmantata* [the best]; and *ijaje* [I don't know]. *Emman* [good] and *nana* [bad] (and 'don't know) were used by one participant, while her neighbor distinguished those she liked from those she didn't. She clearly knew which was which. A woman in her forties categorized the group in three ways, whether the individuals were *Irooj*, were educated beyond high school, or her knowledge of their status was unknown.

One of the youngest participants was a Catholic high school student who classified the elites as those who: "go with the flow," "are corrupt," "follow tradition, whether good or bad," "are stubborn, for good or bad," or "are democratic and for the people." In this example, the ideal of democracy is juxtaposed with tradition and stubbornness, where democracy is described as being "for the people," while following "tradition" is viewed as possibly harmful to people, as is stubbornness. Contrasted to those who take firm stands, (for better or worse) are those who "go with the flow." This young man apparently admires those who take a firm stand on issues, and put others' ("the people's") needs above their own loyalties, alliances and invested interests.

In these characterizations of *rutej*, discourses of democracy "for the people" and the cultural ideal of "taking care of people" clearly overlap. Similarly Western criticisms of "corruption" mirror local criticisms of greed and the lack of *joj* or generosity/kindness. While the discourses of democracy and culture overlap in this example, the ideal behaviors that accompany democracy (free speech, protests, confrontation) are opposed to the ideal behaviors that often characterize Marshallese social relations (humility, silence, respect,

obedience). Gossip -- negative talk about leadership -- has been the extent of social action/reaction to perceived injustices and abuses of power.

There is a sense of the inevitable, and the entitlement of certain individuals, particularly *Irooj* and government officials, as explicated in earlier examples. *Rutej* are expected to live as they do, with the amenities that accompany their positions. They drive government vehicles (with tinted windows), they work in nice air-conditioned office buildings. The Glass Palace capital building is predominantly without visitors. At the time of this research, the relatively new Outrigger Hotel, was almost exclusively frequented by local elites, particularly elected officials who drank at the bar as if it were a private club.<sup>46</sup>

The social distance of elites from non-elites has notably increased in the past decade. Elite families intermarry; their resources are pooled. They are tired of others asking for their financial support, and they find it easiest to avoid others than to deny them. Their social circles grow smaller, their extended family obligations less intense. A frequent comment of non-elites toward wealthy family members is that they are ignored by their wealthy relatives. They no longer receive rides from relatives while they wait on the road for taxis. They can't distinguish one government vehicle from another given the identical make, model, color, and tinted windows that prevent the driver's identity from being recognized. In less obtrusive ways, elites seek to avoid being seen. Government officials are notorious for wearing dark sunglasses indoors. Typical of hierarchical societies, the powerful have little direct relations with those beneath them. The social distance ensures mystification, fear, and perpetuates power relations (Kertzer 1988; Marcus 1980).

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<sup>46</sup> Since Outrigger, a Hawai'i-based company, managed but did not own the hotel, massive RMI government subsidies covered losses and ensured its doors stayed open.

The separation between the *rutej* and the non-elites is acknowledged and often, expected. Elites acknowledge the discomfort of non-elites citizens in the restaurants, clubs, and bars they frequent. At parties non-elites are not excluded, but often accommodated with food that is prepared and served in a different area from the *rutej*.

In the *Nitijela* chambers, the audience seats are generally empty (except for the notable example of the following chapter). I cautiously entered the chambers during session one day, and discovered a small crowd seated, hidden from the senators' view, on the stairs that lead up to the stadium seating.<sup>47</sup> (The Senators seats are somewhat sunken in a semi-circular arena that is surrounded by a few rows of graduated seats above them, reserved for the general public.) There is no arena or procedure for direct interaction between the public and the officials other than an occasional public hearing on controversial topics, which are scantily attended. Direct interaction between elites and nonelites is largely initiated by nonelites in need (tuition, air fare, a case of chicken for a *kemmem*).

Since such social distance has become the norm, and the nation's first President has passed away, the question of Marshallese resistance is examined in the following chapter, as discourses of culture, democracy, human rights, and social justice taken from church, government, NGO, and indigenous sources are combined to challenge the authority of a select few. The people are coming up.

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<sup>47</sup> See Chapter 6 for more detail about Nitijela audience participation.

## CHAPTER 6 PRACTICING POWER

### INTRODUCTION

Having examined the rise of a commoner elite in the previous chapter, exploring the ways the *rutej* maintain and also resist authority on Majuro are important topics. The use of foreign, Western, discourses of human rights, democracy, and equality are often integrated with Marshallese discourses of authority, privilege, dependency, and obligation, particularly in issues surrounding government.

This chapter examines contemporary events that demonstrate shared values and understandings of authority and power on Majuro today and how these are undergoing a dramatic evolution. Majuro's activities provide insight into the dominant influence of various political, social, cultural, and economic networks and institutions. Through the benefit of long-term relationships and opportunities provided by my employment, I was allowed privileged access to some of these networks and gained valuable insight into how the examples that follow expose negotiations of power in obvious and subtle ways, in the context of shared understandings about the nature of authority.

While exploring these examples of power and practice, I pay close attention to local models and methods of resisting authority. Emphasis is placed on examples that demonstrate the pervasive practice of asserting, denying, contesting and resisting power and authority in everyday situations. As Marshallese people explore and redefine notions of hierarchy and democracy -- of power, its acquisition, practice and resistance -- in families, within communities, on atolls, and in their nation, they are also creating new

models upon which to base interpretations and understandings of power at a larger scale (i.e., between nations in regional and global arenas).



Figure 88. "The Predator and the Prey."  
Editorial Cartoon. Marshall Islands Journal 27(42):8 10/18/96.

### POWER IN PRACTICE

Marshallese are quite accustomed to noting that appearances often differ dramatically from reality, just as "yes", doesn't always mean "yes."<sup>48</sup> Chuji Chutaro notes that the utilization of a vocabulary of democracy doesn't mean democracy exists:

It is true that many of us have gone through higher education and have learned the vocabulary of democracy. It is true that the vocabularies we have learned in the universities have inspired our hopes and aspirations for our people. On the other hand, however, I would like to call attention to the fact that the vocabulary of

<sup>48</sup> Hilda Heine likes to educate Americans about the three meanings of yes for Marshallese people -- yes, maybe, and no, -- whose meaning depends on the relationship between the individuals, and the inability to say no to someone with authority.

democracy that a few of us have acquired in school does not mean that we can run a democratic society (1970: 14-15).

Within the “democratic” structures of the Marshall Islands *Nitijela*, the reproduction of a traditional privileged discourse of *manit* [custom] continues to exist. This discourse is controlled by those leaders (traditional, religious, educational and political) whose influence dominates all sectors of society and is linked to the promulgation and reinforcement of that ideology. They also define the criteria by which they are evaluated. The *Nitijela* and other western democratic institutions, such as the RMI court system, function to validate and enhance traditional authority in the nation.

This leads to a (not entirely uncommon) phenomenon in which a small portion of the population makes the decisions for the entire nation. This is in keeping with hierarchical discourse practices and power processes in which rules are declared, rather than discussed, and policies are proclaimed rather than persuaded (Brenneis and Myers 1984; Firth 1975; Marcus 1984). A dominant single-party government that has no opposition and no constituent input may easily be expected -- even by constituents -- to serve its own interests and agendas. Because of cultural understandings of autocratic rule, resistance takes on very clever forms.

It is the subtle and shared understandings of power, its representation, and its practice that are so evasive, elusive, and even maddening for outside observers. The veiled quality of threats, the intended or interpreted meanings of political rhetoric, the interactions between employers and employees in the workplace all occur in ways that are hard to pin down without a deeper appreciation of local models and methods of power and

authority. The hidden, locally understood nature of political maneuverings also functions as a form of resistance to oblivious foreigners.

In the following sections, I describe examples of where and how power is practiced/enacted/and resisted on Majuro within modern political institutions during elections, *Nitijela* debates, and the infamous passage, and unprecedented repeal of gambling legislation.

### **Political Institutions**

In the thirty-three member *Nitijela*, each of twenty-four electoral districts is represented by one member, except for five atolls with additional Senators: Majuro elects five, Kwajalein three, and Ailinglaplap, Arno, and Jaluit elect two members, respectively. The President, elected from among the Senators, appoints his Cabinet from among them. While portfolios and cabinet seats have changed in number and description over the years, the average number of ministries has been eight. The shuffling of Ministers' portfolios mid-term was a consistent tactic used by the first President, with the effect of reducing a Minister's control over a particular sphere of influence, as well as preventing any effective consistency in policy and implementation. It also had the effect of ensuring political loyalty, and making sure the President's objectives were never challenged or constrained by his Ministers, whose positions were never completely secure.

In 1996 President Amata Kabua created two 'non-portfolio' ministerial posts that represented the two island chains and traditional power divisions of *Ralik* and *Ratak*. *Irooj* were appointed to these positions as Minister of *Ralik* and Minister of *Ratak*. They were controversially justified as training posts for a future President. The *Nitijela* debate over

these positions highlights the difficulties of dissent and serves as an introduction to patterns of authority maintenance and resistance in public institutions.

A senator who had been only recently been demoted from his ministerial post critiqued the creation of the two new ministerial posts, in light of an Asian Development Bank's (ADB) promoted Reduction in Force (RIF) that sought to drastically reduce the number of government employees over the course of one year. The ousted Minister called the creation of new posts during this time of government cutbacks "illogical and a waste of money" (MIJ 27:3:4 1/19/96). The Senator further noted that using these positions to train a presidential successor ignored the fact that the Nitijela selects the nation's President by vote, not appointment. The Minister who succeeded this senator to his former ministerial position, and who was likely to be appointed to one of the controversial positions if the resolution approving the two new posts passed, responded to the points raised by completely ignoring them. Instead, the Minister replied that he had never spoken up to complain or criticize the former Minister during all the time the criticizing Senator held his position. He added that since the former Minister had served for six years in the Cabinet, the government's current situation (that is, the necessity for a Reduction in Force) was his responsibility, implying that the former Minister must take responsibility for any criticism or complaints put forth, even his own (MIJ 27:3:4 1/19/96).

The response to the Senator's critique completely avoids the content of his criticisms, and rather highlights the perceived insult of public criticism. The new Minister's response implicitly emphasizes *manit* and local understandings of authority by asserting that since the new Minister never publicly attacked the former Minister, he was better behaved

and thus better qualified to hold the new position, despite any financial or procedural constraints. The mention of the Senator's past government involvement calls attention to the association between the Senator and those making the current arrangements as well. The new Minister spreads guilt by association to discredit the apparent righteousness of the Senator's claims.

In a similar example (MIJ 23:5:10 1/31/1992), after the elections of 1991, in which the "opposition," which had organized as the Ralik/Ratak Democratic Party (RRNP) and publicly criticized the practices of the "government" party, discussion and refutations of various accusations dominated the *Nitijela*. In one noteworthy session, various Senators spoke to record their opposition to the tactics of the RRDP, and show support for the recently re-elected President, Amata Kabua, while others defended themselves from the election finger-pointing. In response to a campaign advertisement that revealed controversial loans given to government officials, one responded that only certain individuals' names were revealed, and not others, exclaiming, "How do I work with liars?" As in the previous example, pointing out the bias of the criticizer – and then labeling him/her a liar -- is considered a more effective strategy of defense than refutation of the accusation. In both cases the sense of entitlement to various privileges is not questioned by those in authority, but the ability/right (the appropriate status) to question authority becomes the very issue.

Distinctions between Marshallese and American style politicking are highlighted by one long-term statesman in this same *Nitijela* session and function to discredit those who follow the "American style." In his address, one Senator praised the President who didn't

participate in the back and forth negative campaign rhetoric and then cautioned his fellow legislators to abandon the American (*dri-belle*) style in favor of Marshallese custom when they come to speak in a public forum. He reminded them that the people of the Marshall Islands hear everything that is said in *Nitijela* (via public radio broadcasts), and that it should be admitted that *Irooj, Alab*, and the government were improperly criticized and that a responsible leader should admit this was a mistake and apologize (*MIJ* 23:5:10 1/31/1992).

The Senator stressed, and thus defined, the criteria for, “acceptable” political practice when he stated that public criticism of not only traditional leaders such as *Irooj* and *Alab*, but also “the government,” is inappropriate. His opinion is validated by reference to the behavior of *Iroojlaplap* President Amata Kabua who neither engages in public criticism, nor responds to it. He implicitly acknowledged the positionality of Kabua as *Irooj*, reinforcing the idealized model of a chief as above politics and business, and affirming the value of respect displayed through silence and obedience.

The *Nitijela* is an arena where shared understandings of power and authority are defined as well as contested, as in the examples above. It is also the site in which political and economic powers intersect. Legislation, as well as rhetoric, that reinforces those powers and ideologies of traditional power are promoted. The authority of the modern governing body is used to influence, if not determine, the practices of other sectors of Marshallese life, including health and cultural spheres. For example, the *Nitijela* passed two resolutions in 1996 that would have amended the list of radiation-related illnesses eligible for compensation from the Nuclear Claims Tribunal (NCT) fund to include diabetes,

cataracts, and strokes (*MIJ* 27(40):3). While the resolution passed, the NCT's medical experts ultimately declined to add those conditions to the list for lack of evidence showing any correlation between heart disease and radiation exposure.

Similarly Amata Kabua was recognized, through legislation, as the traditional *Irooj* of Bikini. While Bikinians have disputed the claims of the Kabua line since the bomb testings on the grounds that they were not "looked after" or "cared for" by the Kabuas, the *Nitijela* was able to overstep their protests ---even their physical presence during the vote on this bill -- and recognize Amata Kabua. As mentioned in Chapter 4, this recognition overstepped the authority of the traditional rights court, and paved the way for Kabua to receive a portion of Bikinian compensation payments as well as a share of profits from the newly established dive resort.

### **Getting Elected and Staying in Power**

The strategies used within the *Nitijela* are also used to earn a seat in it. Asserting genealogical heritage, discrediting opponents, subtly intimidating voters and publicly redistributing material resources are among the tactics that typify the most explicit and public negotiations of power and position in the RMI -- the national elections.

Gaining a seat in the *Nitijela* is like winning the lottery. Besides having an opportunity to influence national policy, and represent constituents' needs, an elected official is entitled to many benefits, such as free housing, electricity, and travel opportunities, as well as the prestige and status associated with a government position. Senatorial positions are highly sought after, and the campaigning intense, resulting in lasting divisions among families.

Despite the desirability of these positions of power, influence, and access, serving as Senator or Minister also has its well-recognized drawbacks. The relationship between elected officials and their constituents consists of a series of mutual obligations and expectations, which are demanding, difficult to deny, and most significantly, *personal*. In this section I wish to highlight the ways in which average Marshallese citizens are empowered through their offers and denials of support for elected officials at election times. I also point to some strategies previously used by powerful incumbents to ensure constituents' votes/compliance in elections.

As noted in Chapter 3, the Japanese colonial government held chiefs responsible to financially provide transportation, and health care expenses for their people. This functioned to level native economic inequalities from copra tax shares, diminish the arbitrary nature of chiefly support/care taking, removed chiefly powers from a spiritual to a secular realm. Where previously chiefs' support was dependent on *kajur* labor and loyalty, the Japanese government obligated chiefly responsibility through legal measures. This history informs the nature of the requests received today by both chiefs, and those who hold positions of authority and wealth (as explored in Chapter 5).

The power of the constituents to pressure and even threaten elected officials is acknowledged by the Senators: "It's tough meeting the demands of our constituents, it's pretty unfair," and "It's always difficult to turn them away," especially when the local understanding is, "I put you on that seat and if you don't look to my needs I won't support you again."

The *Marshall Islands Journal* notes that elected officials are besieged by those who claim to have supported a candidate in the hopes of garnering a favor: “By one report, even before the recent elections results were official, one apparent victor was deluged with requests for money from people who claimed they voted for him” (*MIJ* 27(2): 6 1996).

Not only does this occur after an election, (even before the results are final), but it also occurs as soon as a candidate announces his or her candidacy. As one participant who ran for a *Nitijela* seat claimed, “It was ‘open season!’ The day I announced my candidacy I came home to find people waiting for me by the backdoor, asking for money, food -- you name it!”

The expectation that candidates, and thus elected officials must provide personal support for their constituents emerged in the consolidation of power in the dual roles of *Iroojlaplap* and President Amata Kabua. Many traditional chiefly responsibilities were shifted to “government” following cultural logic. Even prior to Kabua’s term in office, foreign institutions such as schools, courts, hospitals replaced traditional community responsibilities. During the stable reign of Amata Kabua, government became a near seamless integration of cultural, political, and economic authority and responsibility. Only religious authority was outside government, but close family ties between religious leadership and government, through traditional leaders, connected the two spheres.

One means of strengthening the ideal of government as supreme provider, and asserting the perceived commitment to look after its people is evident in the practice of pre-election rallies. These rallies involved tremendous displays of food/wealth, and the sharing of that food to strengthen relations of families to their traditional leaders, land, and

one another. Since food is sacred (J. Walsh, fieldnotes, interview with JK) sharing food reinforces collective sustaining links to land, clan, history, ancestry and mutual familial obligations. It is not only rude but potentially dangerous to refuse any offer of food: *Jab pejwak peim ak* [Don't twist the wing of the frigate bird; Don't look a gift-horse in the mouth].

### **Rallying and Feasting**

Political rallies and feasts serve to unite people with particular candidates and 'parties' in much the same way as traditional family celebrations do. Political rallies enlarge family and community support at the broadest political levels to the larger community of the Marshallese "nation."

Candidates hold rallies on their home atoll, as well as on Majuro, during the many weeks and months of campaigning. Field trip ships, loaded with food, head to outer islands where candidates, their families, and supporters sponsor tremendous feasts for their present, and potential, constituents.

Family support is critical. If outer island relatives do not support the candidate, who may actually reside on Majuro, then neither will any other island residents. The assumption of the primacy of family bonds means that it is nearly impossible to gain non-relatives' votes if the candidate is not fully backed by family members. This requires much extended family negotiation, especially with the multiple ties to several families and candidates in any given election.

When the *Ralik Ratak* Democratic Party (RRDP) "opposition" party organized for the 1991 elections, I witnessed these rallies on Majuro. As noted in Chapter 2, political

authority on Majuro is divided and shared between two historically recognized landholders' descendents, Langlan's family (then headed by Amata Kabua) and a corporate landholding group, formerly Jitiam's group known collectively as Twenty-Twenty, strongly affiliated with the 'opposition.' The "government" rallies took place at the weather station, across from the Capital building and Gibson's on Amata's land, and the RRDP rallies were set up in the large parking lot of Robert Reimers Enterprises. Pickups with balloons and banners, music and horns, and waving people traveled back and forth the mile or two between these sites. The prepared food, freely distributed, could and probably did, feed an army since the population of Majuro at that time was approximately 20,000.

These rallies were frequent. They occurred nearly every weekend, and sometimes on weekday evenings. Not only was food provided for a single meal, but as is the custom, attendees covered piled-high plates with foil to take home.<sup>49</sup>

In the election of 1999, a candidate for the seat of Likiep Atoll brought goats, cows, pigs, and tremendous resources to the people of Likiep, in the hopes of securing their votes and ousting Likiep's long-term incumbent. In addition to bringing supplies, and excitement to outer islands, elections function to temporarily balance power relations, by redistributing wealth throughout the often ignored outer islands, and Marshallese communities on the US mainland.

It is significant to note that one does not have to be a resident of an atoll to be a registered voter of that atoll. In most cases, people recognize multiple "home atolls" where they have land rights, and choose one, depending on the closeness of the race, and the

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<sup>49</sup> I often wonder if economists' models ever take election years and finances into account in their projections.

candidates they choose to support. Marshallese living in the United States do the same and vote with absentee ballots. In numerous negotiations, potential constituents and entire families can sway elections with their registration choices and candidate support. One elderly friend described her frustration at her husband who wanted her to change her island affiliation for the last election: "I was so mad at him. I had already registered on Jaluit and then he made me switch back to Likiep so I could vote for his relative!" For this reason, candidates announce their candidacy early, since voting registration ends more than six months prior to the elections. Selecting which atoll and candidate to support involves numerous clan negotiations. Family meetings encourage clan block votes. It would be extremely difficult if not impossible not to support a relative running for office, despite political or personal disagreements since *Botoktok ej kur* [Blood calls; Blood is thicker than water]. The obvious advantages of voting a relative into office supercede political differences.

Some of the candidates' strategies, as mentioned above, include the display and distribution of wealth and resources as well as genealogical assertions. In the 1999 Likiep election, the candidate was unsuccessful at winning a seat, since the incumbent was supported by a very large extended family. The young man, whose father is an American, printed an ad in the local newspaper that displayed his Marshallese mother's genealogy *along side his campaign slogans*.

Although this candidate's efforts to assert his Marshallese identity, his rights and connections to the land and people of Likiep ultimately failed in landing him an elected position, in the case of combined traditional authority, the ability to influence others

through genealogical assertions is increased. One strategy used successfully on Majuro was the division of voting districts into *wato* [landholding family units] so small that it was relatively easy to determine how a family and even individuals voted. In cases where votes were known to be cast against authority, some families were evicted post-election. On Majuro where the majority of residents do not have land rights, subtle threats, rumors, and accounts of evictions intimidate voters and impact elections. Family, and particularly tenants, living on a chief's land are quite dramatically swayed. Other means of subtle intimidation include the recognition of dependence on government jobs, and the ability of an angered official to deny access to jobs, resources, and land.

The practices surrounding elections in the RMI, emphasize the negotiation and shifting of power that occurs at least every four years. Historically, since independence, the membership in the *Nitijela* has been fairly steady with some incumbents maintaining their positions, like the late President, for five terms. Approximately twenty percentage of seats change in each election, and "opposition" party members typically held only four or five seats. In the 1991 election with its organized opposition, only four RRDP candidates won seats representing atolls with notorious anti-Kabua factions: Jaluit (Heine family home); Bikini; and Majuro (the Twenty-Twenty contingent).

Only in the first post-Amata Kabua election of 1999 were long-term incumbents ousted from power; only two of the former governing party's leaders maintained their positions. That election marked a *complete overthrow* of the traditional power and familiar political parties and players -- if not the structure and popular expectations of government.

To understand that election, this chapter looks at the political maneuverings that preceded it during the transition period that followed upon the death of the late President in December of 1996 and considers the following questions: Was the “overthrow” of government “resistance?” Was it a structural shift, or merely a change in players? Does the election of new players alter the system? My tentative response is a positive one. In small face-to-face societies with deeply rooted expectations of authority, the election of a commoner as President does provide new models of power in a system that must alter to subject the dictates of custom to the laws of the nation and its constitution. As the populace wonders if a commoner can govern effectively in a Parliament full of *Imoj*, if the President will be treated with the respect offered to earlier leaders, new practices and relationships emerge.

## **Gambling Debate**

### Casino Resorts

Since 1972, Amata Kabua had dreamed of establishing a gambling casino as a tourist attraction (*Micronesian Reporter* 1972:4, 7). As this dream began to take shape in 1996, the *Nitijela* took steps to legalize it.

In 1996, an agreement was signed between President Amata Kabua and a South Korean businessman, “Mr. Big” Mo Haeng Yong<sup>50</sup> to develop resorts on Mili and Majuro atolls. The Mili resort, a \$500 million project, was to have “hotels, condominiums, shops, casinos, a golf course, and a power plant” (Johnson 1996). The inhabitants of Mili were to be resettled to the smaller islets of the atoll as the project proceeded. Majuro was

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<sup>50</sup> Mo was named the Korean Consul to the RMI by Imata Kabua in 1997 (*MIJ* 10-10-97 28(41):1) He was later arrested in Korea for swindling \$88 million from followers of his doomsday cult (*MIJ* 6-23-2000).

to have a 1,000 room hotel, and a casino complex estimated at \$300 million. According to news reports, the greatest attraction for the South Koreans was the passage of legislation that legalized gambling in the Marshall Islands (Johnson 1996). The government hotel, later managed by Outrigger Hotels of Hawai'i, that opened in 1996 for the South Pacific Forum meeting on Majuro was also originally designed to offer casino gambling.

Bill 8, the proposed legislation to legalize gambling in the Marshall Islands passed in February of 1996, despite the organized opposition of local churches led by Assumption, the Catholic mission on Majuro. The first mention of possible legalized gambling was presented in a *Marshall Islands Journal* article about the two new hotel developments planned for Majuro, one of which would contain a casino (January 19, 1996). No public debate or discussion had yet occurred. Assumption's Peace and Justice Committee met to discuss issues surrounding gambling and decided to oppose the proposition. The committee contacted the Marshall Islands National Council of Churches (NCC) for their support by first speaking with the Protestant minister, Rev. Enja Enos on January 26, 1996, only a week after the article had appeared in the *Journal*.

Surprisingly, three days later, the *Nitijela* held an unpublicized public hearing on Bills 7 and 8. Local businessmen in favor of the legislation were the only attendees until an alerted Assumption representative arrived.

The following evening, on January 30, a gathering consisting of two Senators, the Protestant minister, Rev. Enos, and three Catholic religious met to strategize opposition. Since the first (of the necessary three) reading of the bills was predicted to occur the following day, the attendees suggested a march on Parliament, and requested Rev. Enos

ask President Kabua to meet with the group to hear their concerns. According to meeting minutes, Rev. Enos reluctantly agreed to speak with the President.

Enos was unable to contact the President and the bill passed its first reading. A public hearing was scheduled for Ebeye before the second reading, giving the opposition time to organize. The summary report provided by Assumption notes: "This is the last time anything was attempted with the NCC. Because most churches were afraid to speak out or do anything publicly, the Catholic Church proceeded on its own from this point on" (Assumption 1996).

The strategy of the Catholic Church shifted to encouraging Catholic Senators and parishioners to voice their concerns. The church sent letters with the text of relevant guidelines from the "Catechism of the Catholic Church" to the Senators. Students were instructed about the moral and ethical issues associated with gambling and the High School's Junior class wrote letters to the editor of the *Marshall Islands Journal*.<sup>51</sup> Church leaders also sought assistance from within the Catholic hierarchy to give extra authority to the voice of its representatives in the Marshalls. Letters opposing gambling were requested from the Bishops of the Dioceses of Las Vegas and New Jersey (Atlantic City), and parish priests in Saipan as well. These supportive documents were translated into Marshallese and circulated.

Four of eight invited senators met with the Assumption Peace and Justice Committee to discuss the gambling issue prior to the second and third readings of the two

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<sup>51</sup> This tactic of using students to express parish sentiments or to vocalize opposition is worth exploring since the children and their parents are not really held accountable for their opposing views, since they are obviously influenced by their teachers. Their letters do serve as a safe vehicle for the expression of discontent though the degree of pressure placed on students is also questionable.

bills. One of them called a week later, to advise the group of another unpublicized second reading, to be held on Friday, February 16: Assumption records explain:

We sent the entire Assumption High School and faculty and staff to a 'civics lesson' at the *Nitijela*. The Senators were surprised to see them all. With the students there, someone called for a secret ballot on the second reading of Bills 7 and 8. By a vote of 21 to 8, the *Nitijela* voted to delay passing the bills until their August session, so that they might have more time to study the issue. The Finance Minister called for a hand vote, claiming the secret ballot was unclear. In a hand vote, the *Nitijela* voted 20 to 9 to delay voting on the bills until the August session, so they have more time to study the issue. A break was called, then lunch recess. In the afternoon, with the students gone, one of the ministers asked for another vote, and the *Nitijela* passed the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading by a vote of 17 to 12.

The following Monday, a petition of six hundred signatures petitioning for a delayed vote was given to the Speaker, Kessai Note. Tuesday, the high school students were sent for another 'civics lesson' at the *Nitijela*.

The local newspaper reported that Tuesday's session began with a statement by President Kabua offering support for the gambling bill that would "enable the national government to provide conditions whereby gambling will be permitted within the Marshall Islands" (*MIJ* 27(8):4 2/23/96). The President diffused criticism of the bill by diluting its intention. He added that as the law then stood, local jurisdictions could do as they pleased in regard to gambling but this new bill would allow for national control. He acknowledged public fear about the problems gambling might cause, and pointed out that the nation already had serious problems that are unrelated to gambling. He further acknowledged that the gambling machines permitted in clubs in the past caused suffering to families, and claimed that this would not be the case under 'controlled gambling.' His plan to prevent gambling from 'having a bad influence on people' was to 'require a substantial permit fee that could range from \$250 to \$2000 annually" (*MIJ* 27(8):4 2/23/96). While not altering

the proposed legislation in any way, Kabua attempted to diffuse criticism by emphasizing national enforcement and licensing fees that preclude local participation. He responded subtly to the opposition's arguments and concerns to decrease their intensity at the opening of the session. Assumption documents describe the later significant events of that day:

At the morning *Nitijela* session, Speaker Note introduced the petitions and announced another public hearing, because it was obvious that many people did not like the idea of casino gambling. The President asked on radio to see the petitions. As he looked at them he said he noticed that the signatures of some government workers were on the petition and, according to one eye witness, he then raised his eyes to the ceiling and said aloud, for all to hear on the radio, "I wonder if any of these people live on my property?" The President then said that rather than one large public hearing, there should be many small public hearings, so that they could explain it better to a few people at a time. Speaker Note informed the President that it was too late for that because the invitations had already gone out. It was agreed that the public hearing will take the form of a *Committee of the Whole* (COW).

The President's use of the public radio broadcast of the *Nitijela* session was obviously strategic. Not only were the references to government employees, and residents on Kabua's land quite specific, but so too was mention of the intention to hold small hearings, in which attendees might more easily be intimidated.

Assumption students returning to campus that day were told by certain Senators to be sure they were present at the COW. That same day, the elementary faculty voted to cancel school for Thursday the twenty-second so all faculty and staff could attend the COW. But on Wednesday fear from the President's "veiled threats" (Assumption 1996) had begun to discourage the groups. After the "Ash Wednesday" evening mass, only thirty parishioners stayed to discuss and rehearse questions for the next day's COW.

On the morning of the COW, the pastor of Assumption received two phone calls warning him not to attend the COW since it might be interpreted as “foreign interference” in government, which is punishable by deportation. The pastor decided to remain outside of the *Nitijela* building and chamber, but to be available for “clarification for questions about the Catholic Church position on gambling” (Assumption 1996). The *Nitijela* sent a messenger to invite the pastor inside to sit in the area reserved for church leaders. The Assumption spokesperson began to make her prepared statement, but then decided she would defer to the *dri-belle* pastor, if allowed. Surprised and unprepared, the pastor offered a statement.

In the *Nitijela* chambers, the five seats prepared for those with questions are situated at the lowest rung of a series of semi-circular graduated seats. After the pastor’s and spokesperson’s statements were made, the Senators bombarded them with questions. Three other vocal parishioners came to join the two in the “hot seats” where they answered, rather than posed, questions for an hour and a half. During the discussions, President Kabua noted that the bills only authorized the cabinet to make regulations concerning gambling, which will have public hearings as they are developed. Abruptly, the Minister seated next to the President signaled the end of the hearing to the chair of the committee (Assumption 1996).

The third and final reading on the bills was held the following day. While a Senator repeated what was discussed in the COW for the general public to hear via the *Nitijela* broadcast, the President interrupted him, told him to “stop lying to the people,” and called for an immediate roll call vote. The method of voting was another means of extending

Presidential influence and pressure on Senators. A single Minister attempted to avoid voting by claiming a conflict of interest since his church told him to vote “no” on the bills. He did vote against the bills, but in the final recount switched his vote to *aet* [yes]. The bills passed with a final vote of 21 to 5.

Following the passage of the gambling legislation, the *Journal's* front page headline read: “Casino gambling gets the nod: Craps ‘R Us!” (*MIJ* 27(9):1996 March 1, 1996) despite local sentiment that was “overwhelmingly against the measure.” With the legislation passed, the Cabinet was authorized to establish regulations and to implement gambling in the country.

The primary source for the account given above are documents from the Catholic Church on Majuro, brief interviews with involved opposition members, and articles from the *Journal*. This is a limited perspective that does not take into account any internal *Nitijela* dissent or negotiation, personal opinions, nor explicit threats that may or may not have influenced the outcome of the vote. I note here that the Catholic Church frequently assumes their parishioners, or the alumni of its schools will remain faithful to the doctrines or beliefs promoted by the mission. This presumption ignores other cross-cutting relationships and pressures, such as family ties, economic/business arrangements, and political debts that impact these powerful individuals’ decisions.

### **Maintaining and Resisting Authority**

The strategies used by both powerful government leaders and their opponents are examined here briefly. These tactics were the most familiar patterns of political maneuverings against known opposition through the Amata Kabua era, and beyond, until

the successful anti-gambling campaign two years later, after Amata Kabua's death. These models are the dominant methods used by those in positions of authority to maintain and support their political power.

Strategies used by the *Nitijela* to deny opposition include short public notice for significant controversial bill hearings; the call for breaks often followed by a recess of an afternoon, a day, or many days; the calculated use of parliamentary rules of order to force or delay a vote; public recognition of the traditional authority within the *Nitijela* chambers; labeling opposition leaders "liars," ignoring/interrupting/silencing direct criticism; scrutinizing and discrediting the critic, rather than responding to criticism; personalizing issues by recalling previous interactions between political opponents; voting by roll call, rather than secret ballot to ensure/pressure political loyalty; using messengers to deliver preventative threats to ensure compliance and prevent public confrontation and humiliation; assuming a benevolent display toward one's opponents (e.g. inviting the pastor inside, despite prior warnings that he would not be welcomed) in order to enhance popular and personal support that strengthens reputations and political power<sup>52</sup>; avoiding personal responsibility for voting or support on issues through claims to larger collective organization which claim one's loyalty, e.g. family, church affiliation.

Many of the strategies named above may be classified as indirect, yet they are by no means ineffective methods of maintaining authority. Most are means to prevent the embarrassing direct confrontations common in Western political practice. Messengers,

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<sup>52</sup> President Amata Kabua was celebrated for his public presence, characterized by humility and gentle, gracious interactions with his people. Long-term successful politicians learned the benefits of imitating Kabua's public persona (that of the idealized strong but gentle *Irooj*) and garnered political support through broad popularity.

avoidance, time delays, third-party excuses, polite relations, all emphasize the significance of maintaining (at least) the appearance of harmonious relationships, and the ends to which leaders will go to ensure these appearances are maintained. The strict adherence to Parliamentary rules offers a legal western (and thus authoritative) validation of legislation. Following “proper” procedure avoids the appearance of *impropriety* and political pressure at one level, despite the subtle pressures occurring at other levels of talk and interaction. Each of the strategies and methods described above are successful in that their ambiguity allows for multiple interpretations that may just as easily exonerate as condemn those involved.

Oppositional tactics are less ambiguous, and I attribute some of this to the leadership role of the Catholic Church and its reliance on familiar American confrontational political practices. Opposition leaders sought to dialogue with potential (mainly Catholic-educated) government allies, and assert a sort of primary (primary school?) authority, of adherence to the Church’s ethical/moral values as well an indirect claim on the political “debt” due to the church and school that educated and thus empowered particular Senators.<sup>53</sup> The opposition appealed to “recognized” external authority – Bishops, priests, scholars, etc – to reinforce its position and to oblige alumni and current leaders into compliance. The opposition publicly condemned gambling in church sermons, and distributed documents. They circulated a petition. They emphasized written texts and documents, rather than personal persuasion until it was suggested that they ask a pastor with close ties to the President to speak to him on their behalf. They

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<sup>53</sup> There is an unstated assumption, at Assumption, that Catholic educated leaders -- who hold approximately forty percent of the seats in the *Nijjela* -- will remain loyal or “faithful” to the views of the Catholic Church, its pastor, and its politics.

encouraged students to write letters to the newspaper editor. None of these tactics was particularly successful because they were issue-centered, not relation-centered. Only the pressure and cooperation of committed church-going Senators was successful, even so, those Senators then had to find ways to encourage other affiliations for broader support.

What did impact the vote on the bill, evidenced in both delay tactics and rushed procedures, was the physical presence of citizens in the *Nitijela* chamber. Accustomed to an empty Parliament, direct observation, as opposed to radio broadcasts, by constituents was unprecedented. The radio broadcast was also turned off without explanation as discussions became heated. Those present could hear discussion that was too controversial to be aired live over the radio.<sup>54</sup> The presence of the students, many the “children” (classificatory) of the Senators, was intended to pressure not only the “Catholic” Senators to vote in line with the Church, but also to humiliate the other senators by reminding them of their obligations to look after their people, particularly the young. The students’ presence forced legislators to prioritize political, family, religious, and other loyalties. Their choices were made all the more immediate and challenging when embodied in students and other community observers.<sup>55</sup>

### The (Slot) “Machines”

With the death of Amata Kabua in late December of 1996, the push for casino hotels slowed to a halt. Gradually over the next six months, coin-operated slot machines, locally-referred to as “machines,” began to appear on Majuro. By the time I arrived for fieldwork in August of 1997, concern over the economic impact of the machines on

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<sup>54</sup> Cutting off the radio was employed more frequently in the 1998 gambling legislation vote.

<sup>55</sup> One way government leaders respond to this type of pressure is to wear dark sunglasses within the chambers. They thus have the means of avoiding eye contact that may signal their internal struggles.

families was voiced frequently. The overall economic picture of the nation had turned ominous as well. With an Asian Development Bank (ADB) demand for a reduction in force (RIF), the final cut in Compact funds, the increase of Chinese immigrants with stores and an ever-increasing share of the retail market (whose profits no longer circulated locally), the average Marshallese felt an economic squeeze unknown for decades.

On paydays, the machine rooms were crowded and families struggled to pay for food. Church pastors grew concerned and attempted to organize a repeal of the 1996 gambling legislation, this time to eliminate the existing machines rather than the far-off threat of resort casinos.

On September 12, 1997, the Cabinet's gaming regulation committee held a public meeting in the newly constructed Japanese Cultural Center, a gymnasium/auditorium, to discuss the proposed regulations. Besides the gaming commission, the attendees of that meeting, including myself, were all affiliated with Assumption, except for the *Journal* reporter. Four teachers, four volunteers, 15 high school students, four alum and parish leaders were the only audience members.

The meeting was recognized as an attempt to appease the gambling opposition by providing them an opportunity to voice their concerns or objections to the regulations approved by the Cabinet three months earlier. The regulations stated that: a gaming license to own or operate machines would cost approximately \$2,000; any Marshallese citizen over 21 years of age could buy the required \$10 gambling permit; the national and local police were tasked with enforcement of these regulations; the three-person gaming commission

was directly responsible to the Cabinet; and, no public official could obtain a gaming license to operate a gambling house while in office.



Figure 89. Signage for the 2F Casino.

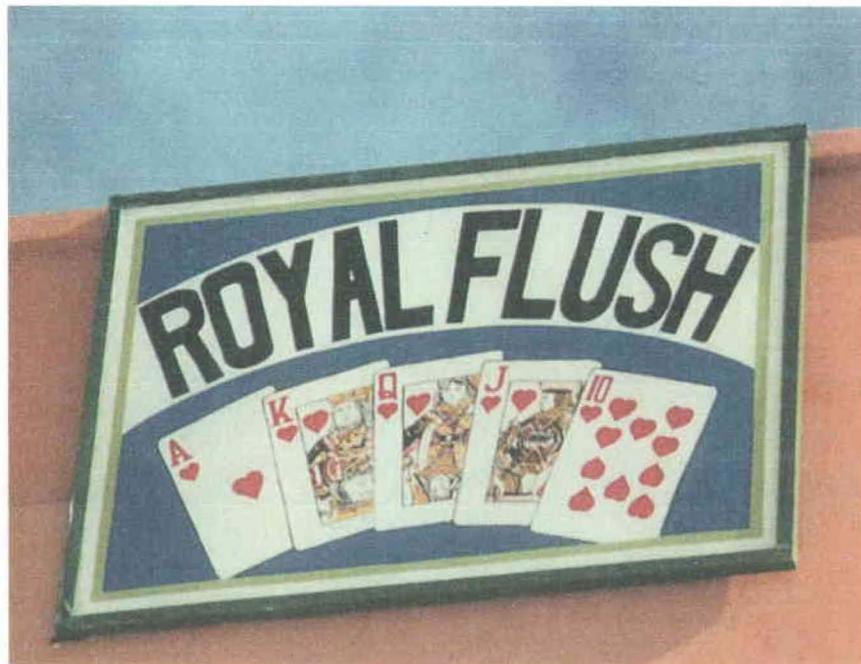


Figure 90. Royal Flush slot machine room.

The meeting, which was conducted for the most part in Marshallese, began with a brief overview of the regulations, and proceeded to direct public challenges to the regulations. First, the audience noted that legislation allowing gambling was passed before any regulations had been drafted. Although the former President had promoted gambling as a means of attracting foreign visitors and assured the opposition that the impact on the local community would be negligible since an expensive permit would be required, the regulations as passed only required a \$10, rather than a \$250, permit. The Chairperson of the gaming commission himself noted that four gambling houses were in operation on Ebeye and Majuro without licenses, and that he was powerless to enforce the regulations since that was the joint responsibility of the national and local police working in conjunction with the Attorney General's office.

A significant juncture occurred when the composition and character of the commission were challenged (in Marshallese) by one audience member who pointed to certain "conflicts of interest" of at least one of the three members of the commission: Jiba Kabua, Neil Milne, and Francis Horiuchi. At that accusation the commission's chairperson abruptly responded in English, saying, "You can always accuse me of something. If we are criminals, dishonest, immoral, whatever, then we're in violation of these things [written in the paper]." The dialogue with the accuser continued in English: "Yes, and who is responsible for cross-checking?" According to the regulations, the committee was selected "by the government." The spokesperson was questioned about whether that meant the President, or the Cabinet. One audience member asked why there were no women on the committee. The response was that the commission had just been formed, and was not

exclusive. The “code-switching” into English here is more than just a linguistic preference. The type of accusation -- personal, and direct -- might have been understood as ‘non-Marshallese,’ as was the chairperson’s response, also direct personal defense. It may also have been a means of excluding others, assuming they did not understand English, from hearing shameful or humiliating accusations and debate.<sup>56</sup>

Another regulation in question was that which denied licenses to public officials while in office. It was noted that any government official’s relative could get the license and operate it on his [there were no women in parliament at that time] behalf. Finally, the commission was asked if it would represent the meeting attendees’ views to the Cabinet. The chairperson responded with, “I can,” to which the audience member pointedly asked, “Will you?” Another audience member stated his view of the gambling situation and its dangerous potential: “We are like little children, playing big people’s games.” When asked if the existing gambling establishments were legal, the commission acknowledged that there were “lots of loopholes and gambling places are ‘not in violation of the law’” (*MIJ* 9/29/97). The meeting concluded with an inquiry that might have well been made at the opening. When a high school student asked whether the regulations were laws, the gaming commission chair replied that he didn’t know and that the lawyer in the audience should be asked. No one could answer the question that ultimately concerned the strength and significance of all they’d been debating for two hours.

The significance of this public hearing was the manner in which the audience persisted and pressured the chairperson of the gaming commission, Jiba Kabua, the son of

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<sup>56</sup> The assumption that the audience had limited English ability would have been incorrect since Assumption’s faculty, staff, and students are required to teach, and learn in English from grades 4-12.

the late President. The audience pointed out the limitation of every regulation, and the circular logic presented by the gaming commission -- in a word, they hounded the three men. The debate, while argued reasonably, had the edge of personal confrontation and the frustration of futility for the Assumption audience. Perhaps the disappointment of having been defeated by the passage of the gaming legislation in 1996 still stung, or perhaps it was the implicit understanding that no matter what was said at the meeting, nothing would change. As stated in the *Marshall Islands Journal*, even though local sentiment was overwhelmingly opposed to the gambling legislation, the opposition was quite powerless to impact policy or its enforcement, despite its best efforts to communicate its concerns and reactions. This apparent powerlessness of the community, in contrast to the strength and influence of a very few men, is even more greatly emphasized in the anti-gambling legislation proposed in first *Nitijela* session of 1998. But in the meantime, a greater threat emerged for opposition efforts.

#### Importing Nuclear Waste?

In the Fall of 1997, the gambling issue took second seat to the struggle to oppose a government plan to import nuclear waste into the Marshalls. The threat of radioactive waste storage focused the energies of the opposition, again led by Assumption.

What is striking about both the gambling and nuclear waste issues is the ability of a small handful of men to design and implement policies rejected and opposed by the majority of the Marshallese population. While the power of particular government officials to push their agendas is nothing new, the extent to which this power is manifest and only rarely publicly challenged is made evident in this example. For a nation that suffers with a

legacy of nuclear testing, the proposal to import additional radioactive waste is difficult to fathom, even when promoted by a chiefly President. In years of discussing this proposal formally and informally with participants, friends, family and community members, not a single person supported the plan, and most thought it offensive, even ludicrous.

While notions of opposition may have been imagined, never in the nation's history had any opposition been successful at defeating the plans of the most powerful members of the *Nitijela*. Almost by definition, the opposition party were outcasts, and their family members nearly 'blacklisted,' or at least not eligible for government jobs or lucrative contracts. Thus, their followers were dedicated, but few, and tended to be those who through education, private enterprise, external resources or family ties, had limited dependence on government positions, contracts, or favor. With government sector employment providing over two-thirds of all jobs until 1997, economic prosperity, if not survival, required cooperation with government.

### Gambling Part II

Once the nuclear waste issue was "frozen," due to powerful external opposition from the US and the South Pacific Forum rather than internal Marshallese dissent, anti-gambling forces began to organize for the 1998 first session of the *Nitijela*. Assumption's Peace and Justice Committee held weekly meetings in the Assumption library, located beneath the Elementary school. This location is private, closed, air-conditioned, and very intimate. Attendees sat around long cafeteria style tables to discuss and strategize their opposition. Beginning on February 5, with only twenty-four days left in the *Nitijela* session, the group realized that the support of all local churches would be necessary to gain the

government's attention. Within two weeks the committee decided to seek support for the proposal of two bills. One (Bill 113) would repeal the previous law and a second (Bill 114) would outlaw all gambling in the Marshall Islands. Senator Ataji Balos from Kwajalein, who had been a strong supporter during the last legislative battles concerning gambling, volunteered to write the resolution and introduce the legislation.

The rationale behind proposing two bills was explained to a larger gathering of church representatives and the Assumption committee on February 25. If the first bill passed, gambling policy would be left to individual atolls to determine and Majuro's mayor had offered her support, even if other atolls, such as Kwajalein, highly influenced by President Imata Kabua and his family, might be harder to persuade. The second bill, if passed, would prohibit all gambling in the nation.

The committee suggested drafting a petition, as it had in 1996, yet this time stressing the negative impact of the gambling on women, offering public support to women, and using women to debate the issue, since women hold a culturally recognized role, *lejman juri* [peace makers] that demands obedience. Someone suggested publicizing the impact of the machines on Ebeye, where they had been around longer, and asking questions about the level of funding received by the government there and what it was used for. It was noted that two of the gambling house/machine owners were Catholic senators. Another wondered how free the senators actually were to vote their minds, given their debts to others. It was also suggested that someone follow up the issuing of permits, to learn if they were being checked upon entering, if business owners had obtained licenses, if income was being reported to government and how much revenue was received

by the government. Members of the committee volunteered to follow up with the various suggestions and assignments. Two older respected men in the community volunteered to talk to ministers of the other churches; the daughter of the late President offered to look into government issues with permits; and an American lawyer offered to draft an official request for information from the government on behalf of the group.

On Tuesday, March 3, the evening before the introduction of Bill 113, the largest gathering of nearly twenty-five people occurred at the Assumption Library. Five Senators and four churches were represented, including the usual Assumption committee members and myself. The Senators asked questions: "What do you really want? To *jolok* [throw out] gambling, or allow for local option?" The Senators pointed out that the Catholic Church was known for its raffles and bingo. The pastor responded that since 1996 when the gambling bill passed, the church parish and schools prohibited bingo. The groups debated the efficacy of having two bills, but the Senators recognized this as an effective strategy, assuming that the previous law would be repealed and then they could work on eliminating the machines through local rather than national means. A Jaluit Senator stressed that making the proposed law too strict might defeat it. A Majuro Senator acknowledged the need to compromise, thus have the two bills, to enable broader support, and to work toward prohibiting the machines "step by step."

The Jaluit Senator discussed the ways gambling was impacting *manit* [custom] since the *Alabs* and *Irooj* gamble. One Ebeye *Irooj* was acknowledged as responsible for re-introducing the slot machines after they had been prohibited in the 1980s. He

acknowledged that it would be difficult to fight against these *Irooj*, but with the support of the churches, and the strength of the popular support it might happen.

At the close of the meeting on Tuesday, it was noted that the bill would be introduced the following day, followed by a public hearing, and then a second and third reading, and then the final reading/vote. Only five days remained in the mandated twenty-five day session. Only the Speaker could extend the session, but probably would not since there was no supplementary budget to provide for an extension. The group committed themselves to appearing at the public hearing, and being physically present during the votes on the bill.

The public hearing had been postponed until Friday March 6. The evening before the groups met again to decide focus points for the public discussion and comments. Sixteen people attended the meeting and this time seven churches were represented. They decided to focus on the gaming commission's conflicts-of-interest, since one member was hosting a gambling house on his land.

The public hearing was held at 2 pm the same day as the International Women's Day parade and rally directly across the street from the *Nitijela* at the weather station. Like many others, I spent the morning listening to speeches and browsing the handful of handicraft and food booths. Many crossed the street at 2 pm to get seats for the hearing. For many of us, it was our first experience in one of the larger meeting rooms in the Capitol complex. Chairs had been set up at the back of the room which had a stage area elevated two-feet. As people filtered into the room, few chose to sit in the chairs initially, and many sat immediately on the stage at the back, out of sight. The *Nitijela* committee

selected for the public hearing included six Senators accompanied by the assistant Attorney General. Church representatives positioned themselves in the front few rows. An elderly Fr. Leonard Hacker, the founder of Assumption Parish and schools, who had influenced many of the Senators as students years ago, was brought to a seat directly in front of the committee.

A long table with empty chairs was situated in front of the committee, and microphones were placed there for the public who wished to speak. A well-known citizen spoke first to ask the committee to address the gambling regulations and lack of enforcement since this was harming the community. While he spoke, the late President's widow caused a stir as she entered the room at the door located to the right of the first row. She is a petite elegant woman in her mid sixties, and the room buzzed as she was led to a seat at the microphone table. The Senators glanced at her and smiled while listening to the testimony. As soon as the first speaker finished, the chair of the committee recognized the former First Lady, and offered her a microphone. Her speech, and all the others, were aired live over the national radio. She argued that children were gambling, that these days life was hard, and people were killing each other, and doing bad things. She noted that although the late President had signed the bill, "we're just not ready for this, I can't sleep in peace." The crowd gazed at the floor or off to the side as she spoke quite emotionally, her voice quivering at times. I peered around the room but found no Marshallese looking directly at her as she spoke. She continued by pointing out the example of Saipan, where it took many years for a foundation to be established and everything had still turned out badly. She reemphasized: "we're not ready for it here. There must be a foundation first."

She was almost crying, as she begged, “PLEASE, *JOIJ*,” and then asked for forgiveness for any mistaken/harmful words. When she finished she stood up, walked over to the wall on the left side of the room, and sat down on the floor. She refused the chair that was brought to her.

The presence of the former First Lady who has rarely if ever taken a public stand on issues, was historic and impressive. As the widow of Amata Kabua who had initiated the gambling legislation now being opposed, her words carried more weight than anything anyone else could contribute. Her justification was “not now” rather than a total condemnation of the practice. She offered a face-saving rationale for those involved who might be swayed by forceful opposition. Her presence was historic -- her words decisive. Prior to her testimony, it was unclear if she supported or opposed the gambling since her husband had initiated the proposal. Her rejection of gambling, her emotional pleas, and her humility deeply affected the mood of the room.

While the next testimony began, the former First Lady, stood and walked barefoot as discreetly as possible across the room, to greet a friend (a *Leroj* [chieftess]), offer her the *wot* [flower head lei] from her head, and then return to her seat on the floor. All of this functioned to increase respect for her, her testimony, and to reinforce her role as a representative of traditional power and authority that appealed to idealized models of humble, generous, leadership that looks after, and cares for her people.

While the testimony continued, the committee members one by one would disappear for a few minutes at a time, and sometimes return with coffee or water. Two of the six members wore dark glasses. I interpreted their seemingly bored glances around the

room to see who was there and their getting out of their seats every 20 minutes or so as discomfort.

Other testimony questioned the benefits received by the government from the machines and asked the Minister of Finance who sat on the committee to tell the audience how much revenue the machines had brought to the country. He also insisted, "You need to listen to us since we're the ones who put you in your seats."<sup>57</sup> A *Lerooj* began her testimony with a comparison between the gambling issues and the sale of passports that brought laughter from the crowd. She reminded them of the result of ignoring the people's opposition to passport sales, saying, "and now look what has happened." A government should listen to the will of the people, or else.

A local jokester got up to tease the committee, counting: "*Juon, ruo, jilu, emmen, lalim, jiljino...* (one, two, ...six)," as he pointed at each member. He introduced himself and spelt out his name -- "B-O-T-T-A, 3 Ratak, 1 Ralik"<sup>58</sup> -- pointing out the committee's membership before being interrupted and asked to stick to the bill. He asked how many people were employed by the gambling houses, and then asked the committee, "please help us, these are the thoughts of the people."

The leading Minister of the largest church in the nation, the United Church of Christ (Protestant) finally spoke. He said, "Church is community; government is community." I believe he was trying to emphasize that either the government, like the

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<sup>57</sup> Later discussions about this hearing with those who had listened to the radio broadcast frequently repeated this man's comments and one person laughed as he described how this man, 'talked to them like they were children' (fieldnotes 3/6/98)

<sup>58</sup> By spelling out his name (as if they couldn't understand), pointing at members of the committee, and identifying them by their home atoll the man was being more direct than is normally considered appropriate and might be interpreted as insulting.

church, is a community in which people must cooperate, or that the community consists of church and government and they must support each other.

Finally the committee members had a chance to ask questions, the most pointed one being, "If the regulations were enforced we wouldn't need to repeal the gambling law, right?" The respected statesman who had begun the testimony responded: "It's not about regulations. They're not enough. It's about moral responsibility. *Kejbarok ainemmon in Majol, manit in Majol* [Hold tight to Marshallese peace and Marshallese custom]."

Discussion for Bill 113 concluded with his remarks and the committee then began discussions for Bill 114, which were shorter and less intense as most of the arguments had already been discussed. Significantly, not a single person at either public hearing spoke in favor of the machines.

This public hearing was significant in many ways. First, the number of recognized community leaders present was unprecedented. Nearly every church on the island was represented and addressed the committee. There had never been an organized church opposition to this extent. Second, traditional leaders, *Lerooj* expressed their opinions. Third, the former First Lady's appeal was momentous and successful in multiple ways since her presence alone showed support for the cause, but her testimony, and actions further enhanced the mood, the tone of moral righteousness, and the overall volume of the opposition.

One advantage of long-term fieldwork is a deeper appreciation of the histories and personalities of a place; one disadvantage is the challenge of writing about them. In this detailed account, the organization of the churches and the support they garnered from the

*Irooj/Lerooj*, Chamber of Commerce, and former First Lady seemed to make a difference that other opposition movements had not. The issue was about more than slot machines and the community's welfare, I believe. It was about defeating the new President, who many opposed and who even at that time was being ridiculed in the foreign press (Chapter 8). The fact that the late President's widow spoke out on this issue, speaks to me of long-term family rivalries. One of Amata's daughters was greatly involved behind the scenes with the Assumption opposition movement. Amata's son was supporting gambling on his property. The family was able to show support for a popular cause, while also benefiting from the humiliation of the President. It was a prime opportunity for the widow to speak out.

Following the public hearing, the *Nitijela* delayed its session by nearly a week, though the number of days remaining was still five. I went to the *Nitijela* office building to interview some Senators on March 12, and learned the session was in progress. It was mid-morning and I decided to enter the Chamber to observe the session. The chamber seating is laid out in semi-circular graduated seats, with the Ministers in the innermost and lowest rung, the Senators above and around them, and the audience slightly above and surrounding the entire arena. The Chamber consists of nine Ministers' seats on each side in a semi circle surrounded by an elevated semi-circle of sixteen senators' seats. At the head of the chamber on the same level as the senators is the Speaker's seat behind a massive desk. The clerk's seat is directly beneath the Speaker's seat, on the same level as the ministers' seats. The lowest level of audience seats is in line with the senators' seats and there are three graduated rows of audience seats.

As I opened the front door, I saw people huddled on the lower stairs that led to the graduated seats. To sit in the seats one must step up about three steps, but the only audience that day was seated in the hidden areas near the three entrances, on the stairs, out of sight. Views of the members and the audience were blocked by the wall beneath the aisle railing, along the seating in the circular chamber. I sat on the third step so I could see without being conspicuous. It was obvious when anyone would enter or leave the chamber, even if they were never seen, since the doors were constantly opening and closing. No one was seated in the seats. No one wanted to be seen.

A week later, on March 19, Bill 113 was finally presented to the *Nitijela*. The entire Assumption High school body was present and, with the representatives of the other churches, the Chamber was overflowing. Citizens swelled into the aisles and the stairwells and out the doors into the entrance hall. The Bill passed its first and second readings in the morning before being postponed for further discussion in the afternoon. The session was later cut short in the afternoon; more discussion was called for the following day's session.

The next morning, one Minister who was operating gambling machines, proposed a compromise bill that would combine both gambling bills (113 and 114) after the President, who also operated gambling machines on his property in Ebeye, left the room. Discussion continued and the audience clapped, cheered, and laughed as the opposition speakers spoke out against the gambling machines. When one senator borrowing the words of Abraham Lincoln, reminded the *Nitijela*, that government was "of the people, by the people, and for the people," the audience response was particularly loud. More than once the Speaker had to instruct the audience to be quiet. The morning dragged on followed by

the lunch break. Once the session resumed it was immediately interrupted by another break, and finally someone proposed a vote on whether or not a vote should be taken right then for the third reading of the bill -- the vote to proceed with a vote was tied. Delayed over the weekend, the next session began Tuesday March 24.

Tuesday, after a morning discussion about gambling revenue on Ebeye, in which the President stated that a portion of Ebeye's \$150,000 budget came from the slot machines, the vote to proceed with a final third reading vote succeeded. A last ditch motion attempting to delay the vote until the August session failed. Discussion was halted and the Speaker called for a short break before the vote. The radio broadcast was turned off as was the practice during breaks. The Speaker addressed the Chamber to notify three members, Tony deBrum, Phillip Muller, and President Imata Kabua, that they would not be permitted to vote due to their conflicts of interest. The Speaker cautioned others to consider their interests carefully before voting because punitive action would be taken toward those with conflicts.

While the three men were obviously surprised and angry, they laughed as they recused themselves from voting as their turn came around. Two others, the gaming commission chair and another *Irooj* also recused themselves. The final vote was seventeen to seven, with five members withholding votes. Public Law 1996-4 was repealed.

Discussion for Bill 114 outlawing gambling began immediately after the vote but a movement was made to postpone discussion until the following day, the final day of the session. That delay tactic was expected to succeed in killing the bill, even by the church-led opposition that was still in shock over its victory in getting Bill 113 passed.

In the late afternoon of that same day, the last day of the session, as I was passing by the College of the Marshall Islands, a friend who had been listening to the radio ran out her office to announce excitedly to the students that the vote was being taken on Bill 114. We all went in to listen. She pointed out to the students that this had never happened in their nation's history, that yesterday and today were so significant that documents would someday end up in *Alele's* national archive. The mood was tense, and expectant.

The broadcast resumed. Again, a Senator had proposed a vote to postpone the final reading until the August session. The results were a tie: thirteen to thirteen. The Speaker, as per his duty, cast the tie-breaking vote to deny the delay and force the final vote on Bill 114. President Kabua was angry. He said, "It seems like you, Mr. Speaker, and Senator Balos are running the *Nitijela*." A break was called. When the broadcast resumed the roll call votes were cast twelve to eleven in favor of the legislation. The Marshall Islands *Nitijela* had, in effect, cast its first vote of no-confidence.

I made my way home to Assumption and waited for the crowd who had been at the Chamber to return and share their stories. At Assumption, there was a feeling that the impossible had just occurred. The pastor was elated; the committee exhilarated. I listened to their stories, and learned what had happened during the break that eliminated three of the votes.

As he did for Bill 113, the Speaker reminded the Senators with conflicts to withhold their votes. These Senators' supporters angrily addressed the Speaker. One of these men was noticeably intoxicated. When an opposition leader suggested to the Speaker that the drunk Senator be denied a vote, the Senator and his colleague stormed out of the

Chamber. Two others had already departed for the airport to check in for the Friday evening Continental flight to Hawai'i, assuming that the vote would be postponed until August. When the final vote was tallied, the opposition had won by a single vote.

### **Repercussions**

Within two months, the *Nitijela* Speaker, Kessai Note, and its Clerk, Joe Riklon, were sued for unconstitutionally denying votes to Imata Kabua, Tony deBrum, and Phillip Muller. In late July at the end of the highly publicized case, Note and Riklon were acquitted, and the gambling establishments were closed.

With over half of the annual allotted *Nitijela* session days used in January, the August session had much work to complete in a short time. The antagonisms of the gambling issues resulted in the forced resignation of the President's Cabinet. Three Ministers who had broken ranks on the gambling issue were removed, while others' positions were shuffled.

One of the ousted Ministers introduced a motion for an historic vote of no-confidence against President Imata Kabua, on September 2, 1998. After the constitutionally mandatory five-day waiting period, while the ousted Minister read the list of fourteen complaints against the President and called for a vote by secret ballot, a Minister interrupted with a point of order to request a roll call vote. This procedural note is significant because the Speaker's decision to ignore the point of order was hotly contested later. The Speaker announced that the request for a roll call vote was denied, noting that the original speaker had been interrupted, and allowed him to proceed and follow the

discussion with a vote by secret ballot. At this, the President invited his supporters to join him as he left the Chamber. Without the necessary quorum, the vote was delayed.

The walk-out lasted six weeks. The vote finally occurred on October 16, only after a High Court judge ruled the walk-out unconstitutional. The vote failed to removed the President from office, by a two vote margin, sixteen to fourteen.

### **CONCLUSION**

The degree of unchallenged authority held by certain *Irooj* in the Marshalls, and the level of power held by elected officials affiliated with traditional leaders but without traditional status of their own has been demonstrated throughout the first decades of independence. The fact that *Irooj*, and by association, government authorities were understood or expected to exercise unchallenged, and unchallengeable power/authority reveals the degree to which the Marshallese hierarchical order was strengthened during the regime of the nation's first President. An oppressive ideology was both cause and consequence of his regime. It was an ideology reinforced by some in powerful positions through culture, deception, intimidation, and secrecy. Amata's era reinforced traditional powers, expanded them to include the modern political realm, and reinforced the ideology that justified them, so that these 'rights' came to be seen as inherent and unchallengeable on one level, and yet contested, if passively and indirectly, at other levels.

The debate over gambling in the Marshall Islands marked the beginning of the most significant national political event in the history of this new nation. The defeat of traditional leaders and their political allies in the *Nitijela* on this issue, and the aftermath of the decision has had an impact on the political consciousness of the Marshallese

population, and is a sign of a changing understanding of traditional authority. This event was empowering for the *kajur* in ways that are only currently beginning to be seen.

The development of the gambling debate and the ultimate consequences, shows how patterns of authority are being challenged in unprecedented ways and with unprecedented results and consequences -- confusing and ambiguous, but empowering all the same. The defeat of the *dri-utiej* [elites; high people] in this example led to further public expressions of discontent: the nation's first strike (at the Majuro hospital), numerous lawsuits, a shuffling of political posts, an *first-time* vote of no confidence, a *Nitijela* walkout by the dominant part, another legal battle declaring the walkout illegal, and a national election that ousted the key political figures who dominated RMI politics for the last twenty-five years. Even more significant was the election of the first commoner President, the former Speaker, Kessai Note, in 2000. Since 1998, the Marshallese people have been bravely charting new waters.

As these alternative methods of resistance multiply and achieve their goals, the range of models of resistance to traditional leaders and contemporary elites increases. Successful local practices may ultimately influence resistance to international authorities, as well as strengthening locally applied methods..

**CHAPTER 7**  
***MONEY IN EWOTLOK JEN LAN***  
**[THE MONEY WILL FALL LIKE RAIN FROM HEAVEN]**

Cultural metaphors are powerful. Like metaphors of time and money are prevalent in America (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), metaphors of power, height, hierarchy dominate Marshallese discursive practices. Models of chiefs as “warrior, priest, and feast-maker” (Keesing 1985, see chapter 4) that express *joj* [generosity/grace], offer protection and guidance, in short are ‘dependable’ Marshallese cultural ideals. In Chapter 4 models and mutations/transformation of chiefly models and responsibilities revealed the gradual increase of chiefly dominance through the TT period, and into the Compact era. Chapter 5 examined the expansion of the models of relations between chiefs and commoners, through the emergence of Marshallese commoner elites in the newly (American) legitimized realms of commerce and government. Chapter 6 pointed out the ways elites and those in power, use democratic discourses and access to US funds to sustain their positions, and validate their authority -- as well as challenge others’.

Since the negotiations of power that are central to Marshallese social life occur within the context of Western legitimized institutions, and make use of particular Western discourses, it is important to consider how the relationship with America which is so integral to Marshallese authority and power today, is constructed and viewed. The ‘normalization’ of America points to the integration/assimilation/Marshallization of American authority, into Marshallese cultural frameworks. Not only did this occur in the World War II era, through first encounters with American might, wealth, protection, and generosity, but the incorporation of America continues today. Metaphors used to describe

the relationship between the RMI and the US convey the application of local understandings of authority and reciprocity to international relations.

The power of cultural models, our primary interpretive frames, to shape our understandings of the world is difficult to deny. Human beings understand the foreign in terms of the familiar. This chapter demonstrates this process as Marshallese examine and reflect upon US relations while the following chapter will emphasize the ways Americans view relations with the Marshalls according to American metaphors and understandings. It points to disjunctures in apparently identical discourses, as cultural meanings shape interpretations. The ambiguities, and inevitable “negotiations” of obligations, responsibilities -- of Compact agreements, democracy and hierarchy -- make for messy negotiations that are deeply culturally influenced.

This chapter explores the relationship between the United States and the Republic of the Marshall Islands through Marshallese evaluations of the Compact of Free Association. I will examine the use of cultural models of authority, with its inherent obligations, through analysis of political discourses that criticize Marshallese national and local leadership for “swallowing money,” while critiquing the US for not properly “watching over” Marshallese leadership, in particular, and the Marshall Islands, in general.

Representations of the United States as parent, chief, coach, and adoptive parent by Marshall Islanders point to an understanding of the US-RMI relationship that is strongly rooted in hierarchical cultural models of chief/commoner, parent/child, and elder/younger -- that is, one that is central to the lived experience of Marshall Islanders who view themselves as dependent upon the generosity and concern of superiors, and responsible for

subordinates and juniors. This analysis shows the ways in which Marshallese view themselves as part of a reciprocal relationship in which they are dependent upon the United States for their well-being while offering loyalty and obedience in return for security and prosperity.



Figure 91. Cartoon from the Marshall Islands Journal, 1996 in reference to the popular pro-Compact slogan: "The Money will Fall like Rain from Heaven." (27(48):8 11/29/96)

As presented in Chapter 4, which highlighted the transformation of salient cultural models of *Irooj* through the American administration and the political development of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Compact of Free Association plays a significant role in local understandings of modernity, democracy, development, and chiefly authority.

When Amata Kabua secured US perpetual support of the Marshalls by leading a separation of the Marshalls from the rest of the former Trust Territory, many Marshallese

saw the agreement between the RMI and US as a legitimizing document. The Compact between the two independent nations provided evidence of *their new position on the global stage*, of the political acumen of their leader who secured independence after a century of foreign rule, and as *opportunity for democratic reforms in a Parliamentary system at home as well as eligibility for participation in American democracy in the United States*.

The Compact was as much about opportunity and access -- for all, not only a select few with traditional status -- as it was about self-determination and sovereignty, and it certainly was contentious.

### **COMPACT CONTEXT**

I begin with a review of the evolution of the Compact and how the Compact was presented to the people of the Marshalls before the 1983 plebiscite in which it was approved in the Marshall Islands. This period of debate is *remembered as one of the most tense, politically charged times in modern memory*, and the views and membership of opposing sides deserve note, as *their interactions resulted in the entrenchment of traditional power/leadership --strongly affiliated with the United States (which contributed to the normalization of America) -- and an awareness of the potential results of challenging authority*.

The participants represented later in this chapter include the original Compact negotiators, a former ambassador to the United States, members of the compact education task force and political education commission, government agency heads, local Majuro businessmen, numerous senators and ministers, and former members of the coalition who

were opposed to the Compact of Free Association. Their views are represented and examined in light of local understandings of traditional authority, national leadership, and cultural ideals of reciprocal social interaction that *idealize* dependence, reliability, commitment, and clan/chiefly allegiance.

Marshallese approval of the Compact was largely about local loyalties, obligations, and culturally-framed interpretations of authority applied to international relations rather than a wholesale endorsement of the proposed relationship with the US. When the 1983 plebiscite approved the Compact, it passed with a simple majority of 1,706 votes. Of the eight atolls with extended historical interaction with Americans, six voted against the Compact.

### **Review of Compact Negotiations**

Both sides of the agreement like to point out that it took seventeen years for approval and implementation of the Compact of Free Association. The Compact proposal began in 1969, after the Congress of Micronesia rejected the US offer of Commonwealth status. While alternative political status talks began officially at that time, it wasn't until 1978 when then Congress of Micronesia Senator Amata Kabua, led the movement to break away from the other TT districts to begin separate negotiations with the US. Besides an understanding of nationalistic sentiment and an appreciation of the difficulties of governing a united Micronesian nation, Senator Kabua knew the Marshalls would benefit from separate negotiations because the Marshalls had more to bargain with -- its strategic location and the US Army base on Kwajalein Atoll. Further, at that time the Marshall Islands contributed the largest share to the TT coffers through its copra income and the

taxes on American workers at Kwajalein. After a 1978 Micronesia-wide referendum rejected the concept of Micronesian unity the Marshalls established its own political status commission.

A year later, in 1979, the Marshall Islands Constitution, and the election of the members of the Marshalls first self-governing body, a two house bi-cameral legislature, based on the parliamentary model of a House of Lords (Council of *Irooj*) and a House of Commons (*Nitijela*) officially marked the beginning of self-rule, with Amata Kabua elected the nation's first President.

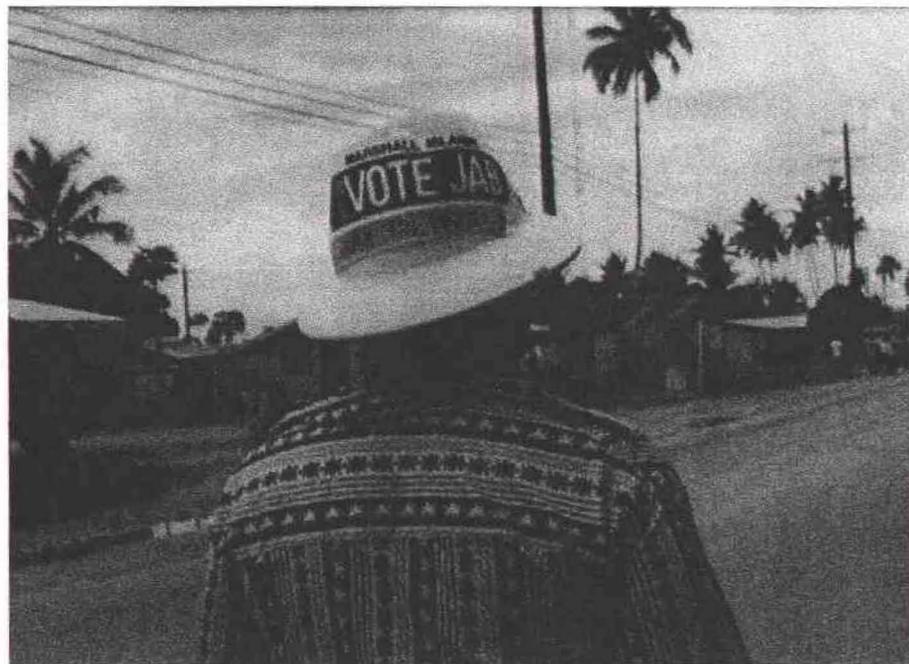


Figure 92. *Jab* signifies a vote for Marshalls separation and a rejection of the proposed Micronesian Compact, 1978. #2839-08 Trust Territory Archives.



Figure 93. Daisy Alik Momotaro, my adopted mother, in the 1978 rally showing Aur atoll's support, *aet* [yes], for Micronesian unity. #2839-09 Trust Territory Archives.



Figure 94. Political parades on Majuro in 1978. Trust Territory Archives #2893-11.

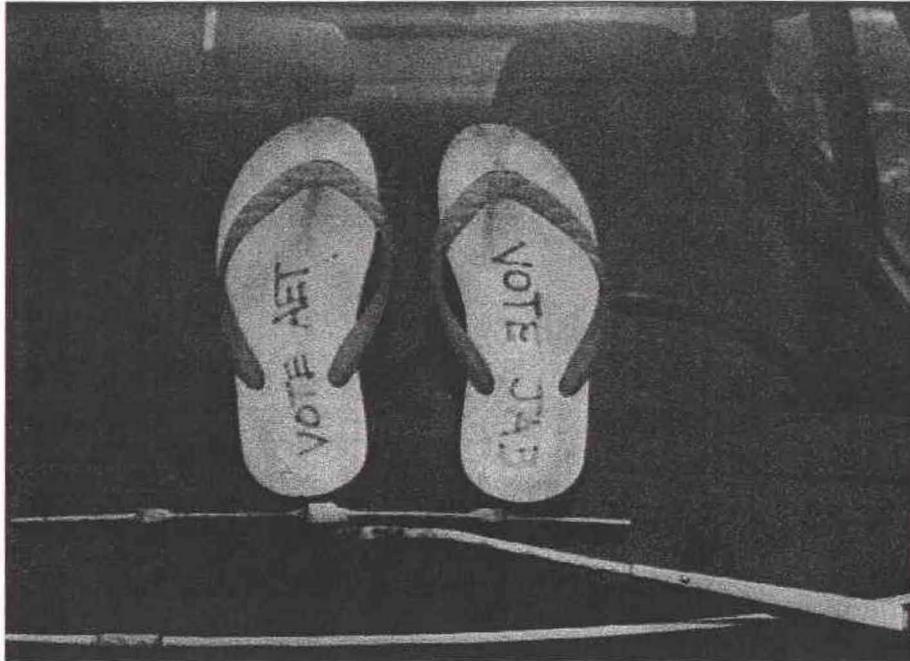


Figure 95. Indecision.  
#2893-13 Trust Territory Archives.



Figure 96. Marshalls *mokta* [first]. Vote *Jab*.  
Trust Territory Archives #2839-17.

In April of 1982, Marshalls chief negotiator, Tony deBrum, of Majuro, agreed to schedule a referendum for August on the newly negotiated Compact. In the Memorandum of Understanding with US negotiator Fred Zeder the referendum was to be a vote between Free Association and Independence. A month later, Kwajalein landowners protested the rental payments allotted for Kwajalein with a "sail in" on the Kwajalein Atoll Army Base. The startled Americans quickly cancelled the scheduled referendum and its option for independence, fearing greater rental payments might be demanded by an independent Marshall Islands. The next month, Amata Kabua responded to the US position by replacing Tony deBrum with Oscar deBrum as chief negotiator. As the Marshalls adopted a more conciliatory stance under Oscar deBrum's leadership, Tony deBrum's effective tactic of threatening independence was pushed aside. A new Compact was negotiated with increased rental payments for Kwajalein (approximately \$9 million per year with \$7 million for the landowners), an increase in compensation for the victims of the US nuclear testing (a \$150 million trust fund that would earn \$270 million over 15 years), increased annual allotments for the national government (\$40 million), and approximately \$16 million in federal programs that included postal service, aviation assistance, a US weather station, Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) funding, and possible access to other US federal social programs such as Head Start, Upward Bound, Job Corps, etc.

A major concession of the Marshalls team was the agreement to allow for extension of the Kwajalein lease for a second fifteen year period without a corresponding second Compact. In return, a larger portion of landowners' share of the rental payments, as well as atoll development funds were allocated through the national government's general

fund, which *is* adjusted for annual inflation. After the first fifteen years, the funds apportioned to the Kwajalein Atoll Development Authority (KADA) were scheduled to be reduced from an inflation-adjusted \$2.84 million annually to fixed \$1.9 million annually. Simultaneously, the landowners' payments would *increase* from \$6.16 million to an inflation-adjusted \$7.1 million annually. The first year of a renewed agreement (the sixteenth year) would provide an additional \$2.5 million solely to the landowners.

Another significant concession of the Compact was section "177," the espousal clause concerning the victims of nuclear testing, known as the "Four Atolls" (Bikini, Enewetak, Utrik, Rongelap). With the signing of the Compact, the victims espoused their rights to pursue economic compensation for their losses in US courts. Their compensation was limited to a \$150 million trust fund that would yield \$270 million over the course of the Compact. The only option for further compensation was a "changed circumstances" clause, that allowed for further negotiations if future information became available that showed the basis of the current arrangement inadequate and inaccurate.<sup>59</sup>

The referendum to vote on the newly negotiated Compact was set for September 7, 1983. The ballot on that day read in two parts. The first was in reference to the Compact, requiring a vote of *aet* [yes] in favor, or *jab* [no] against. In the event of a *jab* majority, the Trust Territory would continue. The second part of the ballot was non-binding. It asked what type of political affiliation the people would seek if the Compact were not passed. Their choices were: 1) independence; or 2) a relationship with America other than Free

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<sup>59</sup> Under President Clinton's administration, declassified materials related to the nuclear testing have justified a Marshallese petition for "changed circumstances" recognition. Its plea to the US Congress for further compensation has to yet received a response. (See further the work of Holly Barker and Barbara Johnson with the Rongelap community.)

Association. A blank was left for the voter to write his or her preference. US and Marshallese negotiators decided that the word 'commonwealth' did not appear on the ballot (Schwalbenburg 1983). The mutual exclusivity of free association and independence has been debated by island leaders, United Nations members, and anthropologists alike (Petersen 1995). In 1983 independence was considered an *alternative* to free association, but, since the Marshall Islands UN membership in 1991, most islanders and US officials persistently refer to the Republic of the Marshall Islands as an independent nation in free association with the United States. The emphatic rhetoric of independence diminishes the dominance of the United States and works to normalize US hegemony, in favor of international recognition that remains ambivalent. (e.g. What does sovereignty mean in dependent economies?).

In preparation for the plebiscite a campaign was organized to educate the populace about their options. Using \$300,000 provided by the United States, the Marshalls' *Nitijela* established a Political Education Commission. Carmen Milne Bigler, a Marshallese who was the first woman elected to the Congress of Micronesia, and also a graduate of the University of Hawai'i,<sup>60</sup> had been the Director of Public Affairs during TT times. Under self-government, she became the Secretary of Interior and Outer Island Affairs, responsible for organizing the first referenda and elections held in the Marshalls. She was selected by President Kabua to chair the Political Education Commission, a task that she initially refused. She says:

You don't know, it's so hard. I didn't want to make mistakes and let the whole thing fall and it would be my fault. It was a huge thing and if you don't do it right you'll be blamed for it. It was more tense than anything ever before that. People

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<sup>60</sup> Carmen Milne Bigler earned her BA in Anthropology in 1967.

drove back and forth all day long, all week long, campaigning, no one worked, they campaigned all day long. And I was in the middle of this whole thing and I cannot say or do anything because I would be suspected to be part of one [side]. I had to be in the middle and I really wanted to say something.

She ultimately accepted the position after the leadership conceded to her request for free reign, her own budget, and no interference.

### **Compact Education**

The Commission consisted of five members, with two representatives from each of two opposing groups. One was the pro-Compact group, or President Kabua's party, the other was a coalition of three groups: the *Ainikein dri-Majol* [Voice of the Marshalls] led by members of the Heine family, who were in favor of Micronesian unity, the Bikinians, and a sub-group of Kwajalein landowners. A Jesuit brother was hired to analyze the Compact and prepare an educational agenda similar to that used in Pohnpei for its referendum. Br. Henry Schwalbenburg prepared educational materials in short and long form covering the main points of the Compact. He also went through the agreement, line-by-line, with the hundred or so educational task force members selected by Mrs. Bigler. These people were tested on their knowledge of the Compact, required to write reports after every public meeting, and attend continuing education sessions on how to answer questions raised by the public. If a member were to be found expressing a personal opinion or presenting a biased interpretation of the Compact, he or she would be removed from the position.

The task force was divided into five teams that visited each of the atolls with major populations. These visits lasted approximately *one week each*. Turnout at the public education sessions conducted by the task force varied from thirty to sixty percent of resident adults in attendance, except on Kwajalein, where turnout was surprisingly low, about six percent.

Schwalbenburg explained this as Ebeye residents' acknowledgement of their *Irooj's* opposition to the Compact, despite increased rental payments in the newly negotiated agreement.

In addition to public meetings, radio programs were produced by the commission. Many programs responded to direct questions asked of task force members with topics such as the section 177 nuclear compensation and Kwajalein payments. Equal radio time for members of opposing sides allowed Marshallese citizens across the islands to hear representatives from both sides of the Compact debate. Rallies held all around Majuro energized citizens and divided families even more than the earlier 1978 referendum. One participant remembered how people camped out at President Kabua's house, twenty-four hours a day, rallying around their chief and President in support. "People were closer to their political affiliates than to their family members," commented one woman. This time is remembered by all those who spoke of it to me, as the most exciting time in Marshall Islands history. The momentum that built from the breakaway from Micronesia, through the establishment of the Constitution in 1979, to the vote on the Compact in 1983 is carved into national memory.

It was not until the final day permitted for radio campaigns, the day before the vote, that Tony deBrum, former Compact negotiator, publicly expressed his influential views. The silence of the person most familiar with the Compact was cause for reservation among many Marshallese people. Senator deBrum's experience in dealing with foreigners, his educational achievements, and his political acumen all contributed to an elevation of his authority in the eyes of the people. His decision to publicly support the Compact was

significant in validating the Compact and ultimately approving it. Not surprisingly, Senator deBrum was soon after awarded the position of Minister of Health and Foreign Affairs.

The following day, in long lines in the sun and rain, Marshallese waited their turn to vote on the Compact. AET [YES] was their choice. UN observers noted that the referendum was conducted in accordance with the regulations set forth in the Marshall Islands' Constitution. After observing the final two weeks of Compact education, they concluded that Marshall Islanders had adequate opportunity to learn about the proposed Compact of Free Association and could thus make an educated vote.



Figure 97. Plebiscite vote on Majuro.  
Trust Territory Archives #1862-06.

How that vote was understood by outer islanders, how Marshallese made sense of this relationship to be forged with the United States is another question. Kevin Hart, a former Peace Corps volunteer and permanent resident of the Marshall Islands notes a local understanding of the Compact in the 1980s. In the Marshallese cultural logic, he claims, the US was paying tribute to President Kabua for allowing the Americans use of Kwajalein for

their own military security. He claims that Kabua's status soared as a result of his successes at acquiring US "tribute."

In contrast, my research supports the view while Kabua's status and power did ascend as a result of the Compact agreement, the agreement further reinforced existing understandings of the United States as a powerful protector and generous provider with unlimited resources that functions as an *Irooj* for the Marshall Islands (See Chapter 4). I believe that further research will support the view that President Kabua, like other Marshallese *Irooj*, served as an intermediary/priest between the source of all resources (be it God, or the United States --"*Irooj* Uncle Sam" [Kabua 1972]) and his people. Resources passed through his government and through his hands, to be redistributed to the people via government jobs. President Kabua's strength was enhanced by affiliation with the United States, the ultimate provider of Marshallese needs and desires in an era of politically motivated US economic largess.

### **Referendum Results**

A close look at the outcome of the Compact referendum is interesting. The Marshalls' constitution allowed for a simple majority of all votes to approve the Compact. Seven of twenty-four atolls populations voted against the Compact. These included two of the "177" atolls, Bikini/Kili/Ejit and Rongelap, and the atolls of Ebon, Kwajalein, Jaluit, Mili, and Wotje. Each of these atolls had direct experiences with Americans, and histories of opposition to Amata Kabua. Both Bikini and Kwajalein resisted the Compact as it restricted their ability to negotiate with the US independently. Ebon (and Jaluit) were sites of historic oppositions between missionaries and chiefs, Heines and Kabuas. In addition,

Kwajalein, Jaluit, Mili, and Wotje each served as Japanese strongholds during World War II and experienced American methods of interaction at a deep level, unlike the other atolls isolated from the destruction and interference of Americans. Long-term antagonisms between Ratak *Irooj* at Wotje and Mili and forceful Ralik chiefs may have informed their opposition to the Compact proposed by Kabua. Not surprisingly, President Kabua's island of Majuro had one of the highest Compact approval ratings, seventy-eight percent.

The Compact was not finalized for three more agonizing years. Oscar deBrum noted in a May 1998 interview that there were over twenty Congressional hearings regarding the Compact in the nine months that he lived in Washington D.C. representing the Marshall Islands. On the day it was signed, October 21, 1986, Oscar deBrum drank champagne with President Reagan and vice President George Bush at Fred Zeder's home.

Meanwhile back on Majuro, Amata Kabua delivered his speech to the people of the Marshall Islands, prepared in both Marshallese and English. He declared the Marshalls no longer a ward of any other nation, a sovereign and self-governing country to be recognized by the international community. He celebrated that this independence was achieved through peaceful settlement after seventeen years of serious negotiation. He closed with these words: "We are a very special people and the Marshall Islands is a very special country. I know that if we work together we can build a nation all of us can be proud of. God bless the Marshall Islands."

The Compact that passed through Congress in 1986 significantly differed from the one passed by referendum in the Marshalls in 1983. The Compact that went into effect added the numerous federal programs originally removed by negotiators to encourage

increased self-reliance. Also, the US Congress decreased trade incentives for Marshallese products. The resulting document encouraged a greater dependency on the US by removing the hard-fought incentives for self-reliance negotiated by Marshallese.

### COMPACT EVALUATIONS

Evaluations of the Compact of Free Association are inevitably evaluations of Marshallese and American leadership and relations. The Compact makes an excellent starting point in getting at local concepts of appropriate authority, administration, and accountability. Political discourse in this hierarchical society centers on *who* is responsible, not how political concerns might be addressed. As demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6, politics are personal, bureaucracy inconceivable. Those in power are judged harshly for their abuses as well as their mistakes, yet they are also frequently forgiven in a populace with memories that reach deep down to their bellies. As one Marshallese political activist explained: "When their bellies are full, their memories fail." Bad times, mistakes, and deliberate sins may be forgiven when personal needs are met.

Unfortunately, as a popular local band sings, *Rankein eben mour* [These days life is hard] and needs are indeed great. Criticism of Marshall Islands leaders is more vocal on Majuro than in past years. No longer afraid of the potential retribution of offending the first President, Majuro residents speak openly about their Senators and government leaders. During Imata Kabua's presidency, a vocal opposition emerged. Majuro, being the seat of government, was a difficult place for this Kwajalein *Irooj* to gain respect.

Imata Kabua was not the only *Irooj* about whom people complain. The numerous complaints against *Irooj* (Carucci 1997) are strikingly similar to complaints formed about

government leadership: “They take too much without giving in return. Our leaders get rich and then don’t share, they waste our money.” These complaints are intimately linked to Marshallese evaluations of the Compact since almost every interview about the Compact began as an indictment of Marshallese leadership’s use/perceived misuse of Compact funds, and a lack of appropriate US oversight.

### **Interview Contexts**

As described in Chapter 5, I approached Marshallese leaders in the community and government, as well as everyday citizens to ask their views on the successes and failures of the Compact, as it was coming to a close. I suggested that their views might help improve future Compact negotiations and relations with the United States. In each interview, I began with biographical inquiries about the individual’s early life, education, employment history, and other affiliations. I asked for this information to better learn how particular variables/characteristics, such as public or private employment; religious affiliation; home atolls; and educational achievement impact political views; I also found the sharing of personal histories to contribute to building rapport, and discovering mutual friends, family, and community connections between us. Much of that biographical information appears in Chapter 5, and conveys the primacy of historical and traditional affiliations -- of chiefs, home atolls, ancient oppositions -- even as they are cross-cut by shared educational and employment histories. This chapter represents these same participants’ (and others’) views of the Compact.

When I asked each participant about the successes and failures of the Compact, I was surprised by the form of critical refrain concerning both Marshallese and American

leadership, coming even *from* Marshallese leaders. I noticed that the ways average Marshallese citizens critiqued their national leaders' irresponsible leadership (i.e., that leaders no longer looked after them adequately) mirrored the criticisms voiced by educated political elites about American neglect of its oversight responsibilities. The explicit metaphors used to describe the failure of the RMI/US relationship all were described in terms of relationships between chiefs, parents, coaches, and other forms of authority that are depended upon.

### **General Evaluations of the Compact Era**

In broad terms, interviewees positively described the infrastructure developments on Majuro and Kwajalein, in light of their shared view that the US had left the Marshalls at the close of the TT with inadequate infrastructure. The critique justified the large loans for the regionally recognized electric and telecommunications agencies, while it fended off criticisms of what some considered excessive expenses.

Other positive evaluations of the Compact include specific mention of Marshallese immigrant accessibility to the perceived advantages of American education and health care systems, and the development of a thriving private business sector, which grew to be one of the strongest in Micronesia.

The Marshall Islands' private sector felt the full impact of Compact funds. Local businesses benefited from government contracts to provide food for schools and social services that received US federal funding. The private sector expanded to meet the demands of the growing government sector as well. Where two-thirds of all employed people work for the government, their reliable paychecks had a great impact on the

economy and material existence of Marshall Islands society. As one CEO explained, “The majority of Compact funds went to payroll. It was disposable income.” Marshallese demanded imported American goods. While businesses profited from the disposable income of government employees and US federal contracts, they experienced little official government support for private sector development.

In regard to education, Marshallese students continue to be eligible for US Pell grants. In addition, a scholarship fund established by a US block grant, allows Marshallese students to attend international colleges and universities in return for government service upon completion of the degree program. Unfortunately, attrition rates for students abroad remain high. Although the average number of scholarship recipients is approximately 150 per year, only seventy-four Marshallese students have received Bachelors degrees since 1988 (RMI Scholarship Board).

Similarly, medical referrals to Honolulu are the expectation of many ill Marshallese. Because of criticisms of the Majuro and Ebeye hospitals, and complaints of rats, lack of medicine, and foreign Filipino or Chinese doctors, Marshallese prefer to receive medical treatment in Hawai'i.

The positive assessment of the Compact as an opportunity to access what are viewed as better educational and health facilities, as well as employment opportunities, reflects an implicit understanding of most government leaders with whom I spoke. The Compact was not looked upon as funding support for Marshallese institutions of education and health care. Health and education statistics support this view. The Ministry of Education enrollment reports for 1997-1998 reveal the number of Marshallese students in

public and private elementary and secondary schools to total, approximately, 14,500. Given the Republic's current population and considering that forty-two percent of that number are children under the age of fifteen, approximately one quarter of school-aged children are not enrolled in school. This is evident on any weekday walk through downtown Majuro.



Figure 98. Marshall Islands Journal cartoon illustrates the sexy attractiveness of an American lifestyle to Marshallese youth.

With respect to health care, in 1996 one-third of the entire budget for the Ministry of Health was spent on 258 off-island referrals totaling \$2.4 million. Clearly, the Compact was viewed positively for allowing access to American institutions, but for whatever reasons, these critical institutions have not enjoyed substantial government support within the Marshall Islands.

The Compact was viewed in terms of access to some resources perceived as *inherently superior, instead of an opportunity* to support equally effective and appropriate local institutions. These attitudes convey an implicit denigration of Marshallese ways, skills, knowledge, and capabilities that few, if any, participants explicitly noted. In almost every interview before concluding our discussion, I asked if the Compact had impacted Marshallese culture. I intentionally waited to broach the topic, wondering if cultural change would emerge in the evaluations of the Compact. Only once was the topic initiated by one of the participants prior to my mentioning it. Complaints focus directly on Marshallese leadership, and indirectly at American authority. My identity as an American likely influenced the avoidance of an anti-American discourse.

### **Compact Critiques**

This brings me to the criticisms of the Compact, and Marshallese and American leadership. First are the complaints of citizens today that the schools and hospital are falling apart. In fact many of the infrastructure investments are requiring more capital today. One government Minister identified health, education, and transportation as complete failures. He added, "It's easy to buy and build. Human resource development is the challenge."

Criticism of government priorities in retrospect is easy. Neglect of outer islands in favor of infrastructural developments on Majuro and Ebeye is a common complaint. Government spending on the Airline of the Marshall Islands, the capital building, and the Outrigger Hotel is generally considered excessive. Many people point to the guaranteed US funding that is directly programmed for Marshall Islands' scholarships, and the

compensation payments for the Four Atolls as ideal. More than one person has suggested designated funds that go directly to outer island local governments, or health care, or the school system, in one person's words, "so those guy couldn't touch it." Plainly, government leaders' priorities and spending are suspect.

Because Marshallese people find it culturally impossible to confront their leaders, they look to the US to interfere. This is the *only* criticism of the Compact that is directly related to the United States. The discursive technique used in the following portrayals of the United States as a coach, parent, or chief is directly linked to Marshallese views of authority as residing in those who watch over, protect, and provide for others in their care. The logical extension of this local hierarchy into the international realm is critical to Marshallese understandings of their relationship with the United States. In the metaphor of the Marshallese, the US is guilty of "poor parenting."

The analogy describing the Marshall Islands as a child and the United States as a parent has its precedents in Marshallese hierarchical social relationships. In reference to political and traditional leaders, Marshallese frequently use the phrases, "He takes care of us, he watches us, he gives us what we need, if we need anything we can go to him." These reflect the ideal leader who has *jojij*, and is a dependable and generous provider and protector. A poor leader is one who *takes* all the time and gives nothing in return. One who asks for monthly payments, who sends people around to collect tribute, and then doesn't reciprocate at appropriate times is generally spoken about with scorn. Leaders are expected to "help out" in times of need by providing airfare to Honolulu, donations of food for family celebrations, and sometimes tuition for children of needy families. Leaders speak at

community gatherings to offer public acknowledgement of affiliation and concern. They are also expected to reciprocate the loyalties of their followers.

Similarly, the US is viewed as a contemporary provider of Marshallese needs, particularly those of health, education, and even food and shelter, in emergencies, through the FEMA program. The US continues annually to contribute to the national budget, to education, health care, and various social needs of the Marshallese people through Compact agreement and the Federal programs for which Marshallese remain eligible.

Among Marshallese citizens who are not 177 compensation recipients, nor Kwajalein landowners, there are few complaints. Recipients of nuclear compensation enjoy a high status, similar to Ebeye residents who have access to American goods on Kwajalein. There is surprisingly little criticism of the United States except for that coming from government leaders today facing a budget crisis and US criticism. The failure of local institutions is not generally blamed on the United States, but on local leadership.

The one critique repeatedly voiced about the United States is this: "The US should have made our leaders more accountable for the funding it provided. Because the US didn't get involved, the money was wasted, poorly invested, or mortgaged, and now we are all suffering. *Rankein eben mour* [These days life is hard].

The discursive style in which this complaint is voiced will be examined in the seven excerpted examples that follow. Because these critiques are politically sensitive, and potentially dangerous, I have chosen to represent these views devoid of personal information in order to provide as much anonymity as possible to the participants.

## ONE

I blame the local leadership because under the Compact it says, this is you, you take care of your internal affairs, we'll take care of your military. Here's your money. Use it wisely as it's spelled out in the Compact while we watch you. We'll take care and if someone comes to rob you we'll come in. It's like a baby, you tell a baby, a little kid, not a baby, someone who can think., you say ok, here's your dollar, don't buy anything sweet, go buy a pencil or something. Instead, they run to the store and get an ice cream and enjoy it while they have it. It was all written in the Compact, you take care of your internal and we'll watch you.

In this quotation, the participant repeatedly uses the phrases, "take care of," and "watch." The person sees the US as an adult responsible to watch a growing child who makes poor choices, choosing something fleeting and appealing (ice cream) rather than something useful, and long lasting, (a pencil). The US is also represented as a protector who will step in if someone comes to rob or steal from the child. In the end, this speaker seems to place the responsibility for a poor choice on the child, though, rather than the adult, the one who watches passively unless the child is in danger.

## TWO

We're independent now but still we can ask help from States. We're independent not that we can be alone and stand with our own feet, cause we're still crawling. Yeah, we're still crawling and we're now learning how to one step, two step, but once we fall we'll grab to the United States.

This person places the United States in the role of adult, who also stands passively near the child learning to walk. The emphasis is on the child walking and having someone to grab to, rather than the adult figure leading the child. The assumption of assistance and cooperation is clear.

## THREE

US should have made them [Marshallese leaders] more accountable, I think that's what made others to misuse the funds. One person gets away with it. I think they should have made fixed allotments, like this much for health care. Certain

percentages. I think the US should interfere, I feel that in this stage it's very early for Marshallese leaders to take full control, that's what I think, we're still in early stage, like we're not ready yet to manage that much money.

While this example doesn't make reference to a child/parent relationship, it does describe the Marshall Islands as beginning, unprepared to be fully responsible for all that the US gives, "that much money."

Mention of an "early stage" implies that more development is required before the US should leave the islands alone as a sovereign nation. This participant recommends US active involvement, at least through specifically designated funds or funding percentages allocated for crucial services, such as health care.

#### FOUR

A monitoring process [is needed] to keep an eye on how the money is used. Don't just let it go and [say] 'here is the money, be on your own.' But you know, keep checking, coaching. Once something wrong happens, you stop right there, make the correction, but what is happening now is (has) been built up and up for this many years, now we're complaining, we're saying what's happening, it's already late, no money, no nothing.'

From day one, things should have been geared toward what's happening in the Marshall Islands. You can't just give the money and then close your eyes. That's US money. [Not] just to fool around with.

I would say that the monitoring is what we need. Like I said, some leaders they don't even care. They got their freedom to spend the money the way they want. But if there was monitoring all the way from the beginning, once our little mistakes happening, stop it right there. Don't let it go. I think in the future maybe there will be a day that Marshall Islands will be on its own without any [help]. It doesn't mean that the US should continue to spoon feed the Marshall Islands, you know just keep eye as a little baby, but in the meantime I think there is a need [for monitoring]. The US really trust Marshall Islands that they can really take good care of the money and make good use of it which didn't really turn out right and I think it's from the leaders, our leaders' problem.

The Senator who expressed this view criticizes the US for handing over funds without concern for how they are spent. The US should continue to "check", and "coach"

and step in to “make corrections” when people make mistakes. But he criticizes the US for not doing this for the past eleven years. “Monitoring” is what he suggests and he is angry that it didn’t occur all along and today, Marshallese people are left with “no money, no nothin.”

The analogy of parent/child is used differently by this leader. He suggests that the US might ultimately stop “spoon feeding” the Marshall Islands, and “just keep an eye open” as one would for a baby. Again the idea of “watching over.” In the meantime, at this stage, monitoring is necessary. Despite this criticism of US neglect and irresponsible leadership, this man tempers his remarks by giving the US and Marshallese leaders the benefit of his doubt: the US “trusted” the Marshalls to use its money wisely, and Marshallese leaders had “problems.”

#### FIVE

I don’t blame the US. They give money. They did something [wrong, referring to the nuclear testing], but, so, who on earth is perfect? They pay for it. They helped us really good. [Acting out:] ‘We help you, cause, you know, we’re like your *Irooj* who knows what is bad or good for this.’ US is the *Irooj*, and [acting again:] ‘I give you this.’ It’s like your father, it’s like parents, eh? ‘I’m your father and you take \$1 bill and use it wisely, ‘cause if you don’t I’ll think about it. Next time when you come to ask for money from me, I’ll think about whether I give you \$1, or seventy-five cents, or fifty cents, so if you use the money right, \$1, then if you ask for help again, I’m still gonna give you as much. It’s like US giving us but [saying], ‘you use it correctly and I’m not going to punish you.’

This participant compares the US to an *Irooj* (or chief), a father, and parents in this example. Perhaps because she is not a 177 recipient, she is forgiving about the US nuclear testing, and perceives compensation as adequate. She also considers that the US “helps us really good.” The US knows what is “good or bad” for the Marshallese people, like those people in Marshallese society responsible for watching after others -- *Irooj* and parents. Her

comments echo the idiom, *Irooj in jela*, [A chief knows]. She portrays the US as a strict parent trying to teach a child to use money wisely. But this parent, instead of watching passively, as in example one, responds to the child's action by suggesting rewards or punishment for the child's behavior.

## SIX

It's like we were asking the US if they could adopt us and like [they] have a baby and saying, 'ok, here's your milk, here's your bottle, now you take care of it.' And then not following up with it. "Is it getting spoiled? Come and I'll correct you with that.' Maybe if the US was doing that, like come back and [say] 'nuh-uhm what have you done to.. who did that? You're in jail, you're gonna be in jail.' They should have [checked] every quarter. "Quarter one, ok what is your balance?" Like it was a trick, eh? The US knows we're like a hermit crab coming out of a shell, don't know what to do, see the money and go crazy about it. Like we were a baby and under the UN. Once a baby and started crawling and now coming. Don't wait [for us] to fall off a cliff, say, 'That's the wrong way.' We didn't know. . . But really, they knew [the leaders knew] otherwise, why did they hide it? Like you play a trick on us. We use it and now when come to the end, 'See, you didn't listen. You see your mistake.'

Another respondent makes numerous analogies in this example. Again the US is viewed as a parent, though an adoptive one, who doesn't really know how to care for a child. The adoptive parent gives the baby its needs, a bottle, but expects the child to care for itself. Presumably, this is an unrealistic expectation. What would have happened if the US had come to see if it's child was "getting spoiled" or needed correction? This individual familiar with the quarter system of government payments, notes that the US should have checked more frequently. *The lack of concern is considered to be duplicitous, a deliberate strategy so, "at the end" the US can, like a parent, punish, the Marshall Islands, possibly by decreasing funding in a future Compact of Free Association.*

The comparison to a crawling child reappears here, though the parent in this case is the United Nations. The UN is criticized for waiting too late to interfere. The Marshalls is

also compared to a hermit crab, isolated in its shell, not knowing how to handle the outside world, and “going crazy about the money.”

An interesting point is that as this participant expresses anger at being tricked, and neglected, the speaker starts to explain, ‘We didn’t know,’ or ‘we didn’t know [better].’ And then the participant pauses and refers to Marshallese government leaders, realizing they did know, they knew how to use the money, confirming this observation with the fact that their mistakes were hidden and are just now coming out into public view. Again the participant blames the US for allowing this to happen, for tricking the people, so that later they might be scolded.<sup>61</sup>

## SEVEN

Like any developing country, we are learning it. We are going through a period of growing pain. And beginning to learn the responsibilities, the discipline, the control that I knew about because I used to work for the Trust Territory government and before that I worked with the Navy.

As the elderly generation are passing out, and the new emerging generation many of them do not really know or appreciate the Marshallese values and traditions. Many, I’m sorry to say, but it’s true.

[It comes from the] school system, way of life and having to be relocated to a centralized place, having to live on their own without paternal guidance, all this are influencing factors. ‘Course the American concept of freedom of choice. Before, we had freedom too, but that freedom was subject to freedom of others. And subject to the freedom of the elders, who would always observe you, coach you, help you, We don’t see that any more.

References to growing pains, and the learning process are important here. The work of the elders, those with authority, was to observe, guide, and help those in their care. This “paternal guidance” isn’t seen anymore, and is described in contrast to the American

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<sup>61</sup> This interviewee identifies my identity as an American, and my affiliation, even collusion with the United States very subtly at the end of the quote. As she expresses her frustration she switches from referring to the United States as the US to the direct, “you [America/Americans] play a trick on us.”

concept of freedom of choice, presumably one that lacks the necessary respect for the elders' commands. This participant continues:

But one value that I see is a value of discipline that is being built up now. The Compact that was first implemented that built-in discipline wasn't there. The US could have done a better job of saying, 'Look, annually you do this things, program it so that you just don't spend the money without program.' Well, I think the US could have done a better job, but I guess the world was pressuring the UN, [and the] United States to give them their freedom, give them self-determination, give them the right to do things as they see fit to do things for themselves. Yes, they forgot to build in programs that would make them more responsible. They could have done a better job of coaching.

He compares the United States to a coach who should give specific directions in how to program and spend the money. His criticism is gentle: "The US could have done a better job," and "they forgot" under the pressure from the UN. Perhaps this is partly due to personal history of working with the military and his many dealings with Americans throughout Marshall Islands history. His experience has earned him great respect throughout the nation. He further excuses US negligence in the following dialogue:

That was the clear purpose of the Compact, to develop self-sufficiency but what that means was not spelled out. The US just said OK, you develop it yourself, the way you see fit. I mean they could have said, 'Alright, let's go. So this year you spend this money, this way, that way, and there will be an annual audit, to make sure that you spent it right,' but we had a very strong personality in President Kabua. He would not let anybody tell him what to do. He was a chief also, yes, and so I think US might have tried, but he wouldn't budge.

He points to the "very strong personality" of his former classmate, President Amata Kabua, as the reason US interference was rejected. While he is critical that the US didn't spell out self-sufficiency or pay closer attention to annual audits, he acknowledges the former President's power to "not let anybody tell him what to do."

Mention of Amata Kabua brings about a discussion of the responsibilities of an

*Irooj.*

Well you see our traditional system, there is what is called *marin ko*, means the bush of refuge where people run to that bush in t time of need, and in time of fear and in time of happiness as well as sadness, the *Irooj* system is named *marin ko*. This is where people go for help, but have they lived up to that expectation is another thing. It's one thing to become an *Irooj* and another thing to do the functions of the *Irooj* so that you can be recognized as *Irooj*, I think most of these young *Irooj* have sort of drifted away from the model, the traditional model of an *Irooj*.

It is important that the *Irooj* is described here a source of refuge, assistance, help in a time of need. And equally important that the participant notes that "young *Irooj*" don't live up to those expectations. He makes a distinction between being an *Irooj* and functioning or acting as one to earn people's recognition and respect. Reciprocity, guidance, protection are integral to chiefly respect.

This case is also made against the United States. While the US may be recognized as an authority that is responsible for those in its care, it has not been adequately performing its duties to assist, watch over, and guide.

### **Conclusions**

Evaluations of the Compact of Free Association that portray a Marshallese expectation that the US is responsible for Marshallese people are inherent in the negative judgments of the US as an ineffective coach, an inattentive chief, and a lazy and indulgent parent. These evaluations also convey the expectation that there is nothing to be done about this perceived negligence.

The attitudes shared here about the US, correspond to those shared in earlier chapters about the methods of resistance, and the recourse available when chiefs, or other authorities do not live up to their responsibilities. The methods of challenging chiefs frequently involve use of a third party, and/ or a shifting of loyalties to a more promising

provider. Demands for greater US involvement and accountability over Marshallese chiefs invoke historic precedents, as well as contemporary strategies. Using churches to challenge political and traditional authority in the gambling debates of Chapter 6 illustrates this precedent. Some have suggested the stronger ties between the Marshall Islands and Asian nations such as Taiwan and China, are attempts to shift loyalties in this historic manner, seeking a more promising source of desired goods and wealth. Further, seeking a more promising provider is always risky, since accepting others' favors obliges reciprocity.

In the case of US/Marshallese relationships, the US is more than an ideal chief, in the sense that it provides for Marshallese needs, and interests, with no expectation of return. The only thing of interest to the US in the Marshall Islands, as history has shown, is the size and location, of a single atoll.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps this is the meaning of "freedom" Marshallese so often use to characterize this American period -- freedom from hunger, from the tyranny of some chiefs, through direct economic relationships in which the US provides and Marshallese receive. The ambiguities of Marshallese-American relations emerges here, since for many Americans any representation of the Marshalls as "free" under American authority is offensive; yet the most important questions concern how Marshallese have experienced authority, and how they judge the United States.

While some Marshallese may see US authority as a means of challenging their powerful *Irooj*, certainly other Marshallese, particularly political elites, view any American influence as an insult to the nation's sovereignty. As shown in earlier chapters, Americans have struggled with their desires for democracy in the Marshalls hierarchical society. What

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<sup>62</sup> I consider this fact significant to those who charted the direction of the nation, and significant in influencing the progressive agenda of the first President. Nicholas Thomas's article "The Inversion of Tradition" (1982) speaks directly to this point.

is sovereignty in the Marshalls' dependent economy? In what ways can sovereignty be supported? According to western notions, US interference infringes upon Marshallese sovereignty; by Marshallese standards, *not* interfering only further empowers their local and national leaders' hegemony. Like the pair of *zorries* (See Figure 95) that convey the uncertainty of *jab* and *aet* votes, the ambiguities abound around issues of sovereignty, dependency, appropriate authority, and strategies of resistance.

While the Marshallese I represent here described their nation's relationship with America in cultural metaphors of parenting, and authority, it must also be noted that this discourse does not occur in a vacuum. American leaders have used it too. In his "farewell" speech at the signing of the Compact, Ronald Reagan addressed the people of the Marshall Islands as children who have grown up and are leaving their homes:

Greetings on this historic occasion to our friends in Micronesia. For many years a very special relationship has existed between the United States and the people of the Trust Territory. Under the Trusteeship we've come to know and respect you as members of our American family, and now, as happens in all family, members grow up and leave home. I want you to know that we wish you all the best as you assume full responsibility for your domestic affairs and foreign relations.

As you chart your own course for economic development and as you take up your new status in the world as a sovereign nation, we look forward to continuing our close relationship with you in your new status. But you'll always be family to us.

Over the years, perhaps the most lasting and valuable things we've built together are not the roads, the airports, the schools and hospitals, but rather an understanding of the meaning of democracy and freedom and the dignity of self-determination. You've built a strong foundation for your future, together in Free Association we can and will build a better life for all. Thank you and congratulations (President Ronald Reagan's Address to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands 1986).

Culture frames, but does not limit, the ways each side understands this relationship. US representations, and Marshallese counter-representations are examined in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 8 IMAGINING THE MARSHALLS

Tragic are the people of the lovely Marshall Islands. When America exploded the A-bomb it took their homes, and when it gave comfort it took their ambition, and when it offered only craven solutions it took their hope. Now the Marshallese look to America once more, and the natives are growing restless (Friend 1997).

### INTRODUCTION: DISCOURSE ON DISCOURSE

This chapter will explore various images of the Marshall Islands put forth by Marshallese and outsiders, namely Americans. I will distinguish between dominant and alternative Marshallese representations and their promoters, linking individual biographies and their historical associations in order to explore the power of elites, the process of nation-making, the influence of collective memories and experiences on identities at multiple levels: national, cultural, and individual. I will show how predominant cultural models of affiliation with authority, combined with political elites' collective experience of a foreign administration, and *internalized negative foreign discourses contribute to* apparently contrasting sets of predominant national representations of the Marshalls as progressive and modern or dependent and victimized. I will also identify alternative representations that emphasize "tradition" and how they are promoted by and linked to historic oppositions (as well as foreign funding sources). The intersection of biographies, social memory, national identity, as well as the modern emergence of class combines with historic national political oppositions to inform the production of images of the Marshall Islands and its people.

While I choose to limit the Marshallese representations in this chapter around themes of progress, dependency, and "tradition," I acknowledge that there are multiple

classifications and possibilities for analysis. I have chosen to represent these three as they seem most strongly tied to political histories (represented in earlier chapters) of those who have the authority, power, and responsibility to represent the Marshalls to foreign audiences. I believe the dominant representations also reflect understandings of hierarchy and self-representations at its opposite extremes. Chiefs portray their wealth and ability to provide for their followers (and to attract others), while commoners depict their dependency to impress upon chiefs and those of higher status their obligations to assist. Marshallese self-representations vary from images of progress and modernity, to assertions of dependency and obligation.

The invocation of Marshallese “tradition” most frequently comes into play to justify both chiefs’ and commoners’ roles and responsibilities, rather than to represent material culture, art, skills, or knowledge. Evidence of chiefs’ enduring power and contemporary influence is seen in the repeated selection of images that represent social obligations and power relationships focused on models of commoner/chief relations, expanded into class and other social relationships on Majuro today. As Majuro serves as a microcosm of the multiple interactions with various authorities -- traditional, economic, political and religious -- these social behavioral understandings and images are ‘exported,’ shaping foreign relations and local understandings and interpretations of them as well.

In contrast with other Pacific nations, who emphasize their indigenous arts, knowledge, skills, technology, folktales, communal relations and values in images of nation and culture, Marshallese self-representations rarely call upon explicit ‘traditionalist’ rhetoric. Whereas some nations highlight cultural differences that elevate their own status in

opposition to their former colonial power, Marshallese acknowledgments of difference tend to denigrate their own culture rather than American ways.<sup>63</sup> This cultural denigration may simply reflect a cultural value of humility, or an avoidance of direct confrontation, though evaluations of *America and Americans* as authority figures may also be involved. Marshallese are quick to contrast their ways, lifestyles, values, and oppositions to other ethnic groups judged inferior, such as Filipinos, Chinese, and Koreans (Aine, Albert, Alfred, Capelle, et al 1996).

The absence of any defensive culture rhetoric may be an offshoot of the same cultural models that demand respect for authority. Wealth, specialized knowledge, and gifts are requisites of respect. Chiefs, missionaries, government officials, teachers, doctors, business owners, soldiers assume roles of respect, and Americans have served in all these roles, as sources to provide highly valued resources, practices, institutions, and skills.

An exchange of discourses occurs as foreign journalists who visit the islands and interview community leaders repeat local talk. Foreign media speaking with Marshallese elites perpetuate dominant understandings of inappropriate development, corruption, and contentious concerns when representing the islands to a foreign audience. These writings only further strengthen the prevailing local rhetoric in an era of internet access and a dispersed Marshallese community, as foreign press can not only validate but also reinforce dominant representations, sometimes even by challenging them.<sup>64</sup> Given the limitations of

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<sup>63</sup> One exception concerns the ways Americans (do not) care for family. Marshallese people are appalled at the concept of nursing homes, and homeless people and take pride in how they care for one another in contrast to their perceptions of American family relations.

<sup>64</sup> A *New York Times* (3/30/97) article that included excerpts from an interview with former President Imata Kabua that occurred in a bar while the President was drunk, caused a strong reaction on Majuro ("Marshall Islands in Uproar Over New York Times Piece," *Agence France Presse* 3/13/97).

this analysis, I will not include discussion of the role of international media, its practices, or power in defining or denying these discourses.<sup>65</sup>

I will closely examine historical and contemporary representations of the Marshalls in foreign media and US government documents and the ways these representations interact with RMI national representations. The repetition and interplay of predominant themes strengthens certain tropes of cultural and national identity. Discourses of development and dependency are perpetually re-represented by multiple sources in ways that normalize them.

Dominant (Western) discourses are difficult to reject, particularly by those educated in Western educational systems. Hau'ofa stresses the difficulties of rejecting Western models, particularly for those who are products of Western educational systems (1993). In an effort to empower his indigenous islander students, Hau'ofa consciously rejects Western perspectives that view islands as small, marginal, and isolated. Instead he supports his students whom he sees as agents of change, power, and meaning in their communities. The means and ease of transmitting debasing and depressing characterizations of Pacific Islands to Pacific Islanders is made clear in Hau'ofa's work, as well as the importance of challenging foreign representations and discourses that degrade indigenous peoples and their lived experience.

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<sup>65</sup> See UH Professor Beverly Cleaver for PhD dissertation about the *NYTimes* lack of coverage of the nuclear testing events in the Marshall Islands. See also my own writings about the non-identification of RMI in missile-defense media coverage (*Public Anthropology* journal 2001: [http://www.publicanthropology.org/Journals/Grad-J/\(2\)Hawaii/Walsh.htm](http://www.publicanthropology.org/Journals/Grad-J/(2)Hawaii/Walsh.htm)).

## **Globalization**

As Hau'ofa suggests, the global circulation of particular discourses is difficult to deny. Repetition of terms, rhetoric, discourse (whatever you wish to call free-floating international vocabulary) normalizes and naturalizes. With certain terms come strings of associations and judgments. For example, the term "globalization" itself is nearly universal. It usually carries with it opposing, even ambivalent images. One perspective views globalization as benign, beneficial, and inevitable, while an alternative view portrays materialistic, capitalistic economic and social systems that trample third world peoples and environments in their search for broader markets, more resources, and cheap labor.

In some circles, globalization is cause for alarm; in others, it is cause for excitement. In my view the alarmists tend to be those who romanticize third world living and do not give local cultures the credit they deserve for their creativity in "indigenizing" the foreign into local frames of reference and meaning. Also, as has been well noted, (Dominguez 1992; Jolly 1992) Westerners have a double standard in regard to cultural preservation or loss and development. Americans often overlook the fact that American popular culture is constantly absorbing/assimilating elements of other cultures as well, and regard that process with pride, as growth. When other cultures similarly embrace material goods, or styles of other places, Americans bemoan their cultural loss, viewing Western materialism as synonymous with Western meanings. Notions such as "Westernization" and "Americanization" need to be unpacked, and closely examined from an insider's perspective, rather than outsider perceptions. Locally contextualized meanings and interpretations can neither be completely ignored nor imposed.

In reference to the Marshall Islands, “globalization” in both *foreign and local* representations underscores the common rhetoric of Marshallese as victims. A cover story for the *Honolulu Weekly* notes in its headline, “Sea Change: The Marshall Islands are running aground on globalization” (11(9): 6-8 2001). Portraying the islands and islanders as exploited victims of foreign fisheries vessels, the article focuses on interviews with knowledgeable locals who shake their heads, powerless to prevent the waste of Marshallese resources considered expendable to foreign fishermen casting non-discriminating nets in search of a single profitable species. Juxtaposed on the opening page of the story are two photos, the first of a solitary palm-covered islet, surrounded by lagoon. Its caption reads: “Hawaii’s closest neighbor, rich in fish and idyllic islets, is seeking its place in the 21st century.” The caption and photo show the islands as isolated and timeless. A second photo placed above, shows an iced heap of fresh-caught reef fish. Its bold caption reads, “The Marshall Islands tread water while foreign fleets exploit their fisheries.”

Both of these images portray the Marshalls not only as unaware, out-of-touch, isolated, and barely able to sustain themselves (e.g. stay afloat, tread water) as other worlds invade and exploit them, but also as passive and motionless. The images and their captions reinforce the frequent stereotyping of the islands/islanders as victims of foreigners, foreign markets, and globalization. This example serves to illustrate how global discourses such as “globalization” can strengthen and support existing stereotypes. They are also incorporated into local contexts and discourses. One Marshallese businessman uses “Globalization” as an explanation for his company’s economic decline:

What Majuro has been hit with... is the reality of globalization. It’s unfair to blame the Asian businesses that have proliferated in Majuro in the last several years for all

the woes of local companies. It's a new business environment, one that neither local businesses nor the government has successfully adapted to.

For local companies to survive in Majuro's 'globalized' economy, it's going to take active support from the government (*Pacific Islands Report*, 7 January 2003).

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

Representations of the Marshall Islands and Marshallese people by foreigners share several dominant themes. In order to emphasize my assertion that Marshallese representations are tied to colonial experiences, negative evaluations of indigenous ways, and foreign discourses of development, culture, history, and nation, I present foreign representations that first idealize Marshallese islands, people, and culture as: shy, generous, humble, passive, kind, and victimized.

### ***Tristes Tropes*<sup>66</sup>: Paradise Lost**

This discourse highlights aspects of the Marshalls judged favorably by foreigners, while bemoaning the islands and islanders' fate, culture, traditions, environment, education, health -- and nearly any other social institution -- at the hands of other foreigners. It is a backhanded compliment that looks to what was, and praises Marshallese ingenuity, but simultaneously points to its rapid disappearance or loss. Another common trope of this type includes emphasizing the "strange mix" of Western material goods in island contexts, startling readers with images that challenge dichotomies of us/them, islanders/Westerners, tradition/modernity.

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<sup>66</sup> Sahlins (1994).

## Cultural Loss and Inauthenticity

In a reflective piece in *Cultural Resource Management* a former ethnographer at Alele Museum, Donna Stone, contributes to the *triste trope* of cultural loss and Westernization (Stone 2001):

What is evident in the RMI is the gradual 'westernization' of youth. Children watch 'western' television and movies, play video and computer games. Those living in the urban centers might be taught more about western ways and ideas than traditional Marshallese culture. Many young people have never been to one of the rural, more traditional, outer islands and have little knowledge of Marshallese history. But, they are exposed to readily available 'western' ideas and knowledge.

Similarly, a retired US Army commander at Kwajalein, Col. Richard Chapman notes: "The entire situation of the Marshallese is quite unfortunate. They embraced a good deal of what's wrong with our culture, and lost a great deal of what was good in theirs" (Roylance 1997).

Even in an effort to praise the Marshallese for their renewed interest in their "legendary legacy" of navigation (Salkever 1998), the author's account highlights voices of Marshallese who represent local preferences for Western, modern goods and conveniences over traditional Marshallese cultural knowledge and materials:

Despite the sea worthiness of the *korkor* [small outrigger canoes], Alessio [American founder of *Waan Aelon Kein*, Canoes of these Islands] says, he saw the canoe-sailing tradition was quickly – and expensively – being replaced by aluminum skiffs and outboard motors. Canoes lay rotting on the beach, ignored by a younger generation. "Their attitude," he recalls, "was that this is an old thing, and anything old is no good."

In the more urban surroundings of Majuro, the *korkors* [small outrigger canoes] are important for a different but equally valuable reason: retention of a rich cultural heritage that is under constant bombardment by outside influences. "Many of the youth here don't know anything about their culture," says WAK manager Alson Kelen. "They know about Michael Jordan, Budweiser and Nike. But this canoe-building project helps to bring them back in and teach them about the ways of their people" (Salkever 1998: 25, 26).

The leaders of the canoe project are endorsed as progressive for their pro-tradition stance, in the way their views are highlighted by the author. Kelen defines himself in opposition to those he must “bring back” to teach about their shared culture.

Marshallese themselves at times subscribe to the representations of negative cultural loss discussed above. The Marshalls delegation to the 1992 South Pacific Festival of Arts held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands joined other delegations in the opening festivities and while other islanders wore their national or customary dress in the opening parade, the Marshallese representatives wore black jeans and new, white, high top athletic shoes. When discussing this with Marshallese people they credit/blame the group’s leader with this decision. Since the Marshall Islands do not have a national dress, nor wear traditional dress for occasions in their own islands, any representation of their native dress would have been contentious. Choosing contemporary styles more accurately represents a unified theme, though many Marshallese see this, too, as an embarrassing representation of their nation and culture.

A double irony, and yet the same dichotomy exists around the South Pacific Festival of Arts where “tradition” is the primary focus of representations. Some might argue that the desire for “modernity” is “traditional” and historically rooted, perhaps more so than the “progressive” neo-traditionalist movements in other Pacific nations.

### **Shy, Gentle, and Pro-American**

The characterization of Marshallese people as shy, humble, quiet, gentle is widespread. In 1950, the US Navy referred to the Marshallese on Majuro as a “very polite”

and “gentle people” (US Navy 1950:13, 16). In their handbook for new military assigned to Majuro, the introduction claims:

The average Marshallese is shy and retiring but a brief acquaintance brings out their congenial and friendly traits. They have a ‘happy-go-lucky’ attitude because they do not live by the clock but take things as they come, never worrying about what tomorrow or the next day will bring (US Navy 1950:15).

Interestingly, the happy-go-lucky attitude fortuitously corresponds to a very positive attitude toward Uncle Sam:

Prestige is an important factor among the Marshallese. They have little desire to amass wealth but instead prefer to gain prestige by association with Americans and acting in an official capacity. Marshallese have enjoyed their association with Americans and like them very much. They have learned to drive trucks, repair mechanical devices and largely maintain the operational status of our Base. However, it will probably be many years before the Marshallese are ready to take over the management of government affairs in accordance with Western ideas (US Navy 1950:16).

The Marshallese are presented as having a pro-American stance, and benefiting through higher prestige and new skills, from their new association with Americans. This representation is in line with that of early *National Geographic* articles that emphasize the benefits of association with the US over the ‘disappearance’ of local culture.

### **“Americanization of Eden”**

The images accompanying the *National Geographic*<sup>67</sup> article, “Micronesia: The Americanization of Eden” (Boyer 1967) are noteworthy for their deliberately striking oppositions. A wreathed Yapese couple wearing only their customary *thū* and *lavalava*, are shown being photographed in front of a bright new motorbike, by another topless young woman. Another photo reveals the remains of a World War II bomber rusted upon a

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<sup>67</sup> Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins provide a deeper analysis of *National Geographic*'s role in representing others, particularly the Pacific and the various poses/themes that dominate their representations. (Lutz and Collins 1993).

lagoon beach. Yet another photos portrays shirtless male students in a chemistry lab supervised by their American teacher, as opposite, topless teenage female students peer into microscopes and write the names of the parts of a cell on a blackboard. With subheadings such as: “New Era Dawns for Island Wards;” “In Eden’s simple garb;” and “Living masterpieces of a dying art,” the dominant theme of this piece is of a paradise lost then replaced by attractive American novelties and knowledge.

This representations links the common refrain of “Paradise Lost” with more dominant Marshallese portrayals of socio-cultural change as “Paradise Gained.” This is a very challenging perspective for both liberal and conservative Americans. In contrast to the bemoaning of the Americanization process frequently expressed (unlike the example above), the efforts of President Amata Kabua, as demonstrated by his focus on grandiose development projects and the symbolic incorporation of things American, disclose a positive perspective on modernization.

### **SYMBOLS OF MARSHALLESE MODERNITY**

Marshallese representations of national identity avoid explicit “cultural” depictions. Instead, they emphasize modernity by using Western symbols of power and wealth. They accentuate development and progress away from the “traditional” past. The nation is defined in opposition to humiliating experiences of powerlessness and poverty, internalized judgments of three colonial administrations. I mention here only three national symbols because they are so dominant and deliberately impressive. Expressions of identity such as these are critiqued by the West, according to that double standard of cultural loss/growth,

as well as other Western tropes about non-Western cultures, as will be shown in a later section.

### The Glass Palace



Figure 99. The Marshall Islands Capitol.

The landscape of Majuro's DUD (as described in Chapter 2) provides an opportunity to explore representations of modernity, progress, and development. The RMI government Capitol and *Nitijela* (Parliament) buildings were constructed during the Amata Kabua administration and completed in 1993. The four-story capitol office building literally sparkles as it reflects tropical sunlight and lagoon light in its mirrored glass windows. If national capitols (Hereniko 1994) serve as symbols of cultural identity, the Marshallese ideal image of nationhood is embodied in its capitol. The materials of construction, the architecture, and the conspicuous nature of the structure's enormous size are impossible to ignore, as is its significant location, situated at the curve of the main road so all traffic coming into town faces it directly. Further, its intense reflectivity mirrors the intent of its

architects to represent the nation as bright, dominant, and powerful. The building borrows from Western notions of wealth (shiny metallic surfaces glitter like silver and gold). Its height, breadth, and size are expressions of power and influence. It is by far, the largest, most domineering structure in the nation. It is so large that even one of the widest islets of Majuro atoll (Delap), had difficulty supporting its sheer size and weight. During construction in the early 1990s, the building sank in spots on more than one occasion, and many of the original windows were replaced in the first few months as the occupied building settled and shook.

In addition to the symbolism of power, wealth, and strength, in the building's location, size, and architecture, the building represented a large sum of the nation's income. According to US government accounting office documents, the structure cost approximately \$8.3 million (GA 2000: 11). Perhaps even more significant than the image of power, strength, and wealth, are the imposition and adoption of Western protocol requiring a particular social etiquette.

The government created a dress code for admittance that required men to wear ties and closed-toe shoes, and women to wear dresses that covered their shoulders, upper arms, and mid-calves. Sandals were unacceptable. These regulations, in effect, prohibited all but government employees with funds to purchase such clothes, from entering the building. Since the public had to drop off or receive payments or other information at offices inside, the average person would borrow the proper items from others or be turned away by security guards at the door. The result was cause for local humor and as well as disgust. Men and women wore ill-fitting clothes and shoes to meet the requirement. The "take-out"

stores across the street rented clip-on ties. American lawyers would keep a loosely tied tie hanging on their wall and slip it over their Aloha shirts. One Marshallese quipped, "You can't tell the *janitors* from the *Senators* in there," adding additional humor to the content with the emphasis on Marshallese identical pronunciations of "s" and "j."

The Marshall Islands Journal notes that the Capital Building, particularly its dress code, denies the *reality of life for most Marshallese people*:

We admit it. Appearances are important. . . More important than appearances is reality. And the reality of Majuro, of common people, of the real social status of most of us, is being lied about just about every time a citizen is forced to put on a necktie, struggle into a long pair of pants, and squirm into (what appears to be the latest wrinkle) a pair of high quality leather shoes just to walk into the government's tax office.

Down at the government office, depending on which day of the week it is, you either must or must not wear a tie and other clothing requirements. Just to gain entry. On Thursday, it's optional. On Mondays it's required.

'You wouldn't go into the White House without a tie,' explains one of the security guys as you try to enter the Capital building.

Yeah, he's right. But you also would not go to the White House to pay a tax bill. The capital building of the RMI is not a white house. It is a multi-purpose building. And while there has been some accommodation made for casualness (like two days a week neckties are not needed), *the accommodation smacks of schizophrenia* (Marshall Islands Journal 1999).

The comparison of the RMI Capital building and the US White House, while made light of, is taken for granted. The prevalence of American symbols of power at a local level is so common as to be unnoticed, naturalized and ignored in favor of pointing out the discrepancy between this accepted representation of the nation as wealthy and powerful, and the reality of the lives of common Majuro citizens who are neither.

As will be further discussed, American criticism of this structure might be interpreted as a reaction to Marshallese modernity; Marshallese criticisms of the structure

not only convey the contested nature of this particular national symbol but also the dominant traditional authority behind it and other prevailing development discourses.

A recent US Government Accounting Office (GAO) report documents the RMI Capitol building as one example of poor planning and maintenance that accounts for the failures of many Compact-funded projects. The report notes:

“We also identified instances of poor construction and maintenance. For example, the capitol building in the RMI, built during the 1990s using \$8.3 million in Compact funds, has visible signs of deterioration. Metal stairs are rusting, elevators are inoperable, and roof leaks are evident throughout the building (GAO 2000: 11).

### **Outrigger Hotel**



Figure 100. Outrigger Hotel, Majuro Atoll.  
[http://www.outrigger.com/hotels\\_detail.aspx?hotel=35](http://www.outrigger.com/hotels_detail.aspx?hotel=35)

Like the government buildings, symbols and structures of “development” were central to Amata Kabua’s view of his newly formed Republic. Kabua dreamed of Majuro hosting the South Pacific Forum meeting. It wasn’t until the island could accommodate such a gathering that his dream became a reality. The rapid construction of the Outrigger Marshall Islands hotel doubled the islands tourist capacity, by offering 150 more hotel rooms. Built by the government of the Marshall Islands and managed by Outrigger hotels of Hawai‘i, in its first international management contract, the hotel boasts the nation’s

“first full-service hotel, first ballroom, and first man-made swimming pool on Majuro”

(Business Wire 8/8/96).

The Outrigger Hotel was part of a larger plan agreed upon by Amata Kabua and a South Korean businessman, Haeng Yong Mo,<sup>68</sup> in 1996, to develop large tourist resorts on both Mili and Majuro atolls. The Mili resort, a \$500 million project, was to have “hotels, condominiums, shops, casinos, a golf course, and a power plant” (Johnson 1996). The inhabitants of Mili were to be resettled to the smaller islets of the atoll as the project proceeded. Majuro was to have a 1,000-room hotel, and a casino complex estimated at \$300 million.<sup>69</sup>

### Air Marshall Islands



Figure 101. Air Marshall Islands on Wotje Atoll.

<sup>68</sup> In 2000, “Mr Big” Mo Haeng Yong, the Republic of the Marshall Islands’ Korean consul, was arrested for swindling \$88 million from followers of his doomsday cult (Marshall Islands Journal, 4 Feb 2000, 1). Yong’s resort on Mili was never constructed.

<sup>69</sup> See chapters four and six for the long history of this development agenda.

Like Nauru, a nation with which the RMI has close familial and other connections, the RMI considers a national airline, while expensive, well worth its cost. For many reasons, one may see that a new nation of widespread atolls may consider a national airline a necessity rather than a luxury. It also distinguishes the Marshalls from other Freely Associated States, and puts the RMI among the ranks of other 'developed' Pacific Island countries such as Fiji, American Samoa, Tonga, Nauru, and the Cook Islands, among others with government-run national airlines. Distinguishing itself from other Micronesian nations through its embrace of 'development' is a regionally recognized characteristic of the Marshalls and Amata Kabua is recognized for his role in this.

"AMI," as the national airline is known, is so important to the nation that despite operating at incredible losses annually since its inception, the government continually subsidizes its operation expenses. In 1997, despite a government subsidy of \$785,000, the airline recorded a loss of \$1.6 million.

AMI has been a hotbed of political controversy as its board of directors' battles and dismisses its ex-patriot managers with the result being accusations of political interference. The airline provides a great service to outer island communities who otherwise might not receive goods for many months depending on "field trip ship" schedules. Yet, like the field trip ships, or *tima* (a holdover from the first shipping companies that used steamers) the flights are frequently re-directed by powerful government Ministers, or out of service, in need of parts and repair. AMI's early routes included Honolulu, but that was later eliminated due to the burden of the expense.

## MEDIA (MIS)REPRESENTATION

Americans have strong reactions to “development” discourses and symbols of modernity on small islands they prefer to romanticize. A visiting journalist noted to me that everywhere he went on Majuro, the community sought to impress him with the latest innovations – cell phones, internet access, the Outrigger Hotel, nightclubs, and bars – while he was there seeking images of remote, idyllic vacation spots (Fieldnotes May 1998). Faced with the realities of life in the contemporary Pacific, journalists and others often express their frustrated hopes and ideals by reacting with criticism. Marshallese leaders who promote development frequently emerge as corrupt, inept, and greedy in foreign accounts. Their complaints about the United States, the inequalities of its relations with the Marshalls, and requests for funding are viewed with cynicism and criticism.

### **“Yankee, Go Home. Send Cash.”**

An American journalist representing the *New York Times* wrote an infamous article in March of 1997, which caused a strong reaction on Majuro.<sup>70</sup> It begins:

The President is in his customary place in the hotel bar, apparently inebriated and enjoying yet another pre-dinner drink, when he is asked about the United States. He frowns.

“You know, I was arrested by the United States,” the President, Imata Kabua, slurs proudly, and he starts to tell the story of how he was detained in 1982 for protesting the American military presence at a base here. His drinking buddy, a local senator who is also more than a little unsteady, is repeating over and over: “I don’t like America, I don’t like America.”

Thus the paradox of foreign aid: There is almost no place in the world where America, as America sees it, has been so generous as the Marshall Islands, a collection of coral atolls between Japan and Hawaii. Yet the local economy remains a shambles and the United States is broadly resented. Something went badly wrong, for usually it is possible to be resented without paying \$1 billion for the privilege.

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<sup>70</sup> “Marshall Islands in Uproar Over New York Times Piece” (*Agence France Presse* 3/13/97).

An arrestingly beautiful collection of islets with a relaxed, friendly feeling and about 56,000 people, the Marshall Islands are about as American as a non-American place can be. The currency is American dollars, and although there is a local language, the newspaper is mostly published in English. The loose atmosphere is evident in the way President Kabua simply dines in the hotel with his buddies each evening, chatting with anyone who drops by. (To be sure, although Mr. Kabua was as cordial as he was tipsy, not everybody was pleased. Although the meeting had been approved ahead of time with Mr. Kabua's office and with the Foreign Minister, the Health Minister later called to threaten bodily harm and demand that any tape of the interview be destroyed) (Kristof 1997).

After reading the first four paragraphs of Kristof's article, the impression of the Marshall Islands is of a nation full of corrupt, drunk -- even violent -- ingrates who run their government and economy poorly, blame and yet imitate America, and barely speak their own language. Despite Kristof's appreciation of the natural environment, and the friendliness of the atmosphere, his perceptions and representation of the islands echoes the former US Ambassador to the RMI, Bill Bodde (see "victimization" discussion below).

Kristof unfairly misrepresents the relationship between the RMI and US when he refers to the "paradox of foreign aid," and makes light of Kabua's protest by not acknowledging Kabua's ownership of the land upon which that unnamed military base is located -- on Kwajalein Atoll. Further, the lack of acknowledgement of "a base here" and its significance to US strategic defense is duplicitous. It acknowledges that the US has military interests, then diminishes their significance with the indefinite descriptor -- "a base" -- as if there were, or could be, any other place in the world that meets US missile defense designs so successfully.<sup>71</sup> Kristof diminishes Kwajalein's importance by not naming

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<sup>71</sup> "Kwajalein is the only place where you can do exoatmospheric tests of long-range missiles. . . We've been testing out there for 40 years, and its been a very successful facility,' says Bill Congo, of the Army's Space and Missile Defense Command in Huntsville, Alabama, which operates the Kwajalein Range; Interceptor missiles -- the Exoatmospheric Kill Vehicles --are launched from Kwajalein to destroy incoming missiles. 'Without Kwajalein they'd never get the proper trajectory and altitude to test this kind of system,' says Dan Smith of the Washington-based Center for Defense Information" (Woodard 1999).

it and by portraying it as just another base. He also denies the atoll's significance to it's landowners by diminishing Kabua's arrest -- calling it "detainment" -- and describing Kabua's motivation as "US military presence," rather than a perceived unfair compensation for use of Kabua's own land.

Kristof also misrepresents local sentiments about resenting the United States since he only offers the perspectives of top ranking government officials, particularly these individuals who were at odds with the US officials, who were then pressuring them about use/misuse/abuse of funds at the time. Kristof represents the views of an administration that was viewed as corrupt and exploitative by the larger populace -- a populace that later broke with all election customs to vote in an "opposition party" government in 1999.

### **"Bombing Bikini Again (This Time with Money)"**



Figure 102. *New York Times Magazine* Cover story.  
Source: <http://www.bikiniatoll.com/NYTM.html>

A *New York Times* Sunday magazine in May of 1994 featured the title above on its cover page. While the author does not present an idealized portrait of the Marshall Islands, he does share the familiar theme of “sympathetic” paternalism. The “lost” more than the “paradise” is portrayed as the history of the US nuclear testing program is examined, along with the impact of the US funds provided as compensation. While not so dire as the “paradise lost” discourse, the emphasis is on the historic victimization of the Marshallese, their contemporary challenges, and their wacky ideas to address their future. Davis attempts to show Marshallese agency in their desire to: 1) import international nuclear waste for income on an already contaminated island; and 2) to create an underwater theme park that commemorates US victory in World War II, as well as a sense of the power of a nation that could sink such a tremendous fleet in seconds. The author ultimately ridicules both options as unrealistic or absurd, but emphasizes that few options exist given the islanders’ contemporary situation. He highlights the causes of contemporary issues for the Marshalls, by emphasizing how the Marshallese from Bikini have been abused by outsiders as well as their national leadership (Davis 1994).

### **“An Atomic Age Eden (but don’t eat the Coconuts)”**

Another *New York Times* piece by Kristof offers a brief history of the US nuclear testing program to highlight the newly opened -- and quite successful -- dive resort established at Bikini. In interviews with exiled Bikinians living on Ejit island in Majuro Atoll, Kristof makes light of the Bikinians perspective on US obligations:

A few other Bikinians, sitting on the broken white coral outside a home, and listening to Mr. [Jason] Aitap [Mayor of Ejit] agreed and nodded their heads. One after another, the Bikinians on Ejit repeated the mantra: the United States has a responsibility, after poisoning their soil, to declare it is safe for them to return. . . .

The United States seems a bit flummoxed, though, by the way President Clinton has been effectively made the king of Bikinians. There is a long tradition of Marshall Islanders having an outside king, or *iroij*, and these days many Bikinians say Mr. Clinton is the man.

Traditionally, the king received fealty from his people but also has a responsibility for them. The Bikinians insist that by moving them off their island and promising to care for them, the United States entered that relationship so that the American President is their king and is responsible for their welfare.

“That’s exactly what he is, Mr. Aitap said after being asked if Mr. Clinton was their king. “And we expect him to act like an *iroij* and look after his people.”

One reason the Bikinians want Mr. Clinton as their king is that they are worried by the efforts of Imata Kabua, the President of the Marshall Islands, to declare himself their king – and claim one-third of their revenues. . . . Asked about the Bikinians’ attitudes President Kabua responded with an expletive. His tongue was loosened and he appeared to be drunk (he was interviewed in the hotel bar that he frequents). . . .

Kristof portrays Marshallese people as childish, naïve, drunk, and victims subject to higher authorities of chiefs, kings, and foreign presidents. His article emphasizes to me, the ways some foreign visitors, authors, tourists, and others judge Marshallese people. In trying to make sense of Marshallese perspectives, such as conferring *Iroij* status on Bill Clinton, they are made light of, and dismissed, rather than further explored.

### **Crippled and Corrupt**

Another common trope refers to the nation as “crippled”, and in need of external help (Roylance 1997): “Struggle: US Nuclear Tests and Westernization have crippled the Marshall Islands, which has contracted the University of Maryland at Baltimore to recommend reforms.” The text bombards the reader with a series of extraordinary statistics and very little context for interpretation. In short, the Marshalls are condemned as a disaster area:

On overcrowded Ebeye, failing water, electric and sewer systems have led to outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness that killed four children over four months. . .

The pursuits of cash and consumer goods, and disruption of traditional family and community life, are also blamed for crime, spousal abuse, drug abuse, truancy, teen pregnancy and suicide.

The traditional diet of fish and tropical fruits and vegetables has been largely supplanted by the worst of the West's culinary exports. Spam and frozen turkey tails are favorites, as are other convenience foods high in fat, salt and sugar, and low in nutrition.

Among the consequences: Twenty percent of preschoolers are malnourished and 38 percent are anemic. Half of the adult women are overweight. Thirty percent of the people over the age of 15 suffer from non-insulin-dependent diabetes, resulting in high rates of hypertension, cardiovascular disease, kidney and eye disease.

'It really is a disaster,' said Dr. Paul Z. Zimmet, of the International Diabetes Institute in Caulfield, Australia who has studied diabetes in the Pacific Islands.

There's more. Forty years of US administration as part of the former US Trust Territory of the Pacific, and nearly a billion dollars in US aid since independence in 1986, have left the Marshallese with an American style health-care system they have not been able to maintain, and which does not keep them healthy. . . .

Inadequate preventive care has contributed to appalling health statistics. Life expectancy for men is 61 years, third worst among 15 Pacific Island populations. Infants die at rates five times that in American Samoa in the South Pacific. Women die of cervical cancer at 75 times the US rate. Liver cancer kills men at 30 times the US rate.

The Marshallese believe their suffering and sacrifice for US nuclear weapons testing and America's continuing military presence at the strategic US Army missile range at Kwajalein Atoll, entitle them to more US help. . . . But US officials express no interest in expanding the taxpayers' largess for what is now an independent country with a diminished strategic importance and a history of mismanaging previous aid.

US auditors have for years found evidence of waste and corruption in the islands. A Marshallese inquiry last year revealed millions of dollars in misappropriations by top officials of the Marshallese Social Security Administration, who oversee the health care system.

'The corruption here is so widespread that it is depressing,' said Alan E. Hutchinson, administrator for the 177 Program, a US-funded health care plan for residents of nuclear-contaminated atolls and their descendants. 'It is no wonder

that, as you look around you see so little tangible evidence of the massive US aid we hear about.’ . . .

Birth rates are high, and half the population is under age 15. The children laugh easily. Their parents are shy and modest, but friendly when approached by strangers.

In the Marshall Islands, [Nuclear Claims Tribunal] awards range from 12,500 to 125,000. In a country with a per capita income of \$1,600, the prospect of such sums can have a powerful effect. Health care workers say they have watched patients weep in despair or anger when told they did not have cancer, or had the wrong sort of cancer to qualify for the money.

‘We sympathize with them,’ said Mary Note [President Kessai Note’s wife], an associate public advocate with the Tribunal. Many Marshallese think any cancer is caused by radiation, and that they are entitled to compensation. ‘They feel cheated.’

In fact, medical experts say far more Marshallese are dying from an unhealthy diet, lifestyle and inadequate medical care.

While I will not attempt to refute the RMI’s national health statistics, nor defend its leadership from charges of corruption or waste, I will refute the representation of the generous US “largess,” and its “massive aid” package as yet another repetition of the familiar portrayal of the islanders as recipients of US aid.<sup>72</sup> This familiar discourse makes Marshallese out to be ungrateful, corrupt, ignorant, or incompetent, at best. The portrait of the Marshalls presented here is that of a tragic disaster area. While the author does acknowledge and describe the nuclear testing and its impact, the real message of the article is that the Marshallese are more to blame for the state of affairs than the US. According to Roylance, after all, the US has made an effort to compensate the islanders, and generously given aid as well -- aid that was wasted, or stolen, or misused. Additionally, he presents Marshallese health issues as the consequences of poor choices, poor leadership, and

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<sup>72</sup> As noted in earlier chapters and repeated elsewhere, this is inaccurate and unfair. The Compact funding is part of an international treaty that enables an exchange of resources and accessibility between the US and the Marshall Islands.

ignorance with only a phrase of reference to the initial TTPI health system and the larger US context. He does try to spread some of the blame for the 'disaster' onto the US by acknowledging the nuclear testing program and its health consequences for Marshallese, as well as the presence of US Spam and other unhealthy foods to the islands.

The article is based on interviews with Americans (thus the repetition of familiar American ex-pat discourses that bash RMI leadership), and only quotes Marshallese who support the observations being presented, for example Mary Note's mention of Marshallese who cry at not having a cancer diagnosis.<sup>73</sup> While a paragraph describes 'Marshallese beliefs that the US owes them,' it implies Marshallese ingratitude and perhaps an exaggerated sense of entitlement, rather than a just expectation. He makes light of their *understanding of the relationship rather than exploring it further.*

Someone who knows much more about US/Marshallese relations is former US Ambassador, William Bodde, who is considered persona non grata in the Marshall Islands. He served as Ambassador to the RMI from 1990-1992. His authoritative representations of the RMI only exacerbate the dominant rhetoric, while asserting US authority to comment on and condemn the activities of other nations and their use of US funds. Bodde's implicit assertion that it is his (American) obligation to be sure the money is used "wisely" (i.e., according to US values and interests) is an insult to the sovereignty of the RMI, particularly in light of US decisions, abuses, and exploitation of the islands. Whether his statements and accusations are factual or not, the fact that he feels it is his right to comment on such things is deeply offensive. In reference to the CFA, Bodde asks, "Where did we go wrong?"

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<sup>73</sup> Majuro health care workers have described similar examples to me in the past.

.. We know that money, per se, isn't the solution" (PIR 7/19/99). He presumes it is the US government's responsibility to make the RMI 'work', to solve its US-defined problems.

He has deemed the CFA a failure (PIR 8/17/98 "Freely Associated States Compacts Generally Failure: Ambassador Bodde) pointing out that if continued support means "the money just goes to the bloated bureaucracy and pays some of the elites underhand, it's just not going to do the trick" (Stayman appointed...PIR 7/19/99). In an attempt to be complimentary, he adds an alternative option: "The Marshalls and FSM, they have a lot of smart people, and they can export brainpower, and send money home" (Stayman PIR 7/19/99). In other words, intelligent Marshallese would be better off moving to the United States to help economic development in their nation. The frustrations experienced by Marshallese leadership in working with ambassadors such as Bodde who show such insensitivity to Marshallese love of land, and communal relationships, not to mention national and ethnic identity, is made obvious in this statement. The dismissal of RMI sovereignty to assert "successful" US economic models highlights the ignorance and arrogance of some US representatives in these islands.

Bodde, has a negative view of the impact of the CFA on Marshallese lives:

Bodde says the nearly \$1 billion the Marshalls has received from the US over the past 15 years, 'has produced a few millionaires, but most of the population continues to live under deplorable conditions' (Woodard 1999).

Further, he describes economic dependency in negative terms:

"The money spent since 1986 has resulted in 'very little economic development'. 'A fatal flaw', was that the financial assistance was not used to create a market economy and economic wealth. . . It's a legitimate question whether these islands can become self-sufficient,'. . . "Foreign aid can be a trap. You've got to get off foreign aid, and need to create wealth. "The US must not be that generous anymore. There should be no money for government operational expenses, with funding only for projects that have a development component" (Hulsen1998).

Bodde's comments portray the Marshalls as suffering from dependency, living under deplorable conditions, in poverty. He considers the US as generous, and the Marshallese as corrupt and wasteful, since "all that money" resulted in little development. He does not point to a history of US lack of oversight or support after providing nearly all public services for forty years.

The Marshallese government recently has embraced the US political rhetoric of "accountability" and "transparency" in RMI national discourse. The political use of these terms locally is significant because President Kessai Note was elected on campaign platform of reform. He and his cabinet demanded accountability for the wrongdoings of previous Marshallese, not American administrations. The power of these terms lies subtly in their one-sidedness. Accountability and transparency are demanded in an attempt to assert a righteous moral cause. They imply the secrecy and dishonesty of another party. They highlight others' responsibilities while subtly and simultaneously masking their own. As the US government demands transparency and accountability from the RMI, President Note's government makes identical demands on former political rivals, with similarly veiled threats. Significantly, and unfortunately, this rhetoric isn't deflected on the US to ask how transparent and accountable are its relations with the RMI.

### **Dependency**

Both Marshallese and others have expressed representations of the Marshallese as unequal with, and dependent on, the US for some time. During the Trust Territory government, one Marshallese politician quipped: "We have the Trust; the United States has the Territory" (Balos in Gale 1979).

Another central theme concerns dependency and victimization, critically linked by notions of passivity and responsibility. Both Marshallese and foreign portrayals share the discourses of dependency and victimization for different ends. For Marshallese, the representation follows cultural lines that oblige authority to provide for those beneath them, and it is primarily expressed to assert claims for compensation. For outsiders, this depiction is a sub theme of the “corrupt, lazy, and greedy” trope that emerges in government criticisms.

As both Bodde and Kristof highlight Marshallese economic dependence on the US, so does the US Government Accounting Office in its report, “Foreign Assistance: US Funds to Two Micronesian Nations had Little Impact on Economic Development and Accountability over Funds was Limited” (GAO 2000). The reports states that both the RMI and FSM:

remain highly dependent on US assistance, which has maintained artificially high standards of living. . . The RMI . . . reduced its reliance on US funding somewhat, from 78 percent in 1987 to 68 percent in 1998. . . For fiscal years 1987-1998, . . . the RMI spent about \$507 million in funding provided by the Compact. . . In the RMI, the largest amount of total expenditures, 45 percent or \$230 million, went to support capital fund activities such as building infrastructure, supporting economic activities, and servicing debt. . . For the RMI, 46 percent (\$65 million) of the total capital fund expenditures are classified as ‘other’ expenditures. Most of this amount (\$54 million) was listed as unidentified capital expenditures in the RMI financial statements (GAO 2000: 2, 4, 5).

In addition, the RMI issued millions of dollars in Compact revenue-backed bonds to finance projects in the early years of the Compact. According to the GAO report, the Marshalls has used forty-two percent of its compact funding to repay bond debt. In 1998, the RMI spent \$25 of \$38 million of Compact funding to service its debts (GAO 2000:6). Deducting \$8 million in land payments to owners of Kwajalein atoll, left only \$6 million

(15 percent of Compact funds) to support government operations, new investment, and sector support (GAO 2000:6).

The GAO report concludes with the following observation:

The FSM and RMI are among the largest recipients of US assistance worldwide on a per capita basis. In 1998, total US assistance . . . was about \$1,095 per person in the RMI. . . This high level of per capita funding has maintained artificially high standards of living in both countries that would, according to the Asian Development Bank, collapse in the absence of US assistance (GAO 2000:7).

Many of the problems associated with Compact-funded projects were described as resulting from poor management, planning, construction, maintenance, and or misuse. The US Department of Interior, which oversees Compact funding, explained that “neither the FSM nor the RMI governments had staff that possessed the skills necessary to plan and manage expenditures under the Compact” (GAO 2000:11).

The portrayal is at the heart of the report. According to the GAO perspective, the islanders don't know how to manage their money -- their government buildings are collapsing, large portions of their budgets are unaccounted for as 'other,' and without US funding 'assistance' the nations would fall apart. The GAO report of 2000 emphasizes mismanagement and poor planning over corruption. In sections not quoted here, it also acknowledges lack of US oversight, departmental disputes between State and Interior, intentional US 'leniency' toward accountability in the early Compact years in favor of friendly relations, and the inability of the Department of Interior to put strings on Congressionally guaranteed funds (GAO 2000).

This representation of economic dependency resonates with ones emphasized by the Marshallese, although the blame is shifted. The RMI contends that this dependency was deliberately encouraged, while the US insists that Compact of Free Association was

designed to promote economic development and self-sufficiency through direct financial payments to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and RMI as a continuation of US rights and obligations of the Trust Territory (GAO 2001: 8). While dependency is viewed by the US government as a lack of economic development and a sign of a failed Compact, the RMI government continues to assert its economic dependency on the US. Both the US and some in the RMI perpetuated a dominant discourse of development (Hanlon 1998) until recent years. Environmental limitations on economic development are starting to be acknowledged, causing some US representatives to join the RMI in questioning the possibility of self-sufficiency (Bodde in Hulsen 8-17-01 PIR).

### **“Becoming a Professional Victim”**

Fran Hezel, a Catholic priest and scholar, wrote the twenty-ninth issue of the *Micronesian Counselor* to discourage the government of the Marshall Islands from presenting itself as a victim. The particular foci of this publication are the RMI’s case against the US tobacco industry and the RMI’s pursuit of the Compact’s “changed circumstances” clause. The “changed circumstances” petition wishes to extend recognition and compensation to a much broader Marshallese population than those previously acknowledged as affected by the US nuclear testing program, since newly declassified documents shed light on the intent and extent of the program (see Appendices C, D, E, and F).

Hezel acknowledges the Marshallese people’s suffering and applauds their “indomitable spirit” (2000:3). Yet, he notes:

As pleas for compensation multiply and the road to claims court becomes more clogged, I fear for this spirit. When people begin to regard themselves as victims, their fate is fixed. They may be found sitting by the side of the road with their tin cup, waiting for others – the villains of the past – to fill it with coins. The danger is

not that they derive profit from what they have suffered (which they may well deserve), but that they may come to see themselves as helpless in the face of the firestorms unleashed on them by the fates and their enemies. It would be a shame if the Marshallese, ... excused themselves from the responsibility of improving their economy, their homes, their health on the grounds that they were merely victims.

Is there anything wrong with this [changed circumstances petition for expanded compensation for nuclear damages]? Perhaps not, unless it feeds the tendency of people in the Marshalls to *find a seat in the shade, rattle the change in their tin cup,* and ignore their responsibility for making the government work, comfortable that they are once again victims who can do no more than rue the past and make claims on those responsible for their past misfortunes to create a future for them.

We don't have to be fans of the tobacco industry to pick up an off-key note in this querulous argument. The tune is one we've heard before: 'We bear none of the responsibility for what has happened to us. We are the victims of one disaster after another. If it isn't the Atomic Energy Commission or the Department of Defense that's to blame, then it's the American tobacco companies.' The chord is a familiar one: victimization. . . .

I am doing everything I can to ensure that the Marshalls does not find a comfortable spot at the side of the road from which it can jingle the change in its cup while shrugging off responsibility for its future (Hezel 2000: 3,5,6).

Hezel writes daringly in an age of political correctness to critique the Marshalls' representation of themselves and their nation as victims. This term, this label, is a loaded one, though, and I think also misrepresents the way Marshallese people understand those experiences. Hezel suggests that looking to others for help means not taking responsibility. But for many Marshallese, seeking redress, using the language and cultural concepts of obligation, loyalty, and looking after, is an example of responsible behavior, particularly when Marshallese are stereotyped as, and expected to be, passive and non-confrontational.

The discourse of 'victimhood' is as close to Western notions of resistance as Marshallese get. Calling attention to their situation at the hands of powerful others, is equivalent to a demand for justice and for *others* to take their responsibility to look after the

weaker (less powerful) more seriously, as chiefs provide for their people, mothers protect their children, and coaches guide their teams. It is obvious to Marshallese that they have been wronged. By pointing it out to the world they are insisting on justice.

Fr. Hezel's article stimulated much discussion on the Micronesian Seminar website discussion group. One of his supporters wrote: "I wanted to say, 'Bravo!' I thought I was the only one who was thinking this way, and felt a little bad to be fighting against the government" (7/25/2000). I appreciated the irony of the use of the word "Bravo" in reference to Marshallese victimization, given the name of the atomic blast that destroyed parts of Bikini atoll.

In refutation of Hezel's evaluation of Marshallese agency, Thomas Kijiner, Jr., (son of the five term Marshallese Senator), wrote:

Contrary to the contention that the 'changed circumstances' petition and tobacco lawsuit demonstrate that Marshallese are becoming professional victims, I would argue that the indomitable spirit of the Marshallese people is alive and well. Indeed, the tobacco lawsuit and the 'changed circumstances' petition prove, contrary to the beliefs that Marshallese are the 'quiet' Micronesians, that like anybody else, Marshallese do have their own opinions and will defend them, even against such formidable adversaries as the US government and the tobacco industry. . . the fact remains that these nuclear-affected communities are not just sitting around and 'jingling the change in its cup while shrugging off responsibility for its future.' Indeed, the nuclear-affected atolls also have their own community development projects in their respective islands that are targeted at improving the standard of living of their people. . . I know that there are some Marshallese who are currently receiving nuclear compensation, that would rather sit comfortably in the shade and 'jingle the change in their tin cans' instead of trying to help themselves. But, I also know that there are many more who would much prefer to do for themselves. . . Marshallese people are saying, 'enough is enough.' The Marshallese people are standing up tall and telling the world that they will not sit back and let fate and others write their history for them. Instead of being merely victims, the Marshallese are saying, 'our fate is in our hands' (8/2/2002).

When Marshallese representatives express their frustrations with the United States (e.g. Imata Kabua in the Outrigger Hotel bar), they are declaring their dependence on the

US, and their rights and entitlements. While “victimhood” and dependency are not the same thing, a perceived lack of agency links them. As Tommy Kijiner demonstrated in his response to Hezel, seeking justice (i.e. asserting one’s victimization at another’s hands) requires agency. Kijiner, Jr. stresses that seeking compensation is not waiting around for handouts. It requires planning, cooperation, and focus. Further, fighting Goliath-like opponents is daunting and brave, not fearful and weak.

### **Nuclear Victims’ Remembrance Day: March 1, 1998**

With Western representations so hard to refute, reinforced stereotypes become Goliaths, and every act of defiance requires greater and greater determination. “177” communities affected by nuclear testing have long and tiring histories of seeking just compensation. The following example conveys the process of organizing the events for the annual Nuclear Victims’ Day in 1998, while showing how different meanings of the experience of “victimization” are constructed on Majuro and represented for various audiences.

The situation of the 177 communities within the RMI reveals the complexities of hierarchy and victimization, as the example of the national Nuclear Victim’s Remembrance Day ceremonies will show. Americans and non-government institutions (CMI, *Alele*) organized the event, the US Ambassador declined her invitation, and no RMI government official participated. The example highlights the ways 177 people represent their situation, the ways they are not only inadequately compensated by the US, but are also marginalized within their own country.

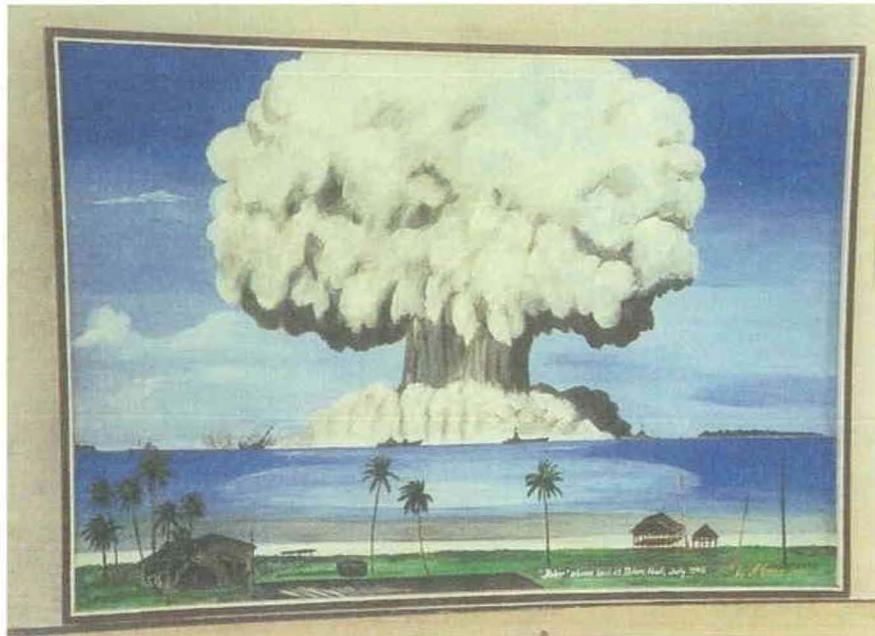


Figure 103. Painting by Amram Enos, *Alele* archivist.

A national holiday on March 1 acknowledges the nuclear legacy and the suffering that resulted from the single “Bravo” shot, a 15-megaton hydrogen bomb exploded at Bikini Atoll on March 1, 1954. In recent years, a concerted effort has been made by the RMI government, Nuclear Claims Tribunal, Four Atolls, and others to increase awareness of these events to a larger audience, and to educate Marshallese citizens about information obtained from the declassified documents obtained during the Clinton Administration.

In 1998, Holly Barker, a former Peace Corps volunteer turned anthropologist, and RMI US embassy staff, continued her research gathering data throughout communities in the Marshalls that experienced illnesses similar to those acknowledged as “exposed.” Her efforts provided documentation to assist the RMI’s petition to pursue the changed circumstances clause of the Compact. Barker worked with local counterparts to collect data, as well as to teach a course about the nuclear testing program and its consequence at the College of the Marshall Islands. During that spring semester, a “nuclear institute” was

established at CMI that included a computer with a database of all the documents relating to the nuclear testing. Copies of that database were also deposited with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the US Embassy in Washington D.C. Further, under Barker's direction, CMI students formed a "nuclear club" to educate their peers about the nuclear testing.

As public service announcements produced by students reached the airwaves, local leadership decided to take advantage of the increased interest, and Holly's presence, to expand upon the annual holiday commemorative event. Representatives of the Four Atolls, the Nuclear Claims Tribunal, the Marshall Islands Radiological Victims Association, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CMI, and Alele Museum formed a committee to organize the event. I was selected to represent Alele, a favorite Majuro site for public ceremonies such as this.

The committee decided to invite speakers for the program, and requested that Youth to Youth in Health perform for the crowd. The US Ambassador, Joan M. Plaisted, was invited to speak, but declined in a note to committee member Alfred Capelle of CMI:

Regrettably, I am unable to accept your kind invitation to speak at the public ceremony being held to celebrate your country's holiday on March 2.

Thank you for the words in your letter acknowledging the considerable efforts my country has made in friendship to the Republic of the Marshall Islands to address the effects of the US testing program in the northern atolls. Please accept my best wishes for a successful ceremony (Personal communication, Alfred Capelle 2/23/98).

Working with the committee, coordinating the schedule, tracking down speakers, became my task as the host coordinator. The irony of my orchestrating Nuclear Victim's Day, was lost on nearly everyone but Biram Stege, the emcee and last-minute co-organizer,

and myself. Somehow the two of us managed to pull it off, despite the delayed start, and a last minute shuffling of speakers.<sup>74</sup> The ceremony began with an opening prayer, followed by the National Anthem, and a welcome from the Council of *Irooj*. Representatives from the Rongelap community stood to sing a song:

*Naat inaj ella lok jen intan kein ko ijaje kio?*  
When will I overcome this suffering that I never knew before?

*Komaron ke juon ao dri-jinet im ao marin ko?*<sup>75</sup>  
Could you be my guide and my refuge?

Chorus:

*Ne ij ped ilo ao radiation en bwe imojno ko thyroid im ao jojolair*  
If the radiation stays with me, it will make me (my thyroid) weak, and abandoned,

*Konan oa in bwe in wiwa wot ion juon ao jikin aeneman im jab na wot ak ro ilo numba in 177.*  
Here's what I want, (my only wish) to overcome (radiation), on a peaceful place,  
not only for me but for all the 177 people.

*Aolepen lomnak e ao ij lewoj rej nan kom kio kin wewin ko ij lo ilo an raan jab kein ad.*  
All my thoughts, I give them to you now because it's the way I see things today.  
(Transcript from fieldnotes. March 2, 1998.)

While the remainder of the day focused on speeches that described the nuclear testing program, and the struggles and status of the changed circumstances petition, the most moving part by far was the performance of the song above. In it, the Rongelapese express their profound suffering, and deep desire to be free on a peaceful place. They ask only for support and guidance.

In the context of numerous representations including photos, students' reports and drawings, documentary broadcasts, and radio coverage about the testing and its

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<sup>74</sup> Lessons learned about the negotiations of power in everyday practice through the coordination of this event have informed preceding chapters.

<sup>75</sup> The term *marin ko* literally means tree of refuge, and is used to describe the *Irooj* system, as noted in interview number 7 of Chapter 7.

consequences, the expression of the Rongelapese almost disappear. They are tired, and weary of the pain of struggling with cancer, death, and isolation. They have no place to call their own each day, since they cannot live on Rongelap. They depend on others for land, for medical care, for support. Rongelapese are not only victims of the US, but also of their own nation's leadership. Marginalized by the assumption that they can care for themselves since they have compensation money, their needs are often dismissed, their claims ignored. Rongelapese and the other 177 communities are considered rich and lucky among Marshallese, despite their suffering.

Senator Tony de Brum of Majuro has worked with and for the 177 people for many years. He has appeared before numerous US congressional committee hearings on their behalf and represented their needs and interests to others faithfully. His presence at the event was a strong sign of support. On the *Nitijela* floor the following day, he chastised the other senators and ministers who did not attend. One participant described the interaction at the *Nitijela*:

One senator was talking about getting money for Likiep and all the changed circumstances stuff, and then Tony said, "I don't want to hear you talk about radiation. All you're interested in is money. Where's your proof that your islands were affected? If you're so interested in radiation where were you on Monday. Monday was Nuclear Victim's Day, to commemorate those who were affected and I didn't see any of your faces there (Fieldnotes 3/5/98)!"

Despite invitations, there was no official government representation in the ceremony. Over nationally broadcast public radio various officials made excuses, while deBrum publicly humiliated them by representing the government officials' primary interest in changed circumstances as financial. Collective, national support for the victims and the communities is lacking.

The experience of “victimization” does not only occur at the hands of foreigners, or the United States, but also in what Westerners would identify as the cultural hegemony of a hierarchical society. This discourse of powerlessness, extends beyond the radiation-affected groups, and is a much larger part of everyday discourse in the islands. It serves as an act of resistance, a declaration of others’ responsibilities to fulfill their share of the perceived mutual obligations that are integral to any relationship in the Marshall Islands.

### CONCLUSION

Marshallese representations of nation, culture, and identity are multiple and varied. Both the dominant and subordinate portrayals are linked to cultural frameworks and understandings of authority, as well as the positionality of those who proffer the overriding or alternative representations. The persistent use of these two models of Marshallese modernity and dependency reveals an ideology of authority that is only recently being questioned as new models and representation are explored.

Alternative representations of the Marshall Islands are put forth by non-governmental organizations that often find their funding and support through foreign sources, including American and international organizations. Non-governmental organizations were often considered *anti-governmental* organizations by the RMI national government as they competed for recognition. In the past, since knowledge of *manit* is considered an *Irooj’s* domain, discourses of culture were left to a government that was led by a chief. Assuming the authority to represent Marshallese culture to others was viewed as a challenge to a chief’s authority. Consequently, organizations like *Aele* received very little government support, and even less popular support.

Today, things are different. Many non-governmental organizations have taken on the task of learning about and educating the general public about elements of the Marshallese past, and specialized knowledge and skills. The *Waan Aelon in Majol* [Canoes of the Marshalls] (WAM) trains young people in the science of canoe building, and the practice of public education. *Jodrikdrik nan Jodrikdrik ilo Ejmour* (JNJIE) [Youth to Youth in Health] engages young Marshallese in courses about culture and health to provide creative public performances of public health issues in culturally based skits and songs. The newly organized -- and government supported -- Marshall Islands Visitors Authority (MIVA) provides cultural, historical, and contemporary statistical information about the Marshall Islands to prospective tourists and businesses.

Government support of MIVA shows continuity with the “development” agenda of past administrations and a transformation that acknowledges tourism as a practical development strategy. Many of the choices of symbols used by the national government that present the Marshall Islands as “modern” and “progressive” (rather than “traditional” or “backward”), I would argue, result from historic -- even “traditional” -- understandings of authority, power, and powerlessness. Through various colonial administrations, Marshallese chiefs have opted for cooperation and affiliation with foreigners in order to obtain the resources they desired -- be they Western goods, services, or conveniences. Marshallese are historically highly skilled adaptors. The representation of a “modern” Republic of the Marshall Islands reflects the continuity of these values and skills.

Another example of the perpetuation of Marshallese values lies in the other dominant theme of representation I have selected to explore -- the discourse of

dependency. Again, I argue that the framing of relationships in terms of power and powerlessness mirrors Marshallese relationships that bridge that gap through reciprocity and mutual obligation. The act of asserting dependency, at least within Marshallese society, functions as a demand for expected entitlements, and it calls upon the highest cultural values of sharing, and caring for each other. Unfortunately, in international relationships the response is less generous.

The predominant models of modernity and dependency are expressions of long-standing cultural values, and practices, that reflect historical Marshallese experiences with Marshallese authority, and with foreign authority. The alternative models of culture and tradition beginning to be explored and presented by non governmental organizations demonstrate the development of a different sort of progressivism within the Marshall Islands – one that looks to the past to find value, rather than to the future.

Western depictions of the Marshall Islands seem, in many cases, reaction to the realities of the Marshallese present. The positive portrayals are limited to those elements of Marshallese culture that are holdovers from an imagined past -- sailing and navigational skills, Marshallese naïveté and innocence, glorious remote atolls. The majority of the representations of the Marshall Islands is quite negative, and plays off the central themes of *Marshallese representations -- modernity and dependency*. The negative accounts highlight contemporary Marshallese society in ethnocentric comparisons and contrasts: Western-like institutions are condemned, leaders promoting development are corrupt, greedy, and jealous, and Marshallese citizens are passive in their oppression, begging for handouts instead of working toward solutions to their “disastrous” situations.

In each case, the representations and reactions to others' representations interplay and touch upon long-standing cultural models and expectations of power, authority, government, and "other." Marshallese projections of modernity frustrate Western romantic notions of Pacific islands, as US journalists' depictions of "victimization" deny Marshallese agency.

As has been shown repeatedly throughout this dissertation, culture shapes understandings and interpretations and is not bound by global forces or discourses. In the following summary chapter, lessons from the Marshallese case are expanded for broader audiences interested in the ways global and local models interact and influence each other.

## CHAPTER 9 RE-TURNINGS

*Symbiosis: n. Biol. The relationship of two or more different organisms in a close association that may be but is not necessarily of benefit to each. (The American Heritage Dictionary.)*

### **BAR ITO-ITAK**

In form and content this narrative conveys the tensions inherent in foreign accounts of indigenous peoples. It reflects the comings, goings, and returnings of a long-term researcher who struggles to meet multiple conflicting goals -- to participate and observe, to specify and to generalize, to selectively assert her personal and professional identities and theoretical affiliations while deliberately privileging the various perspectives of many participants.

The Marshallese expression *ito-itak* [back and forth] is my chosen metaphor for the process of doing anthropology today in our merged global/local world, as well as a device for expressing in form the complicated and messy perspectives of multiple participants and various levels of analysis. I value the back and forth process as a middle ground where meaningful discussion and action occur. It is not the end result, but the process that enables understanding.

I explore the history of some of my own relationships and interactions in the Marshall Islands hoping to shed light on *yet another example of American relations in the Marshalls* -- the deeply personal connections that are formed in the midst of those 'other' endeavors and interests. This is not intended merely as an examination of my personal ties, but as an illustration of the ways local familiarities and researcher associations with institutions of power (church, government, educational institutions) impact the formation

of anthropological knowledge. These examples illustrate how researchers and communities of research come to know each other not only as “American” or Marshallese,” but also as individuals with personal histories and shared experiences. I am an inside-outsider, a member of the Marshallese “elite” through association. I have my own journey of transformation as the Marshall Islands has “indigenized” me, as they do other transnational linkages and resources. Being “Marshallized” has altered my understandings of relationships, reciprocity, generosity, and even time (e.g. this dissertation’s completion). I consider the inclusion of personal affiliations and experience critical to this process of understanding.

A researcher’s own lived experience informs interpretations and understandings, particularly as a representative of powerful western/foreign institutions (funding agencies, universities, church or other affiliations) and must be taken into consideration in the representation of any culture. The strength of these personal relationships developed and sustained through local employment offers a context for *real* relationships with local meaning to be formed. There is no substitute for this type of relationship, in which interdependency and reciprocity emerge. Similarly, work with elites denies the ethnographer the “upper hand” in power relations and puts the ethnographer’s project in the hands of the participants, rather than being imposed upon them.

This project also contributes significantly to contemporary ethnographic methodological issues through explorations of issues surrounding fieldwork, particularly long-term fieldwork, in communities where one is a participant as well as an observer. Access to indigenous elites, their histories, perspectives, and goals is critical in understanding national development and international relations, and long-term fieldwork

strengthens personal relationships of trust and respect that enable vital access and self-understandings of elites' roles.

Long-term research necessarily enables the researcher to become a participating member of the community of research, to personally invest in issues and lives and thus, more easily be understood and known by the community. Long-term fieldwork is one of the few ways that anthropologists contribute to communities of research, through a deeper commitment to advocacy and a greater appreciation of local interests. Yet, despite the advantages, long-term research hinders the researcher's ability to "distance" the community in order to gain new perspectives. Some consider this an advantage, yet indigenous scholars are quick to note the exploitative nature of many research methods that make native views and experiences unrecognizable (Smith 1999).

Long-term non-indigenous researchers share many of the experiences and challenges of indigenous researchers. Complex negotiations of insider/outsider -- notions of home and belonging -- are personal as well as professional and too complex to be solely defined by ethnicity. Maintaining long-term transcultural relationships in communities that have become "home" necessarily fashions a useful tension that itself is a methodology of transcultural learning. The increased frequency of shifting perspectives required in transcultural encounters informs understandings in ways that solitary jaunts cannot. Long-term research forms long-term inter/transcultural relationships that, like any other relationships, constantly shift and transform.

I have constructed a narrative that is an apt manifestation of a reality that defies neat categorizations and generalizations, is open for discussion and interpretation, and will

never be fully complete. The untidiness serves as a starting point for future opportunities to return home, to question, listen, reflect, write, ask, listen, reflect and write again.

The grounded and personal nature of this narrative (I hope) bridges a gap between academic discourse and indigenous perspectives that are often considered exclusive. The attempt to privilege the voices and views of Marshallese, while still conveying the theoretical and analytical interests of anthropology is challenging -- particularly where relationships are primarily personal, with ties that reach beyond professional activities and research interests. As a result, I am committed to advocacy and empowerment of Marshall Islanders and their nation. In this dissertation I have tried to represent them as the active agents that I know, rather than passive recipients or victims of other portrayals.

Long-term fieldwork has its "disadvantages" as well. It creates an increased awareness of complexities, and a desire to constantly contextualize. It makes it uncomfortable to draw sweeping generalizations and conclusions. As (retired) anthropologist Alan Howard noted, the longer he works in Rotuma, the greater his sense of historicity, of having to contextualize everything, and having to avoid the previously comfortable generalizations in favor of greater and greater detail (ASAO 2003). He speaks of this apologetically, but I consider this an advancement in ethnographic methods -- a sign of a mature disciplinary humility that can acknowledge the limits of its knowledge.

My commitment to empower Marshallese and to express their agency necessitates a descriptive and context-filled dissertation. This, then, raises issues for me of the limits of academic representations (transcribed, theoretical, static) to express knowledge. I have found myself drawn to express my understandings in more active forms, particularly

through applied activities that sustain the process of asking, listening, and reflecting that always leave me ready to re-turn to my questions and to the Marshalls.

### COLLUSIONS AND COLLISIONS

From the earliest explorers' accounts to the most recent US government reports, the Marshall Islands and its people have been continuously imagined according to competing foreign interests that seek to discover noble savages, save souls, exploit resources, claim imperial territory, defend sea lanes and national interests, test destructive weapons, and establish permanent strategic alliances. Lost in the numerous, repetitive, foreign representations are the voices of Marshallese people. How do the Marshallese make sense of these relationships? How do foreign representations and relations impact Marshallese identities? How do Marshallese then define and represent themselves in light of these transnational relationships? Using insights gained from an examination of US-Marshall Islands relations, this study investigates the complexities of interwoven transnational relationships and highlights the ways culture mediates *globalization* and how global processes influence cultural production.

"Culture" is shown here to be a joint production as discourses of tradition, modernity, chiefs, and nationhood produced by various players (in transnational contexts) interact and merge. Like the processes of cultural production, which involve numerous sources and influences, the processes of globalization, too, necessitate cultural complicities and collaboration, which then also mediate and limit their influence. Cultural notions of authority and leadership, culturally defined relationships of power and dependency, rivalry and resistance, as well as shared values and beliefs impact transnational networks and

colonial relations and agendas. They do this by defining and framing many aspects of transnational interactions such as: who leaders are, who may serve as links to foreign, external institutions and networks, what is expected of leaders and foreigners, how they should interact, and how localized rivalries and histories inform the motivations, methods, and outcomes of alliance-building.

This dissertation foregrounds the power of cultural models and metaphors, particularly those of power and authority, and the importance of individual agency in the integrative process of cultural production, representation, and identity formation that *necessarily* involve multiple transnational and cultural influences.

The Marshall Islands is a nation defined by its relationship to the United States, as well as the global networks enabled or created through that relationship. To paraphrase Stuart Hall (1996) in reference to sub-altern British identities, to understand Marshallese identities requires more than an account of Marshallese voices and views about themselves; it requires an awareness of Marshallese views of the United States, *and* American views of the Marshall Islands.

The goal of conveying the interconnectedness, and the mutuality of constructions/imaginings of the Marshall Islands and its people frames the focus and methods of my study. To adequately explore constructions of tradition and authority requires an intense local focus on social relations and histories that are negotiated in daily interactions. Simultaneously, it also requires focusing on the multiple transnational linkages to American institutions and interests.

The central agents in these negotiations of culture and globalization are “elites,” both traditional (i.e. chiefs) and modern. As such, their understandings of their roles,

networks, alliances, and influences are as significant as their translations of global discourses into meaningful cultural frameworks. Elites are important sites of global intersections since they connect cultural status, networks, and alliances with various foreign institutions that may complement, supplement, or challenge local authority. Examining how these negotiations occur through and in elites is critical to a grounded understanding of the generally abstract notion of “globalization.” By focusing on individuals as sites of global exchange, and on the discourses they share, globalization may be viewed as an interaction -- an exchange -- rather than a one-way process.

Discourses serve various agendas, which may collide or collude to sustain hegemonic ideologies and practices. Where discourses intersect, new definitions emerge as old understandings transform. The example of Marshallese chiefs, buttressed by discourses of democracy and *manit* [custom] produced jointly by American administrators and Marshallese serves to illustrate this point. Where discourses collude, transformations result.

### TARGETS

Using the metaphors of missile testing to imagine the processes of globalization seems apt to me. Globalization is often imagined as the bombardment of Western products, values, and economic practices into other nations’ bounded economic, geographic, and national political systems. Globalization is represented as a unidirectional force, in which dominant powers invade the economies and lives of less powerful others, and thus conquer them. The assumption is that the presence and meanings of Western goods, practices, and discourses are identical in any context. Too often we ignore the

“interceptors” that are blasted in response – and often hit their mark, infringing upon the ability of the missile to distribute or deliver its intended impact.

### **Collisions**

Cultural models and metaphors mediate our interactions. They shape our lives, influence our perceptions, our thinking, our beliefs about ourselves and others. The concepts with which we organize our thoughts govern our everyday functions, perceptions, relations, as well as define our daily realities (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). We use mental cultural models because they come naturally -- they are pre-existing, enduring, complex, and adaptable and they may be modified to suit our needs. Our models are so strong they influence our perceptions and judgments because it is much easier to borrow and modify existing frames than to invent them for that which we have no prior experience (Fernandez 1991). Their potency results from their natural and unquestioned use.

We interpret the foreign in terms of the familiar by creating metaphors to connect the unconnected, to bridge gaps. Because metaphors enable us to apply the features of one domain to another based on judgments of similarities, they are useful. They are able to shift, transform, and stretch to include new contexts and lead to new meanings and new models.

Cultural models and metaphors play a tremendous role in transnational relations and exchanges, as they unavoidably mediate expectations, interactions, and evaluations. Where conflicting discourses and understandings collide, major misinterpretations occur. The result includes ambiguous, ambivalent attitudes toward the other, and perpetual negotiations of meaning and understanding. While Americans may borrow the vocabulary

of Marshallese hierarchy by offering “tribute” to “chiefs,” and Marshallese use the discourse of “democracy,” each is defined in opposition (or relation) to the other. American notions of equality conflict with Marshallese perceptions of authority and power. The conflicting representations of victimization and dependency carry vastly different implications. For example, dependency may be considered a Marshallese ideal -- a fact of life -- in families, communities, with chiefs, with government, and with America. Conversely, dependency is an American nightmare -- the opposite of freedom, personal choice, and individualism. It is impossible to understand transnational processes without an awareness of the attitudes and the agency of local actors.

### **Collusions**

Ethnographies frequently explore power relationships in one-sided ways, from the perspective of the subaltern, the exploited, and the victimized (Marcus et al). This work contributes to discussions of power through its close analysis of the ways power is discursively created, and economically reinforced by indigenous elites.

The findings of this dissertation reveal the complexity of power and the agency of local actors in (post) colonial and transnational contexts. While elites' roles in larger systems of power are frequently studied, their interactions and rivalries, their views of their socialization and acculturation are not. Elites serve as the “interceptors” whose dual positionality as *transnational linkages and translators of global events and discourses* heavily influences local understandings. They, like cultural metaphors, bridge gaps through their personal experiences, their knowledge, and the skills that enable them to lead, and

hold positions of influence. They access foreign and local resources and acquire status through their redistribution.

Not only are elites mediators of the global, they serve as agents of transnational forces. Through their socialization processes, they are collaborators in globalizing agendas, yet they serve in positions that enable their mediation of this influence. Reflective interviews about contemporary political relationships (preceded by contextualizing biographical data) help to place elite identities and histories in a historical context. Their attitudes, beliefs, and understandings of globalization directly influence their effectiveness in collaborating or challenging foreign agendas.

Indigenous/traditional leaders, as culturally defined authorities, are also key players with transnational influence. While shared cultural values and beliefs define their authority, local rivalries and prior foreign relations have altered chiefs' authority. These histories inform the ways chiefs mediate the global, and form alliances with foreign institutions, nations, and others. The alliance of Amata Kabua with US interests is critically informed by local rivalries, collective war experiences, and historic relationships between Marshallese chiefs and foreign administrations. Transnational relationships may as easily be predicated on local agendas as they are on foreign ones.

Further, the interactions between chiefs and elites internally, are shaped by cultural models and transformed by globalizing relationships and competitions. Culture creates elites by defining authority -- traditional chiefs, and those with ascribed status are acknowledged as leaders, yet historical experience of foreign others, and their discourses of democracy and equality, and educational institutions also mold elites. Cultural frameworks define how non-traditional elites compete, interact with, and relate to chiefs, and use

external sources and resources for local cultural politics. Even so, local relationships are also influenced, and even dictated by foreign agendas (e.g. American institutionalization of chiefly authority in democratic representative bodies at close of WW II legitimized the representative bodies and transformed the meaning and powers of Marshallese *Irooj*).

One target of this research has been to shed light on the ways the US presence consistently distorts and transforms Marshallese structures of power (“culture”) in specific even contradictory ways (for example, Kwajalein chiefs). Traditional owners of what is now US strategic real estate -- Kwajalein Atoll -- hold an economic power that exceeds the bounds of traditionally recognized authority and denies relationships of mutuality and dependence between *Irooj* and *kajur*. Chiefs use the rhetoric of *manit* or custom/tradition to validate a power derived from US-provided *green peba* [money].

Discourse is a significant focus for examining the symbiosis of global and cultural productions. For example, Marshallese and American models of leadership share a discourse on leaders’ obligations to subordinates (Marshallese)/constituents (American). Yet, Marshallese methods of fulfilling those obligations and constituents/‘subordinates’ expectations of leaders drastically differ from American models. Thus, the charges of corruption and abuse raised by Americans in Majuro and by the US government representatives, merges with Marshallese dissatisfaction into a discourse that is mutually beneficial in discrediting and disempowering elites yet calls for vastly different results (Chapter 6). The US condemns corruption in a desire to see Compact funds (which it considers as US federal rather than RMI monies) used for the benefit of all (Bodde 1996). Marshallese condemn corruption in a desire to alter current political leadership, perhaps for better access to resources through a more direct source (i.e. different individual; clan

member). Alternatively, Marshallese may be critical of a leader who is reluctant to assist his constituents by complying with their personal requests, when they view him or her as perfectly entitled to the resources under his control. Elected officials are held to two conflicting standards whose proponents collaborate in a unified critical chorus. Despite numerous shared and intersecting discourses, deep-rooted differences remain. Apparent collusions may in fact mask ideological collisions and transformations.

Borrowing discourses of democracy or modernity, invoking the foreign, must be understood in specific cultural contexts, and evaluated according to both foreign and cultural frameworks and understandings (metaphors and models). What may seem to be the dominance of global practices and forces may be understood and have local meaning as an act of resistance, or a well-conceived and executed strategy to access foreign resources and wealth. Local actors and foreign ones may view these actions and forces quite differently. I call the creative process of integrating foreign and local models and discourses “indigenization.”

### **Conclusions**

US and Marshallese models of authority and power are renegotiated and reinforced in each another through shared discourses, symbols, and images. So much focus has been on US hegemony (Americanization) that not enough attention has been paid to how that power is conceived of and constrained by local actors, cultural politics, and cultural histories of resistance. Anthropology is uniquely situated to explore this critical aspect of globalization. Indigenizing and claiming foreign power is a successful strategy for showing cooperation. Successful adaptation in a changing world requires familiarity with global

discourses, symbols, images, rhetoric selectively incorporated into local frameworks that often twist or invert foreign meanings to suit culturally informed ones.

The Marshall Islands does this by seizing US discourses of development, tradition, accountability, democracy but enacting culturally framed interpretations of these terms, in their own ways. As individual lives are influenced by American education, travel, and the perpetual *ito-itak* --and transnational migration -- the influence of broad American concepts infiltrates local discourses that then reinforce the foreign in new transnational, global discourses. American imaginings of its role in and relationship to the Marshall Islands then share vocabulary, concepts, and rhetoric, if not meanings, with Marshallese imaginings of their nation, its relationship to the United States, and its role in the global arena.

Like the “interceptor” missiles fired from Kwajalein at dummy warheads launched from California, the understandings of Americans and Marshallese about each other are not always “on target.” Cultural metaphors and models have powerful trajectories. This work demonstrates how Marshallese and Americans share a discursive “space,” in which they alternately send, receive, and intercept discourses and symbols in the creation of the various images of “The Marshall Islands.”

**APPENDIX A**  
**GEOGRAPHY OF THE RATAK AND RALIK ISLAND CHAINS**

| Name                    | Type   | Approx.<br>Number<br>of Islands | Area (square<br>miles) | Dry Land     | Latitude (Deg.<br>Min.) | Longitude (Deg.<br>Min.) |
|-------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Marshall Islands</b> |        | <b>1,225</b>                    | <b>4,506.87</b>        | <b>70.05</b> | <b>4 34' - 14 42'</b>   | <b>160 47' - 172 10'</b> |
| <b>Ratak Chain</b>      |        | <b>641</b>                      | <b>1,672.52</b>        | <b>34.02</b> | <b>5 53' - 14 42'</b>   | <b>169 53' - 172 10'</b> |
| 1 Bokak                 | Atoll  | 10                              | 30.13                  | 1.25         | 14 32' - 14 42'         | 168 53' - 169 1'         |
| 2 Biker                 | Atoll  | 7                               | 14.44                  | 0.19         | 12 11' - 12 18'         | 170 4' - 170 9'          |
| 3 Utrok                 | Atoll  | 10                              | 22.29                  | 0.94         | 11 12' - 11 12'         | 169 45' - 169 51'        |
| 4 Toke                  | Atoll  | 6                               | 35.96                  | 0.22         | 11 5' - 11 30'          | 169 33' - 169 40'        |
| 5 Mejit                 | Island | 1                               | -                      | 0.72         | 10 16' - 10 18'         | 170 52' - 70 53'         |
| 6 Ailuk                 | Atoll  | 55                              | 68.47                  | 2.07         | 10 12' - 10 27'         | 169 52' - 169 59'        |
| 7 Jemo                  | Island | 1                               | -                      | 0.06         | 10 7'                   | 169 33'                  |
| 8 Likiep                | Atoll  | 65                              | 163.71                 | 3.96         | 9 48' - 10 4'           | 168 58' - 169 20'        |
| 9 Wotje                 | Atoll  | 75                              | 241.06                 | 3.16         | 9 21' - 9 32'           | 169 48' - 170 15'        |
| 10 Erkub                | Atoll  | 16                              | 88.92                  | 0.59         | 9 8'                    | 170 0'                   |
| 11 Maloelap             | Atoll  | 75                              | 375.57                 | 3.79         | 8 29' - 8 55'           | 170 50' - 171 15'        |
| 12 Aur                  | Atoll  | 43                              | 92.58                  | 2.17         | 8 7' - 8 22'            | 171 1' - 171 12'         |
| 13 Majuro               | Atoll  | 64                              | 113.92                 | 3.75         | 7 3' - 7 13'            | 171 2' - 171 58'         |
| 14 Arno                 | Atoll  | 103                             | 130.77                 | 5            | 6 58' - 7 18'           | 171 33' - 171 57'        |
| 15 Mili                 | Atoll  | 92                              | 294.7                  | 6.15         | 5 53' - 6 16'           | 171 42' - 172 10'        |
| 16 Nadikdik             | Atoll  | 18                              | -                      | -            | -                       | -                        |

| Name               | Type   | Approx.<br>Number<br>of Islands | Area (square<br>miles) | Dry Land     | Latitude<br>(Deg. Min.) | Longitude (Deg. Min.)    |
|--------------------|--------|---------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Ralik Chain</b> |        | <b>584</b>                      | <b>2834.35</b>         | <b>38.03</b> | <b>4 34' -11 42'</b>    | <b>160 47' - 169 44'</b> |
| 17 Enewetak        | Atoll  | 44                              | 387.99                 | 2.26         | 11 20' - 11 41'         | 162 17' -162 24'         |
| 18 Ujelang         | Atoll  | 30                              | 25.47                  | 0.67         | 9 46' - 9 53'           | 160 47' - 161 0'         |
| 19 Bikini          | Atoll  | 36                              | 229.4                  | 2.32         | 11 29' - 11 42'         | 165 12' - 165 34'        |
| 20 Rongdrik        | Atoll  | 14                              | 55.38                  | 0.65         | 11 15' - 11 25'         | 167 22' - 167 32'        |
| 21 Ronglap         | Atoll  | 61                              | 387.77                 | 3.07         | 11 9' - 11 29'          | 166 38' - 167 4'         |
| 22 Ailinginae      | Atoll  | 25                              | 40.91                  | 1.08         | 11 8' - 11 11'          | 166 17' - 166 2'         |
| 23 Wotho           | Atoll  | 18                              | 36.65                  | 1.67         | 10 1' - 10 11'          | 165 54' - 165 46'        |
| 24 Ujae            | Atoll  | 15                              | 71.79                  | 0.72         | 8 55' - 9 12'           | 165 30' - 166 16'        |
| 25 Lae             | Atoll  | 20                              | 6.82                   | 0.56         | 8 54' - 9 2'            | 166 11' - 167 46'        |
| 26 Kwajalein       | Atoll  | 93                              | 839.3                  | 6.33         | 8 48' - 9 22'           | 166 49' - 167 25'        |
| 27 Lib             | Island | 1                               | -                      | 0.36         | 8 20' - 8 22'           | 167 23' - 168 18'        |
| 28 Namu            | Atoll  | 54                              | 153.53                 | 2.42         | 7 45' - 8 12'           | 167 58' - 168 59'        |
| 29 Jabat           | Island | 1                               | -                      | 0.22         | 7 44' - 7 5'            | 168 58' - 168 59'        |
| 30 Ailinglaplap    | Atoll  | 56                              | 289.69                 | 5.67         | 7 16' - 7 36'           | 168 33' - 169 44'        |
| 31 Jaluit          | Atoll  | 91                              | 266.31                 | 4.38         | 5 47' - 6 18'           | 169 24' - 169 44'        |
| 32 Kili            | Island | 1                               | -                      | 0.36         | 5 37' - 5 38'           | 169 7' - 169 8'          |
| 33 Namdrik         | Atoll  | 2                               | 3.25                   | 1.07         | 5 35' - 5 38'           | 168 5' - 168 9'          |
| 34 Ebon            | Atoll  | 22                              | 40.09                  | 2.22         | 4 34' - 4 42'           | 168 38' - 168 47'        |

## APPENDIX B MARSHALLESE ORTHOGRAPHY

The excerpts below are taken from the Peace Corps, Marshall Islands, "Marshallese Language Training Manual" (Cook, 1992) and describe some of the challenges of reading and writing in Marshallese:

NOTE: The difficulties which will plague the student of Marshallese come about in large part because the language remained unwritten until recent times. Through their attempts to translate portions of the Bible, Christian missionaries were the first to introduce literature to this area of the Pacific, transcribing the sounds of Marshallese with the Roman alphabet. These first translations of the Bible, done in the dialect of the Rālik chain, brought about the eventual predominance of this dialect.

The spellings which these missionaries introduced were erratic and the Roman alphabet was not well suited to represent the sounds of the language. It was not until recent times that a new system was developed to more accurately and consistently depict the sounds of Marshallese. The beginning of this new system is the "phonemic transcription" as it appears in Spoke Marshallese. This same system of phonemic transcription was later used in the M.E.D. [Marshallese English Dictionary] with only minor modifications, as mentioned above.

The main entry spellings of the M.E.D. were devised based upon the analysis of the phonemes of Marshallese to more consistently represent the sounds peculiar to Marshallese. These spellings are intended to be the standard for all writing in the Republic.

The differences between the common spellings and the M.E.D. standard spellings are many, and until the spelling reforms are enforced throughout the country the student will find reading the "Marshall Islands Journal" ("M.I.J."), the Marshallese Bible, or just about anything written in Marshallese to be somewhat difficult. Because it has been common for writers of Marshallese to spell words according to their individual whims, it is difficult to enumerate all the differences between the "traditional" and "standardized" spellings. To illustrate some of these differences, you will see below passages excerpted from the Marshallese Bible and the "M.I.J."

## TRADITIONAL SPELLING

### Psalm 23

- 1 Iroj ej ao *shepherd*,  
Ijamin aikwij.
- 2 Ej kakkijeik io ilo melaj in ujoj ko remmaroro,  
Im ej tel io non unin dren ko relae.
- 3 Ej kakajur io.  
Ej tel io ilo ial eo ejimwe  
Einwot an kar kallimur.
- 4 Iroj, mene ij etal ilo juon ial eo eninjik,  
Ijamin mijak jabdrewot nana,  
Bwe kwoj bed ibba,  
Im kwoj tel io im kejbarok io kin jokon eo jokonam.
- 5 Kwoj keboj juon ien mona non io  
Iman mejen ro rej kijdrate io;  
Ilo am wonmaik io kwoj kabit bora kin *oil*,  
Im kwoj kalon mejidjid *cup* eo limo.
- 6 Emol, am joij im yokwe renaj bed ibba toan wot ao mour;  
Im inaj jokwe imweo imom non indrio.

NEW STANDARD SPELLING

Psalm 23

- 1 Irooj ej aõ jabõt,  
Ijamin aikuj.
- 2 Ej kakkijeik eõ ilo melaajin wüjooj ko römmaroro,  
Im ej tõl eõ ñan wünin dän ko rölae.
- 3 Ej kakajoor eõ.  
Ej tõl eõ ilo ial eo ejim we  
Áinwõt an kar kallimur.
- 4 Irooj, meñe ij etal ilo juon ial eo eninjek,  
Ijamin mijak jabdewõt nana,  
Bwe kwõj päd ippa,  
Im kwõj tõl eõ im köjparok eõ kön jokun eo jokun am.
- 5 Kwõj köpooj juon ien möñä ñan eõ  
Im aan mejän ro rej köjdate eõ;  
Ilo am wönm aik eõ kwõj kapit böra kön weil,  
Im kwõj kalõñ mäjidjid kab eo limõ.
- 6 Emool, am jouj im iokwe rönaaj päd ippa toun wõt aõ mour;  
Im inaaj jokuwe im weo im om ñan indeeo.

**APPENDIX C  
COMPENSATION SCHEDULE/AWARDS FOR NUCLEAR AFFECTED  
MARSHALLESE**

Pursuant to §23(13) of the Marshall Islands Nuclear Claims Tribunal Act 1987, as amended, the Tribunal adopted regulations in August 1991 establishing a list of 25 medical conditions which are irrefutably presumed to be the result of the Nuclear Testing Program. Those regulations were amended by the Tribunal and approved by the Cabinet of the Republic of the Marshall Islands in January 1994 to add two additional conditions (numbers 26 and 27 below) to the presumed list. Effective October 1, 1996, the regulations were again amended by the Tribunal and approved by the Cabinet to include seven additional conditions (numbs 28-34 below).

For eligible claimants, the administratively presumed medical conditions and the amounts of compensation for each that will be paid in pro rata annual payments are as follows:

1. Leukemia (other than chronic lymphocytic leukemia) ..... \$125,000
2. Cancer of the thyroid
  - a. if recurrent or requires multiple surgical and/or ablation ..... \$75,000
  - b. if non-recurrent or does not require multiple treatment ..... \$50,000
3. Cancer of the breast .
  - a. if recurrent or requires mastectomy ..... \$100,000
  - b. if not recurrent or requires lumpectomy ..... \$75,000
4. Cancer of the pharynx ..... \$100,000
5. Cancer of the esophagus ..... \$125,000
6. Cancer of the stomach ..... \$125,000
7. Cancer of the small intestine ..... \$125,000
8. Cancer of the pancreas ..... \$125,000
9. Multiple myeloma ..... \$125,000
10. Lymphomas (except Hodgkin's disease) ..... \$100,000
11. Cancer of the bile ducts ..... \$125,000
12. Cancer of the gall bladder ..... \$125,000
13. Cancer of the liver (except if cirrhosis or hepatitis B is indicated) ..... \$125,000
14. Cancer of the colon ..... \$75,000
15. Cancer of the urinary bladder ..... \$75,000
16. Tumors of the salivary gland
  - a. if malignant ..... \$50,000
  - b. if benign and requiring surgery ..... \$37,500
  - c. if benign and not requiring surgery ..... \$12,500
17. Non-malignant thyroid nodular disease  
(unless limited to occult nodules)
  - a. if requiring total thyroidectomy ..... \$50,000

|                                                                                                                                                                                    |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| b. if requiring partial thyroidectomy .....                                                                                                                                        | \$37,500  |
| c. if not requiring thyroidectomy .....                                                                                                                                            | \$12,500  |
| 18. Cancer of the ovary .....                                                                                                                                                      | \$125,000 |
| 19. Unexplained hypothyroidism (unless thyroiditis indicated) .....                                                                                                                | \$37,500  |
| 20. Severe growth retardation due to thyroid damage .....                                                                                                                          | \$100,000 |
| 21. Unexplained bone marrow failure .....                                                                                                                                          | \$125,000 |
| 22. Meningioma.....                                                                                                                                                                | \$100,000 |
| 23. Radiation sickness diagnosed between June 30,1946 and August 18,1958, inclusive<br>.....                                                                                       | \$12,500  |
| 24. Beta burns diagnosed between June 30,1946<br>and August 18,1958, inclusive .....                                                                                               | \$12,500  |
| 25. Severe mental retardation (provided born between May and<br>September 1954, inclusive, and mother was present on<br>Rongelap or Utirik Atolls at any time in March 1954) ..... | \$100,000 |
| 26. Unexplained hyperparathyroidism .....                                                                                                                                          | \$12,500  |
| 27. Tumors of the parathyroid gland                                                                                                                                                |           |
| a. if malignant .....                                                                                                                                                              | \$50,000  |
| b. if benign and requiring surgery .....                                                                                                                                           | \$37,500  |
| c. if benign and not requiring surgery .....                                                                                                                                       | \$12,500  |
| 28. Bronchial cancer (including cancer of the lung<br>and pulmonary system) .....                                                                                                  | \$37,500  |
| 29. Cancer of the brain .....                                                                                                                                                      | \$125,000 |
| 30. Cancer of the central nervous system .....                                                                                                                                     | \$125,000 |
| 31. Cancer of the kidney .....                                                                                                                                                     | \$75,000  |
| 32. Cancer of the rectum .....                                                                                                                                                     | \$75,000  |
| 33. Cancer of the cecum .....                                                                                                                                                      | \$75,000  |
| 34. Non-melanoma skin cancer in individuals who were diagnosed as<br>having suffered beta burns under number 24 above.....                                                         | \$37,500  |

The regulations adopted by the Tribunal also provide a mechanism and set out applicable standards for (1) the consideration of non-presumed conditions for compensation in individual cases; (2) the periodic evaluation of possible modifications to the list of presumed conditions; (3) the assignment of compensation levels to non-presumed or future presumed medical conditions; and (4) adjustments to the amounts of compensation based on a claimant's age and prognosis.

To review or obtain copies of the regulations, contact Cathlina J. deBrum, Clerk of the Tribunal, P. O. Box 702, Majuro, MH 96960; telephone (692) 625-3396; facsimile (692) 625-3389; e-mail [nctmaj@ntamar.com](mailto:nctmaj@ntamar.com).

### COMPENSATION AWARDED

| CONDITION                                         | COMPENSATION | NO. | TOTAL<br>COMPENSATION | DEDUCTIONS<br># | NET<br>COMPENSATION |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Acute radiation sickness                          | \$12,500     | 72  | \$900,000             | 0               | \$900,000           |
| Benign parathyroid gland tumor requiring surgery  | \$37,500     | 2   | \$75,000              | 0               | \$75,000            |
| Benign salivary gland tumor requiring surgery     | \$37,500     | 17  | \$637,500             | \$56,250        | \$581,250           |
| Benign salivary gland tumor without surgery       | \$12,500     | 2   | \$25,000              | 0               | \$25,000            |
| Beta burns                                        | \$12,500     | 71  | \$887,500             | 0               | \$887,500           |
| Breast cancer - lumpectomy or no surgery          | \$75,000     | 10  | \$750,000             | 0               | \$750,000           |
| Breast cancer - mastectomy or recurrent           | \$100,000    | 24  | \$2,400,000           | \$25,000        | \$2,375,000         |
| Breast cancer - end stage or cause of death       | \$125,000    | 22  | \$2,750,000           | \$309,500       | \$2,440,500         |
| Bronchial cancer (lung or pulmonary)              | \$37,500     | 51  | \$1,912,500           | 0               | \$1,912,500         |
| Cancer of the bile duct                           | \$100,000    | 1   | \$100,000             | 0               | \$100,000           |
| Cancer of the brain                               | \$125,000    | 11  | \$1,375,000           | \$349,500       | \$1,025,500         |
| Cancer of the cecum                               | \$75,000     | 2   | \$150,000             | 0               | \$150,000           |
| Cancer of the colon                               | \$75,000     | 12  | \$900,000             | \$25,000        | \$875,000           |
| Cancer of the colon - end stage or cause of death | \$125,000    | 4   | \$500,000             | \$111,500       | \$388,500           |

**COMPENSATION AWARDED (cont.)**

| CONDITION                                                  | COMPENSATION | NO. | TOTAL<br>COMPENSATION | DEDUCTIONS<br># | NET<br>COMPENSATION |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Cancer of the esophagus                                    | \$125,000    | 5   | \$625,000             | \$60,000        | \$565,000           |
| Cancer of the kidney, .                                    | \$75,000     | 5   | \$375,000             | \$37,500        | \$337,500           |
| Cancer of the liver                                        | \$125,000    | 27  | \$3,375,000           | \$374,500       | \$3,000,500         |
| Cancer of the ovary                                        | \$125,000    | 40  | \$5,000,000           | \$640,000       | \$4,360,000         |
| Cancer of the pancreas                                     | \$125,000    | 10  | \$1,250,000           | \$160,000       | \$1,090,000         |
| Cancer of the pharynx                                      | \$100,000    | 7   | \$700,000             | 0               | \$700,000           |
| Cancer of pharynx - end stage or cause of death            | \$125,000    | 9   | \$1,125,000           | \$144,500       | \$980,500           |
| Cancer of the rectum                                       | \$75,000     | 8   | \$600,000             | \$37,500        | \$562,500           |
| Cancer of the small intestine                              | \$125,000    | 1   | \$125,000             | \$62,500        | \$62,500            |
| Cancer of the stomach                                      | \$125,000    | 26  | \$3,250,000           | \$393,000       | \$2,857,000         |
| Cancer of the urinary bladder .                            | \$75,000     | 4   | \$300,000             | 0               | \$300,000           |
| Cancer of the urinary bladder, end stage or cause of death | \$125,000    | 2   | \$250,000             | \$49,000        | \$201,000           |
| Hyperparathyroidism                                        | \$12,500     | 1   | \$12,500              | 0               | \$12,500            |
| Hypothyroidism .                                           | \$37,500     | 16  | \$600,000             | \$193,750       | \$406,250           |
| Leukemia                                                   | \$125,000    | 37  | \$4,625,000           | \$1,458,000     | \$3,167,000         |
| Lymphoma                                                   | \$100,000    | 18  | \$1,800,000           | \$150,000       | \$1,650,000         |
| Lymphoma - end stage or cause of death                     | \$125,000    | 11  | \$1,375,000           | \$175,000       | \$1,200,000         |
| Malignant salivary gland tumor                             | \$50,000     | 4   | \$200,000             | 0               | \$200,000           |
| Meningioma                                                 | \$100,000    | 8   | \$800,000             | \$100,000       | \$700,000           |
| Meningioma - end stage                                     | \$125,000    | 1   | \$125,000             | \$8,000         | \$117,000           |

**COMPENSATION AWARDED (cont.)**

| CONDITION                                    | COMPENSATION | NO.    | TOTAL<br>COMPENSATION | DEDUCTIONS<br># | NET<br>COMPENSATION |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------|--------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Multiple myeloma                             | \$125,000    | 3      | \$375,000             | \$38,000        | \$337,000           |
| Severe growth<br>retardation                 | \$100,000    | 2      | \$200,000             | \$75,000        | \$125,000           |
| Thyroid cancer                               | \$50,000     | 75     | \$3,750,000           | \$675,000       | \$3,075,000         |
| Thyroid cancer -<br>multiple surgeries       | \$75,000     | 25     | \$1,875,000           | \$212,500       | \$1,662,500         |
| Thyroid nodule -<br>partial<br>thyroidectomy | \$37,500     | 213    | \$7,987,500           | \$1,318,750     | \$6,668,750         |
| Thyroid nodule -<br>total<br>thyroidectomy : | \$50,000     | 13     | \$650,000             | \$125,000       | \$525,000           |
| Thyroid nodule<br>without surgery            | \$12,500     | 617    | \$7,712,500           | \$343,750       | \$7,368,750         |
| Unexplained bone<br>marrow failure           | \$125,000    | 3      | \$375,000             | \$187,500       | \$187,500           |
| TOTALS                                       |              | 1,492* | \$62,800,000          | \$7,895,500     | \$54,904,500        |

# Deductions include both prior compensation for the same medical condition and adjustments in the amount of compensation due to age.

\* The 1,4902 admitted claims involved 1,368 individuals, many of whom had more than one admitted contition.

**APPENDIX D**  
**US NUCLEAR TESTS IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

| <b>No.</b>                   | <b>Date</b> | <b>Name</b>         | <b>Atoll</b> | <b>Type</b>            | <b>Yield (kilotons)</b> |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Operation Crossroads:</i> |             |                     |              |                        |                         |
| 1                            | 6/30/46     | Able                | Bikini       | B-29 Airdrop (520 ft.) | 23                      |
| 2                            | 7/24/46     | Baker               | Bikini       | Underwater (-90 ft.)   | 23                      |
| <i>Operation Sandstone:</i>  |             |                     |              |                        |                         |
| 3                            | 4/14/48     | X-Ray               | Enewetak     | Tower (200 ft.)        | 37                      |
| 4                            | 4/30/48     | Yoke                | Enewetak     | Tower (200 ft.)        | 49                      |
| 5                            | 5/14/48     | Zebra               | Enewetak     | Tower (200 ft.)        | 18                      |
| <i>Operation Greenhouse:</i> |             |                     |              |                        |                         |
| 6                            | 4/7/51      | Dog                 | Enewetak     | Tower (300 ft.)        | 81                      |
| 7                            | 4/20/51     | Easy                | Enewetak     | Tower (300 ft.)        | 47                      |
| 8                            | 5/8/51      | George              | Enewetak     | Tower (200 ft.)        | 225                     |
| 9                            | 5/24/51     | Item                | Enewetak     | Tower (200 ft.)        | 45.5                    |
| <i>Operation Ivy:</i>        |             |                     |              |                        |                         |
| 10                           | 10/31/52    | Mike <sup>76</sup>  | Enewetak     | Surface                | 10,400                  |
| 11                           | 11/15/52    | King                | Enewetak     | Airdrop                | 500                     |
| <i>Operation Castle:</i>     |             |                     |              |                        |                         |
| 12                           | 2/28/54     | Bravo <sup>77</sup> | Bikini       | Surface                | 15,000                  |
| 13                           | 3/26/54     | Romeo               | Bikini       | Barge                  | 11,000                  |
| 14                           | 4/6/54      | Koon                | Bikini       | Surface                | 110                     |
| 15                           | 4/25/54     | Union               | Bikini       | Barge                  | 6,900                   |
| 16                           | 5/4/54      | Yankee              | Bikini       | Barge                  | 13,500                  |
| 17                           | 5/13/54     | Nectar              | Bikini       | Barge                  | 1,690                   |
| <i>Operation Redwing:</i>    |             |                     |              |                        |                         |
| 18                           | 5/4/56      | Lacrosse            | Enewetak     | Surface                | 40                      |
| 19                           | 5/20/56     | Cherokee            | Bikini       | Airdrop                | 3,800                   |
| 20                           | 5/27/56     | Zuni                | Bikini       | Surface                | 3,500                   |
| 21                           | 5/27/56     | Yuma                | Enewetak     | Tower (205 ft.)        | 0.19                    |
| 22                           | 5/30/56     | Erie                | Enewetak     | Tower (300 ft.)        | 14.9                    |
| 23                           | 6/6/56      | Seminole            | Enewetak     | Surface                | 13.7                    |
| 24                           | 6/11/56     | Flathead            | Bikini       | Barge                  | 365                     |

<sup>76</sup> Experimental thermonuclear device, produced a crater 6240 feet in diameter and 164 feet deep. Device itself weighted 164,000 lbs.

<sup>77</sup> Largest nuclear test explosion conducted by the United States, produced a crater 6000 feet in diameter and 240 feet deep. Expected yield 6 megatons (presumed range 4 to 8 megatons). Cloud top 114,000 feet.

|    |         |           |          |                       |       |
|----|---------|-----------|----------|-----------------------|-------|
| 25 | 6/11/56 | Blackfoot | Enewetak | Tower (200 ft.)       | 8     |
| 26 | 6/13/56 | Kickapoo  | Enewetak | Tower (300 ft.)       | 1.49  |
| 27 | 6/16/56 | Osage     | Enewetak | Airdrop (600-700 ft.) | 1.7   |
| 28 | 6/21/56 | Inca      | Enewetak | Tower (200 ft.)       | 15.2  |
| 29 | 6/25/56 | Dakota    | Bikini   | Barge                 | 1,100 |
| 30 | 7/2/56  | Mohawk    | Enewetak | Tower (300 ft.)       | 360   |
| 31 | 7/8/56  | Apache    | Enewetak | Barge                 | 1,850 |
| 32 | 7/10/56 | Navajo    | Bikini   | Barge                 | 4,500 |
| 33 | 7/20/56 | Tewa      | Bikini   | Barge                 | 5,000 |
| 34 | 7/21/56 | Huron     | Enewetak | Barge                 | 250   |

*Operation Hardtack I:*

|    |         |                        |                            |                       |            |
|----|---------|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 35 | 4/28/58 | Yucca                  | Nr. Enewetak <sup>78</sup> | Balloon (86,000 ft.)  | 1.7        |
| 36 | 5/5/58  | Cactus                 | Enewetak                   | Surface               | 18         |
| 37 | 5/11/58 | Fir                    | Bikini                     | Barge                 | 1,360      |
| 38 | 5/11/58 | Butternut              | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 81         |
| 39 | 5/12/58 | Koa                    | Enewetak                   | Surface               | 1,370      |
| 40 | 5/16/58 | Wahoo                  | Enewetak                   | Underwater (-500 ft.) | 9          |
| 41 | 5/20/58 | Holly                  | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 5.9        |
| 42 | 5/21/58 | Nutmeg                 | Bikini                     | Barge                 | 25.1       |
| 43 | 5/26/58 | Yellowwood             | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 330        |
| 44 | 5/26/58 | Magnolia               | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 57         |
| 45 | 5/30/58 | Tobacco                | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 11.6       |
| 46 | 5/31/58 | Sycamore               | Bikini                     | Barge                 | 92         |
| 47 | 6/2/58  | Rose                   | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 15         |
| 48 | 6/8/58  | Umbrella               | Enewetak                   | Underwater (-150 ft.) | 8          |
| 49 | 6/10/58 | Maple                  | Bikini                     | Barge                 | 213        |
| 50 | 6/14/58 | Aspen                  | Bikini                     | Barge                 | 319        |
| 51 | 6/14/58 | Walnut                 | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 1,450      |
| 52 | 6/18/58 | Linden                 | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 11         |
| 53 | 6/27/58 | Redwood                | Bikini                     | Barge                 | 412        |
| 54 | 6/27/58 | Elder                  | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 880        |
| 55 | 6/28/58 | Oak                    | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 8,900      |
| 56 | 6/29/58 | Hickory                | Bikini                     | Barge                 | 14         |
| 57 | 7/1/58  | Sequoia                | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 5.2        |
| 58 | 7/2/58  | Cedar                  | Bikini                     | Barge                 | 220        |
| 59 | 7/5/58  | Dogwood                | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 397        |
| 60 | 7/12/58 | Poplar                 | Bikini                     | Barge                 | 9,300      |
| 61 | 7/14/58 | Scaevola <sup>79</sup> | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 0. ("low") |
| 62 | 7/17/58 | Pisonia                | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 255        |
| 63 | 7/22/58 | Juniper                | Bikini                     | Barge                 | 65         |
| 64 | 7/22/58 | Olive                  | Enewetak                   | Barge                 | 202        |

<sup>78</sup> Balloon detonation at 12°37'N, 169°01'E, approximately 85 miles northeast of Enewetak.

<sup>79</sup> "Safety Experiment."

|    |         |        |            |         |               |
|----|---------|--------|------------|---------|---------------|
| 65 | 7/26/58 | Pine   | Enewetak . | Barge   | 2,000         |
| 66 | 8/6/58  | Quince | Enewetak   | Surface | 0. ("fizzle") |
| 67 | 8/18/58 | Fig    | Enewetak   | Surface | 0. ("low")    |

**TOTAL YIELD      108,496.18**

**Sources:**

Addendum to "Compilation of Local Fallout Data From Test Detonations 1945-1962  
 Extracted From DASA 1251" Volume II - Oceanic U.S. Tests, 1 May 1979, prepared by  
 General Electric Company-TEMPO under contract to the Defense Nuclear Agency  
 (publication number DNA 1251-2-EX).

"Nuclear Weapons Databook Working Papers - Known U.S. Nuclear Test" January 1989,  
 published by Natural Resources Defense Council.

U.S. Department of Energy "List of Declassified Yields of Tests Conducted in the Pacific  
 Prior to 1958 - 1961 Moratorium," December 1993.

**APPENDIX E**  
**US ATMOSPHERIC NUCLEAR TESTS AT NEVADA TEST SITE**

[NOTE: Tests listed are those conducted during the periods from January 21, 1951, to October 31, 1958, and from June 30 to July 31, 1962, the designated periods of exposure in the U.S. Radiation Exposure Compensation Act of 1990. Tests detonated in a shaft or tunnel have been excluded]

| <u>No.</u>                            | <u>Date</u> | <u>Name</u> | <u>Site</u>   | <u>Type</u>        | <u>Yield (kilotons)</u> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Operation Ranger:</i>              |             |             |               |                    |                         |
| 1                                     | 1/27/51     | Able        | NTS (FF)      | Airdrop (1060 ft.) | 1                       |
| 2                                     | 1/28/51     | Baker       | NTS (FF)      | Airdrop (1080 ft.) | 8                       |
| 3                                     | 2/1/51      | Easy        | NTS (FF)      | Airdrop (1080 ft.) | 1                       |
| 4                                     | 2/2/51      | Baker-2     | NTS (FF)      | Airdrop (1100 ft.) | 8                       |
| 5                                     | 2/6/51      | Fox         | NTS (FF)      | Airdrop (1435 ft.) | 22                      |
| <br><i>Operation Buster Jangle:</i>   |             |             |               |                    |                         |
| 6                                     | 10/22/51    | Able        | NTS (Area 7)  | Tower (100 ft.)    | <0.1                    |
| 7                                     | 10/28/51    | Baker       | NTS (Area 7)  | Airdrop (1118 ft.) | 3.5                     |
| 8.                                    | 10/30/51    | Charlie     | NTS (Area 7)  | Airdrop (1132 ft.) | 14                      |
| 9                                     | 11/1/51     | Dog         | NTS (Area 7)  | Airdrop (1417 ft.) | 21                      |
| 10                                    | 11/5/51     | Easy        | NTS (Area 7)  | Airdrop (1314 ft.) | 31                      |
| 11                                    | 11/19/51    | Sugar       | NTS (Area 9)  | Surface            | 1.2                     |
| 12                                    | 11/29/51    | Uncle       | NTS (Area 10) | Crater (-17 ft.)   | 1.2                     |
| <br><i>Operation Tumbler-Snapper:</i> |             |             |               |                    |                         |
| 13                                    | 4/1/52      | Able        | NTS (Area 5)  | Airdrop (793 ft.)  | 1                       |
| 14                                    | 4/15/52     | Baker       | NTS (Area 7)  | Airdrop (1109 ft.) | 1                       |
| 15                                    | 4/22/52     | Charlie     | NTS (Area 7)  | Airdrop (3447 ft.) | 31                      |
| 16                                    | 5/1/52      | Dog         | NTS (Area 7)  | Airdrop (1040 ft.) | 19                      |
| 17                                    | 5/1/52      | Easy        | NTS (Area 1)  | Tower (300 ft.)    | 12                      |
| 18                                    | 5/25/52     | Fox         | NTS (Area 4)  | Tower (300 ft.)    | 11                      |
| 19                                    | 6/1/52      | George      | NTS (Area 3)  | Tower (300 ft.)    | 15                      |
| 20                                    | 6/5/52      | How         | NTS (Area 2)  | Tower (300 ft.)    | 14                      |
| <br><i>Operation Upshot-Knothole:</i> |             |             |               |                    |                         |
| 21                                    | 3/17/53     | Annie       | NTS (Area 3)  | Tower (300 ft.)    | 16                      |
| 22                                    | 3/24/53     | Nancy       | NTS (Area 4)  | Tower (300 ft.)    | 24                      |
| 23                                    | 3/31/53     | Ruth        | NTS (Area 7)  | Tower (300 ft.)    | 0.2                     |
| 24                                    | 4/6/53      | Dixie       | NTS (Area 7)  | Airdrop (6022 ft.) | 11                      |
| 25                                    | 4/11/53     | Ray         | NTS (Area 4)  | Tower (100 ft.)    | 0.2                     |
| 26                                    | 4/18/53     | Badger      | NTS (Area 2)  | Tower (300 ft.)    | 23                      |

|    |         |        |              |                         |    |
|----|---------|--------|--------------|-------------------------|----|
| 27 | 4/25/53 | Simon  | NTS (Area 1) | Tower (300 ft.)         | 43 |
| 28 | 5/8/53  | Encore | NTS (Area 5) | Airdrop (2423 ft.)      | 27 |
| 29 | 5/19/53 | Harry  | NTS (Area 3) | Tower (300 ft.)         | 32 |
| 30 | 5/25/53 | Grable | NTS (Area 5) | Gun (airburst, 524 ft.) | 15 |
| 31 | 6/4/53  | Climax | NTS (Area 7) | Airdrop (1334 ft.)      | 61 |

*Operation Teapot:*

|    |         |                 |               |                      |    |
|----|---------|-----------------|---------------|----------------------|----|
| 32 | 2/18/55 | Wasp            | NTS (Area 7)  | Airdrop (762 ft.)    | 1  |
| 33 | 2/22/55 | Moth            | NTS (Area 3)  | Tower (300 ft.)      | 2  |
| 34 | 3/1/55  | Tesla           | NTS (Area 9b) | Tower (300 ft.)      | 7  |
| 35 | 3/1/55  | Turk            | NTS (Area 2)  | Tower (500 ft.)      | 43 |
| 36 | 3/12/55 | Hornet          | NTS (Area 3a) | Tower (300 ft.)      | 4  |
| 37 | 3/22/55 | Bee             | NTS (Area 7)  | Tower (500 ft.)      | 8  |
| 38 | 3/23/55 | Ess             | NTS (Area 10) | Crater (-67 ft.)     | 1  |
| 39 | 3/29/55 | Apple-1         | NTS (Area 4)  | Tower (500 ft.)      | 14 |
| 40 | 3/29/55 | Wasp Prime      | NTS (Area 7)  | Airdrop (737 ft.)    | 3  |
| 41 | 4/6/55  | HA (high alt.)  | NTS (Area 1)  | Airdrop (36,620 ft.) |    |
| 42 | 4/9/55  | Post            | NTS (Area 9c) | Tower (300 ft.)      | 2  |
| 43 | 4/15/55 | MET (Mil. Eff.) | NTS (FF)      | Tower (400 ft.)      | 22 |
| 44 | 5/5/55  | Apple-2         | NTS (Area 1)  | Tower (500 ft.)      | 29 |
| 45 | 5/15/55 | Zucchini        | NTS (Area 7)  | Tower (500 ft.)      | 28 |

*Operation Plumbbob:*

|    |         |                |               |                    |         |
|----|---------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|---------|
| 46 | 5/28/57 | Boltzman       | NTS           | Tower              | 12      |
| 47 | 6/2/57  | Franklin       | NTS           | Tower              | 0.14    |
| 48 | 6/5/57  | Lassen         | NTS           | Balloon            | 0.0005  |
| 49 | 6/18/57 | Wilson         | NTS           | Balloon            | 10      |
| 50 | 6/24/57 | Priscilla      | NTS           | Balloon            | 37      |
| 51 | 7/5/57  | Hood           | NTS           | Balloon            | 74      |
| 52 | 7/15/57 | Diablo         | NTS           | Tower              | 17      |
| 53 | 7/19/57 | John           | NTS           | Rocket             | About 2 |
| 54 | 7/24/57 | Kepler         | NTS           | Tower              | 10      |
| 55 | 7/25/57 | Owens          | NTS           | Balloon            | 9.7     |
| 56 | 8/7/57  | Stokes         | NTS           | Balloon            | 19      |
| 57 | 8/18/57 | Shasta         | NTS           | Tower              | 17      |
| 58 | 8/23/57 | Doppler        | NTS           | Balloon            | 11      |
| 59 | 8/30/57 | Franklin Prime | NTS           | Balloon            | 4.7     |
| 60 | 8/31/57 | Smoky          | NTS           | Tower              | 44      |
| 61 | 9/2/57  | Galileo        | NTS           | Tower              | 11      |
| 62 | 9/6/57  | Wheeler        | NTS           | Balloon            | .197    |
| 63 | 9/8/57  | Laplace        | NTS           | Balloon            | 1       |
| 64 | 9/14/57 | Fizeau         | NTS (Area 3b) | Tower (500 ft.)    | 11      |
| 65 | 9/16/57 | Newton         | NTS (Area 7b) | Balloon (1500 ft.) | 12      |
| 66 | 9/23/57 | Whitney        | NTS (Area 2)  | Tower (500 ft.)    | 19      |

|    |         |            |              |                    |    |
|----|---------|------------|--------------|--------------------|----|
| 67 | 9/28/57 | Charleston | NTS (Area 9) | Balloon (1500 ft.) | 12 |
| 68 | 10/7/57 | Morgan     | NTS (Area 9) | Balloon (500 ft.)  | 8  |

*Operation Hardtack II:*

|     |          |            |     |         |       |
|-----|----------|------------|-----|---------|-------|
| 69  | 9/19/58  | Eddy       | NTS | Balloon | .083  |
| 70  | 9/29/58  | Mora       | NTS | Balloon | 2     |
| .71 | 10/10/58 | Quay       | NTS | Tower   | .079  |
| 72  | 10/13/58 | Lea        | NTS | Balloon | 1.4   |
| 73  | 10/15/58 | Hamilton   | NTS | Tower   | .0012 |
| 74  | 10/16/58 | Dona Ana   | NTS | Balloon | .037  |
| 75  | 10/18/58 | Rio Arriba | NTS | Tower   | .090  |
| 76  | 10/22/58 | Socorro    | NTS | Balloon | 6     |
| 77  | 10/22/58 | Wrangell   | NTS | Balloon | .115  |
| 78  | 10/22/58 | Rushmore   | NTS | Balloon | .188  |
| 79  | 10/26/58 | Sanford    | NTS | Balloon | 4.9   |
| 80  | 10/26/58 | De Baca    | NTS | Balloon | 2.2   |
| 81  | 10/29/58 | Humboldt   | NTS | Tower   | .0078 |
| 82  | 10/30/58 | Santa Fe   | NTS | Balloon | 1.3   |

*Operation Storax:*

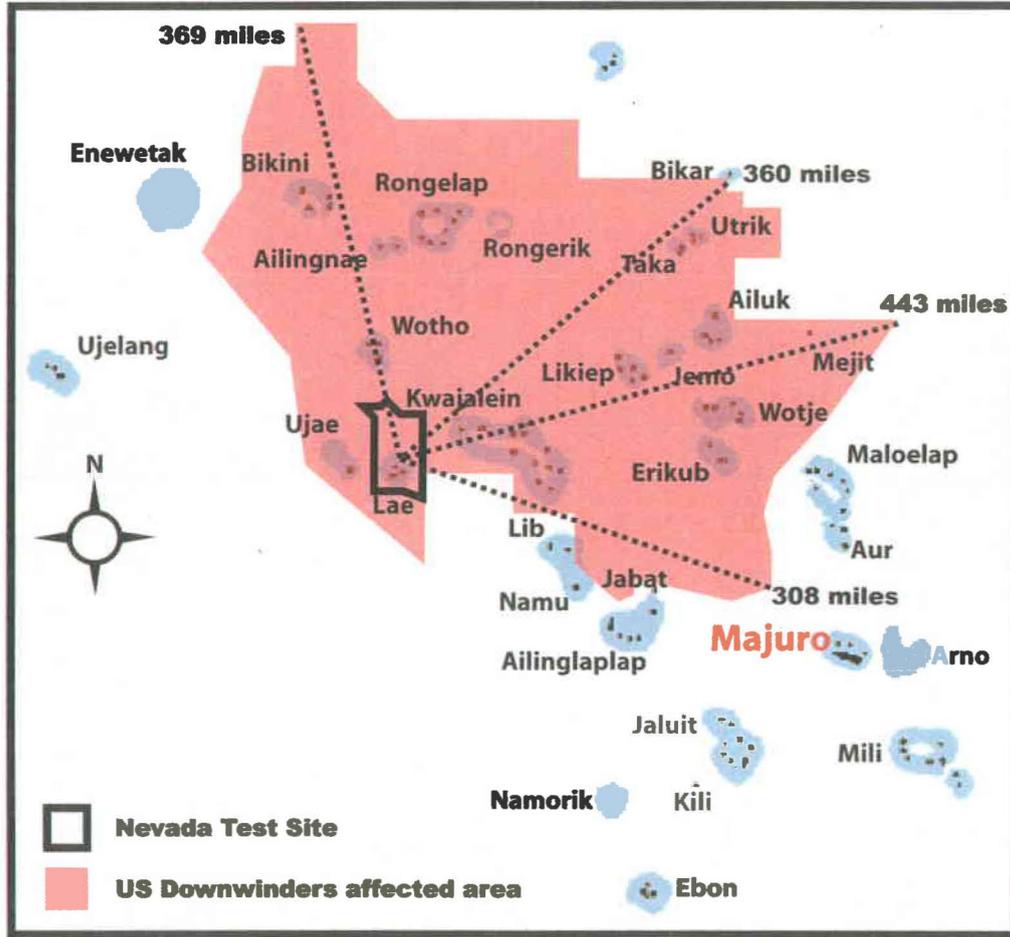
|    |         |                  |     |                   |       |
|----|---------|------------------|-----|-------------------|-------|
| 83 | 7/6/62  | Sedan            | NTS | Crater (-320 ft.) | 100   |
| 84 | 7/1/62  | Little Feller II | NTS | Surface           | "Low" |
| 85 | 7/11/62 | Johnny Boy       | NTS | Surface           | 0.5   |
| 86 | 7/14/62 | Small Boy        | NTS | Surface           | "Low" |
| 87 | 7/17/62 | Little Feller I  | NTS | Surface           | "Low" |

**TOTAL YIELD (EXCLUDING TESTS INDICATED AS "LOW") 1,096.0385**

Source:

Addendum to "Compilation of Local Fallout Data From Test Detonations 1945-1962 .  
 Extracted From DASA 1251" Volume II - Oceanic U.S. Tests, 1 May 1979, prepared by  
 General Electric Company-TEMPO under contract to the Defense Nuclear Agency  
 (publication number DNA 1251-2-EX).

**APPENDIX F  
MAP OF "DOWNWINDERS"**



## APPENDIX G "HOW THE SAIL CAME TO THE OUTRIGGER"

Once long ago on the island of Woja, Ailinglaplap, there was a family of ten brothers living together. Each brother wanted to rule of the others. The desire to be the leader got worse. Once day these brothers agreed they would have a canoe race. They decided to race their canoes far away from Woja Island, across the wide lagoon, to Jeh Island. It lay a great distance to the east. They felt sure that the best man would win the race. On the day of the race, all the brothers lined up their canoes along the shore of a place which is still now called Jebro. They started out on the big race. They agreed that whoever first landed at Jeh would become *Irooj*.

The canoes of the ten brothers were built for speed. Each man had made his own. Each one had carved a special paddle for the great race.

At last came the day. 'The first and best starting place belongs to me,' said Timur, the eldest.

The other brothers arranged their canoes along the shore according to their ages. The boy, Jebro, had the last place, for he was the youngest. The other canoes were between the places held by Timur and Jebro.

In those days, sails had not yet been invented. A man used a pole with which to push his canoe along in shallow water. He used a paddle in deeper water. So, all of the brothers were paddling in the open sea. The oldest brother, Timur, got the lead, and Jebro, the youngest, was the last one in the race. While these brothers were racing toward Jeh, their mother Liktanur was standing on the beach of one small island in Aineu Village, the island is shaped like a sail.

The mother of those ten brothers was a wise, beautiful woman who lived high above them, in the sky. She came down to earth from time to time to be with her family. Her name was Liktanur. She knew about the race that her sons had planned. She came down to the beach, just as they were about to start. She had brought along some large bundles, but she did not explain what was in them.

She went to Timur, her eldest son, who was first in line with his fast racing canoe. He thought to himself, 'My mother and her bundles will load my canoe too much. If I take her along, I might lose the race.' Timur told her to wait for his next brother because he was in a hurry. . . .

And so it was with the other brothers. None was willing to take her along in the race. Finally her youngest son Jebro was approaching the island. 'Son, please give me a ride,' she called. Jebro heard his mother. He pulled over to the shore. When she asked Jebro, he said, 'Of course, Mother. Come with me and welcome.'

That day, the wind was blowing strongly from the east. The brother knew that they would have to paddle hard all the way. But even so, Jebro was willing to take along his mother and her bundles.

The canoes of nine of the brothers leaped over the water. Each man paddled with great strength and skill. Soon they were far apart on the horizon, but Liktanur kept Jebro on the beach for a while.

'Don't worry because you are late in the race,' she said. 'You'll catch up with your brothers.'

Then she asked him to loosen the strong of her large bundles, and Jebro did so. There was strange looking gear, such as he never had seen before. Among such things as poles, hardwood blocks, ropes, and twine, he saw a large piece of strong woven material.

'What's this?' he asked.

'Something new, Jebro,' replied his mother.

'Who made it?'

'I did, my son. I wove strips of pandanus leaves, then I sewed the strips together into this three-cornered shape.'

'What is this thing to be called?'

'It's a sail. We'll hang it on a mast and put it on the canoe. It will fill up with wind and push your canoe along fast.'

'Faster than I can paddle?'

'You won't need to paddle at all, my son. The sail will do all the hardest work for you. But you must learn how to put it up and to handle it, and how to steer the canoe with a paddle.' . . .

Jebro was delighted when the sail filled with air and the breeze carried them fast over the high waves. He looked for his brother, but by that time, they were a long way ahead. They had paddled far apart from each other and were out of sight, among the swells and the waves.

Liktanur showed Jebro how to get speed by tacking, first to starboard, the right side, and then to port, the left side. The canoe flew over the water like a great bird, and he was happy and excited. He and his mother passed the other canoes, one by one, without being seen by his brothers.

At last, they were ahead of all except Timur. Then they came to him. He was surprised to see the sailing canoe. 'Give me the boat! Exchange with me at once!' he shouted.

'I'll have to give Timur my canoe,' said Jebro.

'Very well,' said Liktanur. 'We'll get into his canoe and let him have this one. But take along with you the *repakak* and the *jurikli* [boom socket] from one end of the canoe. Leave him only those at the other end.'

So Timur got into the sailing canoe. Jebro and his mother paddled ahead in Timur's canoe and were soon hidden from him by high wave. Timur sailed very fast, but when he tried to tack, he had trouble, because of the missing gear. The canoe would go only one way. Jebro reached the shore of Jeh long before the others.

His mother smiled at him. 'Hide Timur's canoe in the brush and come with me,' she said.

She led Jebro to the ocean side of the island, where they would not be seen from the lagoon side. Near the shore, there was a pool of clear water. She bathed her son, then she rubbed him with perfumed oil. She gave him a new skirt of the inner bark of the *loo* [hibiscus] tree and some beautiful necklaces of colored seashells. She put sweet-smelling white flowers around his head.

Then she stood in front of him and spoke. 'I give you the kingly name of Jeleilon,' she said.

The other brothers thought that Jebro and their mother had been left far behind. Even Timur thought so, for he did not see them, when he landed. He was the first of Jebro's brothers to come to Jeh Island. He was sure that he had won the race. . . . He thought that he was the first one to set foot on the island and he began to shout and call people. He said that he was *Irooj*.

Then the other brothers arrived at the beach and saw Timur there. They all shouted.

'*Irooj* Timur – ooo! Timur is *Irooj*!'

Then Liktanur said to Jebro, 'Now is the time to go over and show yourself to your brothers.'

Jebro, bathed and oiled and decorated, walked over to his brothers and stood before them. They looked at him in surprise. Then came Liktanur, their mother, and the people of Jeh Island, shouting:

'*Irooj* Jeleilon...oo! Jeleilon is *Irooj*! When Jebro reached the south, the seas became calm, and he loved mankind!'

As so Jebro became *Irooj*. Timur was angry. He turned his face away from Jebro and looked back toward the south. He told Jebro that they would not see each other again. To this day, Timur faces to the south in the sky. When their life on earth was over, the ten brothers went to live in heaven with their mother. They are the bright stars by which men steer their boars on lone voyages. From their places in heave, Timur and Jebro can never see each other. The only star which is close to Jebro is his mother, Liktanur.

**APPENDIX H**  
**OTTO VON KOTZEBUE IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

**1816**

May 21 Utirik (Kutusoff) and Taka (Suwaroff) sighted and named.

**1817**

- January 1 Mejit sighted and designated New Year's Island  
 January 5 Landing at Wotje, "Goat Island"  
 January 15 Other islands of Wotje visited. Meeting with Rarik on Ormed/Wodmej;  
 Meeting with Lagediak on Otdia/Wotje; Meeting with Langin on Edmedio;  
 Meeting with Labugar on island south of Edmedio; Wotje Atoll named  
 Romanzoff Islands
- February 7 Eregup/Erekub named Tschitschagof. Sighted only.  
 February 10 Kawen/ Maloelap islander interaction  
 Feb. 12 Tamon (*Irooj*) Labadeny of Tarua/Tarua; Kawen described as more lush  
 than Otdia/Wotje; Meeting with Langedju of Olot, near Tarua.
- February 16 Tarua, Kawen/Maloelap until February 19th.  
 February 19 Airik, Kawen/Maloelap  
 February 20 Meeting with Irooj Labeloa of Kawen island  
 February 22 Visit Langedju at Olot, near Tarua Kawen/Maloelap  
 February 23 Departed. Kawen named Araktschejef Islands (after a general); Sighted  
 Pigen, Aur. Meet Kadu and Eddock from Ulle /Woleai. Meet Irooj  
 Tigidien, 'Tamon' of Aur.
- February 24 Stobual Island, Aur. Meet three chiefs: Tiuraur, chief of Wotje, father of  
 Rarik, Lebeuliet, chief of Kawen, and Tigidien. Learned of Lamary who  
 controlled Ratak from Aur to Bikar, who was assembling a force to move  
 South to attack Majuro, since Majuro islanders pillage Wotje because  
 Majuro's population is so large.
- February 26 Aur named Traversey, after the Russian Minister of Marine.  
 February 28 Sighted Wotje again, then Ailu//Ailuk  
 March 1 Contact islanders at Ailuk.  
 March 2 Went ashore on Ailuk. Met Langemui, Irooj of Ailuk who resides at  
 Capeniur.
- March 4 Visit Capeniur to meet with Langemui for geography lesson about Ralik  
 chain and the chiefs there, Lagadack-nanait and Labondugin. Odja  
 /Ailinglaplap, is considered the most populous and largest of the Ralik  
 group.
- March 13 Leave Ailuk, names it Krusenstern after the man with whom Kotzebue first  
 traveled

Viewed Utirik (recognizes it as Kutusoff from May 1816 records). Viewed  
 Taka/Togai. Four canoes appeared, about to repeat previous year's  
 ceremony when islanders recognized Kadu. Meet Lamary on sea.

March 14-15 Tried to reach Bigar/Bikar, but current too strong and pushed them too far West.

**(Journey to Alaska and back to Radack)**

October 30 Sighted Wotmej, Wotje

October 31 Wodmej, Wotje -- Kadu greets friends.

November 4 Departed from Wotje; pass Erikub

November 5 Sighted Likiep, greeted islanders, named atoll Count Hayden (after Commodore)

**1824**

April 28 Sighted Wotje, reunion with friends

May 6 Leave Wotje, pass Aur. Charted Likiep, without landing.

**APPENDIX I  
AMERICAN MISSIONARIES TO THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

| <u>Name</u>               | <u>Years of Service</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Edward and Sarah Doane    | 1857-1859               |
| Luther and Louise Gulick  | 1859-1860               |
| Jessie Hoppin             | 1890                    |
| Edmund and Harriet Pease  | 18??-1894               |
| George and Nancy Pierson  | 1857-1859               |
| Clinton and Isadore Rife  | 1894                    |
| Benjamin and Lydia Snow   | 1862-1869               |
| Alfred and Lavinia Walkup | 1880-1888               |
| Joel and Louisa Whitney   | 1871-1881               |

**Hawaiian Missionaries to the Marshall Islands**

| <u>Name</u>               | <u>Years of Service/Location</u>                             |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hezekiah Aea              | 1860-1869 Ebon<br>1869 -1871 Majuro                          |
| David Kapali and wife     | 1862 Ebon<br>1864 Namodrik<br>1866 Jaluit                    |
| J.A. Kaelemakule and wife | 1862- Ebon<br>1864 Namodrik                                  |
| Simeon Kabelemauna        | 1870 -1876 (died at Mili)                                    |
| Mary Kaaialii*            | 1870 -1876 Mili (with Simeon)<br>1877-1881 Mili (with Nawaa) |
| S.P.K. Nawaa              | 1877-1881 Mili                                               |
| Samuel Kaaia              | 1871-1874 Namodrik<br>1874-1882 Arno                         |
| Samuel W. Kekuewa         | 1873-1883 Majuro                                             |

\* *After Simeon Kabelemauna's death Mary Kaaialii married his brother S.P.K. Nawaa.*

Source: Sam, Harry 1988: 30-31

APPENDIX J  
ADMIRAL NIMITZ PROCLAMATION

PROCLAMATION NO. 1

TO THE PEOPLE OF  
THE MARSHALL ISLANDS:

In prosecuting their war against the Japanese it has become necessary for the armed forces of the United States under my command to occupy this and other islands of the Marshall Islands.

It is the policy of the United States Forces not to make war upon the civilian inhabitants of these islands but to permit them to continue their normal lives and occupations in a peaceable manner, so far as war necessities and their own behavior permit.

In order to preserve law and order and provide for the safety and welfare both of my forces and of yourselves, it is necessary to establish Military Government in the islands occupied by United States Forces.

WHEREFORE, I, C. W. Nimitz, Admiral, United States Navy, Commander in Chief, United States Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas and Military Governor of the Marshall Island Areas occupied by United States Forces, do hereby proclaim as follows:

I

All powers of government and jurisdiction in the occupied territory and over the inhabitants therein, and final administrative responsibility, are vested in me as Admiral, United States Navy, Commanding the United States Forces of occupation, and Military Governor, and will be exercised through subordinate commanders by my direction.

II

The exercise of the powers of the Emperor of Japan shall be suspended during the period of military occupation.

III

All persons will obey promptly all orders given by me or under my authority; must not commit acts hostile to the United States Forces under my command or in any way helpful to the Japanese; must not commit acts of violence or any act which may disturb public safety in any way.

IV

Your existing personal and property rights will be respected and your existing laws and customs remain in force and effect, except to the extent that it is necessary for me in the exercise of my powers and duties to change them.

V

Until further notice, United States dollar currency, overprinted "Hawaii" and United States coins will be legal tender in the occupied territory and all persons are warned against accepting or dealing in any other currency whatever, except as permitted under my orders.

VI

As long as you remain peaceable and comply with the orders of the United States Forces of occupation, you will be subject to no greater interference than is made necessary by war conditions, and may go about your normal occupations without fear.

VII

Further proclamations and orders will be issued by me or under my authority from time to time. They will state what is required of you and what you are forbidden to do and will be displayed at police stations and in your villages.

C. W. NIMITZ,  
Admiral, United States Navy,  
Commander in Chief,  
United States Pacific Fleet and  
Pacific Ocean Areas,  
MILITARY GOVERNOR OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Date \_\_\_\_\_

布告第一號  
マーシャル群島の民ニ告グ

行爲又ハ其程度如何ノ間ハ其要ニ切當ニ及ビ行動出ス  
可カラズ

布告第一號

マール諸島々民ニ告フ

本官陛下、米國軍ハ日本人ニ對シ戰爭遂行上マール諸島中本島並ニ他島占領ニ必要生セリ

我々米國軍ノ原則トシテ本島居住民ニ對シ戰爭行為ヲ為スモ、非ス唯軍略ノ許ス範圍内及島民ノ行動如何ニ依リ當該島民ヲシテ平常ノ生活並ニ業務ヲ安全ニ持續セシムルニ非ナラス

治安維持及我々米國軍並ニ島民ノ安寧福祉確保上我々米國軍ニ依リ其占領諸島ニ軍政宣布ノ必要トス

故ニ本官

米國太平洋艦隊及太平洋區域司令官兼マール諸島占領地帯軍政長官海軍大將ニミツ

茲ニ左記、如ク布告ス

一 占領地及其ノ住民ニ關スル凡テノ統治及司法權並ニ最高行政權ハ米國占領軍司令官兼軍政長官ニ本官

、權能ニ歸屬シ本官ノ監督下ニ部下指揮官ニ依リ行使スル

一 軍事占領中日本皇帝ノ主權行使ヲ停止ス

一 本島民ハ本官又ハ部下指揮官ノ公布スル凡テノ命令ヲ

迅速ニ遵守シ本官陛下、米國軍ニ對シ敵對行動又ハ何事ヲ問フモ本人ニ有利ナル援助ヲ為サズ且ニ總

行為又ハ其程度如何ヲ問ハズ治安ニ妨害ヲ及ス行動ニ出ツ可カラズ

一 我々戰權行使ニ當リ其必要ヲ生セサル限リ個人ノ生命財產ニ關スル權利及現行法規並ニ風習ヲ尊重ス

一 進テ通告アル進テ占領地内ニ於テ中哇ト印シタル米國紙幣並ニ米國貨幣ヲ法幣トシ我々命令ノ依リ規定シタル以外ノ凡テノ通貨引受或ハ之ニ依リ取引ヲ禁ス

一 我々米國占領軍ノ法規ニ從順シ平穩ヲ保ツ人民ハ戰時必要以上ノ干渉ヲ加ヘス安心シテ日常ノ業務ニ從事スヘシ

一 今後凡テノ布告並ニ命令ハ本官又ハ本官ノ指定シタル權威者ニ依リ逐次發表サレ之ニ依リ島民ニ對スル我々要求又ハ禁止事項ヲ明記シ各級官署署長並ニ部落ニ揭示サル

ヘシ

西曆 年 月 日

米國太平洋及太平洋區域司令官兼  
マール諸島軍政長官

海軍大將ニミツ

July 1944

FIRST PROCLAMATION

TO THE MARSHALL PEOPLE

My American soldiers are fighting the Japanese soldiers. We Americans must come to these Marshall Islands in order to fight the soldiers of Japan.

American fighting forces do not want to make war on the Marshall people. We Americans want the Marshallese not to suffer wherever we do not have to make changes because of war. And we Americans want the Marshallese to be friendly to us.

In order to protect the Marshallese and the Americans, it is necessary to make the commanders of the armed forces rule in the Marshall Islands.

Therefore I, C. W. NIMITZ, high commander of American warships and fighting men in the Pacific Ocean and Governor of these Marshall Islands declare these words to you now:

1.

In these islands all power belongs to me, high commander of American warships and armed forces which are here and Governor of these islands. And my officers will rule by my laws.

2.

The Japanese authorities will not give laws to the Marshallese when American soldiers are here.

3.

All Marshallese will obey all my laws promptly and they will obey my officers. Marshallese shall not be hostile to American troops and shall not help the Japanese troops. You shall not destroy anything or do anything bad to any person.

4.

I desire that the Marshallese keep their houses, their property, their customs, if the Americans do not have to upset them.

5.

Good money now in these Marshall Islands is American money only, called dollar. You shall not buy or sell with Japanese money.

6.

If you are friendly to us and obey the laws of the American forces, we will not disturb you more than we have to because of the war.

7.

I and my officers will write new laws later on. These laws will tell you what is good for you to do and what is forbidden. You will see these laws in the town and in the police station.

I, C. W. NEBITZ, High Commander  
of American Warships and Fighting Forces  
in the Pacific Ocean  
and Governor of these Marshall Islands

Day            Month            Year

/Note: This proclamation and the two succeeding notices were translated by the LAND District Intelligence Office and checked with a native Marshallese.

/The word Komissar was used in German times to indicate the highest resident authority in the island group. It is considered an adequate term for Governor and will be understood by middle-aged adults who will also be best able to read their own native language.

/Dri Kian 'man of the law' is used for commander and officer in distinction from the native word for chief./

K E N N A N M O K T A

NON DRI MARSHALL

Ro dri tarinae aō in Amerika rej irre ro dri tarinae in Nippon. Dri Amerika kimwij aiku; itok ion ailiē kein Marshall bwe irre ro dri tarinae in Nippon.

Jar in tarinae jen Amerika re jab kōnan tarinaik dri Marshall. Kim dri Amerika kim kōnan bwe dri Marshall ejelok iſten ilo jikin otemej; ia kim jab aiku; ukote kin tarinae. Im dri Amerika re kōnan bwe dri Marshall ren jolj hōn kim.

Bwe kejbarok dri Marshall im dri Amerika, e aiku; in keiroj ro dri kien in jar tarinae ion ailiē kein Marshall.

Inen Na, C. W. NIMITZ Dri Kien Elap in Manwa kein im Dri Tarinae in Amerika ilo Pacific Lousto, im Na Komissar in ailiē kein Marshall, ij ba nan kein hōn kom kiō:

1.

Ilo ailiē kein kajur otemej; kajur aō, Na Dri Kien Elap in Manwa kein Amerika im Jar in Tarinae re ber-ijin, im Komissar in ailiē kein. Im Ro Dri Kien aō re naj iroj; kin kien ko aō.

2.

Ro dri bebe in Nippon ren jab jiroē kien ko hōn dri Marshall ke jar tarinae in Amerika re ber-ijin.

3.

Aolep dri Marshall ren mōkaj bokake hōn kien otemej; ao im ren bokake dri kien ro aō. Dri Marshall ren jab kijeerate hōn dri tarinae in Amerika, im jab jiboē dri tarinae in Nippon. Komin jab kokkure ak jab kōmōne men nana hōn armij otemej.

4.

I kōnan bwe ro dri Marshall ren rebij lmeir, ane ko air, kab manit ko air, ke ro dri Amerika re jab aiku; ukote man kein.

5.

Emōn mōni kiō ilo ailiē kein Marshall e mōni in Amerika wōt, mōni etan dala. Komin jab wie ak wiaka kin mōni in Nippon.

6.

Elaŋe kom joi; hōn kin in komin bokake kien ko air in jar tarinae in Amerika, kinwij jab naj aŋte kom elaplok jen awij aiku; kin tarinae.

7.

Na in dri kien sō kinwij naj jeje kien ko re keal tokelik. Kien kan re naj kwalok men ko enōn ami kōmōne in men ko re jab melin. Kom naj lo kien kan ilo jikin kwalok in ilo imān dri kabwijrok.

Na, G. W. NIMITZ, Dri Kien Elap  
in Manwa kein in Jar Tarinae in Amerika  
ilo Pasifik Lomoto  
in Na Komissar in Ailiŋ kein Marshall

Ran

ALIE

Jea

*Handwritten notes:*  
"demonstrate"  
Kien...  
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## GLOSSARY

- Aelon:** island  
**Alab:** lineage head who serves as liaison between the chief and the lineages on the land.  
**Bwij:** Matrilineage  
**Bwebwenato:** a story or the act of telling stories.  
**Bwirak:** the child of an Irooj father and commoner mother. Neither royalty (Irooj) or commoner (kajur). A lower-tiered Irooj.  
**Dri:** people of, or people who  
**Dri-Amerika:** Americans.  
**Dri-belle:** People with clothes, possessions, wealth. Foreigner.  
**Dri-jerbal:** workers  
**Dri-kaki:** a church leader, teacher, or a schoolteacher.  
**Dri-kien:** government people  
**Dri-mweie:** the wealthy  
**Dri-Nippon or Dri Japan:** Japanese people  
**Dri-tel:** leaders  
**Ito-itak:** Coming and going, moving back and forth  
**Iar:** lagoon  
**Irooj/Lerooj:** Chief,/Chieftess also, Lord.  
**Jojj:** Generosity, goodness, grace  
**Jook:** ashamed, shy  
**Jowi:** Clan, a cluster of matrilineages that descend from a common ancestress.  
**Kajur:** strength, or commoner  
**Kautiej:** to respect; or noun: respect  
**Lik:** Ocean  
**Kile:** to recognize  
**Mantin Majol:** Marshallese customs, ways, knowledge, behaviors, abbreviated form of **manit in Majol**.  
**Utiej:** High  
**Rutej:** Dri-utiej, the high status people, the authorities.  
**Wato:** smallest defined unit of land, usually a strip running from lagoon to oceanside.

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