

**ADOPTION IS BLOOD: UNDERSTANDING CHAMORRO  
POKSAI AS CHAMORRO AUTHENTICITY WITHIN RACIALIZED  
DECOLONIZATION POLITICS ON GUAM**

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In my analysis of two Guam public meetings in this paper, I explore the messy, imbricated issues of identity, authenticity, family/kinship, and race within the Chamorro struggle for self-determination. *Poksai* (adoption) and ancestors—and more importantly “the Chamorro *familia*”—become the key narratives through which some Chamorros can assert a sense of authenticity within a landscape complicated by colonizing and decolonizing forces. As evidenced in these two public meetings, the discursive use of “the Chamorro familia” along with conceptions of race (*mestizo*) becomes a recuperative strategy for some Chamorros to infuse a sense of authenticity into representations of themselves. This permits them to claim Chamorro identity and thus membership in a group deserving decolonization from U.S. colonialism, sovereignty, and a vote in the proposed Chamorro-only vote. Another crucial aspect of the “authentication” of Chamorros is that these narratives about “the mestizo Chamorro familia” can act as a powerful decolonizing discourse by resisting the delegitimization of imposed racial identity and as a location to formulate Chamorro political resistance.

**Chamorro *Poksai* as More Than “Adoption”**

A CHAMORRO MAN FROM GUAM, a long-time land rights activist and supporter of Independence, Antonio “Tony” Artero Sablan and I had a running joking exchange. He would ask for my infant son, and I would laugh and tell him that it wasn’t going to happen. By “asking for” my infant son, he meant he wanted to raise my son on Guam—he wanted to *ma-poksai* him. His

children were grown, he made plain, and he yearned for a child again. He would regale me with all the advantages my son would have being raised by him; after all, what better place to have a son grow up than on Guam? He assured me it wouldn't be forever, just long enough for him to teach my son how to be a man with island sensibilities and skills. This almost ritualized, mirthful tête-à-tête was humorous because neither he nor I believed this was a real possibility because of the nature of our relationship, but it hinted at what could be.

Initially, I was a bit bewildered because Chamorro *poksai* (usually translated to mean "adoption" in English) broke with my notions of what constitutes family life. Although I knew it was a joke, and I had read and heard about Chamorro *poksai* practices in which children are "given" to relatives to "raise," I (at first reacting with my white, American cultural background) still couldn't fathom simply handing my child to someone else to raise unless extreme circumstances necessitated it. Through research into the complex world of decolonization politics on Guam, I learned that Chamorro families were constructed differently than what was understood as the white, American norm pervasive in island institutions and hegemony. Furthermore, I discovered that *poksai* came to represent not only a dynamic yet age-old system of expanding Chamorro families but a powerful metaphor and symbol for authenticating Chamorro identity within racialized decolonization identity politics on Guam. Chamorros<sup>1</sup> are the indigenous population of the Mariana Islands in the Western Pacific, of which Guam is the largest and most southern; Guam has been a colony of the United States since 1898. Chamorros are just one group among many grappling for power and negotiating the complexities of identity politics on Guam.

This essay deconstructs the statement "adoption is blood" uttered at a public meeting about the defining of who is Chamorro as a way to explicate the intersection of Chamorro identity, race, colonialism, decolonization, and the Chamorro family. It illustrates how within the 'Government of Guam' (GovGuam) efforts to define Chamorro, *poksai* is offered by some Chamorros as one prime example of how "being" Chamorro is something other than what U.S. powers say it is because "family" means something different to Chamorros than it does to U.S. colonial culture. Chamorro *poksai* clearly substantiates that "Chamorro *familia*" and relatedness is more expansive and less conceptually rigid than U.S. notions of "biological" relatedness. The public meeting described in this paper encapsulates how, on the one hand, U.S. colonial discourse for political legitimacy required a construct of authenticity that relies on ideas of racial, cultural, and linguistic "purity" which stigmatizes hybrid/*mestizo* identities as inauthentic and politically illegitimate. In other words, the colonizer can exert extreme power over the construction

of knowledge about decolonization of Guam, both locally and internationally, by reframing the language of decolonization into racialized narratives about valid indigenous authenticity, a power that the colonized negotiate and subvert (e. g., Foucault 1980 [1972]).<sup>2</sup> And, on the other hand, given these grounds for colonial political legitimacy, the Chamorro familia is presented by some Chamorros to signify and construct a claim of authenticity that relies on notions of *mestizo*<sup>3</sup> racial, cultural, and linguistic identity which contests the colonial imposition of purity as the only valid basis for political legitimacy.

This is not to say that those who identify themselves as Chamorro do not rely on notions of purity as well. This essay presents the very multifaceted negotiations between “hybridity” and “purity”, resistance and compliance. It is about the cultural and political space where the statement “adoption is blood,” as spoken by a Chamorro politician in the public meeting, is both a hearkening to the resistant power of hybridity as symbolized in poksai and to purity through the symbolics of blood. Indeed, “being Chamorro” can be at times about the extent to which they are maintaining what might be called “pure types”; at other times, Chamorros seem to be all too conscious that pure types simply do not exist. The public meeting discussed is an example of the former. Some Chamorros are demonstrating that because of how the Chamorro familia is constructed, pure types do not exist because being Chamorro means having families that are both socially sprawling and mestizo—characteristics that do not seemingly correspond to notions of racial purity. Chamorros establish that not only are their families organized on different terms, but Chamorro identity in general (i.e. racial identity) is also ordered on different—mestizo—idioms. Chamorro families and Chamorro people are indeed mestizo; therefore, their identity cannot be constrained by U.S. notions of purity. The discursive use of the Chamorro familia within decolonization processes by certain, but certainly not all, Chamorros becomes a recuperative, resistance strategy to infuse a sense of “authenticity” into representations of Chamorros. Chamorro familia is then translated through and predicated on the politicized narratives about the colonial/racial assignment of Chamorro mestizo-ness, the Chamorro employment of mestizo-ness along with familia as a strategy of authentication. As is similar in the Hawaiian case in this special issue and in her earlier work, Judith Modell Schachter explains, “the concepts of *hanaii* [informal adoption] and *’ohana* [kin] have become crucial public symbols in Hawaiian struggles for cultural autonomy and national sovereignty” (1998). One of the most vital aspects of Chamorro authentication is that these overlapping narratives about the Chamorro familia and mestizo can act as a powerful decolonizing discourse to contest imposed racial identities that delegitimize Chamorros.

### “The Circle”: Expansive Chamorro Families

In the Chamorro project to authenticate their “culture,” “Chamorro culture” is perceived to be lived at its most expressive through family life. Complex relationships of reciprocity and networking define family life, as well as the other family “values”—or *I Kustumbren Chamoru*. This is the stuff of Chamorro authenticity, the stuff that marks a continuity between their pure Chamorro past (pre-European) into a hybridized past (post-European). Lilli Perez, a Chamorro scholar from Guam, calls *kostumbren Chamoru* a “homogenized cultural blending” (1998, also see Souder 1992, Stade 1998). By the 1970s, many of the same family values maintained as definitive in traditional (be them before or after Spanish colonization) times were still circulated as central to Chamorro familia, as reported by Robert Underwood (a former Guam Congressional Delegate for the U.S. Congress) whom, in the *Pacific Daily News*, analyzed Chamorro family through six belief statements:

- i*) Family authority and ties are preeminent in all social relationships. . . .
- ii*) Interdependence in man is more important than personal interdependence. . . . (*Ina'fa'maolek*—help each other in an agreeable fashion) . . . [and] (*Chenchule'* and *ika*—the giving of gift in the form of money and goods to assist in the cost of a feast).
- iii*) Responsible persons always respect social position and the social situation. . . .
- iv*) Old age brings wisdom and age governs social relationships. . . .
- v*) Nature must be lived with, not struggled against. . . .
- vi*) A sense of *mamahlaho* (shame) guides your daily behavior . . . . (Underwood 1979)

These values and familial structures, in turn, permeate constructions of class and local politics. Chamorro talk, indeed, is infused with family. A plethora of familia and familia-related subjects abound in my fieldnotes and memories from Guam because family was one of the main topics of conversation. For example, a Chamorro meeting another Chamorro for the first time will immediately ask, “Are you related to so and so?” or “What is your clan?” Lilli Perez described in her dissertation that, while conducting interviews, her informants always insisted in identifying her within family networks before answering questions from her.

The primary interest of informants was my family’s association (clan affiliation). This entailed a delineation of my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles until key family members were recognized. Once the informants recognized my clan affiliation, I was identified by

such affiliation and introduced by my informants to other members of their families accordingly. (Perez 1998, 120)

The extended familia (clan) and the networks (based on extended family/clan units) that sustain them are essential to how people mobilize connections and are inextricably linked to political workings on the island. Clan membership, or extended family relatedness, is often understood as the hallmark of the strong and authentic Chamorro familia. It is the basic structure through which networking is accomplished and sustained. These clans<sup>4</sup> do important work: actual physical work of preparing food and all the other tasks related to hosting large (or small) gatherings; exchanging resources and information; supporting one another emotionally and materially, and assisting one another in most situations. In addition, Chamorros can locate, participate in, and construct identities: within an extended clan; within a clan that has a name with a certain history marked with class or status distinctions; within a clan that has certain historical relationships with other clans; and within an island nation that has people who reckon clan familia in similar ways.

Clan networkings are the real strategies that are defined as “genuine” Chamorro culture, and it is this that self-determination efforts desire to maintain. Guam is analogous to Hawai‘i in this case; Schachter (2008, 226) states, “. . . hanai can be an assertion of Hawaiian identity even for those individuals who reject the politics of cultural autonomy and consider the sovereignty movement elitist or misguided.” Chamorro narratives of self-determination/decolonization are rooted in familia speak and familia metaphor because Chamorro familia plays a major role in defining who is and who is not Chamorro and, therefore, who does and who does not have the right to self-determination. As mentioned above, Chamorro familia has large extended family networks; has a steadfast tradition of sharing food; is bound by reciprocity among its members; has unyielding respect for elders; has reverence for matrilineal ancestry; is manifest in the Chamorro values it promotes (Thompson 1969 [1947]; Perez 1998; Department of Chamorro Affairs 2003). A person embedded within Chamorro networks of relations, or as one Chamorro told me, within “the circle,”<sup>5</sup> can claim to be Chamorro—the very same group vying for self-determination.

### **Poksai—Exemplary of Chamorro Mestizo Families**

John Benavente,<sup>6</sup> a sixty-something, comfortably retired U.S. military, Chamorro man, was someone who was fascinated with both social scientific

understandings of the Chamorro familia and the intricacies of his own genealogy. Indeed, he is a self-proclaimed “family politician” who knows his extensive family intimately. Mr. Benavente admits to a “military frame of mind,” but he nevertheless is a steadfast supporter of Independence, and a member of the Independence task force (an option, he admits, many other Chamorro military servicepeople saw as oppositional to the U.S. military to which they had dedicated their lives). Mr. Benavente was a child of World War II, having been a young boy when the United States both lost and then retook the island. He remembers being forced to survive in the jungles of northern Guam with his parents and siblings, all seven of them, when Japan had control of the island. He now owns a comfortable house with beautiful landscaping in Dededo, the northern village of his family roots, but has spent and continues to spend a great deal of time in the United States or abroad. His “global” existence began during his career in the army in which he lived away from Guam—usually the United States—on military assignment. He is a man who is well versed in Chamorro artistic traditions and is the son of a famous basket weaver (his mother, Tan Elena Benavente<sup>7</sup>). Tan Elena passed her skills on to her son John who takes great delight in it. Well-read on a variety of subjects, he spent a great deal of time researching his family genealogy and spoke with analytical precision not only on the topic of Chamorro family life but on any political/social/cultural issue related to Guam or the United States. Since his military career, he has been active in politics on Guam and has been linked with well-known Chamorro politicians. He was always ready to inform this naïve anthropologist about the ins and outs of Chamorro culture, especially political culture, and had the added duty of acting as my Chamorro language teacher and translator.

During one lengthy conversation, he explained to me his interpretation of the details of how the Chamorro clan system works. He described that he belongs to seven clans (*Brunu, Chedo, Lile', Bobo, Duenas, Loddo', Dalalai*)<sup>8</sup> related to him both through his mother and father. He emphasized that clan relationships and obligations are flexible. Here he describes how certain clans of the seven are more closely related to him and take precedence in obligations. As he states: “Your primary responsibility is your clan, so it’s important in that respect. I think members of your clan have a social obligation to your clan. And how important is that? It’s very important because in the networking, if you are in need of help or you are in need of information, your first source of information would be coming from your clan.” Generally one is closer to those clans that were the primary clans of one’s father and mother; thus, technically speaking two clans from his mother and two clans from his father (one from each grandparent). Which clan one feels closest

to or feels the most obligated toward is relative—based on how the relationships between the individuals develop over time. Even if one is of mixed parentage, or mestizo, and only one parent is Chamorro or even part Chamorro, clan membership would be passed to the child through the Chamorro parent. Chamorros say that they belong to a clan by saying “*familian Titang*,” for example.

I asked Mr. Benavente about the responsibility of clans to an individual in one’s life rituals. The Department of Chamorro Affairs (2003: 29–41) precisely spelled out these stages: *Finanagu* (Birth), *Baotismo* (Baptism or Christening), *Primera Kumunion* and *Komfetmasion* (First Holy Communion and Confirmation), *I Inakkamo* (Marriage), and *Finatai* (Death). Each major event in life requires a certain complex of rituals and requisite family gatherings.<sup>9</sup> Many of these fiestas or family gatherings are enormous undertakings that involve organization, family reciprocity, and a great deal of prepared food and work. This reciprocity, or *chenchule*, is much touted in conscious narratives of familia as being a cornerstone of Chamorro culture. L. Perez asserts: “I view reciprocity among Chamorro families and their networks of social support as a method of providing their membership with prescribed avenues of social interaction. Here, both kith and kin, relations and friends, function as a social network by which members engage in social exchange and effectuate a sense of social support” (Perez 1998, 14). Once more, *chenchule* is part of the narrative complex that defines and identifies Chamorro family and, to a great extent, Chamorro culture, but it is also a practiced principle for family reciprocity, lived out among familial connections.

Poksai and *kompaire* (Chamorro godparent system) can be seen as exemplary of Chamorro family clan mechanics in which reciprocity and a relative openness is valued. Chamorros have narratives that consistently expand relatedness beyond “blood” and “biology” (such as through *kompaire*, *poksai*, and to some extent friendship). The *parientes*, or “relatives,” brought into the family through *kompaire* or *poksai* are also part of the networks, “the circle,” which make life go. Lilli Perez states, “Affiliation in the network is defined by consanguinial, affinal, and ritual relations and is not confined to members of the family” (1998, 313). Most notably, the *kompaire* system is also often referred to as the *compadragazo* system, which is also common in Southern Europe, throughout Latin America, and the Philippines (Quan 1976; Perez 1998). John Quan explains that godparents, parents, and “initiates” (a child) are bound in a relationship that revolved around the Roman Catholic life rituals of baptism, confirmation, and occasionally, marriage (Quan 1976, 2).<sup>10</sup> It creates relatedness through, according to the Department of Chamorro Affairs, linking generations and serving to “fortify the families’ relationships and to strengthen the traditional value of

*inafa'maolek* (harmony, interdependence) for the benefit of the families. In the Chamorro familial belief system, it becomes the godparents' responsibility to look after the spiritual and material welfare of the godchildren when their parents die; they provide a supportive environment in the godchildren's future and understanding of their cultural heritage" (Department of Chamorro Affairs 2003, 29). Most often godparents are chosen from family members. However, sometimes they are selected from distant relatives or friends with whom one wants a closer relationship or maybe a political favor. John Benavente stressed the closeness felt between godparents, parents, and godchildren: "You're the closest that is not blood, that is not a blood relative."

I would like to linger a little longer on Chamorro poksai. Poksai is a system that straddles "consanguinal, affinal, and ritual relations." And similar to poksai on Guam, adoption is an extremely common form of relatedness across the Pacific Islands, to which other articles can attest (e.g., see other articles in this issue of *Pacific Studies* and examples in Carroll 1970a; Linnekin and Poyer 1990; Marshall 2004). Whether it is grandparent adoption in among the Dani of the Highlands (Papua Indonesia; Butt 2008) or Raivavau (Austral Islands, French Polynesia; Dickerson-Putman 2008), or a variety of other dynamic adoption practices in Mota Island (Vanuatu; Kolshus 2008), New Caledonia (Salomon and Hamelin 2008), Ujeland/Enewetak (the Republic of the Marshall Islands; Carucci 2008), Chuuk State (the Federated States of Micronesia; Rauchholz 2008), or Hawai'i (Schachter 2008), what is translated as adoption remains a feasible and forceful component of kin relationships throughout the Pacific. Vern Carroll in his 1970 anthology remarks on the "extremely high incidence of adoption in many parts of Oceania . . ." (Carroll 1970b), although what is considered adoption may vary considerably throughout the Pacific region. Yet, adoption practices across the Pacific share certain similarities, such as adoption occurring between those considered related; "land tenure considerations" (Brady 1976b) figuring in kinship relationships of all types including adoption; and the lack of conceptual distinctions between adoption and "fosterage" (Carroll 1970a; Brady 1976a).

The word poksai means "to nurture" in the Chamorro language, a term of parental responsibility to any child brought into the family through other means than giving birth. The Department of Chamorro Affairs handbook summarized Chamorro familia and values, and poksai's place in the Chamorro family, as the following:

Familial relationships and responsibilities emerged from the Chamorro ancestral belief that members of a clan—loosely defined

as family or families—have responsibility to each other from birth to death. Chamorros believe that familial bonding provides an extensive and dependable network for the Chamorro people, particularly in times of need; it is [an] arrangement that ensures Chamorro self-sufficiency. The *familia* demands a strong commitment of respect and loyalty among its members, which include the *manaina*, or elders, *mane'lu*, or brothers and sisters, and *famagu'on*, or children, *tiha yan tihu siha*, or aunts and uncles, *primu yan prima siha*, or cousins. It is a communal organization of families that provide [*sic*] support and assistance in all activities undertaken by families. Whether by birth, marriage, or adoption, once a person became a member of the *familia*, he or she stayed a member forever. Women did not have to get married to have children, nor did they have to bear children to become mothers. The rule of Chamorro clan membership provided for all children, no matter how they came to be born. If the child's mother died, the child immediately would be taken into another family in the clan. This kind of "adoption" system is called *poksai*, which meant to nurture. It provided a way to care for mother[-]less children, and it also provided a way for childless women to become mothers. Familial bonding goes beyond family membership—it is not unusual to address all elders as *saina*, contemporaries as *che'lu*, and a child as *patgon-hu*, or my child. (Department of Chamorro Affairs 2003: 23–25)

In the past, *poksai* often occurred when a family had many children; the parents would then give one or two children to a childless relative or a relative with few children. This helped the parents, and it allowed the relative to have the pleasure of raising a child—something of great value within Chamorro communities. Even today, this type of *poksai* occurs; although from what I could gather, it does not happen as often because the size of families has reduced and families often are scattered all over the world. However, because of the imposition of U.S. legal and cultural concepts and institutional structures, *poksai* has come to be understood as adoption in the U.S. sense, although this is a misnomer. Because of this mistranslation, there often is confusion about what constitutes Chamorro *poksai*.

Alexander Spoehr stated in his 1954 ethnography of Saipan<sup>11</sup> that adoption in the Chamorro community on Saipan occurred at a lower rate than other Micronesian islands and was organized more like European or American models of adoption. Because this "lower rate" is most likely attributable to the designation adoption, *poksai* is saddled with what

adoption connotes to various researchers. For example, Joe Tyquiengco (1989), a Chamorro researcher, more or less repeated Spoehr's observation of the low frequency of adoption on Guam. However, his explanation is expanded:

Adoption, although not frequent, does exist and may occur in Chamorro families. Adoptions exist in special cases only and the adopting parents are usually relatives of the child. Some cases of adoption would be upon death or separation of parents or childless married couples who are unable to have their own children and might want to adopt. Another case in which adoption occurs is with illegitimate children born to young mothers who because of age or reasons of the parents are unable to adequately raise the child. *One likely reason for few adoptions in Chamorro culture is because it is not unusual for a child to be raised or live with another family or couple* [emphasis added]. Examples of this would be a child being raised by or living with his or her grandparents for the purpose of caring for them. An instance like this occurs more out of necessity or obligation.

Adoption in these cases could be construed to mean something legally permanent, something more akin to what adoption means in the United States, whereas poksai denotes something much more expansive.

Poksai is a flexible system that denotes a continuum of the intensity of care given to children—a combination of U.S. understandings of fosterage and adoption. Mr. Benavente clarified to me in a 2002 interview how poksai may work in Chamorro families today:

These are true examples. The mother passed away and the kids are only four, five, six, seven. You have a father, but then the auntie and her husband [who is the brother of the woman who passed away] talk about it. They say, "Let's help the kids. Tell Mariano that we'll take care of the kids." And of course the single dad, he appreciates this because it's his wife's brother's family that want to take care of the kids, so he agreed. So need is sometimes a factor. Children born out of wedlock are usually candidates for that. Especially if the family is trying to hide the fact that you have already mothered a child. So then the family takes over this child that is born out of wedlock, and grandma raises you. And then as you got older, you discovered or you were told that your Mom is Maria. That kind of thing.

It is not uncommon while perusing the obituaries to notice a elderly woman's next of kin to include the category "raised," which implies that she not only gave birth to how ever many children but she "nurtured" other children. These children may have been with her for a year or their whole lives. In one instance from my fieldwork, one young boy (the second of three boys in the family) was given to a grandmother to raise for about five years because he was a rather difficult and demanding child who, it was deemed by all adults involved, needed individual, grandmotherly attention.

There was no legal change of guardianship and no thoughts of making the arrangement "legally" permanent. And the amount of time one may ma-poksai a child varies considerably. To name a few possible scenarios: it can occur, as mentioned, with a "problem" child who moves to live with another relative who is willing and able to deal with the child; children being sent to a relative in the United States to obtain access to better schooling; children of financially strapped parents who send their kids to relatives of more means. However, many of these rather "informal" situations in which adults raise children have increasingly become embroiled within the U.S. legal system, which establishes the poksai relationship within specific formalized conditions. John Benavente explained that because of U.S. legal regulations, it is increasingly believed that whoever is going to ma-poksai a child nowadays, they must either have legal guardianship or legal adoption. Mr. Benavente states: "[U.S.] [b]ureaucracy has entered the picture. Whereas before there was no bureaucracy." He continues with an example:

A young couple is divorcing, and grandparents are not well-to-do, but they are comfortable. And the young couple, marriage is shattered, grandparents will come into the picture and grab the kids. They will say, "We will take care of the kids. You guys don't know how do to it. You are doing this all wrong and the kids are suffering." Now that's happening. Now what's happening, again because of the American ruling, parents are adopting formally their grandkids. And also because of the benefits involved. See, right now if I adopted one of my son's children, that child is a recipient of social security benefits right off the bat. And in my case, because I am a military retiree, I would take her and get her a military I.D. card. So now because of the change of games and change of benefits . . . then adoption is the new word. But really basically, I'm doing ma-poksai. And I'm, for example, in my case, if it's my daughter, and her name is McDonald, I would raise my grandkids, I don't care about changing the name to Benavente. That doesn't matter. That's the point for me to be taking

the kids—[to help the kids]. Not to increase my Benavente name, but to assist.

Poksai occurs most often among “related” families, as in the cases described above. However, it can occur between people not related; indeed, I was told by Chamorros like John Benavente, it is poksai that makes one related. It is a mechanism that links an individual to a system of obligation and reciprocity—a clan network. When describing the ways in which individuals participate within the clan network, John Benavente stated:

There are many variations that can determine to what extent you participate. Were you ma-poksai? If you were, even if you were a third cousin [or a very distant relative], but if my mom raised [i.e., poksai] you guys—man, you’re in. You have an outstanding obligation. You have the same obligation as the siblings or the children.

Although on the surface, poksai may resemble some fosterage practices in the United States (because they themselves are diverse), the underlying concepts are significantly different. Although Modell (1994) explicates how U.S. adoption is something outside of “blood ties,” poksai is a natural result of and extension of Chamorro relatedness and all its accompanying obligations. Alice Pomponio (1990) explains Mandok (Papua New Guinea) adoption practices are “conceived in terms of the fruits of human effort, close association, and enduring solidarity” rather than “shared biogenetic substance.” Like the Mandok, poksai practices among Chamorros tether Chamorro familia, and indeed identity, to something beyond biological ties.

### **Poksai, Mestizo (Race), Blood, and Identity**

Poksai is a process through which those sometimes not related by birth are incorporated into a family; it is a familial system which is deeply couched in all the discourses about the Chamorro family. Therefore, it is necessary to understand poksai and its relationship to blood through understanding the Chamorro family’s relationship to race. To begin, the language about the Chamorro family on Guam often dwells in the imagery of outsiders. For example, one Chamorro man entertained me and a group of other Chamorros by humorously describing his discovery of “Jesuit priests and a Chinese woman” when researching his family genealogy, whereby his audience of friends responded with much laughter. He went on to say he expects to find

a smattering of foreign “sailors and tradesmen” as well. This anecdote was amusing to others because it encapsulated a sometimes tacit, sometime overt, nugget of “truism”—the belief that all Chamorros have those defined as non-Chamorros in their family genealogy; in other words, narratives about mestizo are akin to understandings of—sometimes recent, sometimes past, or sometimes both—Chamorro familia. It is reminiscent of my friend John Benavente’s saying, “. . .if you shake a Chamorro family tree long enough, a Japanese, a Chinese, a Yapese . . . person is bound to come falling down.” By mestizo narratives, I am denoting those racialized stories created about and valued as Chamorro ancestry and family genealogy that indicate that all Chamorros, because of historical understandings, have some non-Chamorros in their family past. All Chamorros, if you go back far enough, are the product of a “mixture” of peoples. Therefore, stories about the Chamorro familia and stories about mestizo often become overlapping narratives; they end up chronicling the same tales about Chamorro identity.

The Chamorros of Guam have struggled to define themselves and their political future in a colonial environment infused with an intricate racial tapestry; one woven through three periods of colonization and corresponding racialization (Spain 1565–1898, Japan 1941–1944, and the United States 1898 to present). The ever-active subtext of race has forcefully shaped the colonial mechanisms operating between the United States and Guam and is a powerful conduit through which the colonizer and the colonized contend with each other and deal with other people on Guam (e.g., Cooper and Stoler 1997; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2001 [1995]; Loomba 2001 [1998]; Stoler 2002). Historically, these racial/colonial processes have represented Chamorros in a specific way, as mestizos, whose cultural and linguistic lives have been extinguished rendering them “inauthentically” indigenous (Alva 1995). Authenticity, premised on conceptions of mestizo (race), has become the conceptual lattice through which Chamorros must navigate land, language, citizenship, and the overarching concern of decolonization. For indigenous peoples across the globe, and indeed inherent in most identity politics (indigenous or not), issues of authenticity are often at the heart of political negotiations of identification surrounding such diverse issues as land rights, water rights, or sovereignty (e.g., Osorio 1999; Sylvain 2002; French 2004).

As is the case on Guam, some indigenous peoples are often placed in situations where they must negotiate “essentializing” Western legal and administrative tendencies. The resulting political contestations surrounding authenticity and identity are often at the core of the tugs and pulls between cultural—and racial—tendencies of purification or hybridization (Handler

1988; Latour 1993). It is at this juncture—in the complex, racialized realm in which what is believed to be pure clashes with what is believed to be mixed—where this essay sits, in the realm of how mestizo and authenticity are negotiated in Guam. As scholars such as Marisol De La Cadena (2000, 2001), Lourdes Martinez-Echazabal (1998), and Arlene Torres and Norman Whitten Jr. (1998a, 1998b) point out, these identity concepts are culturally, legally, economically, and politically forged through complex power dynamics between groups. Once again, when I use mestizo (“hybridity”), I mean to denote that concept rooted in Western racial ideologies, signifying the notion of privilege in racial purity which justifies racial discrimination against those who are classified as mixed—mestizo. Simultaneously, it is a powerfully emergent, fully embraced indigenous identity category that speaks to synergistic cultural forms and identity formation, one specific to each colonial situation (Alva 1995, 243). Therefore, in this essay, when I use mestizo, I am referring to the Spanish-American word for mixture, and its usage will refer to the colonial narratives of mixture as expressed in Guam (Rafael 1993, 2000, 2005; Espiritu 2005).<sup>12</sup> When I use mestizu, as opposed to mestizo, I am referring to a Chamorro word, meaning mixed or hybrid, and a Chamorro narrative about the nature of mixture and cultural hybridity between Chamorros and non-Chamorros.<sup>13</sup> Of course, these two types of narratives overlap considerably at points.

### **Defining Chamorro in Practice: The Chamorro Registry Public Hearing**

During my fieldwork on Guam, I was a regular at Guam’s vast array of public meetings. Whether for political status issues, environmental contamination, or election campaign speeches, I criss-crossed the 32 × 12 mile island to attend these meetings. Common to local government and large agencies in the mainland United States as well, GovGuam used these venues to both publicize an issue and allow for public feedback. Be it in a local village community center or the legislature building, people from local government officials to farmers, of little to great financial means, Chamorro to immigrant gathered to air their feelings and listen to others do the same. These assemblies, often similar in structure but diverse in style and content, drew families—grandmothers to grandbabies, uncles to aunties, brothers to sisters. If I was lucky, they sometimes were exceedingly rich cultural sites where the politicized nature of Chamorro extended familial networks were patent and thriving. For me, one meeting in particular was exemplary in highlighting the coalescence of Chamorro family, identity, race, and decolonization.

On a sun-filled Friday at the end of January 2000, there was a public hearing on the proposed Chamorro Registry regulations for an upcoming political status plebiscite. Before the Chamorro Registry meeting, individuals from the local citizenry (i.e., “the public”), along with locally elected and appointed government officials gathered at the Guam Legislature building in downtown Hagatña in west, central Guam. After a bevy of social exchanges both outside and inside the meeting room, the event was off and running; everyone palpably eager to express opinions about what it is to “be Chamorro.” That is to say, the goal of the event was vigorous debate about how to define “Chamorro” in quite literal terms, as a “group of people.” Ideally, the definition, if one could be determined, would then be used to judge eligibility for voting in the as-yet-never-held, so-called Chamorro-only plebiscite in which those defined as Chamorro would express their wishes for a political status option for the island. Unlike previous plebiscites, all of which failed to result in any political status change and all of which were inclusive of every citizen of Guam regardless of ancestry, some Chamorro activists pushed for a divergent path for constituting self-determination. This vision was one that would restrict self-determination to those who were descended from the indigenous Chamorro who were initially colonized by U.S. powers in 1898 and, thereby, eliminate those many others who immigrated to Guam after, or as some Chamorro activists argued, as “a result of,” colonization.<sup>14</sup> It was reasoned that Chamorros, as the indigenous population of Guam, were never able to truthfully and legitimately state their desired political status preference because their voices, as expressed through votes, in previous political status plebiscites were drowned out by the many non-Chamorros who demographically outnumber them (that is, non-Chamorros who may have other opinions on political status).<sup>15</sup> Today, the people of Guam have the possibility of changing their current political status from an “unincorporated territory,” or colony, of the United States to either Statehood, Free Association, or Independence. There are decolonization movements, mainly comprised of, but not limited to, self-identified Chamorros, that support all three options.<sup>16</sup>

Like the rest of the crowd, my discussion of the definition of Chamorro started in the hall outside the formal meeting space. I chatted with two political status task force chairmen with whom I was acquainted, Jose “Joe” Ulloa Garrido of Free Association and Antonio “Tony” Artero Sablan (the same man who wanted to ma-poksai my son, who was yet-to-be born at the time of this meeting) of Independence, both Chamorro men in the middle of their lives, with ample reputations for Chamorro rights activism. Since my first baby was going to be born on Guam (I was about five months pregnant

at the time), Tony asked me, half in jest, “Do you think that [your baby] should be considered indigenous?” In naïve, stereotypical ethnographic fashion, not wanting to guide a response, I evaded the question by saying, “I don’t know. What do you think?” According to both Tony and Joe, of course my child would not, under any circumstances, be indigenous, but to “some people” on the island, my baby would be considered indigenous simply because he happened to be born on Guam. Our conversation got no further because the crowd was promptly channeled into the conference room of GovGuam by Senator Mark Forbes. An experienced Chamorro senator, Forbes was the official moderator of the meeting. At the time, GovGuam was using the U.S. census of 1899 as a benchmark to determine membership in the Chamorro group, meaning those who intended to register as Chamorro must have documentation demonstrating they had an ancestor who was defined as Chamorro in the 1899 census.<sup>17</sup>

Until after World War II, the vast majority of the population of Guam (around 90 percent) was comprised of self-identified Chamorros; only through U.S. colonial maneuvers in response to that war did the demographics of the island shift dramatically (Bettis 1996). Especially after *Rice v. Cayetano* (Kauanui 1999, 2002)<sup>18</sup> in Hawai’i, the Guam legislature was sensitive to any racial language in defining Chamorro. They anticipated legal challenges to this so-called Chamorro-only vote based on a perceived racial preference prohibited in elections within the U.S. Constitution. Notice that the above definitions of Chamorro avoid any racial speak and even are designed to be inclusive of non-Chamorros who could be inhabitants of Guam or “persons born on the island of Guam.” Leland Bettis, the Chairman of the Commission on Decolonization<sup>19</sup> at the time, explained to me in a 1998 interview that the definition of Chamorro was tweaked to avoid connotations of racial exclusion. He stated,

We don’t see [defining Chamorro as stated above] as a political move, more so as a racial move. There are so many people of so many different races that make up a Chamorro population. As if pure races exist anyway, but that this really is a political group. It’s not like the Hawai’i example, or the situation on reservations where it’s some quotient of blood you must measure to determine whether or not you qualify as a person entitled to vote. This is clearly based in a point of time, directly relating to the colonial relationship between Guam and the United States.<sup>20</sup>

This nonracial definition of Chamorro allowed supporters of the Chamorro-only vote to contend that even those immigrants defined as

non-Chamorro could potentially participate in this plebiscite, if they had ancestors living on Guam before the 1899 census.

A few of the public speakers—mainly those who identify as Chamorro, some scheduled speakers, some serendipitous—employed the format of the Chamorro registry to dispute any “outsider”/U.S. colonial attempt to define Chamorros. One Chamorro woman—someone I later learned was linked to Independence—indignantly testified, “A Chamorro is more than that [the definitions provided by GovGuam]. A Chamorro is a person who has a common lineage with an ancestor who was indigenous. It is not just residence that makes someone a Chamorro.” Another Chamorro woman, also a supporter of Independence, donning a T-shirt that pronounced “*Taotaomona* Descendants—I Own Guam,” passionately asserted that Chamorros did not become a people because of the Organic Act or any other colonial document; hence, the mere fact that they were trying to define themselves based on what “foreigners from Spain, Japan, and the U.S.” claim was ridiculous. “They [the foreigners] came in and put guns to our heads. We should not include their definitions. We should go by family clan name; those people are accepted in the heart as Chamorro.”

It is not surprising to hear family clan name as a way to define Chamorro peoplehood. However, it is a particular aspect of Chamorro family, when linked to decolonization processes, that I found quite illuminating at this meeting. Poksai, or indigenous forms of nurturing or rearing children to whom one did not give birth, became one of the more enticing contestations voiced by audience members at the hearing to the proposed legal definition of Chamorro. Joe Garrido of the Free Association task force first brought up poksai as a potential problem for the Chamorro registry. He astutely noted that, according to how the current rules were written by the Chamorro registry, if a person is adopted, they will not be considered Chamorro by the registration process. According to the Chamorro Registry Regulations (Guam Election Commission, January 19, 2000: 2–3), “descendants or lineal descendants” of those defined as Chamorro “do not include adopted children or grandchildren through adoption,” and “a blood tie must be established rather than the connection be through adoption.” Garrido argued that he knows of adopted people, white folks who grew up in Chamorro families, speak Chamorro and have a Chamorro last name, which indeed makes them Chamorro. Furthermore, some Chamorros who were adopted by whites should not be considered “really Chamorro” because they have a different culture. These issues, he noted, should be investigated by the committee.

A middle-aged Chamorro woman then took this topic further by maintaining that some children who are adopted do not know they are adopted, and they might inadvertently find out through the registry, which would

“strip them of who they are.” She also warned, “We need to have a more careful process for this.” Mark Forbes reassured her that, if the person doesn’t know that he or she is adopted, then the process will not expose the secrecy. As far as the Chamorro Registry is concerned, they would be Chamorro; the registry would never reveal the reality of their adoption if the records are sealed by the court. (Exactly how poksai/adoption would be safe-guarded was not specified at the time). He stated that it may be obvious by looking at a “real dark-skinned or white-skinned person<sup>21</sup> that they are adopted,” but besides that, there will be no way to tell. Mark Forbes said “the Chamorro culture that I am familiar with says ‘that which you raise, it is yours.’ *Adoption is blood*” [emphasis in original].

### **Authentication of Chamorro through Poksai in the Context of Colonization/Decolonization**

The central question debated within decolonization processes either implicitly or explicitly is: Who is Chamorro? Is it family/clan, is it land, is it ancestry, is it cultural practices, or is it blood? Of course, this question cannot be definitively answered; however, identity politics, in general, and the U.S. legal system, more specifically, within which decolonization processes are constrained, do and will answer these questions. In other words, if and when a Chamorro-only political status plebiscite does occur, it will be required to be enunciated within international and U.S. colonially and racially imposed legal regulations. Hawaiians, Native American, and other minorities of the U.S. empire operate within the constraints of similar racial definitions. J. Kēhaulani Kauanui maintains, “This blood quantum rule, and the processes of identification that follow from it, impacts contemporary Hawaiian claims to sovereignty and self-determination” (1999, 123). The benchmark process of referring to a certain date to legally denote who is Chamorro is one way of circumscribing Chamorros as a knowable, quantifiable group, thereby quantifying their identity. In this context, Chamorros are racialized and, thereby, de-legitimized as mestizo, as invisible, as Pacific Islander, as minority, as part-citizen, as in between, as something other than American.

The U.S. legal system has been categorizing people based on race since its inception (Lopez 1996). As Ian Haney Lopez writes, it is in the business of both reiterating definitions of race held by the culture at large and constructing racial categories (1996, 10). He continues, “it defines...the spectrum of domination and subordination that constitutes race relations” while also defining and affirming racial identity, racial privilege, and racial entitlements, such as property, or “translating” racial ideas into “material

societal conditions” (Lopez 1996, 9). Indeed racial constructions in the United States are about biological similarities of a group (i.e., biological relatedness [Schneider 1980 {1968}]). In other words, notions of race intersect with and stem from notions of family or kinship biological relatedness; relatedness of any sort implies a biological connection.

GovGuam is constrained by racial definitions of Chamorro but in different ways within different contexts. The Chamorro dominant GovGuam, in certain contexts, is “constitutionally” forced to “avoid” seeming racial definitions of Chamorro to move further in decolonization for those defined as Chamorro. Concurrently, in other ways, GovGuam is also restricted by these legal notions of race because Chamorro definitions hinge on notions of American relatedness as envisioned through blood descendants, rather than capacious Chamorro notions of relatedness, which includes poksai. Kauanui asserts a similar racial conundrum specific to Hawaiians in the *Rice v. Cayetano* case; “This place [the legal/racial defining of Hawaiians] is contradictory because it relies on racialized identity imposed through a blood quantum criterion, yet when these mechanics are applied in the interest of Hawaiian body-politic, they are alleged to be racially discriminatory” (2002, 10).

In the above described meeting, discourses surrounding poksai posed questions for legal definitions of Chamorro. These questions need to be contextualized within the last statement of my presented portion of the meeting, “Adoption is blood.” To middle-class, white, colonial United States, adoption is not blood. Adoption may be just like biological family, just like blood, may be tight as tight can be, but it is not considered blood, no matter how close the emotions of connection (Modell 1994, 223). As Judith Modell explains about American adoptive relationships, “For people whose kinship is fictive, however, blood also represents what is missing. It is this dimension of ‘non-reality’ that makes an adoptive relationship different, paradoxical, and in need of work—a self-conscious relationship” (1994, 226). In very general terms, U.S. notions of kinship or relatedness rely on a specific articulation between the biological and social; in short, family relatedness is premised on a perceived biological relationship, rather than a social one (Schneider 1980 [1968]; Carsten 2000; Parkin and Stone 2000).<sup>22</sup>

In everyday practice in the early twenty-first century, as authors such as Judith Modell (1994) and Jeanette Edwards and Marilyn Strathern (2000) have affirmed, the United States and British relationship between the biological and the social may not be so conceptually rigid, as described above. Indeed as the examples of fertilization technology, surrogate motherhood, and gay couples building families exhibit, Western concepts of biological

relatedness are continually challenged. Nevertheless, adoption in white, middle-class America (from which colonial culture on Guam stems) still discursively maintains a certain distance from blood relationships. Modell (1994, 226) states, “The symbolism of blood . . . lends the transaction a fatal flaw—an inevitable comparison with ‘real’ blood ties. Blood is a reminder that adoption is a *paper* kinship” [emphasis in original]. This is a clue that in the United States blood is different than water—although experientially may not be thicker.

As mentioned above, Chamorro discourse on relatedness and on group identity membership is articulating something that is simultaneously racial and not racial, biological and not biological, about notions of purity and notions of hybridity. Being Chamorro has to do with belonging to a certain type of familia, which is expansive, as demonstrated in their conception and practice of poksai, and governed by things both biological and social. In other words, the narrative strategy of certain Chamorros at these meetings contests the concrete, American forging of blood with identity. As Schneider states, “A blood relationship is a relationship of identity, and those who share a blood relationship share a common identity” (1977, 65). Rather, Chamorro-ness is about blood, AND it is about familia, which is embedded in forms of relatedness that are not limited to biology, in certain forms of reciprocity, in certain ways of networking within extended families, and in the adherence to certain values in *I Kustumbren Chamoru*. Thus, Chamorros turn the Spanish/U.S. racial conflation of identity and purity on its head, arguing instead for forms of political identity that render pure types nonsensical to their experience.

### Conclusion

Calling forth notions of poksai as a quintessential example of the ethos grounding Chamorro familia in decolonizing discourses authenticates Chamorros in several ways. First, it defines them as something other than American. By putting some distance between themselves and the U.S. hegemonic norm, Chamorros are strategically drawing distinctions between that which is American/colonial and that which is Chamorro—a process that aligns them more closely to a sense of indigeneity. Within the legal-political spaces of U.S. decolonization processes, it is “indigeneity” that is valued and not a sense of Chamorro American-ness, which is certainly valued within other contexts. Second, following from the first, it is Chamorro familia that cements their group identity as indigenous identity. No other group can legitimately claim that their families are tied to the island of Guam with such historical and cultural depth as the Chamorro. Third, by placing Chamorro

familia at the heart of decolonization, it is a way of highlighting a specific form of indigeneity—their *mestizo* indigeneity, a form of indigenous identity that is not premised on racial notions of purity (Diaz 2006).

### NOTES

1. According to the 2000 census of Guam (the last full census on Guam), self-identified Chamorros comprise 37.0% of Guam's population. Filipinos (classified under the "Asian" group) make up the second largest population at 26.3%. "White," mainly American whites, comprise 6.8%, other "Asian" groups amount to 6.2%, and other Micronesian groups making up another 7.6%. Other groups accounted for in the 2000 census were "Black or African American" at 1.0%, other "race or ethnic group" at 1.2%, and "two or more races or ethnic groups" at 13.9%."

2. Michel Foucault is the inspirational seed of my theoretical trajectory.

3. Also defined as "mixed," *mestizo* is a Chamorro concept, albeit borrowed from the Western concept but thoroughly appropriated and adapted within Chamorro culture. It is explained in more detail later in the paper.

4. There are also branch clans called *ramas* with which people can be affiliated. These were described to me as clans that have fragmented.

5. A Chamorro friend, John Benavente, advised me early in my fieldwork that I would not make much headway in understanding Chamorro culture unless I was "let into the circle, and without that you won't understand anything." He went on to say that many researchers who come to Guam can't see past the U.S. influences to grasp "the inner circles" within which Chamorros are operating. Indeed, he mused in a very Duboisian or Fanonian way, Chamorros are forced to negotiate two worlds—the U.S. and the Chamorro.

6. Interview with John Benavente, October 3, 2002.

7. His mother, Tan Elena Benavente, was something of a Guamanian institution. The subject of numerous paintings and other artistic renderings, not to mention some media exposure, she often represented that tie to an authentic past. She was a master basket weaver, spoke little English, and wore a *mestizo* dress (a style of dress influenced by both the Spanish and Filipinos, which was common in the years prior to World War II) until she died in 2005 at the age of ninety-nine.

8. Naming of clans is a whole subject in and of itself, which I will not pursue here at length. In short, naming could stem from an ancestor's nickname or some other distinguishing feature of an ancestor or family group. For example, John Benavente told me of a second cousin of his who belongs to the Aragon clan. Aragon is from her great, great grandfather who was from Aragon, Spain.

9. The process of death requires probably the most familial organization and cooperation. When a death occurs, there are nine days of rosaries (*nubena, lisayon matai*) in which

prayer sessions are lead by a *techa*, usually a Chamorro-fluent woman with experience in leading prayers. (These women are often respected *manamko* [elderly] in the community.) The rosaries are open to the public and take place at the *difunto's/difunta's* (deceased man/woman) home, or most often, church. "Very light refreshments," as John Benavente said, or some drinks and a little bit to eat, are served to guests who attend the rosary. These refreshments are furnished by extended family and friends; the immediate relations of the *difunto/difunta* are not responsible for providing anything. After the *bela*, or the wake, there is another nine-day period of rosaries (*lisayon familia*), which are attended only by close family. A year after the death, there is another rosary called *lisayon komple'anos*. Each anniversary of the death of close family is commemorated, if even in the smallest way.

10. The *patlinus* and *matlinus* are participants in a host of rituals related to the baptism, confirmation, and marriage of their *hada* or *hadu*. (Godparents are *matlina*, godmother, and *patlinu*, godfather, in Chamorro. A child would call their godparents *ninu*, godfather, or *nina*, godmother, and the *ninu* or *nina* call their godchildren *hada*, goddaughter, and *hadu*, godson. The parents and godparents call each other *pari* [male] and *malle'* [females]).

11. Saipan in an island in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, which is an island north of Guam in the Mariana Island chain. All of the Mariana Islands were populated with Chamorros; however, because of outside colonial maneuvers, Guam has been politically separated from its island neighbors to the north.

12. My research places the complexity of mestizo racial identity formation within the Pacific. Of course, the Philippines are well known for its mestizo ideology.

13. Like many other complex, polysemic concepts, the Chamorro concept of mestizu has other meanings that often are uncomfortably juxtaposed. First, mestizu can be a way to denote and identify individuals of a mixed parentage. For example, a person who is half Chamorro and half American (*mestizu amerikano*) would be said to be mestizu by supposedly "full" Chamorros. This categorization can also carry stinging pronouncements of delegitimization—separating those full, true, and authentic Chamorros from those with "watered-down" ancestry—presumably classifying mestizus as less Chamorro. It is this aspect that is rooted in Spanish-American colonial notions of racial purity and impurity that contrasted historical understandings of Chamorro as a racial group with pure beginnings as opposed to the mixed "neo-Chamorros" of today. Second, another facet of mestizu can be coded as the elevation and privilege of those elite Chamorros as those who come from Spanish blood above their more pure counterparts. In other words, mestizu Chamorro (without a descriptor in back of the word such as *amerikano*) were often to be understood as those elite Chamorros with more Spanish blood who benefited from their associations with the Spanish administration. Third, in the experiential everyday, mestizu individuals can be judged based on interpretations of political realities of the moment. During World War II when Japan was terrorizing Guam, it was less deleterious within many Chamorro circles to be *mestizu amerikano* than *mestizu hapones*, because the Chamorros of Guam overall supported the United States rather than their World War II Japanese colonizers. Finally, Chamorros overall are perceived as a people whose genealogical representations are scattered with non-Chamorros. Thus, mestizu, on one hand, means a very particular and specific way of pigeon-holing, and often de-authenticating, mixed Chamorros. However, it is a way to talk about Chamorros as a group, a way to racialize Chamorros as a

whole: Chamorros all as mestizo. And it is this aspect of mestizo, that I discuss in this paper.

14. Interview with Ron Teehan, the then-director of the Chamorro Land Trust, December 4, 2000. Teehan is a long-time Chamorro rights activist, and during an interview, he explained immigration of non-Chamorros to Guam in these terms.

15. According the United Nations “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960), “dependent” peoples under colonial influences are guaranteed a right to self-determination. This right should not be obfuscated or deterred through any colonial measures, including immigration to change the demographic composition of the region, economic conditions that aggravate dependence, military installations and bases that shift power away from dependent peoples, and alienation of resources away from dependent peoples that furthers their vulnerability to the powers of the colonizer.

16. These three “decolonization” task forces were organized by GovGuam to educate the public about the three United Nations political status options available for a colony—namely, Statehood, Free Association, and Independence. These task forces were the cultural sites I chose to hone in on for my dissertation research because they were sites uniquely suited to explore how Chamorros negotiate identity and race within the contexts of decolonization and colonization. These task forces were made up of volunteers from the community at large, volunteers who were passionate about supporting a particular political status.

17. According to the Guam Election Commission regulations for the Chamorro Registry, “Chamorro means a person fitting the following descriptions and his or her descendents”: “All inhabitants of [or all persons born on] the island of Guam on April 11, 1899 including those temporarily absent from the island on that date, who were Spanish subjects, who after that date continued to reside in Guam or other territory over which the United States exercises sovereignty, and have taken no affirmative steps to preserve or acquire foreign nationality.” In other instances, GovGuam has defined “the native inhabitants of Guam” as “those persons who became U.S. citizens by virtue of the authority and enactment of the 1950 Organic Act of Guam and descendents of those persons,” as quoted from the Guam Legislature Bill No. 391, which created the “Guam Decolonization Registry for Native Inhabitants on Guam Self-Determination.”

18. In this U.S. Supreme Court decision of February 23, 2000, *Rice v. Cayetano* voted in favor of Harold F. Rice, a white fourth generation resident of Hawai‘i, who attempted to vote in the Hawai‘i statewide elections for Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) trustees. Because he was not native Hawaiian or Hawaiian, he was ineligible to vote. As J. Kēhaulani Kauanui describes, the Supreme Court ruled that the OHA election of trustees violated the Fifteenth Amendment which secures all citizens the right to vote regardless of race or color (2002, also 1999). However, Kauanui explains that it is a racialized colonial history that established definitions of “Hawaiian-ness” based on blood quantum (or blood percentages) and, thereby, instituted all Hawaiian entitlements, such as the ability to qualify for Hawaiian lands, based on these definitions.

19. The Commission on Decolonization was the organization established by GovGuam to oversee and pursue decolonization activities for Chamorros. This agency was

responsible for keeping tabs on the three political status task forces—Statehood, Free Association, and Independence.

20. Interview with Leland Bettis, July 28, 1998.

21. Mark Forbes's reference to skin color brings up another dimension of race in Guam, that of the salience of phenotype as markers for racial understandings of group belonging. Phenotypically, Chamorros come in all shades of brown, from dark to light-skinned, often even within the same family, a reality that highlights to Chamorros their mestizo ancestries. However, Forbes is presenting an assumption in his statement that a person who is very dark-skinned may be African-American or a person who is very light-skinned may be a white American and not Chamorro, who are usually brown. In reality, this may or may not be the case, but his statement speaks to the codes immersed in things such as skin-color. Historically, lighter-skinned Chamorro individuals had privileges over their darker-skinned friends and relatives.

22. Over the decades since Schneider's groundbreaking work on American kinship (1980 [1968], 1984), he has been criticized for his analysis (e.g., Carsten 2000; Parkin and Stone 2000). The most obvious critique was his assumption of a homogeneous sense of "American" family, and his analytical blindness to the diversity within American kinship. However, his analysis of essentially white, middle-class American kinship works well for my comparison between Chamorro and American notions of relatedness. It is the white, middle-class normative kinship narratives that Chamorros find themselves confronting and being judged against. Although colonial power is far from homogeneous, the legal and cultural colonial hegemonic tendencies tend to be white and middle class American.

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