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Special Issue

Pacific Islands Diaspora, Identity, and Incorporation

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# PACIFIC STUDIES

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A multidisciplinary journal devoted to the study  
of the peoples of the Pacific Islands

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# PACIFIC STUDIES

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## **PACIFIC ISLANDS DIASPORA, IDENTITY, AND INCORPORATION**

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## SPECIAL ISSUE

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# PACIFIC STUDIES

SPECIAL ISSUE

PACIFIC ISLANDS DIASPORA, IDENTITY, AND INCORPORATION

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## INTRODUCTION

Alan Howard

Jan Rensel

*University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*

ONE OF THE MOST NOTICEABLE TRENDS on earth, in addition to global warming, is the increasing frequency with which people move about from place to place. To be sure, people have always been a peripatetic lot, but the constraints of boundaries have been progressively stripped away in recent years by improved transportation, economic globalization, and more permeable national borders. One result of this trend has been a proliferation of studies under the rubric of “diaspora,” a term adapted from the dispersion of Jews from Israel beginning in the eighth century BC. This special issue is a contribution—a significant one we hope—to that burgeoning literature.

The collection is the product of successive annual sessions at meetings of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO), beginning with an informal session in 2006 and culminating with a symposium in 2010. Nine papers survived this process and constitute the substantive ethnographic essays presented. Geographically, they cover four originating Polynesian societies (Kapingamarangi, Rotuma, Samoa, and Tonga) and five originating Micronesian societies (Banaba [Ocean Island], Chuuk, Pohnpei, the Caroline Islands, and the Marshall Islands). The main destinations of migrants from these societies include Fiji, Guam, Hawai'i, New Zealand, Saipan, and the continental United States.

It is important to note that Pacific Islanders have been among the most mobile people in the world over the past several thousand years, during which they left homelands in Southeast Asia and dispersed over the entire Pacific Ocean. Minimally constrained by the ocean that surrounded the islands on which they settled, they voyaged great distances in well-crafted canoes, adapted their cultural knowledge to new environments, and generally thrived. As Epeli Hau'ofa observed in his brilliant article "Our Sea of Islands," for the people of Oceania, "their universe comprised not only land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it" (1993, 5). He went on to contrast this view with that of westerners:

There is a gulf of difference between viewing the Pacific as "islands in a far sea" and as "a sea of islands." The first emphasises dry surfaces in a vast ocean. . . . The second is a more holistic perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships. . . . It was continental men, Europeans and Americans, who drew imaginary lines across the sea, making the colonial boundaries that, for the first time, confined ocean peoples to tiny spaces. These are the boundaries that today define the island states and territories of the Pacific. I have just used the term "ocean peoples" because our ancestors, who had lived in the Pacific for over 2000 years, viewed their world as a "sea of islands," rather than "islands in a far sea." (Hau'ofa 1993, 5)

Despite many years of colonial overlay, one might argue that this view of islands as nodes in a web of connectivity persists among the peoples of Micronesia and Polynesia and that their current migrations are simply a new chapter in a long history of exploration, purposeful migration, and resettlement. Indeed, as Suzanne Falgout notes in her article on Pohnpeian emigration to Hawai'i (2012 [this issue]), much contemporary migration within and from Micronesia is guided by traditional principles of voyaging. She paraphrases Micronesian historian Joakim Peter, noting that Chuukese voyaging is purposeful, planned, and with a distinct course of action. Voyagers are advised not to wander aimlessly and to maintain strong clan and trade connections for basic life support (Peter 2000). They should also have a connection or relationship to people in the destination. Indeed, Chuukese custom advises "walking in the footprints" of others, retracing others' movements. Without such connections, Chuukese travelers are said to be lost, or adrift, while away from home (Peter 2000).

This emphasis on maintaining connections is a central theme in the case studies presented in this special issue. Return visits by migrants to their

home island, sending remittances, gifts, and donations in support of churches and various events, are common occurrences that link expatriate Islanders to their homeland. Likewise, people from the islands regularly communicate with kinsmen abroad, send traditional valuables that are hard to come by in foreign lands, and may visit with some degree of frequency. And as communities emerge and expand abroad, visits, exchanges, and communication between them proliferate, strengthening connections in what has become a worldwide network for many Islanders. Indeed, if one were to map the flow of people, money, valuables (both tangible and intangible), and communication in real time, it would result in a most dynamic diagram.

This is not the first collection to address issues pertaining to the Pacific diaspora. It is preceded by two collections that have provided a solid foundation for understanding the issues involved. First came an ASAO volume deriving from an ASAO symposium on resettled communities edited by Michael Lieber (1977). Most of the chapters in the book *Exiles and Migrants in Oceania* are by anthropologists who participated in Homer Barnett's comparative study of resettled communities. It includes chapters detailing the migration experiences of Palauans, Kapingamarangi, Nukuoro, Bikinians, Banabans and other Gilbertese, Rotumans, Tikopians, Ambrymese in the New Hebrides, and the Orokaiva of Papua New Guinea. A second volume, edited by Paul Spickard, Joanne Rondilla, and Debbie Hippolite Wright (2002), is titled *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and Across the Pacific*. This book, by authors from varying backgrounds, has a heavy emphasis on the impact of colonialism on Pacific peoples, with special sections addressing identity issues, migration issues, cultural transformations, gender and sexuality, social problems and responses, and Hawaiian nationalism.

The current collection adds to the literature both by amplifying themes in the previous two volumes and by introducing new issues to the conversation. The first article, by Ping-Ann Addo, describes changing conceptions of kinship groupings, including the very notion of "family," among Tongans in New Zealand as they cope with tensions between providing for their close kin and traditional cultural demands to support the broader Tongan community, both in New Zealand and in Tonga, with church donations and contributions of money and valuables to various ceremonial and fund-raising events. Addo brings to light changes in the expenditure of money between generations of emigrants and describes the ways money is used to teach children about the boundaries of "family" through acts of gift giving. As she notes, the value of money articulates with the value of traditional wealth but within a changing political economy brought about by the



diaspora. Changing attitudes toward money have implications for the ways relationships are created and sustained, both within New Zealand and between emigrants and their kinsmen back home in Tonga. Insofar as the way money is used articulates with cultural values, it also implicates a people's sense of their cultural identity, in this case "the attitudes and beliefs that Tongans say guide them to do *anga faka-Tonga*, that is, to live in 'the Tongan way.'" For this reason, Addo observes, the way people use money arouses emotions like anxiety about how to navigate modernity without losing their traditions. She concludes that even though roles may be shifting in families and kinship networks, cultural values continue to be honored, if in circumscribed ways.

In the second article, Susanne Kuehling draws our attention to the invisible aspects of culture, what a previous generation of anthropologists termed "latent culture," that migrants take with them. Such "invisible belongings" include shared principles of spatial organization, understandings of kinship and gender, cosmologies, moralities, and the interpretation of sensate experience. As Kuehling puts it, "Many of these belongings cannot be 'unpacked' at the end of the journey, but some are elevated to symbols of shared experience and unity." For migrants from the Caroline Islands, a disempowered minority on the island of Saipan in the Northern Marianas, odors, particularly the smells of flower garlands, play a crucial role in maintaining their sense of identity. Culturally meaningful odors that waft in the air, Kuehling observes, constitute "a bonding element, a sense of shared experience that allows people to construct their sense of sameness." Among migrants, she argues, "this experience of communality appears to be an anchor of ethnic identity, as people make use of their invisible belongings to achieve a feeling of communality." From the standpoint of identity construction, a focus on the spaces between persons in which odors exist shifts us away from a bounded, atomistic conception of self, so prevalent in Western culture, to a concept of the self rooted in relationships. Just as the ocean ties Pacific peoples together, Kuehling maintains, "the breeze constitutes an invisible connection that informs their sense of place beyond the confinements of islands." Insofar as flower garlands play a key role in permeating the breeze with meaningful odors, women occupy a central role in the maintenance of Carolinian identity, as it is they who collect the petals, compose the perfume, and braid garlands for their men and children. The case of Saipan's Carolinians shows how deeply embedded and resilient "invisible belongings" can be when safeguarded within female spaces.

The third essay, by Wolfgang Kempf, introduces a discussion of the discourses that encompass diasporas. Although the case of the Banabans is

distinctive in some special ways, most migrant groups have generated conceptual frameworks for making sense of their circumstances. The focus may be on the homeland—a nostalgia for its alluring beauty, cultural purity, carefree lifestyle, and so on, or, alternatively, a sense of outrage at changes seen as corrupting the idealized culture (see Howard and Rensel 2012 [this issue], for examples). Their discourse may focus on issues within migrant communities, such as the stereotypes that people in the new society have of them, and the consequences for their well-being (see Falgout 2012 [this issue]; Carucci 2012 [this issue]). Or discourses may focus on relationships between a migrant community and the homeland, as is the case of the Banabans. The Banabans were forced off their home island of Banaba (then known as Ocean Island in colony of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands) by the Japanese during World War II and scattered over several islands. Banaba had already been despoiled as the result of industrial-scale mining of phosphate, rendering the traditional lifestyle nearly impossible. After the war, the British gathered up the dispersed Banabans and resettled them on Rabi Island in Fiji. Kempf reports that Banabans “link their founding narrative of colonial exploitation, war, dispersal, and resettlement to the biblical story (related in the Book of Exodus) of [the Jews’] liberation from Egyptian bondage and entry, after a period of wandering in the wilderness, into the Promised Land.” The Banabans have adapted the narrative from the Old Testament, with its allegories of liberation and survival, along with the notion of a people chosen by God. In reflecting on the strategic significance of this kind of narrative, Kempf points out that it not only permits the Banabans to organize their perceptions of the past but also allows them to justify their claim to Rabi as a God-given right. In addition, the narrative serves to encapsulate the past in religious metaphors that synchronize religious affiliation, historical awareness, and identity politics. Kempf documents the ways in which the narrative infuses festivities on the island as well as church services. More generally, he draws attention to the role that religion plays in shaping diaspora not only by providing ready-made narratives to justify politically sensitive positions and activities but also as a primary component in the construction (and reconstruction) of cultural identity.

The fourth article, by Manual Rauchholz, brings to light the contrast between formal legal principles and informal customary practices in diasporic settings. He focuses on adoption, child exchange, and fosterage practices among the Chuukese and especially on transactions between people living in Chuuk and their kinsmen abroad in Guam, Hawai‘i, and the continental United States. He presents three case studies of child transfers that illustrate the issues involved and the different ways the rights of children, their biological parents, and adopters are interpreted. Traditional

adoption was largely an informal process in which children were shared with close kin, just as food, labor, and other commodities were shared. Transfers of children between households were a way of redistributing assets and burdens as circumstances required. They were also a means, like other forms of exchange, of consolidating relationships between families and extending networks. In most instances such transfers took place within a geographical space that allowed the child to maintain meaningful relations with both families, and rights in relation to the child were diffuse rather than exclusive. The child's welfare was generally not an issue; the focus was on the relationship between the adults involved. When children are sent to live with relatives abroad, however, circumstances are very different, in part because the child's separation from its biological parents is much more extreme. Furthermore, the courts, both in Chuuk and the United States, focus on the welfare of the child and, in formal adoptions, require the assumption of exclusive rights over the child by the adopting parents. The contrast raises the whole issue of interpersonal rights and obligations, customarily and legally, in diaspora. It also draws attention to changing power relations both at home and abroad and on what this might mean for the refashioning of cultural identity as social networks expand beyond national boundaries.

Howard and Rensel demonstrate in their essay the value of the Internet as a source for researching matters that concern emigrants as they reflect on their homeland and its importance for their sense of identity. As the authors note, the epicenter of the now global Rotuman community exists primarily in cyberspace in applications such as Facebook and on the Rotuma Website, started by Howard in 1996. The Rotuman Forum is a section of the Rotuma Website in which people can request that their opinions be posted concerning issues of general concern to the global Rotuman community. Users are required to provide their proper names and where they live as well as to follow rules of civility. Howard and Rensel discuss seven clusters of interest to Rotumans abroad as reflected in forum postings during the past decade. These include concerns about the unreliability of transportation to and communication with the island, about environmental degradation on Rotuma, about the pros and cons of developing the island economically, about disputes over land, about Rotuma's sovereignty in relation to Fiji (of which it is a part), about Rotuma as an idealized and romanticized icon, and about issues associated with maintaining Rotuman identity abroad. What stands out in the authors' view is a tendency to relish an image of Rotuma as a pristine paradise that existed in an imagined past and is threatened by contemporary developments. The imagery is of a beautiful, bountiful island unsullied by rubbish of any kind, of a people who freely shared and cared for one another, of customs that were uniformly

uplifting. Howard and Rensel assert that it is against this image that complaints about environmental pollution, economic development, land issues, the authenticity of cultural performances, and many other expressions of concern must be understood. They maintain that vehicles such as the Rotuma Website facilitate the construction of an idealized, iconic image, which in turn reinforces a favorable cultural identity.

The next two essays concern the adaptation of Micronesians who have relocated to the state of Hawai'i. Suzanne Falgout contrasts the traditional Pohnpeian context of voyaging to the contemporary context. She maintains, however, that contemporary travel perpetuates aspects of traditional Pohnpeian voyaging, including maintaining a sense of place and family, settlement patterns, means of survival and adaptation to new environments, and ways of perpetuation cultural identity. While recent migration to Hawai'i has been encouraged by a sense of belonging to the United States, migrants have found something less than a welcoming reception and are largely unprepared for life in their new home. As a result, Pohnpeian identity is being refashioned in Hawai'i, in part as a result of altered cultural practices, in part as a result of perceptions of them by the non-Pohnpeians with whom they interact. Like others described in this issue, Pohnpeians abroad maintain strong ties to their home island while developing a new sense of community in their new homeland. And like other Pacific Island migrants, there are distinct generational differences in how these bonds are expressed. Falgout pays particular attention to the ways Pohnpeians are perceived by others in Hawai'i. Until recently, there has been little awareness in Hawai'i of Micronesians, the category into which Pohnpeians are lumped. Unfortunately, as a result of some negative publicity based on selected occurrences and inaccurate information, Micronesians have been branded as a social problem within the state. As Falgout points out, "Hawai'i's lack of good information combined with negative stereotypes about 'Micronesians' have had significant, yet varied, impacts on Pohnpeians identity."

The article by Laurence Marshall Carucci concerns the adaptation of immigrants to Hawai'i from Enewetak in the Marshall Islands of Micronesia. When the United States decided to expand the testing of nuclear bombs from Bikini to nearby Enewetak in 1947, the people on the atoll were moved to Ujelang Atoll, 130 miles from their homeland, and despite promises by the U.S. government to return the people to an inhabitable Enewetak, a complete rehabilitation has proved intractable. As a result, beginning in 1991 a substantial number of people migrated from Enewetak and Ujelang to the Big Island of Hawai'i, where they face a mixture of enhanced opportunities and hardships. Like the Pohnpeians described by Falgout, the

Marshallese also suffer from negative stereotypes of Micronesians held by other Big Island residents. They are particularly sensitive to the degree of surveillance they are subjected to by authorities and their neighbors. One result of these conditions is that people are much more conscious of their cultural identity than their kinsmen in Micronesia, where culture is unproblematic. They work hard at fashioning an identity, rooted in traditional cultural practices, that counters the negative stereotypes held of them by others. Taken together, the contributions by Falgout and Carucci raise some profound questions concerning the ways in which immigrant populations are affected by prevailing stereotypes and intrusive surveillance by less-than-receptive, more politically powerful neighbors. It is circumstances such as these that foreground issues of cultural identity for migrants who settle in substantial numbers in a new land. They are faced with continually refashioning who they are—for themselves, for the authorities, and for their neighbors.

Michael Lieber and his Kapinga coauthors, Willys and Rosita Peters and Mike Borong, focus their attention on Kapingamarangi communities in the United States in the eighth essay. Their focus is on which aspects of the cultural model that prevails on the home island of Kapingamarangi, a Polynesian outlier in Micronesia, are replicated in the United States and which aspects are not or cannot be replicated. There are multiple Kapingamarangi enclaves in the United States, with loosely knit networks in Florida, North Carolina, and the Seattle area. The largest community—the only one that has achieved a critical mass capable of organizing ceremonial events involving the entire community—is in the Salem, Oregon, area. These communities, along with enclaves in Hawai'i and Guam, have taken advantage of the Internet to keep in contact with one another, much in the way that Rotumans have (Howard and Rensel 2012 [this issue]; but note the ways in which Kapinga discussions on the Internet contrast with those of the Rotumans). A progression of websites used by the Kapinga people has included major discussion threads on topics relating to aspects of their adaptation to their new homes with various suggestions about what can be done to resolve problems. However, the most active forum topic in recent years relates to Kapingamarangi history, with a major concern for genealogies. This deviates from the home island, where genealogies are regarded as proprietary knowledge. For Kapinga abroad, genealogies are a means of connecting with kinsmen they would otherwise not know of, whereas on the home island they are instrumental in making and defending claims to land. For migrants living abroad, this is of lesser concern insofar as they are not dependent on access to land for their livelihood. The longevity of the genealogy discussion thread—over two years—speaks to its value for

migrants as a metaphorical vehicle for engaging in discussions of shared substance, the very essence of kinship and cultural identity. The authors conclude with a reconsideration of the very notion of “community” as it relates to the redistribution of a population in the electronic age.

The final ethnographic account, by Micah Van der Ryn, concerns the phenomenon of return migration, a topic little studied as yet in the Pacific and elsewhere. Van der Ryn’s focus is on return migration to American Samoa. He explores return migration to American Samoa as a cultural act within a transnationalized Samoan system of life that helps describe the Samoan diaspora and highlights how differences in governmental policy with regard to key institutions, such as Samoa’s indigenous system of chieftainship (*fa’amatai*), differentially impact patterns of return migration between Independent (Western) Samoa and American Samoa. The main destinations for migrants from American Samoans have been Hawai’i and the West Coast of the United States, while migration out of Western Samoa have been mostly to New Zealand and American Samoa. Relying on “transnationalism” as a key conceptual framework, Van der Ryn sees return migration (following Cassarino 2004) as part of a circular system of social and economic relationships and exchanges in which returnees prepare for their reintegration by periodic visits and sending remittances while abroad. In this system, he envisions Samoa as the center and Pacific Rim countries—the United States, New Zealand, and Australia—as the periphery from which money is extracted in the interest of feeding a Samoan form of prestige. The matai system, including the dispensing of titles, plays a central role in this system and impacts the politics of return migration. In presenting case studies, Van der Ryn strives to rely on indigenous Samoan concepts to illustrate the dynamics involved. Exploring the reasons for return migration, he distinguishes between age-groups while emphasizing the importance of caring for relatives as situations (with children and the elderly) require and as opportunities (education, employment) present. Appropriately, this article concludes with a call for more research on the understudied topic of return migration and particularly on the impact of returnees on their home communities.

The afterword, by Michael Rynkiewicz, places the Pacific diaspora in perspective and explores the contributions of the ethnographic accounts to the theoretical conversations taking place about the nature of diasporas in general. Rynkiewicz reflects on the development of the diaspora concept in modern anthropological usage in conjunction with the terms “transnational” and “transnationalism.” He discusses variations in diasporas, ranging from the relatively simple, involving small numbers of people speaking a single language migrating to a few overseas destinations, to the extremely

complex, involving millions of people speaking diverse languages and spreading over many parts of the world. Rynkiewicz pays special attention to the significant roles played by identity politics and religion in shaping the nature of the migrant experience. He concludes the issue with a set of provocative questions raised by past studies of diasporas that may well set the agenda for future research.

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**TEACHING CULTURE WITH A MODERN VALUABLE:  
LESSONS ABOUT MONEY FOR AND FROM TONGAN YOUTH  
IN NEW ZEALAND**

Ping-Ann Addo  
*University of Massachusetts, Boston*

**Introduction: Diaspora, Kinship, and Money in the Pacific**

FOR MANY SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, diaspora is a phenomenon of late modernity in which economic advancement and security, and specifically earning money, is a central aim of actors (Bertram 2006; Bertram and Watters 1986; Dufoix 2008; Gershon 2007; Lindley 2009). Members of numerous diasporic communities maintain economic connections with their homelands, regardless of whether the diasporas have been established through work, trade, or empire (Clifford 1997; Cohen 2008; Safran 1991). To Pacific anthropologists, diaspora is a phenomenon that is experienced, for the most part, through family (Gershon 2007; Macpherson and Macpherson 2009). Augmenting, financing, and defending kinship constitute “values” in Pacific societies in the sense that these actions represent “conceptions of the desirable” (Kluckhohn 1951). Money is a key valuable ensuring that families can continue to perform according to cultural values. In this article, I seek to illuminate diaspora as a cultural phenomenon-cum-mechanism for apprehending modernity and the challenges that monetary wealth poses. I argue that diaspora can be seen as a social form in which value (of money) and exchange (of gifts) articulate with kinship (and obligation) to produce new models for intergenerational interaction within families. Using a case study of interactions within a transnational Tongan family, I analyze the



reasons why, even within one kin group, people tend to use money in a range of different ways, while citing a common aim: to uphold Tongan values.

For anthropologists who study Polynesian diasporas, and in particular Tongan diasporic experiences, the sending of remittances has been a most-studied money-sharing practice (e.g., Bertram 2006; Brown and Connell 1993; Lee 2004, 2007, 2009; Small 1997). Indeed, contemporary diasporic Tongans cite the need for money as the main reason that they, and thousands before them, chose to embark on journeys from homeland to foreign locations, a process that has been going on steadily for the better part of a century. These journeys and resettlements are now a common cultural strategy for Tongan families who want to earn the cash that will afford them the chance to live a modern lifestyle. Tongans I've spoken with have told me that money is not an end in itself; rather, it is a means to buy happiness and security, to pay for food and education, to make cash gifts to their churches, and so on. Nor do Tongans necessarily think of money in the same way that Westerners do, because they desire it for different uses and assign it different meanings.

There is a widespread assumption among Tongans that money earned in diaspora is mostly used for remittances, based on family responsibility and relationships of gratitude. However, I depart from analyzing how such transactions create, express, and sustain relationships between migrants and their kin in Pacific homelands and, instead, attend to the ways in which Tongans living in the diaspora may use money to modify, even temporarily, relationships with other transnational kin. With specific reference to Tongans in New Zealand, I investigate one of the ways in which the definition of kin groups may be shifting with changing uses of money as a representation of Tongan values.

To set the stage for understanding the role that money plays in diasporic relationships, it is necessary to go beyond discussions of remittances as material value to consider relationships of value among people whose role it has been to provide remittances, that is, expatriate Pacific Islanders. As Anna Lindley stated in a recent article, more research is needed on remittances from the diasporic perspective (2009). Nonremittance uses of money should also be studied, especially because analysts have been predicting a decline in remittances with successive generations of emigrants from Pacific homelands (Brown 1997; Brown and Foster 1995; Lee 2004, 2007, 2009). Emigrants decrease their contributions to remittances for a host of reasons, such as declining earnings or increasing costs of daily life, as well as decreasing trust that the remittance monies are being used in ways that senders would define as responsible (Lindley 2009). One approach to study

changing priorities for the allocation of money in diaspora, explored later in this essay, is to examine ways in which income earners in diasporic families use money to teach children about the boundaries of family and how these boundaries are marked with acts of gift giving.

In what is now considered traditional Tongan gift giving, women present indigenous forms of wealth, the highest ranking of which are *koloa*, textiles made solely by women. Men present traditional wealth in the form of *ngāue*, which comprises long yams and other agricultural produce, pigs, and *kava* roots. People present gifts to one another and to members of other kin groups at life-passage ceremonies such as funerals, weddings, christenings, and key birthdays such as the first, sixteenth, and twenty-first. Especially in diaspora, where *koloa* making takes place at rates well below those in the homeland, women put much time and energy into obtaining, sorting, and arranging *koloa* for gift exchange. The role of women in such exchanges constitutes what Micaela di Leonardo has called the “work of kinship.” Such work includes “the mental or administrative labor of the creation and maintenance of fictive kin ties, decisions to intensify or neglect ties, and the responsibility for monitoring and taking part in mass media and folk discourse concerning family and kinship” (di Leonardo 1984: 194–95). Men in diaspora typically purchase frozen yams and meat to give as *ngāue*, because they do not own land to grow food or raise their own animals, or because they are employed in urban environments. Both men and women contribute cash, which is highly desired as a gift, toward exchanges.

Money that is neither remitted to the homeland nor spent, saved, or invested in diaspora is often used to demonstrate a family’s commitment to living by the Tongan principle of *fētokoni’aki* (helping one another). Impromptu gifts of small amounts of money, which are often referred to as a *ki’i me’a’ofa* (small gifts), are presented to other Tongans within one’s community or within one’s family. Such small gifts bridge the tensions between obligatory gifts and unsolicited ones; between traditional wealth and money; between doing the work of kinship and following individualized, modern life paths; and between what has become traditional Tongan Christianity and new forms of worship. These tensions come to the fore now more than ever because, with increased global movement, Tongan kinship relationships are strongly influenced by the shifting geopolitics of value in Tongan culture. By “geopolitics” I mean the specific nature of power between people whose relationship is significantly defined by the geography of the place or places they inhabit at a given time. In this article, I seek to answer these questions: How does the diaspora affect kin-based exchange? How are definitions of kinship shifting among Tongans whose

*kāinga* (extended families) are now rooted in the diaspora? What purposes of kinship, as both a primordial bond and a future concern, are served by narrower definitions of kin being applied when delineating to whom one is obligated to give money?

For Pacific people, traveling is part of an ancient mechanism for establishing and maintaining social connections, the most salient of which is kinship. Pacific Islanders have long traveled for warfare, exploration, and trade; today they travel to join far-flung members of their kin groups, while maintaining a different sort of connection to their families in the homeland. Building on Epeli Hau'ofa's famous thesis of the connections between Pacific nations being embodied in the ocean, which he refers to as "our sea of islands" (1993), Ilana Gershon referred to contemporary intra-Pacific connections as a "sea of families" (2007, 474).

How Polynesian families maintain a face of calm and happy daily life while also navigating the waters between Western-style modernity and their own notions of "tradition" is the subject of several recent anthropological studies especially, but not limited to, examinations of Tongans (Besnier 2009; James 2002); Samoans (Macpherson and Macpherson 2010; O'Meara 1990; Shankman 1993); and other Polynesian ethnic groups, many of whose members form vibrant diasporic communities in New Zealand (Spoonley 2001). My goal in this account is to demonstrate that traditional Tongan cultural values continue to be maintained by those living in diaspora, if in circumscribed ways, and even though there is a shift in the ways roles are manifested in families.

### **Tongan Diaspora, Wealth, and Remittances**

Money was introduced to Tonga with Western contact and Christianity in the early 1800s. Prior to that time, Tongans had no ubiquitous token of value. Their wealth system was based on the circulation of valuables in the form of food, handmade textiles, scented coconut oils, and carved wooden objects such as headrests. Such items were exchanged according to principles of reciprocity—exchanges were recorded and gifts presented at life-crisis events; they were reciprocated with equivalent kinds and amounts of valuables. Yet none of these constituted a token of value. Money quickly became a link in the circulation of valuables, as it could be widely exchanged and was demanded by churches, government, and family members for a wide variety of purposes, such as obtaining food and clothing, paying taxes, making traditional compensation payments and church donations, and seeking God's blessings. The burden of meeting such financial obligations meant that money was rarely saved and often gifted.

The economic survival of Pacific families, communities, and even whole islands has become largely dependent on the labor of emigrants. But although sending remittances is a common cultural feature of first-generation immigrant life, the level of remittances from the second generation appears to be less than from the first (Lee 2006). One reason for the decline may be that members of the second generation share fewer personal ties and memories of growing up in the islands (Lee 2006). But even if they remit less, they are arguably no less entangled in webs of kin-based obligations to those in the home islands. These include paying for aspects of modern life such as imported luxury foods, transportation, electricity and phone bills; funding rituals such as rites of passage ceremonies; and shouldering routine kin-based responsibilities such as school fees or church donations.

How people assign meaning to forms and uses of money in their societies is an important aspect of expressing identity. Scholars of Melanesia have presented analyses in which local money and Western money are exchanged; these analyses highlight the uniqueness of Pacific modernities (see Toren 1989; Robbins and Akin 1999; LiPuma 2001). Their work suggests that, among other things, the notions of tradition applied when using or eschewing cash as an exchange valuable warrant deeper examination. As Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch pointed out two decades ago, "What money means is not only situationally defined but also constantly re-negotiated" (1989, 23). The contexts for these renegotiations are far from arbitrary; they are linked with people's values, social roles, and other realms in which things have meaning or value. Thus, a discussion of money in diasporic contexts is about the intersection of how people think about what they value and the specific ways in which they put cultural values into practice. As David Graeber pointed out, what one values bears heavily on how things are treated in an act of economic exchange. He related "values" in the sociological sense—that is, "[shared] conceptions of what is ultimately good, proper, or desirable in human life"—to "value in the economic sense," or "the degree to which objects are desired, particularly, as measured by how much others are willing to give up to get them" (Graeber 2001, 1).

Analyses of the Polynesian diaspora must encompass what Polynesians do with money while they are abroad—not least because the populations of the home islands are now, in many cases, smaller than the populations living in diaspora. Samoans, Tongans, Tuvaluans, Niueans, Rotumans, and Tokelauans are but a few of the Pacific peoples whose overseas numbers now exceed their homeland populations. Another reason for including the study of money in the examination of diaspora is that the value of money today articulates with the value of traditional wealth in virtually all Pacific societies, both in the home islands and abroad.

The particular form of gifts is also changing because of the political economy of diasporic communities. When the first waves of commoner Tongans emigrated, *koloa* was only being made in the homeland, partly because the necessary raw materials were unavailable in the diaspora (Addo 2007). But in the last two decades, diasporic Tongan women have introduced hybrid versions of *koloa* that have been accepted into traditional systems of exchange and categories of wealth. One of these is *ngatu pepa*, a textile devoid of any bark content that women create using processes identical to those involved in producing traditional barkcloth and that they also gift like barkcloth (Addo 2007). Homeland-based Tongans also send large amounts of *koloa* abroad, but, as the amount of *koloa* in the diaspora increases, some emigrants are in a position to send barkcloth and fine mats back to the homeland.

Tongans have told me that they experience a constant need for money and that to get it many will *kole* (request) it from relatives; take out high-interest loans (see Addo and Besnier 2008); or sell *koloa*. They also express concern that money is preferred to, and is replacing, traditional valuables. Their reactions suggest that an analysis of the role of money has to take into consideration emotions such as anxiety about how to live in the modern world without losing their traditions (Addo 2009; Addo and Besnier 2008; Brison 2001; Fajans 1983). Some elderly, first-generation Tongan emigrants fear that when everything, including traditional valuables, can only be bought, it will mean that the diasporic community has lost touch with its traditions. It would also indicate a restructuring of power relationships because, although elders and highly ranked people held power in the traditional system, those with access to money, including younger people who perform wage labor, would have greater access to both modern and traditional wealth.

However, money's value does not preclude the need for or replace traditional valuables. Over many generations, Tongan families have continued to exchange them while adjusting to the availability and use of cash. Further, in the homeland and the diaspora, people effectively store some of their earnings by buying and stocking up on *koloa*. The mutual convertibility of *koloa* and cash affords Tongans a way to gather the specific resources they need to meet their kin-based obligations. Earning money in the diaspora is a way to increase cash wealth, but cash may preferentially be converted to *koloa*. Money can be lost, become subject to *kole* (requests) from relatives, or be gifted to others when a family need arises. If money is quickly converted into material valuables like *koloa*, airline tickets, and consumer goods, it can be used over a longer period of time.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the Tongan diaspora deserves to be analyzed with regard to how the economic value of

cash articulates with cultural values—the attitudes and beliefs that Tongans say guide them to do *anga faka-Tonga*, that is, to live in “the Tongan way.”

Among diasporic Tongans, *anga faka-Tonga* is considered the antithesis of *anga faka-Palangi* (the Western way). The latter is epitomized by people hoarding money for themselves rather than seeing to the needs of their extended family. Tongans harbor a learned anxiety in the face of competing demands—to appear competent in Western contexts without being considered *fie Palangi* (wanting to be Western) or unwilling to adhere to *anga faka-Tonga*. This anxiety is most evident in those who have well-paying jobs and, thus, who are expected to uphold the pride of the kin group by furnishing their dependents with money for daily life and ritual exchanges. They may also be called on to remit money not only to relatives in the homeland but also to family members in other parts of the diaspora who request assistance.

Tongans give up large amounts of money to buy traditional wealth, most of which is then gifted away, trusting that they will receive equivalent amounts and forms of valuables in future reciprocations. However, people also give up large amounts of money over the course of a lifetime in the form of small cash gifts. As in other indigenous communities trying to manage the contradictions between their cultural values and the values of late capitalism, one of the purposes of such gifting is to reinforce the Tongan value of mutual help in places outside the homeland by exploiting the multiple levels of the interchangeable nature of money (Cattellino 2009).

Tongans say that family—both extended and nuclear—is one of their highest values (Fitisemanu et al. 2002). Family is a socially constructed system for categorizing people along lines of biological descent and social affinity. Those who constitute family are a group of people whose relationships to one another form a particular structure for social experience that is tied to growth, maturation, and marriage, as well as notions of descent and inheritance. Experientially, family can be defined as the people with whom one shares one's valuables. The high value of family as a concept and as an experience in peoples' lives is apparent in Tongans' continued efforts to do things that bring respect and status to their families. These efforts include the exchange of gifts as well as the contributions of time, money, and the support needed to organize ceremonial events at which exchanges take place. Money is the primary form of value that diasporic families exchange today to ensure that they can feed their families, educate their children, contribute to ceremonial occasions that are the duty of the kin group, and make the regular church donations that remain an essential part

of being a Tongan Christian in the “traditional” way. Insofar as money is an expendable valuable that Tongans use to relate to one another, money is a Tongan valuable. The relationships in which money is produced, circulated, and consumed are important ones in Tongan culture, and they constitute the social world of the Tongan diaspora.

### **Tongan Families, Gifts, and Money**

In both the Tongan diaspora and the homeland, the importance of family is reinforced by the values of *ʻofa* (love), *fētokoniʻaki* (mutual help), and *fakaʻapaʻapa* (respect). All of these are learned in the context of family socialization, and all are vital principles for interacting with family members across prescribed distances of age, rank, and gender (Funaki and Funaki 2002). Thus, maintaining that which is of greatest value—the notion and experience of family—requires Tongans to maintain a socially legitimate context in which to realize and enjoy other things of value. In Tongan culture, as in all cultures, there are rules about how and when it is appropriate to keep, gift, receive, and reciprocate money.

Among Tongans, there are almost no transactions in which money is unsuitable as a token of value or as a gift. There are also certain kinds of transactions for which money is particularly appropriate. These include ex-student associations’ donations to their old high schools in Tonga. Members of an ex-student association meet at a specific venue, usually in the diaspora, to raise these funds. Their contributions include making time to practice, perfect, and perform solo and group dances at fund-raising events, as well as the money that they “earn” from these performances. Audiences—usually consisting of other ex-students and their families—reward the dancers for a fine performance with gifts of cash known as *pale*, which are pooled and donated to benefit the school or to fund the activities of the ex-student association. Whether or not graduates have relatives currently attending the school in Tonga, they gain status as donors, and if they can see, or get news of, the material effects of their donations in improved infrastructures, they are further encouraged to keep giving.

Another form of transaction in which only cash is gifted is *misinale*, the regular monetary donations that members make to their Christian congregations in the homeland or abroad. The rewards from making such gifts include blessings from God and the knowledge that one has helped the church to continue its spiritual work in a specific Tongan community.

Church donations are cultural obligations, but they are also sources of competition between kin groups who belong to the same congregation. The amount of each donation is publicly announced, and people freely discuss



the sizes of gifts that their kin groups and others presented at an event. Families donate several times a year, making the burden on cash-earning members substantial and placing pressure on *kāinga* who may not have given as much to give more at the next event. Even though people are asked to give only what they can, the average gift per nuclear family at one particular Methodist church serving Tongans in Auckland is between NZ\$1,500 and NZ\$2,000 per year. I have met several Tongans who have drifted away from regular worship at Methodist churches where their *kāinga* have worshipped for generations. Instead, they now attend mainstream Methodist churches or have converted to Mormonism or other denominations. They tell me they have done so to avoid social pressure to gift ever-increasing sums of money during misinale time.

Such larger cash gifts are said to constitute *kavenga* (obligation, in the sense of both duty and burden), and the practice of presenting them is cited among the quintessential symbols of Tongan tradition. When gifts are given at ceremonial occasions to commemorate life-passage moments, they usually constitute a combination of valuables (food, *koloa*, and money). A woman in the receiving family usually makes a note of what and how much is gifted and by whom so that an even reciprocation can be made. Funerals are especially important in this regard, because they represent the last moments of a person's life with his or her kin, and the obligation to attend the event, to help with arrangements, and to gift both cash and traditional valuables is very strong. On such occasions, money is the only form of gift that is not normally reciprocated right after the event. Food is immediately reciprocated, usually as part of a redistribution of leftovers from the feast used to celebrate the life-crisis occasion. When the gifting family celebrates a rite of passage event of its own it will receive, from the families it gifted to in previous events, approximately equal amounts of cash. This can sometimes be on the order of hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Such gifting is considered the duty (*fatongia*) of families to one another and the members of each family to their respective *kāinga*.

In the context of *kavenga*, money is treated like a traditional valuable: it is accumulated and gifted in large amounts that are publicly acknowledged by announcements or by writing on the envelope in which the cash gift is presented. Cultural values are actively taught to and reinforced for second- and third-generation members of diasporic communities by openly displaying key behaviors such as gifting one's valuables (including money), thus showing *ʻofa*, which can be defined as love, concern, respect, good will, and sincerity (Kavaliku 1977). These behaviors put into practice the values of mutual help, respect, and empathy (*feʻongoʻiʻaki*), and thus perform *tauhi vā* (nurturing the social relationships between people; see Kaʻili 2005).



Younger generations learn the lessons of culture when they witness elders giving large gifts at kavenga, including presenting “large gifts” to fulfill their duty to support their families’ endeavors to help others and to distinguish themselves in the community. It is optimal to use traditional wealth for such gifts, but the form of the valuables being exchanged is not static. Even in Tonga, gifted food items are no longer limited to pig meat and long yams but also include frozen yams and tinned meats, as well as bottled soft drinks. Adult emigrants are just as likely to use cash as traditional wealth to teach younger Tongans important cultural principles such as putting oneself after others by gifting valuables, redistributing gifts received, and always sharing one’s food. On a daily basis they balance the demands of cultural pride and material need as they fulfill their dual responsibilities to teach a culture of selflessness to their children while making monetary ends meet.

One kind of gift that might appear to contradict the value of putting kin before oneself and of using all of one’s resources to do so is a cash offering referred to as a “small gift,” or *ki’i me’a’ofa*. There is a qualitative difference between large gifts and small gifts along the lines of *fatongia*: small gifts are considered voluntary, and there is no obligation to reciprocate them. When people give small gifts, they should not expect counter-gifts. Because *ki’i me’a’ofa* are not considered obligatory and, therefore, not a form of duty, there is no strict accounting of them. However, there is a tacit obligation to recognize the givers through a process of generalized reciprocity.

Where *ki’i me’a’ofa* are concerned, neither the form nor the timing of reciprocation is prescribed. No one is obligated to give another person a *ki’i me’a’ofa*. Rather than a ceremonial practice, giving such “small gifts” is considered to stem from an emotional moment of *loto mafana*—a moment of “warm-heartedness” when one may be moved to recognize the value of a social relationship, or to feel empathy for another, by performing an act of generosity. Tongan youth learn the value of being emotionally in tune with the needs of others by periodically witnessing how elders channel their “warmth of heart” feelings. The presentation of small gifts is not obligatory but does serve to teach and to reinforce culture.

It is becoming increasingly important for adult emigrants to support kin, especially elderly kin, by providing them with money for expenses. Such acts come under the umbrella of *anga faka-Tonga*. A child may notice her mother skipping the payment of one month’s electricity or telephone bill to finance her grandmother’s church expenses, and the child may infer from this that religious obligations trump all others. According to many second-generation members of Tongan communities in Auckland, such an example is a skewed conception of cultural obligation; they feel it is more

important to teach children to use money for education and to provide food for the *fāмили* (close kin). Yet church participation is integral to daily life because it provides an anchor for faith as well as a physical site for meeting as a community in diaspora. Big gifts for kavenga (life-crisis ceremonies such as birthdays and funerals) are also occasions for enacting identity. How diasporic families finance so-called traditional obligations while covering daily life expenses is the topic of the next section.

### **Traditional Expectations and Shifting Obligations: Financing Family Pride**

In a Tongan family I grew to know well in Auckland, two middle-aged sisters named Sina and ‘Ana support their “mother,” Kalo, an elderly spinster who raised them. Biologically, Sina and ‘Ana are Kalo’s nieces: Kalo had adopted them from her younger sister and raised them since they were under the age of ten, following Tongan custom and a widespread practice in the Pacific of kin adopting, raising, and being recognized as the “parents” of children (see also Rauchholz 2012 [this issue]). Sina regularly gives Kalo money to supplement her small pension so that Kalo can meet her daily expenses—rent, electricity and phone bills, food, and other incidentals of daily life. ‘Ana tends to give Kalo money to finance her other expenditures, such as the church donations that she makes four times per year and the gifts of cash, koloa, and ritual food that she presents along with her annual gift of a sermon.

From Kalo’s perspective, the younger women are simply fulfilling their duty to help her to fulfill her fatongia to her church, but the younger women have a somewhat different interpretation of their agency in making these gifts possible. ‘Ana told me: “I give Kalo a certain amount every month for her to pay for whatever she needs. This is over and above her pension money. I know she uses a lot of it for her church things [that is, donations], but I can’t stop her [from giving her money to the church]. I used to try to fight her about it because, to me, she was wasting money. But now, I just want her to have enough money to pay for the things she wants, rather than her not paying her electricity bill so that she can give the money to the church. . . . I just want her to be happy.”

‘Ana also said that she wanted to help Kalo avoid feeling embarrassment around other elderly people in her congregation resulting from lack of money. The money ‘Ana gives to Kalo allows them to cooperatively realize their affective ties as kinswomen: when Kalo can make the family name proud, then her “daughter” has realized the value of money beyond its material exchange value. As income-earners, ‘Ana and Sina are highly

regarded for the way they fulfill their roles vis-à-vis Kalo as well as their biological mother, whom they also help to support. Little consideration is given for the level of the younger women's earnings or how much money they have available to give after meeting their basic expenses.

By giving money to Kalo and her sister, the younger women also partially avoid the *kole* (requests) they may receive from other members of the family. It is interesting that 'Ana, who was a housewife when her children were younger and now works in a relatively high-paying, white-collar job in the New Zealand Customs Department, has never sent money to relatives in Tonga. She said that her family responsibilities in New Zealand are too demanding and that her affective ties with kin in Tonga are "not as tight." For 'Ana, people in Tonga are *kāinga*, not *fāмили* in the sense of being close-knit. Members of this Auckland-based Tongan *fāмили* include Kalo, Kalo's four surviving sisters, and their children and grandchildren. They share the work of paying one another's bills, meeting everyday expenses, and providing whatever church donations members of the elderly generation deem important to make in order to bring blessings to the family and uphold its good name in the Tongan community and in their Methodist congregation.

Financing various everyday, church, and ceremonial costs are some of the basic expectations that first-generation Tongan New Zealanders have for younger members of their families. Throughout the world, an implicit agreement between Tongan parents and children entails children's obligations to support or care for their parents once the children are economically able or the parents are too old to do so themselves. Parents expect that their children will provide for their needs and desires, while also supporting grandchildren and teaching them *anga faka-Tonga*. Sometimes, parents also incur obligations with relatives in Tonga and expect their children—members of the "one-point-five" and second generations in diaspora—to finance these obligations through remittances.<sup>2</sup> However, like 'Ana, members of these younger generations may have a weaker allegiance to homeland relatives and may resist inheriting their parents' obligations to people located at far reaches of the globally dispersed communities of Tongans—what Heather Young Leslie (2004, 392), following Arjun Appadurai (1996, 3), refers to as the Tongan *ethnoscape*.

### **A Word on Expectations**

Diasporic experiences, family obligations, and cultural values all have in common the fact that they are about people's expectations. People embark on diasporic projects to augment earnings, to enable contributions to larger

projects like institutional donations, and to “pursue dreams” that cost more money to achieve than local sources of wealth can provide.<sup>3</sup> People also pursue their dreams because they have learned—from families, governments, the media, their cultures—that it is reasonable to expect support for pursuing them. Thus, as Tongans are taught to expect kin to provide assistance for one another in the pursuit of their dreams, the sending of remittances has been construed as a duty and the receipt of remittances as a right. Based on the cultural assumption that those with greater wealth and resources should support those with less, sending remittances from diaspora has entered the realm of expectations that must be fulfilled, at the risk of loss of face for the wider kin group, or *kāinga*. However, as some Tongans have told me, the efforts needed to fulfill this obligation often result in their failing to meet expenses incurred by their *fāili* in diaspora—buying food, paying bills, or putting some money aside for the sudden occurrence of *fatongia*, such as a funeral.

Nevertheless, it remains important for those living in diaspora to demonstrate the cultural principles of mutual help and empathy. If a person phones (or possibly texts) Tonga and learns that someone in their extended family is in need, they know that the expectation is that they send money. Commonly, remittances are required for paying school fees and household bills, donating lump sums of cash to church, covering the cost of extra medicines, and supplementing the rising cost of food in the homeland. Phone calls from Tonga often result in the emigrant receiving a request, or *kole*, for loans or outright gifts of money. Dealing with *kole* is a major source of anxiety about shame for those living abroad. They are anxious about losing face among relatives or others in the community, and to meet the request they often siphon off money, which is always in limited supply, from some other impending expense or responsibility (Addo and Besnier 2008). Thus, as other analyses of remittances suggest, diasporic individuals sometimes screen phone calls so that they do not have to respond to requests for money from relatives in the homeland (Gershon 2001; Lindley 2009). With the rising cost of living in New Zealand, diasporic Tongans have to spend increasing proportions of their earnings on meeting the needs of members of their *fāili* who share their households. Some of them opt to decrease or forestall remittance payments, or they find ways to avoid acknowledging requests from their extended kin in the homeland.

Belonging to a church congregation, or *kāinga lotu* (literally, “church family”), comes with certain obligations to uphold the name of the family. During my fieldwork I often heard the phrase, “*Ko ‘e kāinga ‘e kau lotu*,” meaning, “Those we pray with are family.” However, some diasporic

Tongans restrict their recognition of this notion of *kāinga* by limiting their gifting of money to the church and reframing it as money shared within the *fāмили*. Gifting to church, while considered a duty, is a clear example of an introduced tradition that is having detrimental effects on the ability of some *fāмили* to meet the costs of their daily needs. Keeping up with demands to support the church donations of both their diasporic and homeland relatives has caused some Tongans to reconsider which of their cultural duties are most in line with long-standing principles of Tongan culture.<sup>4</sup> As one Tongan in New Zealand told me, “Not one of our cultural principles means that we must put the church ahead of our *fāмили*: not ‘ofa, not *faka’apa’apa*, not even *lotu* (church attendance). These [principles] remind us to put our family before ourselves, but not the church before our *fāмили*. . . . How can we even take our *fāмили* to church if they are not well fed and the bills not paid for?”

Similar sentiments have been recorded by other researchers, such as Helen Lee, who stated: “Concern is frequently expressed about the impact of [high levels of church donations] on children whose parents are committing a great deal of time and money to the church, sometimes leaving children inadequately supervised and the family with little disposable income” (2003, 43). All of this suggests a growing discourse that seemingly puts responsibilities to *fāмили* above those that diasporic Tongans have to their extended kin in the homeland, which are in turn above obligations to *kāinga lotu*.

### **Family, *Kāinga*, *Fāмили*: A Word on Words**

There is some precedent for the increasing use of the term *fāмили* rather than *kāinga* in the perception of Tongan kin groups. *Fāмили*, while “not the nuclear family touted by the missionaries” (Gailey 1987, 260), is a more circumscribed notion than *kāinga*. As Christine Ward Gailey stated, the idea that the *fāмили* may be assuming more of the responsibilities than the *kāinga* (bilateral extended family group) is a notion that warrants further investigation (1987, 260). This notion is supported by a similar trend among diasporic Pacific Islanders generally. According to one recent study that included interviews with Samoans, Tongans, I-Kiribati, and Fijians in Hawai‘i, Pacific Islanders are likely to emphasize the nuclear family when asked for a definition of family (Fitisemanu et al. 2002). Just as Gershon noted for Samoans in Auckland (2001), I have observed that, among diasporic Tongans, *fāмили* is the site of teaching culture and discipline. Among diasporic Tongans, day-to-day value orientations—“assumptions about the ends and purposes of human existence” or “what human beings have a right

to expect from each other and the gods [and] about what constitutes fulfillment and frustration” (Kluckhohn 1949, 358)—may be shifting from expecting extended family to meet needs to relying more on nuclear family units. For example, when asked about “actual decision-making, discipline, and expressions of love,” Tongan respondents emphasized their nuclear families (Fitisemanu et al. 2002, 271).

Tongan parents, whose role it is to teach lessons about how to comport oneself in “the Tongan way,” pass on this propensity for concern about money, along with daily strategies for saving or borrowing money or otherwise meeting financial obligations. It is important to think of small and spontaneous cash gifts as embodiments of kinship obligation. Since Marcel Mauss (1925) wrote in the early 1920s about gifts as a triad of obligations—the obligation to give, the obligation to receive, and the obligation to reciprocate—analysts have been attempting to tease apart the differences between the motivations behind giving gifts out of gratitude versus those given out of sense of obligation (Bloch 1999; Graeber 2001; Rupp 2003). However, as Marshall Sahlins articulated, the way, timing, and form of the reciprocation fit into several different frameworks: balanced, generalized, and negative reciprocity (1972). Practices of the modern Tongan family provide clear examples wherein recipients of gifts are obligated to engage in more or less balanced reciprocity over a series of ongoing life-crisis ceremonies in their community; they engage in generalized reciprocity with kin and other community members with whom they exchange small gifts; and they participate in negative reciprocity with the church, from whom they receive few material gifts while presumably receiving much in terms of spiritual gifts.

Within Tongan kin groups, members of the first generation of immigrants are attributed with having established the practice of sending remittances to relatives in Tonga after their initial emigration. They also often cling to older practices of gifting money across *kāinga toto* (blood kin) and *kāinga lotu*. Christine Ward Gailey reported on a 1970s and 1980s trend of emigrant couples leaving their children with, or sending their children to, female relatives in Tonga while the parents worked long hours in New Zealand and Australia (1992). With two generations of New Zealand-born Tongans now fully ensconced in New Zealand’s society and economy, parents rely less on homeland relatives to help care for, and teach cultural lessons to, their children. Today, Tongan youth whose parents live in diaspora are also living in diaspora.

As parents experience increasing anxiety about rising costs of living abroad, they may also be encountering a value shift from standards set by members of previous generations of migrants from Tonga, including their

parents and grandparents. When first-generation immigrants arrive in New Zealand, they almost invariably meet obligations to remit cash to their kin in the homeland. To them, helping members of the wider *kāinga* is a duty of the utmost importance. They also become beholden to *kāinga lotu* in the diaspora, for these are normally the people who help them “settle into” the new country, connecting them with jobs, advising them about homes to rent, schools for their children, and praying for the newly arrived family’s safe establishment in their new community. Members of *kāinga lotu* are thus also often included in the broader notion of *kāinga*.

My research reveals that more one-point-five and second-generation Tongan migrants, now in their 30s and 40s, strategically gift money to reconstruct the boundaries of the group who constitute *kāinga*, and more importantly, to define who belongs to the *fāмили*. These people are now parents in their own right and are attempting to teach behaviors different from those taught to them by their parents. Rather than giving priority to remitting money to their relatives at home, these middle-aged Tongans, whose burden it is to support their immediate families, choose to limit gifting outside their nuclear families to close kin. At ceremonial occasions, wherein people have the obligation to present large gifts of cash, textiles, food, and kava, these same heads of *fāмили* nevertheless spare few resources to make the family look good in front of the Tongan community. The family as an institution is shown to be a fluid category of allegiance and experience, as reflected in their use of the both traditional and modern valuables.

### **Sita and the Pale: A Case Study on Kinship and Cash**

Kalo also experiences the value of being a member of her church through the blessings she believes she receives when she publicly gifts prayers and a sermon to her *kāinga lotu* at the turn of the New Year. As an elderly woman who is renowned in her congregation for her generosity to pastors and to her local congregation, Kalo has been giving this gift for several years now, always during what is called *Uike Lotu*. This is a very important week for Tongan Methodists, as they open their year together, set spiritual goals, pray, and eat together. Known as a *failotu* (sermon, or prayer-giving), the presentation of a composite gift of cash, cloth, food, and a sermon is extremely prestigious, and only those who have demonstrated both spiritual commitment and competence in navigating the verses of the Bible volunteer their time and material gifts in this way.

During *Uike Lotu*, Methodist Tongan congregants attend church at least twice a day, beginning with a prayer at daybreak and ending with an



after-dinner service, in accordance with how they remembered it being observed during their younger days in Tonga. According to this model in Tonga, congregants eat together, ideally in a feast-like context, seated at long tables laden with island-related foods, the tastes and smells of which create a sensory experience of identity (see also Carucci 2012 [this issue]; Howard and Rensel 2012 [this issue]; Kuehling 2012 [this issue]). Eating communally as a congregation is one of the traditions associated with marking the New Year. Members of a *kāinga* who belong to the same congregation will usually attend church together during this week. In New Zealand, it is not uncommon for families to retire to the home of one nuclear family branch of the *kāinga* to share a large meal. Indeed, the practice of feasting after each church service—two per day for the entire first week of the year—is changing into these smaller and more intimate, but equally highly anticipated, events. Food, after all, is a material locus of Tongan fellowship.

The event I want to relate took place while members of Kalo's *kāinga* *toto* were eating and relaxing together after an important Uike Lotu church service. In Kalo's home were two of her four surviving sisters, their children and grandchildren.<sup>5</sup> The event illuminates how being in diaspora affects the way a Tongan family might articulate their cultural values using gifts of cash, while also (re)defining the boundaries of their smaller, *fāмили* kin group. Small gifts of money circulate within a Tongan *fāмили*, against a background of larger gifts of cash between people in the wider *kāinga*. With some of the same actors involved in multiple modalities of kin-based exchange, different aims can be accomplished and different cultural values reinforced. I provide an excerpt from my field notes:

After a Uike Lotu church service in early 2008, one at which Kalo performed a service known as a *failotu*, she hosted “a feed” at her small apartment that adjoined the church grounds. Present were Kalo's younger sister Linitā, Linitā's three daughters and their children, Kalo and Linitā's nephew Etuate, and his wife Vea with their three children. Their youngest child was named Noa, short for Talanoa, after Etuate's mother who had died the year before; her nickname was “Noa leka,” or little Talanoa. The “feast” comprised a homemade shrimp salad, boiled root crops, two buckets of fried chicken, coleslaw, mashed potatoes from KFC, cakes, and various liter bottles of sugary soft drinks. After blessing the meal, Kalo stood and offered words of thanks to us for being there to support her and she also praised God for the health of her *fāмили* who were gathered around her.



Most people are famished after a long church service, which usually closely follows the hard work of preparing the clothes for oneself and one's children and getting everyone to church on time. The meal at Kalo's house was also the stage for acts of intrakin group pride, which reveals itself as a value through the exchange of gifts during an informal dance performance by one of the children after the meal. It was a traditional Tongan dance by the youngest member of the family, little Sita, a girl of about four years of age.

After we had eaten, Sita stood in the middle of Kalo's small, crowded living room and began to tempt us with a performance of a *tau'olunga* solo dance to a *hiva* song that she called "*Takafiefia*." Sita's cousins had taught her the dance, but she did not know all the words to the song, so her mother and her grandmother sang it for her. She performed the *tau'olunga* sweetly and well, and the adults were duly impressed by how she held her hands and feet, and one of her aunts, 'Ana, exclaimed, "*Sio ka va'e!*" (Look at her feet!). About two minutes into the performance, another of Sita's aunts leaned over and tucked a ten-dollar bill into the little girl's shirt collar. During the next two minutes, two or three other adults gifted Sita money; her pale reward by the end of the dance amounted to over thirty dollars. Sita danced for about half a minute more. Once she stopped, we applauded, and her mother and grandmother both told her to give her entire pale to little Noa, the young girl who had been named after her now late grandmother.

As her dead grandmother's namesake, Noa leka had been particularly deprived of a relationship with her grandmother, so she tended to be coddled by her cousins, aunts, and great-aunts alike. She was considered deserving of receiving the material signs of 'ofa and *faka'ofa* (pity), embodied in gifted cash. Yet Sita was encouraged to realize the full value of her newly earned money by gifting her pale to Noa leka. Kalo then reinforced this moral lesson with a gift of her own:

Kalo closed off the formal aspects of the evening by gifting money, right after little Sita ended her dance, to most of us assembled in her modest, two-bedroom home. She handed out about a dozen crisp, new \$20 bills, which she had obviously saved and prepared before the evening. Those who received them included all the teenage grandchildren and their mothers, as well as other members of the *kalasi 'aho*, a group from church with whom she formally collaborated to make large annual donations to her church.

In the diaspora, earning money often involves long hours away from Tongans' comfort zones of their homes (or homeland), their children, and other members of their ethnic community. A gift of money, however small, is often the hardest-won form of Tongan value. Thus, gifting money is noted as a particularly generous act. Children deserve to be "lifted up" with gifts and displays of *'ofa*—hence the love lavished on Sita by the cash gifts during her dance, and on Noa leka by encouraging Sita to share her gifts with the second little girl. A child who lifts up another with a gift of money comes from a *fāмили* in which her elders have taught her well:

A few minutes later, one of Noa leka's cousins—a teenaged girl who was Kalo's namesake—gave her money to Noa. Without being prompted, this teenager put into practice the lesson of passing on money and of not keeping it or holding it for herself, a lesson she had learned in the bosom of her natal family. The cash economics of daily and ceremonial life were intertwined in fluid ways before my eyes and centered around Kalo's *failotu*, the focal point for this family's experience of the long-standing tradition of *Uike Lotu*, which they shared with the other *fāмили* in their congregation.

### **A Family Problem with Diaspora: The Rules of Family and the Purpose of Money**

Although diasporic Tongan communities have "come of age," as have other Polynesian communities in New Zealand (see Macpherson 2002), most Tongan immigrants have been unable to rise above working-class status. Even for those who attain middle-class jobs, their financial security can be relatively elusive. The loss of employment of one or two key income earners in an extended family household can result in a reversal of fortune overnight. In the midst of such economic and social instability, one can observe some object lessons about the value of money being taught by first-generation Tongan migrants to their children and grandchildren. As in Kalo's family, gifting of money is used to demarcate the boundaries of the extended kin group, and diasporic children learn who constitutes "family" by learning how to both receive and to give small gifts of money. In the case discussed above, the money given to little Noa served to symbolically activate her ties to her dead grandmother. These two examples demonstrate how money operates to strengthen ties between members of a *fāмили* in diaspora and is thus being used to uphold Tongan values.

A general concern with kinship overlays the majority of economic exchanges in the Pacific, and people use both traditional and modern

wealth (money) to communicate such concerns. Thus, Joel Robbins and David Akin observed that “social reproduction is at the heart of the matter where currencies are concerned” (1999, 17). Families are about social reproduction and, thus, constitute a key locus for teaching values and the value of money for Pacific Islanders living in many parts of the world. In diasporic families, imparting cultural values is an ongoing concern, but the responsibility for reinforcing the teaching seems to have become more circumscribed. According to Ilana Gershon, who does ethnographic research on Samoans living in New Zealand, the ties that a child feels to the homeland (and to gifting money to church and to extended family in Samoa) tend to be stronger if the child was raised in the homeland; “the parent-child relationships articulate Samoanness in different ways, depending on whether or not the person was raised in Samoa. In Samoa, children would learn expected behavior from a wide variety of people, partially as a by-product of the multiple hierarchical kinship relationships that Samoans are constantly navigating. Once they move to New Zealand, parents become a much more important source of the teaching of appropriate behavior” (Gershon 2001, 308).

Gershon’s work suggests that, after moving to diaspora, Pacific Islander parents may operate their households under different assumptions about who fulfills particular leadership roles in children’s lives. My research suggests that second-generation and one-point-five generation income-earning Tongans in diaspora are relying less on wider community (fictive kinship) ties in the day-to-day rearing of their children. For example, in Kalo’s family, Sina, one of her adult “daughters,” has recently started pursuing a university degree in early childhood education. Her other “daughter,” ‘Ana, who works in the New Zealand Customs Department, is now the sole breadwinner for her family, because her husband has given up his job as a panel beater in an auto body shop to be home with their three school-aged children on afternoons and during school holidays. Both Sina and ‘Ana regularly gift money to Kalo and to their own mother, Kalo’s sister, to finance their local expenses and obligations, but neither of them remits money to relatives in Tonga.

As social scientists, we continue to debate the longevity of first- and second-generation Tongan immigrants’ levels of remittances (Bertram 1986; Lee 2004; Brown and Connell 1993), and other large gifts such as church donations (Lee 2004, 2006). However, the uses of money in diaspora also have much to teach us about alternative possibilities for “doing kinship” in diaspora. We might ask whether the diasporic Tongan family is shifting from an extended family model to one more focused on the nuclear family. Is it rather, as W. J. Goode (1963) argued in his treatise on

modernity and changing family forms that nuclear families and extended families are better suited to societies with capitalistic markets? For Tongans in New Zealand, at least, the extended family is certainly not giving way to an obvious preference for the nuclear family. Rather, notions of the family are shifting between the two in response to the decreased visibility of the extended kin group. Although families may donate significant sums to the church, they tend to gift across fewer familial connections. The exchange of small gifts in particular reinforces the strongest affective ties—those within the family.

Georg Simmel, writing about the developing West in the mid-1800s, presupposed a social world built entirely out of exchange; he wrote that money has the power to transform social relations, including those within families. He theorized that the more capitalistic exchange became rooted in societies, the freer people would be to make rational decisions about their own consumption and to engage in new forms of social integration (Simmel 1978). Rather than suggesting that the exchange of money per se is transforming relationships, I propose that different forms of kinship interactions may be transforming the types of exchange that are considered normal, desirable, and most efficacious for expressing cultural values. For example, diasporic youth probably encounter fewer members of their extended kin group on a regular basis than their parents did when they grew up in Tongan villages. Changing as well, therefore, are the lessons regarding which of their kin they ought to have strong feelings of obligation toward and thus be moved to give money or gifts to. Furthermore, although I do not attribute these shifts in kinship to the diaspora per se, the fact that they are happening among generations of Tongans who are geographically removed from the homeland, and not being reinforced for gifting beyond the immediate family, implicates the diaspora as a variable that influences shifts in family forms.

I am not arguing that the primary notion of the “Tongan family”—that is, the *kāinga* or extended family as the locus of socially emphasized relationships—is shifting. Nor am I saying that the model for the Tongan family will definitively shift from the predominant extended form to a nuclear one, now that the majority of Tongans live in diaspora. Rather, I am suggesting that diasporic Tongans have embraced justifications for delimiting the scope of obligations they feel that they have to support with gifts of money and that they are systematizing these contracted family forms in interactions that they are keeping quite separate from other institutions, such as the church. Although not uncommon, this is nevertheless a daring move, because living in diaspora does not decrease the intensity with which Tongan families scrutinize one another for lapses in Tonganness. Modern

communication forms lead to a situation where even families who choose to reconstruct the boundaries of their daily, affective family ties are likely to be monitored by more people, both in diaspora and in the homeland.

### **A Word on Kinship and Cash**

Given that Tongans expect themselves and others to “put family before themselves,” they are particularly proud of financing large gifts on the occasion of a life-crisis event. However, because they may spend an excessive amount of cash on such an occasion, they might have to conserve as much money as they can until the next life-crisis event occurs. One strategy is to conceal just how much money one has at one’s disposal. As among Samoans in New Zealand and California (Gershon 2001) and Gambians (Shipton 1995), Tongans are less likely to ask for money from kin if they do not know how much money those kin have. Although this practice is advantageous to individuals because it allows them to strategically avoid sharing money with kin, it can also serve the purpose of upholding family pride, because they can act and talk as if a given kinsman is well off financially without specificity.

However, one thing that money may not enable in many Pacific communities is the accumulation of economic capital. As discussed above, diasporic Tongans use money to delineate the boundaries of their kin networks. But challenges to those boundaries occur apart from the kin group. Likewise, Paul van der Grijp reported that on Uvea storekeepers were unable to realize a profit because they found it difficult to refuse credit to kin who were unable to pay their debts (2002). Niko Besnier and I heard similar reports from entrepreneurs in Tonga and in Tongan communities in New Zealand (Addo and Besnier 2008).

These examples reinforce the cultural fact that personhood in Pacific societies is based on kinship roles, which include obligations to share and to provide for others in the kin group, regardless of opportunities that may compete for resources (Gershon 2001). In small face-to-face communities of Pacific Islanders, the desirability of having money, along with the general practice of approaching kin first when in need, has resulted in money being semantically opposed to the assured value of family. As ‘Ana, Kalo’s niece, put it: “I can’t change Kalo, . . . and it’s only money. What is important is that [she] is happy.” Another way to parse this indigenous Tongan theory of money is to say that one cannot always rely on money to be available, but one should be able to count on one’s family; and if people maintain good relations with their family members, they and their kin will surely have access to money when they need it. Therefore, the concept that our

contemplation of Tongans' use of money has led us to rethink is their notion of the family.

### **Rethinking Approaches to the Study of Family in Diaspora**

As we rethink anthropological conceptualizations of the Tongan family in light of diaspora, we must also rethink indigenous conceptions of diaspora. The extended family, as a notion that connects actors who live in Tonga and in diaspora, is being replaced, not by nuclear ties in Auckland, but by other configurations of extended kin that are more localized in Auckland. Increasingly, Tongans in diaspora no longer have any relatives living in Tonga whom they consider *fāмили* and, thus, to whom they are obligated to remit money (Lee 2004, 239). This reflects a possible change not only in the demographics of Tonga but also in how Tongans in diaspora relate both to Tonga and to specific people there who may have expectations of being recognized as "kin." Thus, it is imperative that we continue to analyze the exchange practices of diasporic families in addition to the levels of remittances from the diaspora to Tonga.

The literature on diaspora and transnationalism is largely concerned with how second-generation migrants think about remittances they are expected to send to relatives in the homeland (Brown 1997; Brown and Foster 1995; James 1993, 1997; Lee 2004, 2007, 2009; Small 1997; Spoonley 2001). Remittances constitute signs of "strong ties" of diasporic Tongans to the homeland and index overseas relatives' prosperity and commitment to Tongan values. They also are a reflection of the prosperity and commitment of far-flung kin as a whole. Helen Lee's recent research on second-generation transnationalism has confirmed that, "at least in the Tongan case, remittances and other transnational ties are much weaker for migrants' children" (2009, 29). I prefer not to conflate remittances with "transnational ties" because of the broad range of forms that such ties can take: ties of affection, material ties that include cash remittances, social remittances such as "ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving communities to sending communities" (Levitt 2001, 11). Materially speaking, remittances sent to relatives in the homeland constitute a major form of reciprocation for sacrifices of homeland relatives who are seen as deprived of the company or labor of others within the *kāinga* who are already abroad (Lee 2004; Small 1997; Young Leslie 2004).

Lee has also noted that "the literature on Pacific remittances ignores the second generation, or simply assumes they will remit at lower levels than their parents but does not pursue the implications of this" (2009, 29). Because Tongans raised outside of Tonga have qualitatively different ties

to the homeland than those who were raised there, it is important to employ a different lens in analyzing the strength of ties to Tonga; strength of such ties often appears different depending on whether we are focusing on the experience of a first-, second-, or one-point-five generation emigrant. As Lee suggested, it is not enough to isolate and compare first- and second-generation spending patterns and amounts for a nuanced sense of commitment to Tongan values and maintaining active ties to the ancestral homeland (2009, 29). Ties to the homeland might also be assessed in terms of diasporic Tongans' return trips, as well as with their patterns of spending while in Tonga. Desires to reunite with kin by participating in life-crisis ceremonies being held in Tonga keep diasporic Tongans committed, if sometimes only intermittently, to the homeland.

However, what is the nature of commitment for people in diaspora? Diasporas have been characterized as border zones because those who inhabit them are neither completely rooted in the homeland nor entirely at home in the host country (Bhabha 1994; Brah and Coombes 2000). Diasporic members of kin groups must continually, and often simultaneously, navigate particular demands from people in each location. The contradictions between demands is a feature of border zones that forms part of the daily experiences for migrants from developing nations who resettle in the nations of the industrialized West. These contradictions result in the emergence of a multiplicity of ways of navigating between tradition and modernity, because both are necessary for survival in homeland and diaspora contexts (Bhabha 1994; Kraniauskas 2000). I am suggesting that diasporic Tongans actively explore ways to be Tongan while not being subsumed by those aspects of Tongan "tradition" that could curtail a family's ability to participate in modernity. The effects of such explorations have many implications for categories of valuables and notions of the family with which analysts and Tongans alike constantly grapple. Hybrid valuables such as money and the textiles that Tongan women produce from synthetic materials become vehicles through which people can act in novel ways and have novel relations imposed on them (Thomas 2000).

A number of second-generation Tongan migrants whom I interviewed say that they spend a large portion of their income on Tongan community concerns in diaspora, such as the church, ex-student associations, and other voluntary associations, while minimizing remittances to Tonga. Many of these same people reduce their extra-fāmilī gifting of money by reducing or stopping donations to their church. Kalo's adopted daughters are a case in point: for weekly worship they attend non-Tongan Methodist church congregations, thus avoiding the social pressure to make large competitive donations like their parents. However, they do two significant things that



maintain a positive connection to their Tongan heritage and that other Tongans look on in a good light—they gift Kalo and the other senior women in their *fāмили* with money, thereby facilitating their elders' church donations, and they attend church for the “big kavenga,” which are the occasions whereby their *kāinga*'s reputation is really set (Macpherson and Macpherson 2009). Thus, by performing their duties as daughters who monetarily and publicly support their parents' designs for doing Tongan culture, these two one-point-five generation Tongan New Zealander women reinforce important assumptions of traditional kinship notions—for example, that one puts one's family before oneself—while exemplifying other ways to uphold Tongan principles in their interactions with different levels of kin.<sup>6</sup> Thus diasporic Tongans create spaces for agency over their earnings, spaces where Tongan cultural values are reproduced.

### Conclusion

In this article, I have looked at how articulating the meanings of money and of family, while living in diaspora, gives members of immigrant minority communities a sense of their own agency within modernity. In examining contemporary diasporic Tongan kinship through the exchange of money, I have defined a local notion of the institution of *kāinga* as it encapsulates *fāмили*, *kāinga toto* and *kāinga lotu*, thereby applying ethnographic and cultural data to test the limits of defining such forms of family. The evidence suggests that definitions are shifting situationally in the diaspora to delimit people who constitute *fāмили* as a result of emphasizing everyday gifting over ceremonial gifting, and *fāмили* over *kāinga*. To continue fulfilling their ascribed roles in a family, diaspora-raised Tongans must strategize ways to provide money to their parents, grandparents, and siblings—members of their *fāмили*. How strongly they feel obligated to provide money for *fāмили* members and the wider *kāinga* depends on what other expenses they have incurred, how “close” they feel to people in the wider *kāinga*, and what relationships parents teach their children to honor with gifts of money.

Although I have focused on one particular way in which diasporic Tongans gift money to express belonging, my analysis also challenges the relevance of some conservative ideas about the role of money in transnational communities. Anxiety about money—its sources, its apparent ephemerality, and Tongans' general inability to do without it—seems to be a basic component of, and a necessary sacrifice for participating in, modernity and transnationalism. Yet specific practices regarding money afford diasporic Tongans some sense of rootedness in the apparently sweeping tides of modernity. Contemporary Tongans have shown that they are able to



transform the symbolism of money and of certain aspects of exchange. Thus, money is often made to act as a Tongan valuable (for Rotuman examples, see Rensel 1994), and Tongans have absorbed this elusive valuable into a highly meaningful transnational economy of affect. In other words, Tongans in diaspora use money to redefine the notion of family even as they live it. How they articulate nontraditional forms of value with family where family or kin group is said to be one of the highest values, reveals that the diaspora is instrumental to Tongan culture. Insofar as living in diaspora enables Tongan families to express allegiance through exchange, from wherever they may dwell in the world, diaspora is Tongan culture.

If, over the past fifty years, there has ever been a persistent way of doing *anga faka-Tonga* in the homeland, it surely has been the result of informational, attitudinal, and everyday political interactions between people who apprehend the world through their kin groups and not simply as individuals. As Aihwa Ong noted in her analysis of overseas Chinese investors and other diasporic identity constructions: “their subjectivity is at once deterritorialized in relation to a particular place, but highly localized in relation to family” (1993: 771–72). Regardless of generation, Tongans abroad demonstrate the integral place of *anga faka-Tonga* in their uses of money. That is, what makes money valuable and an object of desire for Tongans is not that it affords them ways to become individually rich or independent. Having access to money can enhance their cultural sense of being people worthy of respect (*faka’apa’apa*), known to be loving (*’ofa*), and respectful of the space between themselves and others (*tauhi vā*). What matters for diasporic Tongans is that there is the sense of what it means to be Tongan, that is, what it means to be a member of a Tongan kin group, however defined at a particular moment. Families thrive when their members are able to respectfully and lovingly negotiate their use of material value to uphold and update cultural values.

## NOTES

1. In buying *koloa* and storing it in their homes, Tongan women might be said to have what Parker Shipton would call “a contrary liquidity dependence” (1995, 247). This means that objects that are treasures—in that they are exchangeable as gifts for ceremonial occasions—can be liquidated, under certain conditions, when cash is needed (see Addo 2007).

2. “One-point-five” is a term often used to describe members of a generation of immigrants who were born and lived outside of the host country for a significant number of their formative years—usually into their teenage years—before resettling with their families in a new country.

3. I am the product of parents who traveled from West Africa and Southeast Asia for further education and who bore and raised me in countries far, and far different, from their own. The stories of why and how my parents left their families and homelands for Canada, where I was born, and a subsequent move to Trinidad where I grew up, frame my study of diaspora. I see diaspora as a matter-of-fact and a normal way of being in the world but also as a condition in which people recognize the continuities and ruptures in the experience of any one place as “home.”

4. An example of other Tongan causes that are often led by churches is disaster relief for Tonga. For example, during their 2002 New Year's services, Methodist Tongan churches throughout Tonga collected money, food, clothing, and building supplies to benefit the victims of Hurricane Waka, which hit several islands in Polynesia but most drastically affected Vava'u, in Tonga. During this time Tonga's lack of infrastructure for disaster relief and its history of reliance on people in the diaspora being willing to live out Tongan cultural principles came together.

5. This event took place on a trip I took to Auckland for New Year's season in early 2008. It was my fifth research trip to Auckland and my fourth time staying at Kalo's home. Having lived with Kalo in 2002, while completing my dissertation fieldwork, I was familiar with most members of her fāмили. My history with this fāмили and command of the Tongan language gave me a partial insider's view to the intricate relationships and happenings that led up to the particular events at this intimate dinner.

6. It is only minimally significant that these gift-givers are women, because sons of elderly Tongans similarly gift money to their elders. Whoever is earning money in a community is obligated to share it with kin group members. Money is widely convertible, but traditional wealth is only convertible under certain conditions. However, individuals are afforded some autonomy in the nonconversion of traditional wealth. A man cannot ask his wife or sisters to liquidate their koloa to meet family expenses, although many women do liquidate textile wealth out of 'ofa for their kin. In contrast, men can rarely leverage power against selling traditional foods if it is required to provide for their wives, mothers, or sisters. As I have discussed elsewhere, anxiety about adequately performing these traditional roles is distributed equally across genders (Addo and Besnier 2008).

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## CAROLINIANS IN SAIPAN: SHARED SENSATIONS AND SUBTLE VOICES

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### **“Invisible Belongings”: What Migrants Take Along**

THE HIGH AND FERTILE ISLAND of Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) represents a special case of Pacific Islanders' diaspora. For almost two hundred years, Saipan has been the home of migrants from the Caroline Islands (which are today a part of the Federated States of Micronesia [FSM]); these people identify themselves as “Carolinians” and share a common language as well as a sense of unity (*tipiyeew*) and belonging.<sup>1</sup> Despite their long and, at times, apocalyptic history of colonial and postcolonial disempowerment, the Carolinians of Saipan have, at least to some degree, resisted the forces of assimilation. Their continued struggle for a sense of unity provides an example for the re-creation and substitution of salient ideas and practices that they have brought from their former home islands. Such ideas and practices constitute “invisible belongings” that, I argue, can resist changes because they are invisible only to the outsider; for those who share them, they are obvious, normal, even banal.<sup>2</sup> Invisible belongings travel in every migrant's luggage—they bring along their individual versions of shared principles of spatial organization, kinship and gender roles, cosmologies, moralities, and sensations. The way it feels to live at the home location and the practices that were part of life there are indelibly retained in memory. Many of these belongings cannot be “unpacked” at the end of the journey, but some are

elevated to symbols of shared experience and unity. In this article, I focus on sensory experiences and their capacity to provide shared and hence socially powerful memories. The case of Saipan's Carolinians supports the argument that female spaces and their ineffable characteristics are particularly capable of providing a continuum of meanings and key values across dislocations. Invisible and yet profoundly significant, sensations and everyday interactions in early childhood, for example, in a mother's kitchen, trigger memories and remain largely subconscious. The household, as the site of taken-for-granted daily interaction, still "requires deeper understanding" in the context of diasporic communities (Raghuram 2006, 18). Here I show that the Carolinians of Saipan, in their role as disempowered minorities in a migrant setting, access their invisible belongings when they use flower garlands to maintain a sense of sameness.

The "idea of a single community of people irrespective of locale" (Lieber 1977, 39), the tension of fluidity (routes) and emplaced life (roots) that characterizes Pacific diaspora, is grounded on such invisible belongings. In their shared experiences and memories, migrants aim at continuity in the face of change, on the preservation (and defense) of their shared experiences in spite of the larger, seemingly overpowering, forces of westernization. The locale, as a sense of place, travels along with a migrant; therefore, an analysis of the dynamics between the old and new places and the people who create migratory paths is extremely fruitful, as most of the articles in this issue show (see also Marshall 2004). Invisible boundaries and the sensations of routine paths and special events turn into memory by emplaced and embodied practice (see, e.g., Alkire 1974, 45; D'Arcy 2006, 98). Often, however, places have been perceived as static and only the people were seen as moving along the paths of migration. Pacific Islanders' "notions of indigeneity," argued Michael Perez, are "not limited to being authentically located in place, but rather the location of space across various sites" (2004, 67). In a recent issue of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, various authors called for an adjustment to the new and complex dynamics of the "diversity of mobilities and subjectivities that constitute fragmented globality," indicating that contemporary research must be "place-based without being place-bound" and calling for approaches that put "place in motion" (McKay 2006, 201).

I suggest that the invisible dimensions of place, as they are carried along when people move, offer a way to accomplish such a dynamic and flexible approach to migration. Migrants' invisible belongings contain their home(s) as "a tangible point in fluidity" (Stewart and Strathern 2003b, 5), as mental representations of being in the world of relations (Jackson 1995, 110). A place like "mother's kitchen," for example, can easily move around the

globe—as long as “mother” re-creates it with her work and presence. The attention that we pay to sensations is filtered by shared principles, as C. Jason Throop has most recently pointed out, demonstrating in relation to pain that such “moral sensibilities” can be viewed as “importantly rooted in the patterning of sensory modalities” (2008, 258; see also Throop 2010).<sup>3</sup>

This invisible dimension of place is incredibly mobile, put into life by the ubiquitous breeze. Let me try to unwrap some of its key elements.

### **The Breeze: Meaningful Winds**

Invisible belongings are associative and experiential—they contain an assortment of scent and sound as well as particular surface structures, including the memory of objects that are no longer in existence. I believe that a focus on the air in motion is useful as an entry point into this realm of the invisible. This area of study has been neglected so far, but I believe that far from just filling the gaps between objects, the ubiquitous breeze links people with their place and with each other. In line with Tim Ingold (2007) and David Parkin (2007), I argue that the moving air transcends persons and places, creating a sense of place that can be unpacked at new destinations: a landscape of wafting scents, vibrating sounds, and lingering spirits. By accepting the notion that persons and objects are connected and not divided by the surrounding air, we may come to a better understanding of emplaced and embodied experience.

The air in motion, as breath, has long been perceived as link between persons and spirits, as shown by the Latin terms *anima* and *spiritus* (meaning “breath of life”; see Robertson 1991). Classic Greek philosophy acknowledged the significance of air (e.g., Aristotle’s treatise *On the Soul*), but the intangible nature of the breeze did not invite ethnographic description. In the notions of animism and spirituality, anthropology has exoticized cosmologies that include ineffable elements of personhood. Excluding from the concept of person the meaning of breath, of air, and of spirits led to an atomistic Western individual. Consequently, sensations, emotions, and the sense of being one with the world were excluded from analysis; they escaped our attention as they were locked up in the black box of invisibility. Martin Corbett argued that the “denial of the sensuous living body . . . reflects and reinforces the status of the body in Western culture” (2006, 222). The embodied world has only recently become a topic of social theory, and, as David Howes has pointed out, there have been “stimulating developments” in anthropology when authors have “seized the importance of studying how the senses are socialized and how society and the cosmos are sensed” (2003, 28).

While some spiritual interpretation and sensory significance of the breeze seem to be universal (Parkin 2007, 40; see also Boswell 2008: 297–98), local or regional interpretations offer a bonding element, a sense of shared experience that allows people to construct their sense of sameness. Among migrants, this experience appears to be an anchor of ethnic identity, as people make use of their invisible belongings to achieve a feeling of communality.

### **Identity: The Boundaries of Persons**

The air creates our perceptions of color and sound, shadows and surfaces. In this regard, it is not surprising that the breeze informs the idea of person in many ways. As Western individualism emphasizes the physical boundaries of a person, it underplays the element of air that connects persons and their surroundings.

The concept of person in Oceania has been described as relational and partible: a person's skin does not form as definite a boundary as in the Western concept, and persons are regarded not as single entities but as part of their group (see, e.g., Panoff 1968: 278–79). This concept of person builds on the unity of humans, spirits, and land. It implies the direct connectedness of individuals with their land and the invisible boundaries that form their sphere of belonging. The “feel” of settlements, gardening areas, sacred zones, and gendered spaces and the changes brought by the movements of sun, moon, planets, and stars are part of Oceania's invisible landscape. Just as the ocean ties these people together into a “sea of islands” (Hau'ofa 1994, 1998), the breeze constitutes an invisible connection that informs their sense of place beyond the confinements of islands.

### **Scent: The Smell of Home**

Spirits are often identified with particular changes in temperature, with sudden drafts, or with specific scents. Odors have been identified as markers of otherness, as morally charged “social sensibilities” (Classen 1992, 137) that are used in many societies as seemingly objective evidence for discriminating others because they “stink” (see Corbett 2006, 229). Since, however, “fragrance is in the nose of the smeller” (Classen 1992, 138), such categorizations are representations of a stratified order rather than manifestations of olfaction.<sup>4</sup> Odors are often used as a strategy for creating otherness (Cohen 2000), but I am here concerned with the opposite, namely, the use of scent to form and maintain a group identity in

the context of migration, where shared morals and memories create a powerful yet invisible sense of scent.<sup>5</sup>

While invisible, scents have a material source that links them to the place and provides the bridge between the visible and the invisible world. Although “a smell cannot be re-imagined to the degree that the other senses can, and depends much more on a particular context to be remembered” (Parkin 2007, 45), it can re-create a sense of place in new locations.

In Oceania, the use of perfumed flowers is a salient way to express love and respect. Scent serves to communicate between humans and spirits, as Oceanic concepts of person include both (see Gell 1977; Howes 2003). Women are central figures in this creation of shared identity, as they collect petals, compose the perfume, and braid garlands for their men and children. The “smellscape” of everyday life is enriched by sound, especially the mundane chats in female spaces, where children experience their social world on a daily basis. These conversations consist of the small talk, gossip, and behind-the-scenes decision making that routinely occurs when women are visiting each other and cooperate in cooking, looking after children, cleaning up, and fulfilling their other regular chores, expressing their love and care for the family group while trying to ignore individual desires and complaints.<sup>6</sup> Songs and proverbs, metaphors and morals, often wrapped into stories and gossip are part of this scene, as are laughter and scolding, steaming food, and delicious treats. Besides tastes, both sounds and scents are part of such childhood memories that may be too subtle to become conscious and verbalized but are nevertheless powerful in their persistent and panethnic effect of bonding in a Pacific Islander’s migratory setting. When speaking about the significance of communal feasts for the creation of a shared identity, Pacific Islanders refer to the process of preparing the meal and decorating themselves just as much as to the actual get-together and the sharing, singing, dancing, and mingling involved (see, e.g., Marshall 2004; Spickard 2002). Their memories of the sensations that these activities create connect them but often escape an outsider. Since such invisible belongings are difficult to capture on paper (Corbett 2006, 230), I suggest here that flowers may serve as a possible net to fish for these ineffable elements of Oceania.

### **Saipan’s Carolinians**

This case study of Carolinian migrants is based on twelve months of fieldwork in 2004, including nine months in Yap State, FSM; two months on Saipan Island, CNMI; and one month on Guam. I explore the “invisible

landscape” of the Carolinians living on Saipan, arguing that the shared experiences and moral values attached to sensations that float on the ubiquitous breeze are connecting the migrants from a large and culturally diverse area, reaching from Palau in the west to Kiribati in the east, if not beyond into Polynesia.<sup>7</sup> Saipan’s Carolinians bemoan the loss of their group coherence as Western ways promote individualism over group cooperation and the cash economy undermines the former practices of reciprocal exchange among neighbors and family members. Their common grounds have shifted from overt political influence (“loud voices”) to the less visible world, which appears to be more resistant to change, namely, the everyday life of women and their respectfully subtle yet influential voices. Expressions of “Carolinian-ness” can be found in small gestures and women’s everyday activities rather than in outwardly directed statements.

Cooking the same food, arranging the division of living space in line with the old setup, and sharing the sensations of wind, sound, and scent within the family in stories of the past and in everyday discourse keeps the island home alive and helps to create a new sense of place in which elements of the past can once again float on the breeze. Such mundane aspects of female agency have often been neglected in ethnographic studies (Underhill-Sem 2001b, 6).<sup>8</sup> They are, however, at the root of Carolinian identity on Saipan, where women’s informal decision-making processes—often set in a food-related spatial context where children are brought up to appreciate certain scents as part of their childhood memories and where moral dimensions of olfaction are established—strongly influence the men’s political speeches and public decisions.

As a behind-the-scenes activity of women that creates a specific “smell-scape,” the use of flowers is an apt example of migrants’ invisible belongings (see Underhill-Sem 2001b). The role of flower garlands, for example, offers a variety of analytical levels of experiencing the invisible world (Kuehling n.d.), including Christianity (Sinclair 2001) and social change (Liki 2001; Underhill-Sem 2001a). By mediating between the visible and the invisible world, flowers (much like food) can open new doors to the “inner landscape of the mind” (Stewart and Strathern 2003b, 7), to a sphere of sensations and emotions that migrants carry with them. Flowers and garlands are close to the heart of Pacific Islanders and deserve our attention.<sup>9</sup> Vicente Diaz’s exclamation that he loves flower garlands and that they “seduce us with the sense and sensibilities of the islands” (2002, 169) is recent evidence that they remain a salient part of his invisible belongings and were unpacked even in the Western academic settings of California and Michigan.

The remainder of this article will demonstrate such an approach, arguing that the significance of flowers has endured among Carolinians on Saipan

despite their near-complete assimilation to the American urban lifestyle that prevails on this most urbanized island in the Northern Marianas. In fact, as discussed later, a flower garland has become the symbol representing the Carolinian population on the official CNMI seal and flag.

### **Saipan: The Empty Bowl**

The Carolinians on Saipan look back to a history of gradual deprivation of their social standing. They began their life on Saipan as the dominant landowning group in 1815, when Saipan was an “Empty Bowl” (Alkire 1984, 279n19), a fertile, large, neglected, and probably completely overgrown island with a sandy beach, a lagoon, a fringing reef, small islets, and an amazingly varied flora—in short, a perfect place to live for anyone whose previous home was also a Pacific island.

The first Carolinian settlers in Saipan came from the Central Caroline atolls, where typhoons and tidal waves have always been a serious threat and where navigators had developed a complex system of knowledge that included sailing instructions for the long journey north (see Flinn 2000: 159–62). This ancient trading route had, however, been abandoned when the Spanish colonizers waged war against the Chamorro people of the Northern Marianas, depopulating Saipan completely. Because of the elaborate principles of secret knowledge, the sea-lane from the Central Carolines to the Mariana Islands was not forgotten, and when the Central Carolinian atolls were devastated in 1815, the survivors took a chance and sailed north. Carolinian oral tradition established an “arrival story,” a version of the past featuring a navigator named Chief Aghurubw from Satawal and his people.<sup>10</sup> With the permission of the Spanish administration on Guam, who had by that time deported the surviving Chamorros to their administrative center on Guam and was now keen to use these skilled seafarers to improve their colonial infrastructure, the “first fleet” of Carolinian migrants began to reinstall their social setup along Saipan’s lagoon coast. The Spanish largely left them alone, as international politics attracted their attention elsewhere; the Spanish-American War led to a near total neglect of marginal places like Saipan.

As migrants to an unpopulated but large and fertile island, the Carolinians maintained their way of life. Word of the new land spread through the sea-lanes, and more Caroline Islanders arrived. After fifty years, a Spanish captain reported to the *London Nautical Magazine* that Garapan (founded by the first fleet of Carolinians) was a flourishing village (Krämer 1937, 127). The abundant resources of Saipan allowed for the peaceful integration of newcomers, and the Carolinian settlers from Palau to Chuuk



gradually developed a common language, now called Saipan Carolinian (see Senfft 1905; Jackson and Marck 1991). Central Carolinian languages and Saipan Carolinian are mutually intelligible.

Beginning in the early 1880s, Chamorros from Guam had been encouraged to settle in the Northern Marianas, and as the U.S. Navy's rules in now American Guam were more intense and overbearing than the minimally staffed Spanish administration could afford to exercise, Guamanian Chamorros took the opportunity and contested the Carolinian landownership; by 1886, they "constituted fully one-third of the reported population of 849 on the island" (Alkire 1984, 273). As the Chamorros had been forced to cooperate with European masters for over a century, they were able to take advantage of their acquired skills. Used to Western dress, they took pride in their "civilized" appearance, which was in stark contrast to the topless, garland-wearing attire of the Carolinians (Fig. 1). When the



**Marianen. Saipan: Sonntag-Nachmittagstee im Gärtchen des Regierungslehrers. Ein Chamorro-Mädchen in gewöhnlicher Kleidung und ein Karoliner-Mädchen im Tanz- oder Festschmuck.**

FIGURE 1. "Marianas, Saipan: Sunday afternoon coffee in the little garden of the government teacher [Dr. and Mrs. Dwucet]. A Chamorro girl in normal clothing and a Carolinian girl decorated for a dance or feast" (Dwucet 1908).



Germans bought the islands of Micronesia (except for Guam) from Spain in 1898, Saipan was, according to census data, settled by 621 Carolinians who lived in Garapan as well as in the exclusively Carolinian village of Tanapag.

During the brief German colonial period (1899–1914), the first steps to the continuing disempowerment of Carolinians were taken, although the force of the colonizers was limited by the small number, as “never more than twelve or fifteen” German administrators and missionaries lived on Saipan (Bowers 2001, 39). Profiting from their “civilized” appearance and the colonial services such as schools and medical care, Chamorros soon outnumbered the Carolinians, buying land with German assistance and accumulating cash as the preferred wage laborers of the colonial powers.

This demographic trend continued. In 1906, there were around 1,600 Chamorros in the German Marianas out of a total of 2,700 Islanders, suggesting that there were roughly 1,000 Carolinians (Schnee 1908, 171; Deeken 1922, 228). One reason for this may be disease, as Carolinians, with their shorter history of contact, were more vulnerable to Western germs than the Chamorros, who had survived several epidemics on Guam (see Hattori 2004, 26; Rogers 1995, 121). If one boat could bring sickness and death to a small atoll, an international harbor like Garapan must have posed a multiplied risk.<sup>11</sup> It certainly resonates with the atoll islanders’ experience that very few of the many people who sailed to Saipan ever returned, whether because they chose to stay on Saipan or because they perished at sea or died from disease.

Japanese colonial rule (1914–44) was more intense, as thousands of settlers from Japan flooded the island, taking over the public life and creating a tight governance system that left little space for Carolinian sociality. Neil Bowers reported that “Japanese commercial enterprise and colonization brought a complete change of landscape. All arable land was cleared and platted to fields” (2001, 41). The Saipanese were “submerged under massive Japanese acculturative pressure” (Carucci and Poyer 2002, 205). Sugarcane fields and refineries required space and workers, port facilities were improved, and thousands of Japanese and Okinawans were brought in by the frequent, regular shipping services. During this period of time, the subsistence economy of old could not be maintained, fishing was taken over by Okinawans, and rice became part of the staple diet. The Japanese chopped down most of the coconut trees, not recognizing the multiple uses of the coconut tree for food and material for buildings, thatch, baskets, mats, garlands, and so on (see Carucci and Poyer 2002: 186–87). All these changes led to the abandonment of critical Carolinian institutions, especially the canoe house and canoe voyaging, as well as the erosion of

clan authority and the disruption of the slow motion of everyday island life.

As in German times, the Japanese colonizers discriminated against Carolinians as “kanakas” and dominated public life.<sup>12</sup> The class ranking of the Japanese left the Carolinians at the bottom of society after Japanese, Okinawans, and Chamorros. “Garapan, the administrative and commercial center of the Northern Marianas, grew from a village to a town of 12,827. With the inflow of settlers, the natives became a minority group, numbering 4,145 in the total population of 46,708 in 1937” (Bowers 2001, 44). Meanwhile, diseases continued to spread and threaten the islanders, with yaws, intestinal worms, trachoma, syphilis, and leprosy reported in Japanese statistics (Joseph and Murray 1951, 97).

In June and July 1944, the U.S. Navy attacked the Japanese on Saipan, taking the inhabitants by surprise. The battle lasted for more than three weeks, destroying the island’s infrastructure and causing much bloodshed among the civilian population. According to Bowers, 10 percent of the people were killed (2001, 57). Out of fear, hundreds (some Saipanese say thousands) of Japanese civilians jumped from a high cliff to their deaths, taking children with them. The town of Garapan was in rubble (Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci 2001, 316). During the fighting, most civilians fled to caves and hid in the hills together with Japanese soldiers. When they were captured or coaxed with megaphones to deliver themselves to the U.S. Marines, they were in desperate need of help: “Many were ill, wounded, and suffering from shell shock, the strain of constant uncertainty and the lack of food and water. Assembled in stockades, they presented immediate problems requiring day-by-day solutions” (Bowers 2001, 58). Secured by barbed wire, camps were erected, at first with primitive shelters that could not protect the prisoners from the heavy seasonal rains (Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci 2001: 247–51). The Carolinians and Chamorros of Saipan were crowded together in these compounds.

The effects of the war and its aftermath on Saipan’s Carolinians were severe, leading to the passive acceptance of U.S. regulations. Joseph and Murray characterized the situation as one of total disempowerment: “The sense of helplessness must have been acute, even before the American invasion, but this violent action changed vague anxieties into horrible reality. The natives of Saipan were overwhelmed by death and destruction as a result of events over which they could have no possible influence. . . . When the fighting was over the Americans did what they could but the damage had been done” (1951, 321).

As I was told, severe damage to Carolinian identity occurred in the spatial restrictions of the camps, which undermined gender roles and forced

them to live together with Chamorros. The competition between these two groups grew as land was redistributed, with tensions aggravated by their different cultural backgrounds. Restrictions on subsistence activities led to American food becoming the staple diet, although Joseph and Murray reported that Carolinians were not as dependent on imported food as the Chamorros (1951, 104); they witnessed the introduction and easy acceptance of high-sugar products: "The Navy free-food rations had to be continued until January 1947, three years after the invasion. These conditions have, of necessity, made the people much more dependent on imports since the advent of the Americans than they were previously, and have helped to develop a taste for American foodstuffs which cannot be produced locally. Soft drinks and ice cream, for instance, are now consumed in large quantities. The United States Commercial Company report for July 1946, enumerating the goods received by the Chamorro Trade Store for that month, mentions \$2,415 worth of foodstuffs and \$2,400 worth of Pepsi-Cola!" (Joseph and Murray 1951, 103).

Despite these circumstances, most Carolinians did not give up their "invisible belongings." The women re-created taro patches, the men fished for subsistence, and the language and a sense of group identity remained alive (see Spoehr 2000, 299). However, their efforts to turn back the clock to prewar conditions were challenged by the presence of Americans and their morals and ideas of development.

### **Adjusting to the American Way of Life**

During this period, Carolinians significantly redefined their identity in order to cope with the new situation. In the past, they had moved from the unstable atolls to the higher grounds of Saipan to prevent famine and death and had established a reliable subsistence economy built on structures that they brought along from the atolls. Now they realized that new rulers were in charge and that new rules were in force. Embracing the American way of life and rejecting their "primitive" ancestry, Saipan's Carolinians attempted to adjust to the new requirements by sending their children to school, wearing clothes, and learning English. Many adults had not mentally or emotionally recovered from the horrors of the war and the camps, and the Carolinian community had lost much of its local knowledge, as many senior members were either dead or too traumatized to resume their roles as informal leaders of their lineages. In most families, important stories of the past, the atolls, and clans of origin, as well as myths and songs, perished with these adults.

As neither the Germans nor the Japanese had ever bothered to prohibit the ritual activities of Carolinians, they had continued to take care of benevolent spirits who lived in their houses. The house posts and the other sacred areas in the house had played an important role in rituals concerning sickness and death in combination with clan-specific chants. But after the war, the dead had not been buried in the appropriate way for a number of years, and the spirits—or the objects symbolizing them and marking their sacred sphere—had been left behind in the houses when people fled into the interior in panic during the assault. When they returned, most houses were rubble, the sacred shrines were gone, and support from spirits could not be expected any longer. A key function of clan identity was gone, too, as were many of the elders who had celebrated the rituals before the war. To fill the void, people converted to Catholicism, erected small altars in their houses, and attended church service on Sundays. A large church was built with local funds raised mainly by Carolinians and Chamorros.

Postwar compensation payments (made to individuals rather than family groups) led to conflicts and jealousy. The “extremely complex tangle” of landownership on Saipan raised “highly troublesome questions” (Spoehr 2000, 72; see also Spoehr 2000: 88, 91, 96; Bowers 2001: 101–2, 249). My impression from interviews is that those with louder voices and better English may have gained opportunities that were closed to others with less knowledge of Western-style negotiation. It is certain that the eventual disentangling of land rights did not satisfy everybody in the Carolinian community. Lino Olopai, a Saipanese Carolinian and activist, said that the payments constituted a fatal blow to the solidarity and one-heartedness of Carolinians on Saipan: “Let’s say my father made the claim for his cousins. When the check came out, it would be made out to my father alone, not to all of them together. Then came the temptation to misuse that money. It was easy to do, because there was no control over how the money was to be disbursed. This was when walls between family members began to be built” (Olopai and Flinn 2005: 218–19).

In 1976, when linguist Jeffrey Marck worked on the Saipan-Carolinian dictionary, he was asked by senior Carolinians to refrain from writing an ethnographic account, as people worried that such a publication could be used against Carolinian interests by the multinational economic and political forces that had entered the scene (Marck 1998, 120). The tendency to “hide out,” reflected in this request, has often been observed among Micronesians (see also Carucci 2012 [this issue]).<sup>13</sup> As many aspects of knowledge (including genealogies, place-names, navigation, divination, and healing) are conceived as guarded property, publication of such data would also devalue the social status of the original owners of this knowledge.

At that time, the status of Micronesia was being negotiated with the United States, and the Carolinians were unable to come to a consensus on their political future (Alkire 1984, 271). From 1969 until 1982, the islands forming the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands negotiated their conditions. Some people favored the idea of becoming part of the United States like Guam; others opted for a compact of free association. The discussions about the future of Saipan split the Carolinians into supporters of the Popular (Democratic) Party and those of the Territorial (Republican) Party (Alkire 1984: 270, 277–78). The Carolinian minority grew, as more people from the atolls kept moving to Saipan for work, better education, and health care (Hezel 2001, 144). Their numbers were, however, soon dwarfed by a multitude of outsiders. The notion of a tropical island paradise attracted Western investors, and in the rebuilding process, Carolinians became a marginalized group. The Japanese occupants had been deported and were replaced by retired Americans, Asian workers, and tourists from both the United States and Asia. The Carolinians eventually realized that they would have to take steps to actively shape their future role in the increasingly crowded world that once was their “Empty Bowl.”

By the late 1970s, Garapan had grown back into a town as a result of housing developments and mass tourism at nearby Micro Beach, and it was obvious to the Carolinians that they were being deprived of their share of the benefits of development while suffering inconveniences caused by the newcomers (see Alkire 1984, 274n9; Marshall 2004, 7). Social stratification and grievances about land sales and political maneuvers polarized Carolinians and Chamorros and led to new Carolinian solidarity in the shape of political institutions like the United Carolinian Association, established in 1971. The first generation of U.S.-educated adults opposed the authority of the elders, tourism and urbanization altered the landscape, and both group unity and adherence to conservative Carolinian custom were threatened.<sup>14</sup>

Today's Carolinians on Saipan follow Western rules of social life, wear fashionable Western clothes, and eat Western food. They watch television, go to work, attend school, and run households. Their Carolinian roots are enacted mainly on weekends when they meet for barbecues on the beach or at funerals and other family events. Their language is still in use, but the younger generation seems reluctant to speak it, and everyone is at least as fluent in English. However, quite a large number of families fly to the atolls during the holidays, attend funerals there, host relatives who come to Saipan for medical or educational reasons, continue to observe cross-sex sibling regulations, and perform traditional gender roles on an everyday basis.

But despite occasional visits and even some remigrations, contemporary Carolinian identity on Saipan is not intimately tied to the atolls; in fact, some people claim that they do not know exactly where in the atolls their ancestors came from. There is also a steady inflow of Carolinians, mostly young and relatively educated, who are searching for employment.<sup>15</sup> Saipan's Carolinians call themselves Refaluwasch, the "people of our land," which is Saipan. They have formalized and redefined their ethnic boundaries, highlighting a selection of characteristics and practices. The revival of canoe voyaging as well as language and genealogy programs are attempts to document common descent and unity, to reassemble forces, and to maintain a distinctive identity (see Lieber et al. 2012 [this issue]).<sup>16</sup>

In the light of political splintering and competition within the Carolinian community and growing disempowerment of Carolinians in the now "Full Bowl" of Saipan, ethnicity has become a powerful political tool. One of the formal groups that lobbies on behalf of Carolinian interests is the Refaluwasch Foundation, a nonprofit organization founded in March 2004 to promote consensus and a sense of the Carolinian community worldwide. Its objectives, as stated in its charter, are directed at the "multi-generations of Refaluwasch people" and include the following: "To help revive and instill . . . a sense of community responsibility and stewardship of land, language, and ideas that are our shared experience and the foundation of our culture," especially "the spirit of 'tipiyeew,' our ancestor's spirit of 'one heart, one mind, one voice'; "lost Refaluwasch traditions"; "arts and music"; "appreciation for cultural diversity within the Mariana Islands community"; by providing "first-hand view and experience of Refaluwasch life in its past and present"; "a forum for the exchange of ideas through language studies, lectures and demonstrations, exhibitions, travel and special events"; "multi-media resources" and assistance in "marketing of cultural and traditional products and services"; "economic activities in the CNMI that provide sustainable development"; as well as the training of "new cultural human resources," fund-raising for scholarships, lobbying, welfare, and networking (Refaluwasch Foundation 2004: 3–4).

Membership is open to "any interested persons of Refaluwasch (Carolinian) descent over the age of 18" (Refaluwasch Foundation 2004, 7). The question of who can claim such descent was discussed at the founding meeting, and it was agreed that at least one grandparent must be Carolinian. A definition by blood may be problematic, however, as intermarriages have always been part of Carolinian reality and a "Carolinian" grandfather may well be part European, part Japanese, and part American. In fact, the genetic determination of belonging is troublesome in many cases, and even those with the right "blood" may not look Refaluwasch.

Population statistics from 1990 show that Carolinians constitute only a small minority on Saipan, steadily losing proportional significance in a democratic system.<sup>17</sup> Their search for an urban version of atoll identity is contested: there are competing versions, some voices louder than others, both intergroup and intragroup messages. Saipan's Carolinians whom I interviewed agreed on the need to fight for their "last resorts" of spirituality but also noted, regretfully, that they were now too diverse to "speak with one voice." The following example demonstrates their struggle to stand up in unity in an intergroup scenario, but it also shows that this struggle is framed by shared symbols and experiences that are recombined to serve intragroup purposes.

### Three "Graves" for a Chief

The uninhabited lagoon island of Managaha, where Chief Aghurubw was buried, became a tourist attraction in the 1980s. A popular weekend hangout for Carolinians as well as one of their last sacred places, the island was soon overcrowded by day-tripping Japanese and other Asians who sunbathed, snorkeled, rode banana boats, and watched the reef through glass-bottomed boats. Jet skiing and parasailing added to the excitement for the tourists, but these activities disturbed the Carolinians. The original grave of around 1850 had been washed away by typhoons, and Carolinians could not be sure that this last resort of ancient (and partly secret) spirituality would not be turned into a full-scale tourist center against their will. In fact, when I visited the island in 2005 with Lino Olopai, half of it was overcrowded with snorkeling, snacking, and sunbathing Japanese, and only the eastern coast was quiet. Following a footpath, we came to a small, white wooden cross (Fig. 2). Candles, offerings of coconuts, and a beautiful, fresh flower wreath reminded me of graves on Woleai Atoll.

Nearby, my attention was caught by a tombstone covered in bright red paint, its broad frame featuring white stars and, instead of an inscription in the center, a white surface (Fig. 3). Small plates holding decaying food scraps and small boxes of soft drinks were placed at its base, together with small bags made from coconut leaves. This stone had been the chief's first memorial and, according to Alkire, had in 1970 been inscribed with the following words: "This marker commemorates King Agurup, c. 1785–1850, founder of the first permanent colony on Saipan after the Spanish conquest. The colony was founded in 1815 by settlers from Satawal and was named Seipon. King Agurup's body was laid to rest on this island . . . erected by the clan of King Agurup and friends" (Alkire 1984, 279).





**FIGURE 2. A cross for Aghurubw (photograph by the author, January 23, 2005).**





**FIGURE 3. A stone for Aghurubw (photograph by the author, January 23, 2005).**

At first, I was perplexed that there was no writing on this stone, its empty face so conspicuously white. Only a few steps further, however, I realized that this grave had lost its original function to an upgraded version. The third monument is an eye-catcher (or eyesore to some), a grandiose display of importance, reminding me of monuments to famous thinkers like Karl Marx or Max Weber in my home country of Germany. If the first stone is a message in Western symbolic language, this monument is a loud call for attention. A larger-than-life painted statue of a muscle-bound man with pale skin stands on a high pedestal with a scroll next to his feet. His legs are tattooed, and he wears a bright red loincloth. An emerald-colored flower wreath crowns his heavily bearded head. His right hand holds a walking stick (which looks a bit like a golf club), while a top hat is tucked under his left arm. The left hand has broken off, but the black metal and crumbled concrete add a dramatic touch to the monument. A copper plate with a picture of an arrival scene and an explanatory text completes this impressive piece of art (see Fig. 4):



**FIGURE 4. A monument for Aghurubw (photograph by the author, January 23, 2005).**

In 1815, a man sailed from the Caroline Islands to resettle his people on Saipan after their islands were destroyed by a major typhoon.

The man's name was Chief Aghurubw, of the Ghatoliyool clan and chief of Satawal. Known as a great navigator, he was also a man of great courage and humility. His courage was revealed as he braved unpredictable weather and uncertainties ahead to bring his people to a land of refuge. His humility lay in his decision to first ask for permission from Governor Medinilla for settlement on Saipan.

Chief Aghurubw lies buried on Managaha Island. This monument stands in honor of the chief who changed the course of history in the lives of the Carolinians and who gave himself to shape their destiny.

As an anthropologist who had just returned from the Carolinian atolls, I was immediately struck that this last monument was so non-Carolinian in a number of ways. First, it was too large, too bold, and too proud. No Carolinian chief of old would have wanted to be represented in such a way, and the text would have been a treasured part of the oral history of his clan rather than public information for anybody chancing to pass by. Second, the man was too white, and his flower wreath resembled a Roman laurel wreath; to me, he looked a bit like a tattooed Julius Caesar emerging from the bath, carrying a cowboy hat.<sup>18</sup>

Obviously, this monument had cost a lot of money, and I understood that it was a message to the tourists rather than a place for Carolinians to commemorate their ancestors. As such, it may have the right size and form to remind tourists that they are on sacred land. Perhaps the cross and the first stone were too small and a Disneyland kind of statue was required to ensure that the appropriate attitude of respect was maintained. Saipan Carolinians did not seem to perceive the monument as a grave, as I did not see any food offerings nearby.

These three monuments for one chief are a fitting example of Carolinian ingenuity and flexibility. While the wooden cross provides a link between people and the spirits of the place, the first stone manifests continuity and may be seen as a boundary marker. In fact, its erection was part of a Carolinian demonstration of their claims to the island. The Office of Carolinian Affairs had drafted a regulation of the use of Managaha: "The present monument is considered sacred and any construction, cleaning or landscaping to be performed within 200 feet of the monument on the island side or between the monument and the sea will come under special

review . . . by government and Carolinians before approval" (quoted in Alkire 1984, 280).

The statue of Aghurubw speaks to foreigners in a language that even the deaf cannot ignore. Before it was even erected, Flinn remarked that "despite the value [Carolinians] may place down orally through chants and stories, they have learned to stress other types of evidence considered more credible by Western standards" (2000, 166).

The "graves" are both strategically and emotionally significant to the Carolinians, and the offerings give evidence of practiced *awaawa*, or respect (see Lewis 1972, 33; Spoehr 2000: 312–13, 328–30). The tourists' lack of such respectful behavior is a grievance to many Carolinians, and their fear of losing Managaha as a sacred space is justified. Despite the Managaha Marine Conservation Act of 2000, which prohibits all human activities on the island unless they are permitted by regulation, a permit was reported to have been issued for a massage parlor on the island (Olopai 2005).

Mentioning the name of Aghurubw's clan on the large copper plate is also a message of internal significance, as it positions his sister's children and their descendants in a senior position in relation to the other Carolinians. As clan names are a sensitive topic and usually not mentioned to outsiders (to the point of total denial of their existence), the inscription on the copper plate raises questions.<sup>19</sup> The clan name appears as Ghatoliyó'l in the Carolinian dictionary (Jackson and Marck 1991) along with some forty others. Since the clan system, with its internal ranking, was allegedly given up in the twentieth century, people do not know any longer to which clan they belong, and the claim to fame of Aghurubw's clan seems to serve as marketable notion of "tradition" rather than as information on local hierarchies. Since clan membership is not a topic for public discourse, it is likely that this is a statement of ownership, as it is common practice on the Carolinian atolls and elsewhere in the Pacific: "Knowledge of names and naming is often viewed as proof or evidence that assures authenticity of narratives. This implies a shared recognition that naming has the function of recording historical events or historical figures" (Guo 2003, 203).<sup>20</sup>

Three sets of voices, minds, and hearts seem to have shaped the sacred area of Managaha. A closer look, however, supports the argument that the "graves" also represent common grounds, as the Carolinian women of Saipan have kept up some key elements of their values, especially their reinterpretation of "taking care" and "respect." Both notions are expressed in flower garlands (*mvàâr*), and in fact all three "graves" of Aghurubw were decorated with rather fresh flower wreaths when I saw them. In Saipan, these beautiful and short-lived adornments are still used to express love and respect, to assist in healing, and to beautify people. After the war, Joseph



and Murray observed that wreaths and garlands were worn for dances and that women preferred to be photographed wearing a *mvààr* (1951: 79, 305). Today, they have become a subtle symbol for Carolinian identity that is understood within the community but, I would argue, is misinterpreted by outsiders as an exotic but beautiful “Pacific tradition,” associated with hula girls and pseudo-Polynesian music—the lei. Because of these mental images, the *mvààr* was accepted by all, and by carrying both Carolinian meaning and Pacific flair, it has remained a typical feature of Carolinian life. Ethnographic detail on the cultural salience of flowers among Carolinians has not yet been published. For this reason, I now turn to the way petals are used and conceptualized on the atolls where the ancestors of Saipan’s Carolinians lived, trying to create a sense of scented space that has in many if not all aspects transcended the two centuries of diasporic existence.

### Flowers That Matter

Flowers for wreaths and garlands are picked and braided by women and children (Fig. 5). Learning the various methods and compositions is part of the process of growing up for a Carolinian girl, as most women weave them almost every day. The wreaths carry a message of love and care, diligence, skill, and respect. In certain contexts, they have additional meanings, such as sexual attraction, rite of passage, or medical treatment. Flower wreaths are a very visible part of atoll life unless, as a sign of grief, funeral restrictions ban them.<sup>21</sup> The weaving of flowers is a salient expression of female agency in relation to the land in their matrilocal world of continuity and emplaced identity. Flowers are a local metaphor that is frequently used in songs and stories, as a pseudonym for individual persons as well as a narrative strand that carries the message of love (or, if lacking, of neglect).

The flowers used on Saipan are mostly the same as on the atolls, but better soil conditions give a wider choice. They are still worn as a daily ornament; I once saw a man casually wearing two stems of peppermint, tied together, as a *mvààr*. Festive attire requires at least one flower head wreath and various neck garlands for both men and women. When I walked around wearing a flower wreath, Carolinians noticed and evidently wondered who I was and whose gift of love and friendship I was displaying on my head. In any photograph of decorated Carolinians from past or present and on the CNMI government’s Internet home page, the *mvààr* appears as a decorative sign of belonging and of being Carolinian.



FIGURE 5. Saipanese woman weaving mwààr for me (photograph by the author, March 12, 2004).

The Carolinian dictionary lists twelve terms related to the “lei or garland,” distinguishing between ordinary speech and respect language, between putting it on a person’s head or on a cross or statue in a religious context, between placing and removing it, and between “withering” (made from flowers) and “permanent” garlands (made from glass beads; Jackson and Marck 1991). The colors have a meaning: purple flowers are associated with death, white flowers with peace. New forms of weaving have been developed over time, with plastic bands and synthetic wool replacing pandanus strings. Despite the availability of everlasting commercial garlands from paper or plastic, real flowers are preferred, as they carry more meaning. The deeper meaning of these short-lived decorations is not a topic of public discourse, but it is revealed when particular flowers are burned in mortuary rituals (*abwaat*), while others are used at funerals because of their strong perfume. The scent is carefully composed when more than one flower is used because it is believed that it provides a protection against evil spirits.

### Spirits of the Carolinians

In order to better understand the link between flowers and spirits, an ethnographic visit to the Central Carolinian atolls is instructive. Some Carolinians have traveled from Saipan to the outlying atolls to return to their roots. On the atolls, Lino Olopai and others have experienced a complex belief system, that is lingering in Saipan but taken much less seriously today: "Imagine what it was like when people were very close to their beliefs about spirits; there were spirits of breadfruit, spirits of mango trees, for example. Because they were respected and consulted, the spirits were able to show themselves. But it was then. Today because of the introduction of Western religion, these beliefs are no longer practiced. But the knowledge is still there" (Olopai and Flinn 2005, 67).

While the details and the background knowledge of pre-Christian spirituality may have become threadbare among Saipan's Carolinians, there can be no doubt that the spirits of old have found some space—as elsewhere in Christian Oceania. In a wider Pacific context, spirits are known to "linger" (see also Howard and Mageo 1996, 5), and Carolinian spirits are notorious for lingering in the homesteads, where they curiously monitor human activity and perceive scents, colors, movement, and sound. According to Edwin Burrows and Melford Spiro, in the 1950s on Ifaluk atoll some homesteads were so infested with lingering malevolent spirits that death and sickness caused families to move out (1953: 225, 307). Before deciding to move, however, people try to improve the place, through ritually cleansing it, clearing out much of the vegetation to "deface" it (as one of my friends put it), and trying to befriend the spirits by planting scented shrubs and offering flower wreaths and food. Spirits are said to enjoy staying in immaterial places that are the "spiritual doubles" of material places. These places are mostly in uninhabited areas (on small islets like Managaha, in the air, under the sea, and under the ground) because spirits dislike noise (see Käser 1997: 141–42, 168, 222; Metzgar 2004).

In general, benevolent spirits love flower wreaths, as many chants, songs, and stories show. William Lessa was told that spirits lived on flowers and their odor (1966, 111). Burrows and Spiro wrote that on Ifaluk "the people on earth wear flower leis (*marmar*) because they know that the *alus* are fond of them and will smell their fragrant odor, should they descend" (1953, 214). In a story from Pulusuk, the decoration of a magician's canoe with flower wreaths resulted in a constant abundance of food. Hans Damm and Ernst Sarfert noted that, on Puluwat, spirits of the dead sometimes demanded that for four days the women make wreaths every morning and afternoon, hanging them at the spirit's place for offerings (*ran*). Small wreaths were a ritual gift to spirits in the annual fertility ritual (*atomei*).<sup>22</sup>

Flowers show affection and assure the maintenance of a caretaking relationship with the spirit of the deceased. Hijikata Kisakatsu observed on Satawal that the weaving of wreaths was embedded in a welcoming ritual for canoes: "The priestess from Fááyen gathered everyone together. She performed the *pwénimwár* (flower-garland weaving) ceremony and had the women prepare food and the men collect young coconuts" (Hijikata 1997, 279).

With Christianity, the power of flowers to communicate this important message has been extended into the church, where the altar and, at times, the statues of saints are decorated with flowers; holy water has become a means to chase away malevolent spirits. In Toon (Chuuk Lagoon), spirits are known to punish (eat, spit at, or bite) humans for wrongdoings, hurting not necessarily the actual wrongdoer but perhaps another member of the group (Käser 1977, 223).<sup>23</sup> Not only can spirits cause sickness and death, but they can also cause unfortunate changes of the weather, plagues, pests, and social complications of island life, like fighting, stealing, and gossip. They are believed to be invisible but perceivable, and they in turn take notice of humans, especially of the odors that surround them.

Spirits may also enter human bodies for a while. States of spirit possession have often been reported for the area, evidencing a weak boundary between humans and spirits. Gifts of flowers and turmeric to the spirit are an important element of these encounters.<sup>24</sup> Metzgar reported from Lamotrek that the medium is referred to as the "canoe of the flower wreath," the vessel for the spirit (2008, 194).

Sickness can be carried on the wind, and healers may wave a coconut frond over a patient while chanting, as on Ifaluk (see Burrows and Spiro 1953: 215–16, 219–20). Another healing method is based on special small mats that are bespelled and hung up around the island: "The women retire to prepare the *timās*. The *timās* are mats made of young coconut leaflets, which the young men hang on trees along the shores, encircling both islands. The words of the song cling to the *timās*, and as they sway in the breeze the words are automatically repeated over and over again" (Burrows and Spiro 1953, 231).

Spirits, flowers, and the air belong together. To Carolinians, the ineffable space, the gap that exists between objects in the common Western view, is filled with life in motion, traversed by smells, ephemeral forms, smoke, shade, shape, and shadows. Carolinians believe that they can influence this space by keeping their bodies clean, by following the rules of respect, and by using material objects like flower garlands. The idea that the moving air carries and mediates spiritual elements is a significant aspect of Carolinian identity.<sup>25</sup> In a healing chant, the connection between spirits and the soft wind is expressed poetically, as Burrows and Spiro recorded:



The god is not like man, he is like birds.  
 He is like the winds,  
 he is like the rain,  
 that tarry not on the land (i.e. he comes to the earth for a short  
 time, and then leaves.)  
 He changes his course like the wind.  
 Like the wind, he comes from the north,  
 and returns to the south,  
 the distance between America and the Carolines.  
 He is like the Sug bird that travels on land and sea. (1953, 221)

In the song of a mother grieving for her dead son, also collected by Burrows and Spiro, she laments,

his place was over at the seaward side. . . .  
 the wind comes against my face  
 And blows on my body.  
 What if that wind were my boy come back to me? (1953, 309)

In this light, the Carolinian conception of breath as the energy of life is notable. In Ifaluk, life energy (*ngas*) was described as a vaporous substance (this was Burrows and Spiro's translation of their informant's statement that it was "all same wind" [1953, 246]). The soul is believed to leave the body through the mouth (Burrows and Spiro 1953, 308). Similarly, in Ulithi, life is closely linked to breathing: "There is a relationship between the soul and breath. With the last breath the soul leaves the body, usually through the top of the head, but through the legs if the last breath is exhaled rather than inhaled. In either event, it goes from the body and hovers about on earth for a brief time. After four days, the corpse is interred and the soul flies away" (Lessa 1966, 111; see also Alkire 1989). On Pulusuk, wind and air are called by the same term, and breathing literally means "the waving of breath." In Toon, according to Lothar Käser, breath is moved by the pumping motion of the heart (1990: 88, 129, 131). Certainly, the breath is very intimate and personal, as indicated in the gesture of "sniffing" the cheek (the "Pacific kiss").

Garlands and flower wreaths appear to have a particular capacity to be sensed by spirits. The smell of turmeric powder (*rang*) must be overwhelming to Carolinian spirits, as it is greatly used in times of transition and weakness (e.g., birth, death, initiation, school graduation, after a typhoon, and at Easter and Christmas). I suggest that it is not just the smell but also the yellow color and somewhat more iridescent surface of the skin caused by the powder that is perceived by spirits and wards them off (Fig. 6). A



**FIGURE 6. Ephemeral protection (photograph by the author, November 7, 2004).**

garland of flowers or of crumpled curcuma leaves is a common addition to the turmeric powder. These decorations are protective, because malevolent spirits are believed to be particularly sensitive to bright, shiny, gently moving objects and afraid of smoke and fire (Käser 1977, 217).

The Carolinian interpretation of smoke, scent, and wind is similar to the larger island world. Any resident of a Pacific village will eventually experience that smoke that rises into the air carries information with it, beginning with the kind of firewood used and the food that is being cooked. In a social context, the smoke tells stories about relationships, for instance, who brought the fuel, who provided the food and which kinds, who prepared the meal, and who will get a share of it. Smoke communicates even more information if spirits are concerned, as it tells them to keep out. In mortuary ritual in Chuuk, when all earthly possessions are burned in a bonfire near the house of the deceased, the smoke that rises in the air carries away the spirit of that person (Bollig 1927, 22). This ritual is still performed by Saipan's Carolinians, mostly on Managaha Island.

In food offerings, like those on two of the three "graves," it is believed that the smell that rises from the food reaches the spirits who can consume it "and feel happy." Burrows and Spiro reported that small portions of any meal were offered to the spirits of the compound (1953: 234, 316) and included a recipe of roasted *wot* taro mixed with grated coconut and leaves of *wareng* (hoary basil) and *angorik* (curcuma; 53).<sup>26</sup> They were told that the sky gods like *wot* taro (true taro) and that some is cooked as part of medicine (214).

The effect of smoke and fire on spirits is used in local medicine, for instance, with steam baths (Krämer 1937: 138–39), and in midwifery when the weak states of a delivering mother and a newborn baby are protected from malevolent spirits by keeping a constant fire nearby. As local medicine is conceptualized as "hot" and spells often refer to heat and fire in various ways, this points toward the visible rising of hot air and fumes. Burrows and Spiro mentioned a weather magician's spell that included the line "my talk goes to the clouds like fire" (1953, 236). The conception of magical heat is also expressed in healing chants, as quoted by Burrows and Spiro:

My arm made this medicine, hot as fire, to ward off illness  
 My medicine is hot as fire. Those who drink will not fall ill  
 My arm is hot as fire.  
 My medicine is hot. Illness will not come.  
 My medicine is very hot. It descends into the oceans. It is very hot.  
 My medicine is very hot; it descends into the waters; it ascends  
 into the heavens. (1953, 233)

Maurice Leenhardt's statement that "odour, for Austro-Melanesians, plays a role which exceeds any we can imagine" (1984, 48) certainly applies to all Pacific Islanders, where a rich smellscape connects people with each other and with their local spirit beings, whose excellent capacity to smell is mentioned in many ethnographic accounts (see, e.g., Damm and Sarfert 1935: 26, 58, 196–97; Hezel and Dobbin 1996: 208–9; Käser 1990: 188–89). Perfumes and stench communicate a person's social standing and moral qualities to the spirits. Spirits detest the smell of menstrual blood and sex (see Burrows and Spiro 1953: 210, 214; Käser 1977: 164, 223). This link can be seen as the reason behind a number of spatial restrictions, especially for menstruating women and new mothers, as well as for men who plan to go fishing, for magicians, and for people engaged in particular mortuary practices (see Burrows and Spiro 1953: 48, 210, 214; Damm and Sarfert 1935, 58; Käser 1977, 253).

Smell, of course, is not the only quality of the air between objects. A song for a sea ghost, recorded and translated by Eric Metzgar, begins with the sensation of sound:

Oh, I can hear the sound of the sea ghost coming!  
 I got up because I feel it.  
 I feel him coming and he smells windy.  
 He smells like the light wind of the leaves when they turn yellow.  
 (2008, 117)

Spirits are audible in a subtle, intuitive way, like the whisper of leaves or the small sounds of low waves reaching the beach. The third and last lines of the song Metzgar quoted point out another significant aspect, namely, the mediation of smell and sounds by means of a light wind. It appears to me that the movement of air establishes the communication of sound, odor, and sentiment. The light wind presents the omnipresent force that links persons with the objects, plants, and spirits of their world. The Western worldview routinely privileges the visual, concrete world and consequently pays too little attention to the bodily sensations of a breeze.

The breeze may form the missing link between the efficacy of odorous and formulaic magic that has caused Alfred Gell to distinguish between them as separate techniques (1977, 25). Both magical substances and spells travel on the air to reach the spirits; the precise formula, body movements, and the enveloping smells are part of it in the specific context but do not differ in kind. Carolinian sea spirits are ever-dangerous antagonists and require ritual attention for successful fishing and canoe traveling. Both the fishermen and their vessels must be protected by the right smellscape and

(magical) “spellscape” to avoid upsetting them. Spells and smells work together to protect the men and help to fish and to return home.

As the air moves, it carries information on the place and on its inhabitants. The perfume of the flower that I wear reaches out with the breeze, passing on parts of my person, shapes, and colors as additional sensations that position me in the momentary context. The air transmits the information about concrete forms and their movements together with abstract notions like ethical and moral standards, levels of intensity, and emotionality. A sudden cool breeze, for example, can carry sensations of fear or sorrow, as it may give evidence of a dead relative’s spirit nearby. At sunset, when a fresh wind from the ocean waves through the atoll, people believe that their ancestors’ spirits return for the night (Damm and Sarfert 1935, 200). When it is dark on Woleai, children, especially babies, are not taken into the fresh air for fear of malevolent spirits (Douglass 1998, 95). In daytime, a perfumed, warm breeze that showers a person with scent is a strong perception and likely to be associated with a benevolent spirit.

Managaha Island, the sacred space of Saipan’s Carolinians, is permeable to the syncretism of religious practice and certainly a focal point of communal identification. The food offerings and flower wreaths on Aghurubw’s “graves” are a means of communication of the living with the dead and markers of “one-heartedness.” The eternal breeze of Managaha Island retains the deeper meanings that exist on the atolls. Spirits still linger on Managaha Island, fires still send their smoke into the sky, and flowers still saturate the air.

On Saipan, the flower wreath has been turned into a quiet message of “one voice, one mind, and one heart.” Its symbolic career rose into international spheres in the 1970s, when a new official seal and flag for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands were created (Fig. 7). A *mwàâr* was added as the third feature to the white star and the silhouette of a gray Latte stone (the famous ruins of ancient Chamorro architecture). Carolinians were not specifically represented by the symbolism of ocean-blue background with a *taga*-star (a common icon for a country) or the ancient Chamorro house post, although one could read the star as a sign for navigation that would include them. But the *mwàâr* also carries more meaning than an outsider would notice; as one Carolinian told me, “They don’t know what they got on there!” To disclose its complex symbolism is probably not in the interest of the Carolinians of Saipan, but three of the flowers in the *mwàâr* are strongly scented, and at least two of them are used in medicine (one of them for treating small children, for example, when they develop painful swellings after their first trip over the ocean). One of them used to be placed into the pierced septum of the nose of the

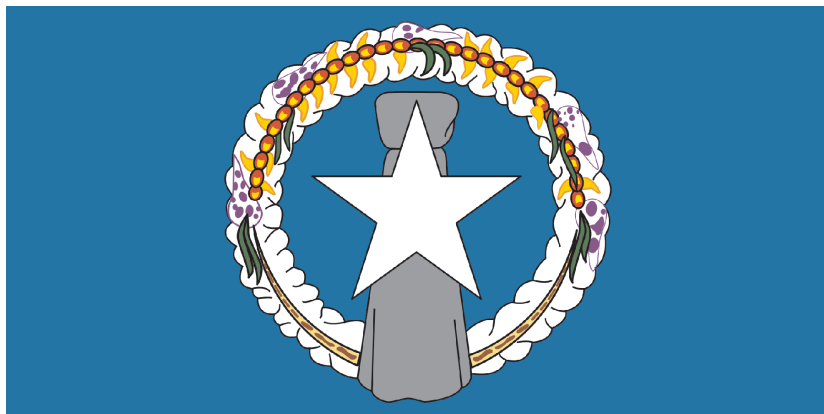


FIGURE 7. Saipan's flag.

women when they cleaned and prepared a corpse for burial to cover up the smell of decay (for Satawal, see Krämer 1937, 117). One flower looks like a dancing fairy and is associated with benevolent spirits. The seal and the flag are thus inscribed with ancient Carolinian principles of love and respect, consensus and knowledge, of women who look after the family and the place, planting flowers to beautify their loved ones, and composing the scents of home that assist people in re-creating present identities: a sense, sensation, and sentiment of being Carolinian in a westernized world.

### Discussion: Recombinant Continuity

The “graves” on Managaha Island and their decorations are outward-directed Carolinian answers to Americanization and their marginalization as players in the commercial games of tourism and politics. At the same time, they inscribe notions of identity in ways that are effective within the group but hardly noticed by outsiders. In this way, Carolinians flexibly adjust to new hierarchies in old patterns by keeping a low profile and working on internal consensus rather than promoting individual careers. Consensus, or *tipiyeew*, to “be of one mind,” is the Carolinian answer, or mantra, in an overwhelmingly Western world that increasingly changes from place to nonplace (see Augé 1995; Alkire 1984, 281). Saipan's shopping malls, airports, and classy hotels are void of local meaning; like standardized hospitals and office buildings, they follow global patterns and style. Even though it is less than fully realized in practice, the mantra is significant as a link to the past; *tipiyeew*, one could argue, is alive and well in Carolinians' invisible belongings.



Various groups on Saipan are concerned about environmental impacts of mines, plantations, and factories, and Carolinians are among them. By conforming to values and principles of American culture in the social fields of democracy and consumerism, postwar generations of educated, vocal, and successful activists like Lino Olopai, Jesus Elameto, or Cinta Kaipat are situated in both worlds and try their best to keep their “culture” alive. Chief Aghurubw’s third monument shows the difficulty of the task because by demonstrating their legitimacy they risk sacrificing key ethics like humbleness, generosity, and social balance. The monument represents a frozen past; the “interaction with the gazes of outsiders makes landscape inscriptive rather than a cultural process” (Guo 2003, 189; see also Flinn 2000, 165). This “secondary representation of landscape through another medium” bears resemblance to an open-air museum (Stewart and Strathern 2003a, 230) rather than to a sacred space of burial, but it certainly serves the purpose of being visible and “loud” in an increasingly noisy world.

The temptation to go the easier way is a normal feature of human existence, and Saipan’s Carolinians are no exception to this principle: family ties are regarded as important, but a well-stocked bank account has its own merits and can be kept secret from a needy aunt to a certain degree (see Addo 2012 [this issue]). Alkire pointed out in the 1980s that to atoll dwellers of the Caroline Islands, Saipan was still a “land of plenty” (1984, 282), and my 2004 research confirmed this idealization.

Saipan’s Carolinians appear to be torn between contradictory values, emphasizing the “traditional” while embracing Western comforts. Buying a cheeseburger is easier than cooking a meal of self-cultivated taro and fish caught in the open sea. Western food and alcoholic beverages have changed the bodies of Carolinians and are certainly threatening their health. Joel Robbins pointed out the “creative abilities in choosing which parts of both the traditional and the modern” people accept or reject (2005, 15). The temptations of fast food and sugar seem to be irresistible, however, despite their unhealthy effects. When I showed Krämer’s 1909 photographs to Carolinians, they frequently commented on the slim bodies of their ancestors: “How strong we were!” In Yap, I heard the expression of drinking “silver coconuts” (Budweiser Light), and on the atolls people like to mix liquor with their coconut toddy. Diabetes and alcoholism-related problems are among the negative consequences of the Western lifestyle (see, e.g., Hezel 2001, 24; Marshall 1979; 2004: 55–58).

When clan identity is lost and land has been first defaced and then turned into a commodity that can be leased by foreigners, solidarity is threatened by egoism, as the Saipan case shows. This does not mean that the Carolinians’ sense of place has changed to a sentimental, frozen memory,

rhetoric, or a political tool. Important elements have survived together with kinship relations to the atolls, and the frequent visits from the “poor spaces” of the atolls to the “land of plenty” in Saipan refresh these ties (Flinn 2000, 171). On Saipan, such elements are condensed in a smaller number of identity markers, especially the art of seafaring, cross-sibling relationships, and flower garlands.

With democracy, the time-consuming process of consensus making is likely to be outvoted by pragmatism; in a capitalist economy, the luxury of endless talks is often not an option, and “too much kinship” endangers the existence of any business. Without the matrilineal system, the taro gardens, and the production of woven cloth wealth as a major means of exchange, women have lost many of the bases for their high standing and pride. All these elements are implied in Kaipat’s statement that “the worst thing that has happened to our people is money” (pers. comm., February 2005; see also Flinn 2000, 167). The cash economy is known for diluting Carolinian notions of “respect” (see Hezel 2001, 161).

The contemporary life of Carolinians on Saipan bears little resemblance to the atoll world of their ancestors. “Saipan is very, very developed compared to the rest of Micronesia, let alone the Central Carolines” (Olopai and Flinn 2005, 174). The island features at least five golf courses and twenty to thirty textile factories (“sweatshops”), where a large number of mostly Asian workers are employed under exploitative conditions. Tourism has changed the face of its coastline, as Saipan’s beautiful beaches are tourist attractions. In the main shopping mall of Garapan, Japanese women sample the latest collections of designer clothes and can spend as much as \$1,000 on a skimpy summer top. Rich Russians spend the winter months in tropical Saipan; Japanese and Koreans have discovered the island as a nearby hideaway from the hectic life at home.

Carolinians live farther apart from each other, and nuclear families mostly keep to themselves. Olopai complained that “families rarely visit each other: Visits are being replaced by television. People read newspapers to learn what is going on instead of getting together to spread the news. Families are independent because of job security and money from work and leases. When they lease property, they feel they no longer have to depend on other family members. The only time you see an extended family together is when there’s a birthday or a wedding or a funeral—especially funerals. That is when families get together. Or they go to court” (Olopai and Flinn 2005, 225).

This lack of interaction leads to egocentric perspectives that contrast starkly with Carolinian principles. Olopai has observed that fundamental ethical rules are easily ignored when individuals are too focused on their



personal profit: “Now, with all the monetary value in land, people have a tendency to make up stories about how properties were acquired to favor their own interests” (2005, 208). Fishing and sailing are recreational activities rather than a food-producing source of male pride and bonding. The world of men has changed more drastically than the world of women, as many women do not have full-time jobs but raise children, prepare daily meals, and maintain closer links to the women of the neighborhood as they spend their days around the house. Women still try to find a quiet spot to keep a garden and decorate their place with flower shrubs. They adorn the Christian icons on the house altar with flowers and speak Carolinian with the children.

The land on Saipan has become a Carolinian place in its own right; its progressive alienation since German times, culminating in the chaotic situation after World War II and subsequent land commoditization, has been a grievance to the Carolinians of Saipan for exactly this reason. The ways of showing respect, of speaking with one voice, and of taking care of each other have not been given up entirely but have undergone an adjustment to modern conditions. Unfortunately, it seems that such a unity materializes only when urgent action is required, as in a demonstration when Managaha was threatened again in 1992 (see Flinn 2000: 168–70). Alkire’s impression in the early 1980s was, “The Saipan Carolinians are not interested in a ‘return to the earth (or sea) movement’ but rather in revitalizing cultural elements that emphasize an ethnic identity. They, as much as the other outer islanders, are interested in gaining or retaining the benefits of much of the new; but they believe that, in order to do so, it is necessary to ‘recapture’ at least some of the old” (1984, 283).

I believe that the last twenty years have not significantly changed this interest, although when I talked to members of the new generation of teenagers, they did not seem prepared to sacrifice their relative independence and liberties for an identity more restrictive of their rights of speech. To these young people, “one voice, one heart, and one mind” was not as attractive a vision as it was for the older generation: “Today we have independent thinking and selfish behavior. ‘This is mine!’ In the past, it was ‘This is ours!’” (Olopai and Flinn 2005, 216). A common sense of belonging depends on practice, and families still come together more often than in, say, my own German extended family. Perhaps Olopai is cynical when he complains that only funerals and courts cases bring families together.

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My account of Saipan Carolinians halts here, suggesting that the heterogeneity of Saipan’s Carolinians has led to their loss of “one voice.” They are

no longer “one group” but global players who follow disparate paths. Their public displays of community spirit lack the cohesiveness of the past, when consensus-finding strategies enabled the chiefs to announce decisions that were carried by all—ideally, with “one voice, one mind, and one heart.” The three tombs for Aghurubw point into different directions of future bonding; they may be seen as different recombinations of a common past to communicate ownership to strangers. A closer look at the sacred site of Managaha Island and more background knowledge from the distant home atolls, however, can reveal a glimpse into lived Carolinian-ness. The food offerings and the flowers that decorated the “graves” are evidence that fundamental principles of the past are still in place, although perhaps in truncated versions and spiced with Christian detail. The flowers speak of internal agreement on principles of spirituality, of female virtues and the Carolinian ethic of love and care. Although the (public/male/senior) leading voice and the principle of overall consensus have been ceded to democracy and global economy, the hearts and minds still nourish common principles. And as long as the children hang around their mother when she prepares food, are taken along to family meetings, and perhaps are able to visit their relatives in the Carolinian islands for holidays, their sense of being Carolinian may survive, if only encoded in small, almost subversive, objects like a flower garland, a cooked meal, or a song.

### Conclusions

Pacific Islands migrants have been described as “insiders without, outsiders within,” as their marginality at the edges of island life and in their new locations creates ambiguous diasporic identities (Perez 2004, 67). Saipan’s Carolinians are no exception, their imagined community covering a large area reaching from southern Micronesia and Guam to outlets in Hawai‘i and the U.S. continent.

Flower garlands, cooked food, and the sensual memories associated with family gatherings that never go without these are forceful (yet barely noticed) elements of Carolinian identity, providing the center of sociality and a stage for shared values. The importance of feasts and local food has often been stressed by diasporic Pacific Islanders (see also Carucci 2012 [this issue]). When a certain dish is classified as “delicious,” it tastes like “home”—recalling memories of family, an outdoor lifestyle near the beach, and mothers in the cooking area, creating a certain “air” of love and care while preparing meals, talking to each other, and supervising smaller children.

Jeannette Mageo’s differentiation between different kinds of memory employed in intergroup and intragroup contexts also helps to grasp the

widening gap between “one voice” and “one heart and mind” (2001: 17–18). The political strategies of Carolinians, typically men, in their struggle for a niche on Saipan are a good example for the hierarchically structured intergroup memory that is meant to impress a wider audience. Erecting monuments, demonstrating, and complaining about the loss of unity can be seen as strategies to selectively employ idealized memories of former sociality. In contrast, the intragroup memory includes synthetic elements, as “one sense recalls another,” and excites personal memories. Intragroup memory, according to Mageo, “speaks a private language” (2001, 18).

My focus on private yet shared invisible belongings may help to identify mechanisms of intragroup bonding through shared memories of home. It has been noted that diasporic communities of Pacific Islanders are typically inclusive: “What is important for Pacific Islander American ethnicity is not boundaries but centers: ancestry, family, practice, place” (Spickard 2002, 53). The encompassing identities of Mortlockese are based on their high mobility, ability to shift into larger Pacific Islander identities, and a persistent sense of family: “Namoluk people remain heavily entangled in one another’s lives” (Marshall 2004, 139). Their shared memories of sensual experiences and moral principles form the invisible belongings, and, depending on the context, these memories can be used to create identity, shifting from place-bound to island-bound experiences and thereby allowing a Pacific Islander sense of communality if this is the smallest possible unit of identification because of a lack of closer “relatives.” Food, flowers, and family create the scents, textures, and sounds from the island world that Oceania’s migrants take along and try to unpack at new destinations. The case of Saipan’s Carolinians has shown how resistant and pervasive these invisible belongings can be—especially those that are being safeguarded within the realms of female spaces and quieter voices.

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### NOTES

1. “Carolinian” here refers to Pacific Islanders from the Caroline Islands, thereby including persons from various language groups who in the past had limited or no contact. The core of these people consists of families who trace themselves back to the

Central Caroline Islands from Eauripik to Polowat. The term excludes especially Chamorros, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Chinese, and westerners (especially U.S. Americans and Russians). While it is assumed that the majority of Saipan's Carolinians came from the Central Caroline Islands, I am not aware that there are statistical data on the place of origin of individuals, and ethnic distinctions have often disappeared through frequent intermarriages.

2. I am grateful to Ping-Ann Addo for suggesting the term "belongings."

3. For an overview of the discussion of these terms in social theory, see Throop 2008: 255–57.

4. Alain Corbin reported that in eighteenth-century France there was a "manifest association between corrupt women and corrupt odors" (quoted in Classen 1992, 143; see also Corbin 1986).

5. Rosabell Boswell's article on fragrance in Zanzibar indicates its important role in creating a "largely tolerant and peaceful society" (2008, 296).

6. For the importance of "home cooking" among Filipinos in Hong Kong, see Law 2005, 234; for culinary nostalgia in postsocialist Lithuania, see Lankauskas 2006: 39–43.

7. The multiethnic identities of Pacific Islanders in the United States of America are discussed in Spickard 2002.

8. In the Pacific Islands, as in Zanzibar, "fragrance is mostly women's business" (Boswell 2008, 300).

9. In Oceania, men and women are fond of floral decorations and as it common to hear comments on the sentiments that they create.

10. See Flinn 2000, 164, for a discussion of different versions of this arrival story; see also D'Arcy 2006: 159, 239n74; Joseph and Murray 1951, 26; and McCoy 1973: 355–56. The film *Lieweila* ("Listen to Our Story") tells a version of this first settlement (Strong and Kaipat 1998; see also Marck 1998).

11. Fritz reported that a German steamship visited Saipan six to seven times per year. The sailing ships of three Japanese companies on Saipan provided a more frequent service to Yokohama and Guam (Fritz 1906, 289). For accounts of epidemics brought by ships to the atolls, see Alkire 1965, 68; Krämer 1937, 10; and Hijikata 1997: 73, 195n, 288.

12. See Costenoble 1905, 73. It is interesting to note that, according to Joseph and Murray, by 1947 the term "kanaka" had "been adopted by both Chamorros and Carolinians as meaning the Saipanese Carolinians and does not seem to carry any depreciatory overtones" (1951, 69).

13. Although I agree with David Hanlon (2009) that the term "Micronesia" is a colonial construct and not a single cultural region, it is too convenient to be given up altogether.

14. See also Alkire 1984: 271, 273; Carucci and Poyer 2002, 205; Flinn 2000, 159; and Poyer 1999: 204–5.

15. According to census data from the 1990s, there were 4,469 migrants from the FSM in the CNMI: “About 1,200 were post-Compact [after 1986], 600 were children of migrants, and another 1,200 were pre-Compact migrants. The other persons were not migrants or their children, but could have been third or later generation persons of Micronesian migrant ethnicities. . . . The number of post-Compact migrants and their children more than doubled between 1990 and 1997, from 2,739 persons in 1990 to 6,550 in 1997” (Office of Insular Affairs 1998: 8, 17).

16. I was told that garland making has also occasionally been offered as a workshop for girls.

17. In 1990, the total population was 38,896 (Chamorros: 10,042; Carolinians: 2,328; and other: 26,526). See Alkire 1984, 273; Flinn 2000, 159.

18. Augustin Krämer spoke highly of the Carolinian art of tattooing and stated that it was widespread except for Lamotrek and Palau (1937, 228). While Johann S. Kubary observed that all the men were covered with tattoos, Krämer saw only a few, but navigators and chiefs were certainly covered in designs on the upper torso. While the patterns varied, the drawing of a Woleaian chief’s tattoos shows that the calves were left free except for a few horizontal lines (Krämer 1937: 225–26).

19. See Marck 2008 for a linguistic analysis of Carolinian clan names.

20. More specific ethnographic data on the three monuments were regarded as sensitive by my interlocutors and cannot be published here.

21. Specific ethnographic data on the creation of flower wreaths were regarded as sensitive by my interlocutors and cannot be published here.

22. See Burrows and Spiro 1953, 221; Damm and Sarfert 1935: 202–5, 221; and Lessa 1966: 73, 112.

23. See Damm and Sarfert 1935: 96–97, 190–92; Goodenough 1978: 111–13; Hezel and Dobbin 1996, 197; Käser 1977: 175, 179; and LeBar 1963, 67. For further studies of Carolinian religion, see, for example, Alkire 1965: 114–23; Burrows and Spiro 1953: 207–18, 344–49; Goodenough 1986; and Krämer 1937: 278–91.

24. See Burrows and Spiro 1953, 239; Damm and Sarfert 1935: 200, 202; Dobbin and Hezel 1996; Hezel 1993; Krämer 1937: 35, 116, 121; Lambek 1996, 241; and Lessa 1966, 112.

25. Among the Orokaiva of Papua New Guinea, a certain wind was associated with spirits, and drumming was a form of communication (Whitehouse 1994: 45, 47). Carolinians do not use any drums today.

26. See also Sohn and Tawerilmang 1976: 164, 172 (where *angorik* is spelled “yangoshig”). The scientific name for *wareng* is *Ocimum canum* Sims (also known as basilic camphor); the fragrant oils derived from this shrub are known for their medical properties in many places of the world.

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**A PROMISED LAND IN THE DIASPORA:  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION, SOCIAL MEMORY, AND  
IDENTITY AMONG BANABANS IN FIJI**

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THE CONVENTIONAL UNDERSTANDING of diaspora was very much pegged to the forced emigration, dispersal, and exile of Jews living outside Palestine—a concept that is laden with religious connotations. More recently, however, a somewhat expanded diaspora concept has been developed that is becoming the analytic instrument of choice for a broad band of movements, migration processes, transnational connections, and multiple identifications. Several authors have remarked that, ever since this new diaspora concept emerged, religion has rarely been given due consideration (Kokot, Tölölyan, and Alfonso 2004, 6). Although quite a number of more recent studies of diaspora would seem to disprove this claim (e.g., Cohen 1997, 1999; Gilroy 1993; Gross, McMurray, and Swedenburg 1996; Pulis 1999; Tweed 1997; Vertovec 1995, 2000; Werbner 2002), certainly there is something to the idea. One reason for the scant attention paid to the religious aspect can be sought in the theoretical-methodological paradigm shift of the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, diaspora as a general idea, an idea ever more detached from the religion and history of the Jews (see Dufoix 2008: 18–19), was taken up and further developed by a conceptual repositioning within the social and cultural sciences, one that set its sights on the systematic incorporation of movement and mobility, speed and flows, communication and networks into the formation of models (compare Pile and Thrift 1995, 24); in this context, religion as a field of study was of secondary importance.

Another reason for the declining attention to the religious aspect was that the focus of theoretical scrutiny had shifted to deconstructing, reconfiguring, and opening up such dominant discourses on identity, ethnicity, and nation as were predicated on delimitation, essentialization, and exclusion. Attention was fixed especially on the destabilizing potential of the “in between,” whether in the form of liminality, hybridization, interstitiality, or Third Space. Nor did diaspora (in its more recent sense) escape being used in this connection (see Brah 1996; Clifford 1994; Gilroy 1993, 1997; Hall 1990).<sup>1</sup> Thus, if the relevance of religious institutions, conceptualizations, and practices for the survival of diasporic communities was lost from sight, probably this partly resulted from recent theoretical debate concerning diaspora and hybridity moving in a self-referential space of conceptual abstractions and utopian counter-models, which were, in turn, largely uncoupled from spatially, temporally, and materially specific processes and practices (compare Mitchell 1997: 535, 537, 551; 2003: 74, 82; Moore 1997: 102–4).

However, a more intimate linkage with the history and everyday life of migrants and diasporic societies would only underline what the historian of religion Martin Baumann referred to when discussing the interconnectedness of migration processes and religion: “Constructing *no* places of worship and forming *no* religious associations seem to be the exception rather than the rule; it is those cases that require an explanation, not the fact of establishing religious institutions” (2004, 173; italics in original). His concern to drive home the fundamental importance of seeing a reorganized religious life as an integral part of what have been described as diasporic lifeworlds (and to integrate this into the analysis of diasporic communities) is in step with the frequently voiced request for an improved empirical grounding of the recent theoretical development of this expanded diaspora concept.

In this connection, the Pacific diaspora represents a promising field of inquiry. Two key issues hold center stage here. First, Christianity has long been a sustaining prop in the social and cultural life of Pacific Islanders living in Oceania and elsewhere. Second, mobility, migration, and transnational relationships among Pacific Islanders have gathered pace in recent decades, in terms of both dynamics and extension (see Connell 2002; Spickard 2002; Lee 2004, 2009). The interplay of religion, migration and transnationalism is expressed, on the one side, by the continuing links migrants maintain with their islands of origin, as when engagement on their part via kinship ties, institutional affiliations, remittances, or home visits includes commitments to the local churches (see Lee 2009: 14, 21; Macpherson 2004, 169). On the other side, Christian churches play a prominent role in social reorganization and identity formation of Pacific Islanders



living in the diaspora (e.g., Allen 2001, 2002; Carucci 2003; Cowling 2002; Gershon 2007). Individual essays in the present collection confirm these insights, while contributing to their further differentiation. Take, for example, Ping Ann Addo's essay (2012 [this issue]) on the entanglements between socioeconomic practice and the reconstitution of kin- or family-based ties among younger Tongans in New Zealand. She points out that obligations toward Christian churches in both Tonga and New Zealand are changing over time. Likewise, Suzanne Falgout, in her study (2012 [this issue]) of identity formation among Pohnpeians in Hawai'i, emphasizes just how variable the influence of Christian churches is when it comes to organizing and holding together diverse Micronesian groups.

In what follows, I examine how Christian discourses and practices have impacted the process of constituting place and identity among diasporic Banabans in Fiji. At the heart of the matter is the public representation of events drawn from the recent past and forged into a mnemonic configuration. I ask why Banabans often link their founding narrative of colonial exploitation, war, dispersal, and resettlement to the biblical story (related in the Book of Exodus) of liberation from Egyptian bondage and entry, after a period of wandering in the wilderness, into the Promised Land. In the Jewish religious tradition, the narratives of the Old Testament hold center stage as allegories of liberation and survival and of how the Israelites came to be the chosen by Yahweh. The Banaban community relies on this standardized version to construct their diasporic identity.

The hope for liberation and salvation, which is associated with the Exodus motif, has inspired more than one migrant group to co-opt this narrative and articulate it with their own history of repression. Thus, for instance, black Christian slaves, acting out of a general identification with the lot of the Jews, drew on the Exodus narrative to constitute a collective history and identity as part of the African diaspora (see Gilroy 1993, 207; 1997, 327). Among Banabans, the facts of deportation, dispersal, reunification, and collective relocation during colonial times supply the primary historical context for appropriation of the Exodus motif. Thus the Exodus narrative, whose tenor may be said to be inherently anticolonial, harks back to those bygone days when colonial regimes exerted control over the mobility and residence of local populations in the Pacific (see Lieber 1977; Silverman 1977). A knowledge of colonial transformational processes (and how they subsequently played out) is vital to understanding the development and specific form of the diasporic configuration and identity politics engaged in by today's resettled Banabans. That such historical contextualizations of contemporary Pacific diasporas possess analytic value can be seen from a number of studies (see Marshall 2004; Carucci 2012 [this

issue]; Howard and Rensel 2012 [this issue]; and Lieber et al. 2012 [this issue]).

### **Banaban History of Displacement**

The Banaban people originate from Banaba (Ocean Island), an island in the Central Pacific situated in the country of Kiribati. At the beginning of the twentieth century, lucrative phosphate reserves were discovered on Banaba that prompted an industrial-scale mining operation; this set in motion a machinery of destruction that stripped the local population of their traditional livelihood. Despite mounting a strong resistance, Banabans could not prevent the steady loss of their land. Then, during the Second World War, the Banabans were deported by the Japanese occupying forces and scattered across several islands in the Pacific, with many being pressed into forced labor. Immediately after the war, the British colonial government used the fact of their dislocation to reunite this far-flung community, deciding to relocate them all to Fiji. Accordingly, in May 1945, the Banabans were resettled on Rabi Island. As a result of this forced migration, Banabans today have two “home” islands separated by more than 2,000 kilometers and belonging to two different Pacific nation-states. This elemental doubling of belonging, as it were, is one of the constituting characteristics of Banaban identity. In Fiji, Banabans are known as an ethnic group inhabiting Rabi Island but also owning an island of origin in Kiribati, whereas being Banaban in Kiribati now implicates a second home island in Fiji. “*Uen abau*” (two home islands) is an expression Banabans use for the concept of “homeland,” defying exclusive reference to a single center (compare Kempf 2003, 55). The narrative of exodus from Egyptian bondage and entry into the Promised Land at once stabilizes and authorizes a collective narrative of the events leading to Banaban relocation (and, thus, to articulation of the two islands).

However, when we take a closer look at historical events and how they interlink with archetypal narratives from the Old Testament, another important issue emerges. Banabans compare their experience of exploitation and repression at the hands of the phosphate industry and the colonial administration on Banaba—and even more so their enslavement and deportation under wartime military rule—with the biblical narrative of liberation from Egyptian bondage. Thus, the Israelites’ Exodus is correlated with their own liberation—either from colonial repression on Banaba or from having been dispersed and oppressed by their Japanese occupiers—whereas the Israelites’ taking possession of the Promised Land is correlated with the community’s forced migration to Rabi Island in Fiji.

But why do Banabans, in evoking this analogy, impart an altogether different spin to the biblical narrative? Why do they associate the repression they suffered on their beloved home island, but also at the destinations to which they were subsequently deported, with the Israelites' experience of enslavement in another country, yet insist, at the same time, on referring to the (originally) alien island of Rabi in Fiji as their Promised Land? This difficult question is not made any easier by my insistence on applying the idea of diaspora, as deployed in the social sciences, to the resettled Banabans. For, as I show more closely in the next section, I construe the Banabans on Rabi Island (and elsewhere) as a diasporic society. But can Rabi Island, the "Promised Land" of Banabans, simultaneously be a place in the diaspora? In Jewish understanding, any talk of a Promised Land in the diaspora would make little sense, because diaspora *per se* refers to the fact of dispersal and of living outside the Promised Land (see Baumann 2000: 316–19; compare Dufoix 2008: 4–5). However, could not diaspora in a more recent sense, one tendentially secular because no longer coupled to the historical experiences of the Jews, be better placed to encompass this contradictory coupling of the biblical Exodus and Banaban history?

Thus, let us study first the specific use to which Banabans have put the biblical narrative. I suggest we need to read their appropriation of the Exodus motif as a creative, selective, and multilayered process, one that is intimately linked to the identity politics of this resettled community. Banabans, in the stories they tell, leave us in no doubt that the experience of dispersal and dislocation is central to their historical identity. Yet no less important to them is the fact of having survived as a community on Rabi Island, something that would have been impossible on their home island of Banaba, considering how its landscape and ecology had been ruined by decades of phosphate extraction. Therefore, as I see it, this metaphoric association of historical and biblical storylines has three principal functions. First, it permits Banabans to organize their perceptions of the past, codifying and preserving them for the sake of future generations. The core historical-religious narrative—one that covers a great deal of territory, ranging from deportation to collective salvation—is an informing element behind everything the resettled Banabans do, or have done in the recent past, to reconstitute and perpetuate their identity as an autonomous ethnic group on Rabi Island. Second, by pegging their self-image as victims and survivors of both colonial repression and dispersal to the Exodus narrative, Banabans are backing up their claim to Rabi Island as a God-given second homeland and, additionally, anchoring this claim in the social memory of their diasporic community. Finally, they draw on this core narrative to justify and defend the claim to ownership of Rabi Island that they make

within their country of residence (a claim this time directed at outsiders, especially ethnic Fijians) while simultaneously invoking divine will. The Exodus narrative allows Banabans to encode and pass on their painful experience of oppression and displacement, together with the twin facts of their collective survival and their right to Rabi Island. The motif harks back to an era in which Banabans vented their anticolonial protestations against the repression and dispersal sustained at the hands of imperial powers, protestations that were intended to bestow moral legitimacy on their cause and standpoint. By encapsulating the past in religious metaphors, Banabans synchronize religious affiliation, historical awareness, and identity politics.

### **Banaban Diaspora**

Why use the word “diaspora” in connection with this resettled community? The answer is that no other word better fits the stories Banabans tell about their displacement and subsequent resettlement; and if that were not enough, there is the fact of Banaban identification with the Israelites of the Old Testament, as attested by such not infrequently heard remarks as “We are like the Jews.” Yet, with the notable exception of the intellectual elite (see K. Teaiwa 2005; T. Teaiwa 2005), the great majority of Banabans in Fiji and Kiribati never explicitly mention diaspora. Given this is so, let me state briefly why I think the concept of diaspora applies to the resettled Banabans. Three principal criteria are met, I argue.<sup>2</sup> The first of these is the recent history of dispersal.<sup>3</sup> For Banabans, World War II was, as we have seen, a time of deportation and dispersal under Japanese rule, with their being subsequently resettled on Rabi Island by the British colonial powers. Then, beginning in the latter decades of the twentieth century, Rabi Island became the scene of an ongoing process of dispersal that continues to this day. The Banaban diaspora is currently put at some 5,000–6,000 individuals. Although more than half are still on Rabi Island, a growing number of Banabans have now moved to Fiji’s urban centers, especially Suva, Lautoka, and Labasa; a smaller number live on Tarawa and Banaba in Kiribati; and a tiny fraction are now residents of Australia and New Zealand. Nevertheless, Rabi Island forms the political, social, and cultural hub of the diasporic community. The overwhelming majority of the generations of Banabans who were born on the island, or who grew up there, have come to see it as their home.<sup>4</sup>

The second criterion is that the Banaban diaspora is marked by the retention of links with Banaba, the island of origin in the Central Pacific. Banaba represents the identity-conferring source and origin to which all Banabans, wherever they may be today, feel bound by ancestry, traditions,

land ownership, and collective memory. By “cross-mapping” Banaba’s original four villages onto their new island in Fiji, the resettled community was able to write into the very landscape of Rabi the bonds that tied them to their ancestral homeland. Thus was Rabi Island turned into a geographically, politically, and culturally separate zone, guaranteeing the survival of Banabans as an autonomous group endowed with a unique culture and ethnic identity. Identification with Rabi, therefore, serves as a window into the deeper past of Banaban origins.

Banaba today is a largely marginalized and derelict place, its landscape torn up and destroyed by the phosphate mining that went on there for so long. It is now jointly administered by the State of Kiribati and the political leadership of the Banabans on Rabi Island. Future planning by the authorities about what to do with Banaba oscillates between resuming phosphate mining and rehabilitation. According to official census data, upward of 300 people are now living on the island.<sup>5</sup> A few are government officials from Kiribati, but most are Banabans from Rabi who were sent over by the Rabi Council of Leaders to act as custodians. Both the island’s history and its current plight confer on the island, and those living there, a sense of diaspora. Thus, the Banaban settlers from Fiji may have built their homes in the ruins of their ancestral island, but there is no escaping the fact that they have settled a deformed land, whose very soil was removed to a depth of several meters prior to shipment to metropolitan countries like New Zealand and Australia, where it ended up fertilizing some farmer’s field (compare K. Teaiwa 2005). Although Banaba undoubtedly exhibits diasporic characteristics, reflecting its originating status, Rabi Island functions now as the new homeland, reflecting its diasporic status. Nor is it the case that homeland and diaspora are reified categories; on the contrary, they are open-ended processes subject to (and still undergoing) change.

However, the Banabans’ new home island in Fiji is very much contested terrain. A third criterion by which Banabans qualify as a diasporic group is found in the difficult relationship they have with Fiji, their country of residence. Military and civil coups have rocked this country repeatedly since the end of the 1980s, destabilizing it economically and politically. Seizure of power was justified, more often than not, as necessary to safeguard autochthonous Fijian hegemony over the second largest of Fiji’s ethnic groups, the Indo-Fijians (e.g., Kaplan 2004; Lal 1992, 2000; Lal and Pretes 2001). This has resulted in a number of constitutional amendments favoring the autochthonous Fijian population, which Banabans see as disadvantageous not only to Indo-Fijians as an ethnic group but to themselves as well. However, what is even worse from a Banaban point of view is that, with this new ascendancy on the part of ethno-nationalist Fijians, their

officially recognized ownership rights to Rabi Island are now coming under attack (see Kempf 2003; Kempf and Hermann 2005).<sup>6</sup> In addition, the ethno-nationalist movement in Fiji has used religion as an instrument of political legitimization. Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, for instance, defended his seizure of power in 1987 by claiming that God had mandated to him the task of saving the Fijians and their land; one of Rabuka's core messages is that Fiji is God-given territory that must remain in Fijian hands (see Rutz 1995: 84–86). For Banabans, who are fully aware of this Fijian discourse, this provides a means of defense. After all, they share with Fijians a common belief in Christianity, which lets them invoke the same divine authority. Thus, not only can they explain their status as a diasporic community in Fiji in terms of a specifically Christian discourse, they can also hope that the Fijians will appreciate the validity of their argument.

### The Motto

*“Atuara Buokira”* (Help us, O God of ours) is a motto that adorns the letterhead of the Rabi Council of Leaders, the body representing the political interests of Banabans. The accompanying signet—with its stylized depictions of fish and ocean, of frigate bird and sky, of Banaba itself—evokes traditional aspects of an island culture once built exclusively around fishing. The logo was designed in the 1970s, at a time when the Banabans of Rabi were stepping up their legal and political battles with the British colonial government and the British Phosphate Commissioners (BPC). It was then that the case compiled by the Banaban community came before the High Court in London. One aim was to secure adequate financial compensation for Banaban land destroyed by mining; another was to secure a commitment that their home island would be ecologically rehabilitated. In tandem with these legal battles, Banabans sought to win sovereign status for Banaba (in association with Rabi Island in Fiji) in what was a bid to regain control of their home island and any remaining resources. At the height of the political campaign, they incorporated the motto “Justice for the Banabans” into their logo. But this was to prove a false dawn: by the end of the 1970s it was clear that Banabans had been unable to get Britain to agree to even a single one of their demands. To make matters worse, the island of Banaba was then included in the newly created nation state of Kiribati, which gained independence in 1979. To be sure, when appearing before the High Court some years earlier, Banabans had won an important moral victory, but their appeals for adequate compensation and for removal of the scars left in Banaba's landscape had fallen on deaf ears. *“Atuara Buokira,”* explained Taomati Teai, one of the leading men who helped coordinate the

political actions taken at the time, “is actually people crying out. People in extreme distress. They’ve given their best, as they firmly believe, but still they don’t have anything to show for it. So now they are crying out to God: ‘Please help us.’ It is the cry of people in need, in desperate need. . . . We are still crying out for help—that’s why we’ve got that letterhead now” (see also Kempf and Teai 2005). Today the signet of the Rabi Council of Leaders symbolizes a diasporic community that has tied its ethnic identity—its very adherence to Christianity—to the historical awareness of having survived victimization via colonial exploitation, dispossession, and displacement, yet without having had any of these injustices redressed. The motto is intended to recall this principled historical stance and, thus, the need Banabans now feel to seek help from on high. The invocation “Atuara Buokira” further implies that, between the Banaban community and the Christian God, there exists a special relationship. I will take this up in connection with the historical narrative of a Promised Land in the diaspora. However, before doing so, I want to show, based on the narrative of Banabans’ conversion to Christianity, that religion has indeed become constitutive of their group identity.

### **Conversion to Christianity**

Central to the first historical narrative I consider here is the conversion of Banaba’s inhabitants to Christianity, a process that began in the second half of the nineteenth century. As older Banabans tell it, their ancestors’ conversion was heralded by a prophecy. Oral tradition has it that the first Christian missionaries, Protestants as it happened, had already set sail for Banaba, when Nei Tituabine—today seen as the most important goddess in the traditional Banaban pantheon—appeared to a local family, announcing that a great fire would soon be approaching the island. This fire, Nei Tituabine went on, would signal the imminent arrival of a truly powerful god. Nei Tituabine therefore advised the Banabans to renounce all their traditional gods and unconditionally accept this new and greater god, to whom she too would from now on be subordinate. Thus, when in 1885, in the persons of Alfred C. Walkup (an American) and his assistant Kinta (a man from the Kiribati island of Tabiteuea), the first missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) landed on Banaba to commence their missionary work, the Banaban goddess’s prophecy had clearly (from the perspective of the islanders) been fulfilled.<sup>7</sup> In retrospect, many Banabans see in the approaching fire foretold by Nei Tituabine the arrival of the light that would lead their ancestors out of the darkness of an archaic world of immorality, disease, and ignorance, extinguishing the



heathen beliefs and practices in which they had previously languished (see Benaia 1991: 23–26, 37; Hedstrom 1995: 10–11).

The orally transmitted story of the acceptance of Christianity heralded by Nei Tituabine is firmly lodged in Banaban social memory. This can be primarily attributed to Rabi Islands' Banaban Dancing Group, whose program of performing various episodes drawn from precolonial and colonial times includes the dance drama "Rokon te Aro" (The Coming of Christianity), which begins with the episode of Nei Tituabine's prophecy (see Kempf 2011). This historically and culturally specific conceptualization of Banaban conversion offers a key insight on which Banabans base their special relationship to God: by claiming to have anticipated the coming, and acceptance, of the Christian God through the agency of their local goddess, they are asserting that they have, in effect, played an active role in their conversion. The fact that Nei Tituabine voluntarily submitted to this new Christian God is much emphasized by Banabans. In this historic gesture, they claim, can be discerned a crucial difference from the traditional creator god of the I-Kiribati, Nareau,<sup>8</sup> who, unlike Nei Tituabine, was at no stage willing to relinquish his power. Hence, for example, a comment made by one member of the Banaban community following a performance of "Rokon te Aro":

E noraki te kaokoro ikai. Te reeti ni Banaba i bon irouna ao Kiribati bon irouna. . . . N aroia kain Banaba ngkekei bon Atuaia Nei Tituabine. . . . Ma e bon okiria kain abana ae Banaba, Nei Tituabine, "kam katukai, kakai ba e nangi roko Te Atua ae maka riki nakoiu". . . . Nareau, e aki, e bon tiku n arona n Atua irouia kain Kiribati. E taua nnena n Atua. . . . Ao e bon matoa irouia kain Kiribati nikarokoa taai aikai. . . . Ao anne kaokorora kain Banaba. Ngaira Atuara Nei Tituabine ma Kiribati, Nareau.

(You can see the difference here. [Between] the people of Banaba and those I-Kiribati. . . . [F]or the people of Banaba, their goddess really was Nei Tituabine before. . . . But then she turned to the people of her land, which is Banaba, Nei Tituabine did, [saying] "You leave me, leave me, for He's about to arrive, the God who is powerful more than me". . . . [As for] Nareau, he didn't [do that], he just remained there in his own right as a god of the people of Kiribati. He held onto his position as a god. . . . And it's really a firm thing with the people of Kiribati even today. . . . And that's where they differ from the people of Banaba. Our god is Nei Tituabine, while for the Kiribati [it is] Nareau.)



Here we find the traditional gods (and their various historical agencies) being enlisted in the cause of ethnic differentiation; Nei Tituabine and Nareau are given the status of ethnic emblems. The comment illustrates how, on the basis of their ascriptions, Banabans have made the repositioning of their gods within the context of religious transformation processes into constitutive features of their own ethnicity. The narrative of the anticipation and acceptance of the Christian God assigns a key role to the local goddess (as the embodiment of the local power of the land) in the run-up to conversion. Thus Banabans inscribe their historically and culturally specific accession to Christianity, stressing their autonomy of ethnicity and validating Christianity as integral to their identity.

In my opinion, this story of conversion to Christianity is part of a wider-ranging ethnic discourse about the original autonomy of ancestral Banaba, a discourse that Banabans developed in the course of their political clashes with the colonial powers. It paints a picture of a precolonial reality in which the relative isolation of Banaba conferred both ethnic uniqueness and political independence on its habitants; then came annexation, phosphate mining, colonial arbitrariness, and displacement, which brought to an end this autonomy.<sup>9</sup> In the later struggle for compensation and sovereignty, the Banabans' political leaders took to citing this construction of a prior Banaban autonomy as justification for their demand that their island should not be seen as part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. In doing so, they were taking especial aim at the British colonial practice of plowing most of the proceeds from phosphate mining into financing the colonial entity, moneys that they insisted should rightfully go to Banaba's indigenous landowners. The opposing side—the representatives of the British administration, the mining company, the political leadership of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands—argued that Banabans were in fact Gilbertese (in today's parlance, I-Kiribati), who only after the discovery of phosphate reserves on Banaba had (for merely economic reasons) "discovered" that they were ethnically different. Faced with the indisputable fact of kinship ties, cultural intermingling, and linguistic standardization (in the wake of Bible translation into the Kiribati language), this contrarian view only redoubled Banabans' determination to further define their ethnic difference from the I-Kiribati (see Binder 1977: 146–67; Dagmar 1989: 201–3; Hermann 2003, 2005; Kempf and Hermann 2005; MacDonald 1982: 268–69).

### **The Promised Land**

The manner in which the linking of religious affiliation, historical awareness, and political identity is used by Banabans to constitute Rabi Island as their Promised Land in the diaspora is demonstrated in a second historical

narrative. Here linkage is made between the pioneer generation of Banabans, who immediately after the war dared to begin again on Rabi Island, and the Israelites of the Old Testament whom God led out of Egyptian bondage to the Promised Land. This metaphorical linkage is rooted in the experience and memory of war, hunger, dispersal, and resettlement, as subsequently reworked and passed on by the founder generation via oral history until, in a standardized version, it gained a firm hold in the social memory of diasporic Banabans. In this process of codification and transmission, the Banaban Dancing Group rates a mention, taking as it did oral history and turning it into memorable dance dramas (see Kempf 2004, 2011; Kempf and Hermann 2005). Thus, the passage of time has thrown up a mnemonic configuration that can be resolved into four consecutive episodes, or “chapters,” as some Banabans prefer to say: first, a period of repression and hunger following capture and occupation by the Japanese Army in World War II; second, the Japanese-ordered deportation and dispersal of the Banabans to the islands of Nauru, Kosrae, and Tarawa; third, the reunion of the scattered Banabans on Tarawa at the end of the war, including the ensuing voyage to Fiji; and fourth—the final period—the landing of the Banabans on Rabi Island, followed by a precarious time living as displaced persons in a provisionally erected tent camp, a time that all Banabans now associate with a collective oath then taken to build a church in commemoration of the settlers’ arrival.

Given their Christian ideology, Banabans discern God’s hand in the details of how their history has unfolded. Looking back, they are persuaded that God extended a protective hand over the Banaban community in the difficult years: first reuniting them, then conveying them to Rabi; in the final analysis, it was God who had kept them from disappearing utterly. This narrative of survival by the settler generation is compared, especially by church leaders, with Old Testament stories like the Exodus of the Israelites and their entry into the Promised Land. For example, Pastor Temaka Benaia (now deceased) wrote in a treatise:

Biblically, the Banabans are like the Israelites who were called from Egypt, the land of bondage and hardships. The Banabans left and traveled to Rabi under very difficult conditions. They journeyed by sea but upon reaching Rabi, they realized that, like Canaan, the land was overflowing with “milk” and “honey,” in the abundance of water and fertile soil to plant food crops. The Banaban leaders or chairpersons of the Rabi Council of Leaders, like the Leaders of the Israelites, were God’s chosen people. . . . Like the Israelites, the Banabans had put their trust in God and they believed that God could help them too (Benaia 1991: ix–x).

Here the author is reproducing a discourse that, in its basic structure, articulates two different sequences of events. This metaphorical linkage is predicated on the Exodus narrative. The image of Egyptian bondage is usually equated with the repression the Japanese inflicted on Banabans during the Pacific War. The reference to the perilous voyage that Banabans undertook on regaining their liberty and being reunited is a clear parallel with the Israelites' time of wandering in the wilderness. Finally, the Banabans reach Rabi Island, their new home, whose wealth of resources prompts comparison with Canaan, the Promised Land of the Israelites. As a logical consequence, the leaders of the Banaban community are now portrayed, in line with the biblical narrative, as God's elect. Indeed, God is the pivot in this discursive equation. It is in His presence and His agency that Israelites and Banabans alike repose their trust, making their stories comparable. This same God who was the salvation of the Israelites, who led them into the Promised Land, has also liberated and united the scattered Banabans, conveying them to Rabi Island and ensuring their survival as a community. This historical narrative places Rabi Island at the heart of divinely ordained Banaban survival. In turn, it is the ongoing existence of Banabans as an ethnic group that supports their claim to Rabi Island. The nexus between Rabi Island and Canaan turns on Banabans' conviction that God gave them that island as part of His salvational plan, after having first brought them to its shores. A Methodist pastor, who explained to me in a lengthy conversation the parallels between Israelites and Banabans, summed up the matter as follows: "[Rabi Island] is God's present and gift to the Banabans."

The *modus operandi* of this representation of the past involves combining oral history with classical written text. This nexus has two important functions. First, it provides for the possibility of self-authorization. Reference to Holy Scripture allows the narrative construction of a divinely influenced, goal-directed course of history to be authorized, a construct that fashions out of the raw materials of repression, dispersal, reunion, and resettlement a teleology of displacement, so that Rabi Island can finally be recast as a land given to the Banabans by God. Second, the sequential coordination of orally transmitted history with archetypes from the Old Testament serves as a mnemonic device. The point of such mnemonic codification is to preserve institutionalized knowledge of the community's past, a knowledge that future generations must on no account forget. Just how this function plays out in the concrete praxis of remembering may be seen in the following case. The remarks reproduced below were made by a woman in her early forties from the Rabi village of Tabwewa, who, when interviewed on the linkage between homeland, remembering, and emotion, drew a number of parallels between Banabans and the Israelites:

What I do know is that [Banabans] compare themselves with the Israelites. During church, say, it may be recalled during the sermon that the Israelites were captives in Egypt. . . . And they were there for how many years? Forty years of captivity, wasn't it? And then they were set free. And when they were free, they were told to go to the Promised Land. God would give them the Promised Land. That was Canaan, wasn't it? . . . And so they reached Canaan—well, not all of them did. So the Banabans said: "We are just like the Israelites. We were in captivity under British rule on Banaba. [The British] took away our lands and all. And then we were brought to the Promised Land of Rabi. Where there is honey and milk." That's what's they often say. . . . You often hear that! Up there in the church! (August 8, 1998).<sup>10</sup>

What the woman from Tabwewa was doing here was reconstructing, first on a purely ad hoc basis, the outlines of the biblical narrative; she then proceeded to link this template to the foundational narrative on the Banaban past. As can be seen, this process of stabilizing and transmitting collectively shared knowledge by reference to Holy Scripture does not necessarily exclude a flexible form of narrative ascription. In the version before us here, Egyptian bondage is associated with exploitation of Banaba's land and its people by the British colonial powers—not with enslavement by the Japanese occupiers during World War II. This variant is not at all uncommon, because it allows the injustice wrought by decades of phosphate mining on Banaba to be brought into focus. Nor does this break in any way with the cultural schema on which Banaban mnemonic praxis is predicated. The basic pattern of historical sequencing can be stated thus: Banabans were repressed and exploited on their original island; therefore, they had to leave it; yet they were able to survive as an ethnic group, despite the profound dislocation sustained, because they found in Rabi Island a second homeland. In this linkage forged with the archetypal narratives from Holy Scripture, two intentions can be discerned: to retain the narrative of stemming from Banaba and arriving on Rabi Island as the hub around which diasporic Banaban identity turns; and to permanently inscribe this narrative in the community's memory.

"You often hear that! Up there in the church!" The church mentioned by the woman is the Methodist church of the village of Tabwewa. This building is in Nuku,<sup>11</sup> the island's nearby administrative center; it sits on a hill overlooking the island's main showground, where all Banaban festivities are held. Members of the pioneer generation are said to have placed stones on the site and to have sworn to build a church there at a later date in commemoration of their arrival. These stones are also said to have been

used when laying the church's foundations. The building, therefore, not only recalls the praxis of symbolically taking possession of Rabi; it is also an expression of the settlers' resolve to give to their vision of the past a fixed spatial mooring, to assign to it a fixed place in the landscape. This was a conscious act, an attempt to justify and (literally) "put in place" a memory deemed constitutive and binding alike. By erecting a public monument in stone, the founders sought to inscribe in Rabi's landscape a token of remembrance, one that would outlast their own day and age and serve future generations as a reference point of shared diaspora identity (compare J. Assmann 2005; A. Assmann and Harth 1991). Today, the church's exposed position and its name—Te Kanuringa ("Remembrance")—indicate how central it is to the social memory of the whole Banaban community.<sup>12</sup> Te Kanuringa is a clear case of official representation of the past being doubly stabilized and renewed. The memorial church simultaneously localizes, authorizes, and supports the narrative construction of past events in association with the Old Testament, and it does so in the same way as the narrative that is constantly reiterated within the ritual setting of divine service, validating and filling with meaning the church as a place of remembrance. Localization and monumentalization, in tandem with the linkage to Holy Scripture, help to enshrine in Banaban social memory this twofold narrative of origin and arrival on Rabi Island.

We should note that it is primarily members of the Methodist Church who equate the Israelites and Rabi Island with the Promised Land (compare Benaia 1991; Hedstrom 1995). They do this, I think, for historical and political reasons. At the time when they reached Rabi Island after the war, most of the Banaban settlers were members of the London Missionary Society (LMS).<sup>13</sup> However, in 1960 the LMS Church on Rabi was absorbed into the Methodist Church of Fiji (Benaia 1991, 67). Therefore, Rabi's Methodist Church, the direct successor organization, now represents the earlier church of a large portion of the settler generation. From this fact, Banaban Methodists not only derive their claim to seniority over all the other religious denominations on Rabi; they also lay claim to interpretive sovereignty over a segment of recent history that is vital to the collective identity of this diasporic community.<sup>14</sup> Thus the historical narrative represents a part of social memory not explicitly endorsed by the other religious denominations on Rabi, which is not to say that they dispute it in any way.

### **The Festival of Commemoration**

Every December 15, Banabans hold an official ceremony commemorating the historic event they refer to as *te moan roko* (the first arrival). The

ceremony recalls December 15, 1945, the day the pioneer generation first went ashore on Rabi Island. The settlers originally marked this important anniversary with a religious service, the point being, as an interlocutor once told me, to thank "God for his safe-keeping in difficult times." In later years, however, this day of commemoration gave way to a festival of celebration spreading over several days, with an opening ceremony, guests of honor, march-pasts, dances, sporting competitions, games, and shows.

The annual festival of celebration is held at the sportsfield cum fair-ground (*te marae*); it is situated directly below the hill on which memorial church Te Kanuringa now stands. This choice of location is historically significant, as it was in this general area that the settlers, immediately after their arrival, were accommodated in makeshift tents, pending construction of more permanent housing. The site, therefore, is a reminder of the difficult circumstances and the many hardships attending the early years on Rabi. The resettled Banabans, weakened and traumatized by the perils and violence of wartime, came to see themselves in this provisional camp as poised between annihilation and survival, between the hopelessness of the past and the promise of a new beginning. Hence it is that at this place, which can be described as a pivotal point in their fortunes, the Banabans of Rabi Island gather every December 15 to recall, especially for sake of the younger generation, their foundational narrative of painful deprivation and hardship followed by the enormous achievements of the first settlers in turning Rabi into what it is today. The extent to which this festival of celebration has become a constitutive feature of the Banaban ethnic group as a whole can be gauged from the fact that December 15 is also now marked in other parts of the Banaban diaspora and even on the ancestral island of Banaba itself. Hence, the identity that Banabans living in the diaspora have built for themselves is predicated on this annual act of ritual remembrance, recalling the historic disruption wrought by war, dispersal, and resettlement.

On Rabi Island, the official opening ceremony on December 15 always follows the same basic format. After the guests of honor and councilors have taken their seats in the covered pavilion, local groups representing clubs, schools, and churches march out onto the fairground waving flags and banners. A clergyman opens the festivities with words of welcome and a short prayer. Immediately afterward, a local policeman hoists Fiji's national flag, as a brass band strikes up Fiji's national anthem; then follows the singing of the anthem—it is at one and the same time a hymn—of the Banaban community: "Te Atua Buokara" (God [Is] Our Help). Next come welcoming speeches by the chairman of the Rabi Council of Leaders and by high-ranking guests of honor. Then the various groups assembled on the

fairground march past the pavilion in a colorful spectacle. Offerings of various kinds, performed by Rabi's many dancing groups and choirs, bring to a close this official part of the opening celebrations. The idea underlying the festive display is that the four original villages on ancestral Banaba (Tabwewa, Uma, Tabiang, and Buakonikai), which were re-created on Rabi following resettlement, should gather together on the fairground. During the entire week of festivities the four villages, represented by various groups (sports teams, game players, dance troupes, choirs, etc.), engage in competitions. When the final day arrives, the points won by each village are tallied and the results announced: the victorious village is then honored at the closing ceremony, winding up that year's commemoration. It is via this leitmotiv of the four villages that the islands of Rabi and Banaba are invoked, recalled, celebrated, and remembered as intrinsically linked, as shared points of reference for Banabans everywhere. In sum, this annual festival of commemoration and celebration held on Rabi's fairground is pivotal to Banaban self-awareness.

I want now to look at one festival in particular, held in 2004, because it was marked by a series of reconfigurations.<sup>15</sup> The focus then shifted to rediscovering the original meaning of December 15. The clergyman officiating that year (the various denominations take turns at this) happened to be a Methodist. The flyer setting out the program broke with past practice: this time the clergyman would not confine himself to a few introductory words and offer up a brief prayer; rather, he would be holding a devotion "with a message of God's deliverance and Salvation of the Banaban Race." Also, the organizing committee would be reviving the former custom of asking an elder from each of the villages to speak publicly, at the opening ceremony, about how he or she had experienced the war and resettlement. Under the heading of "Rongorongon te Bwimanimaua" (The Story of [December] 15), the core historical narrative was divided into four segments, with a representative of each village being assigned a segment to reminisce about. In the program this was set out in tabular form:

Rongorongon te Buaka ("Story of the War")	Tabwewa
Kamaeakinako ("Dispersal")	Uma
Mananga nako Rabi ("The Voyage to Rabi")	Tabiang
Te Roko i Rabi ("Arrival on Rabi")	Buakonikai <sup>16</sup>

What was also special about the new program was that it would now move beyond the usual fare of dance spectacles and include songs thematizing the events of December 15.



From the welter of festivities in that year, two episodes shed light on my topic of choice: Banaban appropriation of the Exodus motif. One is the meditation by the minister of the Methodist church Te Kanuringa in Nuku. In a sermon given at the opening ceremony, he talked primarily of the foundational narrative of the Banaban community, again relating it to the biblical Exodus story. First, he established a reference to what the pioneer generation had been through, with their experience of wartime dispersal; then he dwelt on the protective hand God had shown during that time of existential imperilment:

Te buaka ma uotana aika arangin maiti nakoia ara ikawai. N tain te rongo ao e kanganga te amarae iai, te kamaeaki nako nakon aba aika a maiti iai aika a roko i Nauru iai aika a roko Kosrae, eng! E taku te kantaninga teuana ba ea bua te botanaomata aei. Abua kaain Banaba, ma ngke a bane n rikorikoaki bon te Atua naba ae e rikorikoia man tabo nako, nikiran mwin te buaka aika a taku temangina ba ai akea kaain Banaba ma n tain te buaka ao tain te rongo ara ikawai a karakina aika ti ongora irouia ba ngkana e baka te boum ao a taromauri te Atua kawakinira. Amaiti aika a bobotaki n taromauri te Atua! Te Atua! Te Atua! Te Atua n tain te rongo, Te Atua n tain te buaka, te Atua n tain te kangakanga ao ti nang kaitau nte ingabong aei ba kabaian te bota n aomata boni mairoun te Atua. Ngaia ae kawakina ara bota n aomata ni karokoa raoiroin te ingabong aei.

(During the war our elders really had to go through a lot. In the time of hardship with little food, they were dispersed to many islands. There were some who went to Nauru; and there were some who went to Kosrae, yes they did! From time to time, it was said that this group of people was lost. That they were the lost people of Banaba. But when they were finally all brought together again, it was the Lord who had collected them from all those places. Other wartime survivors said there were no more people of Banaba left. But during the war and during the famine, so our elders tell us and so we have heard it from them, when the bombs were falling they prayed to the Lord: "Protect us." There are plenty who gathered to pray: The Lord! The Lord! The Lord! The Lord in time of famine, the Lord in time of war, the Lord in time of hardship. And we are really thankful this morning that the people back then received the blessing of the Lord and that He has continued to protect us down to this very day.)



After thus relating the trials and tribulations of wartime dispersal, the pastor turned to the arrival of the pioneer generation on Rabi Island:

Kain abara aika ti bane n roko nte ingabong aei. Ti roko iaon abara ae bou ae anganira te Atua, te taeka ae moan te kakawaki nte baibara ngkana kam roko i Kanaan, kam na aki mamananga taekan te Atua ae kaotinakoi ngkami mai Aikubita ni baina aei aroraki ni karokoa kam roko i Kanaan ba Kanaan e ranga nako iai karewen te maniberu ma ranin mama te tabo ae e mari. Kain abara ngkana tia roko n abara ae bou mairoun te Atua ae angania ara ikawai tina aki mamananga ba kabaian te bota n aomata aei bon mairoun te Atua n tainako.

(People of our land who have assembled (here) this morning. We arrived on this land of ours, newly given to us by the Lord. The word that really matters in the Bible goes like this: when you reach Canaan you should not forget the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt by His hand and who stretched His arm out over you until you finally reached Canaan. For out of Canaan flows honey from the bee and milk from the breast. A place that is fruitful. People of our land, if we are now here in this new land of ours that the Lord gave to our elders, let us not forget that the well-being of our people is truly from the Lord and always will be.)

This passage clearly shows the Methodist pastor using the occasion—the celebration of the arrival of the pioneers—to recall the metaphorical relationship between Rabi Island and the biblical Canaan of the Israelites'. By linking the story of the settlers freshly arrived on Rabi to that of the Israelites' own arrival in the Promised Land, he reiterated that Rabi Island was given to Banabans by God and that it therefore now belongs to them.

The second episode involved the public singing of songs at the end of the opening ceremony. I have chosen a particular song, "A Mananga Ngkoa" (They Traveled in the Past), that was composed by Burentau Tabunawati and performed at the festival by his wife Nei Toaningeri. In this song, Israelites and Banabans are depicted as travelers who have entered the Promised Land (the actual Exodus itself from Egypt is skirted over). "A Mananga Ngkoa" accentuates the local discourse of the diasporic Banabans, its chief aim being to foreground their arrival on Rabi and to compare the latter to the Promised Land. When Nei Toaningeri stepped up to the microphone, she introduced her song with the following words:

Aia te kuna ae na aneneia aio, moan manangaia tibun Iteraera nakon te aba are Kanaan. Ao ngaira kain Rabi kanga ti boni mananga ke ti bon aranaki naba ba kain tibun Iteraera ae ti kamanangaki ni kitana Aikubita nako Kanaan. Ao ngkai kam nang ongora.

(Now this song I'm about to sing is about how the Israelites traveled to the land known as Canaan. And we people of Rabi, we had to travel too, just like the Israelites when they left Egypt for Canaan. So please listen to my song.)

She then sang the first two verses of her song along with the refrain (repeated after each verse). According to my later reconstructions, there was actually a third verse, but she had to drop it for reasons of time. The full lyrics of the song are set out below:

#### A Mananga Ngkoa

##### I.

A mananga ngkoa tibun Iteraera	They traveled in the past, the Israelites did,
Nakon te aba ni berita	To the Promised Land
E angania te Atua ngkoa	Which the Lord had given them.
Tai kan nakoim, ibukira	Don't go [for] yourself, [but] for [the good] of us all

##### Chorus:

Ko raba, ko raba	Thank you, thank you,
Te Uea ibukin abara	Lord, for our land
Ko katauraia ibukira	You prepared it for us.
Kona mena iroura	You will be with us,
Iesu ara kukurei	Jesus our joy,
Ue ue ueen te kukurei	Flower of happiness.

##### II.

E kakenato iroura te bong aio	Today is an important day for us,
Tebwi ma nimaua n Ritemba	The 15th day of December.
Tia roko raoi iaon Rabi	We arrived safe and sound on Rabi.
Mai iroun Iesu te kabaia	From Jesus Himself the blessing.

##### III.

Aua matan n taratara nako ngkai	Four eyes are looking now
Rabi te aba ni berita	At Rabi the Promised Land.
Aranga iai kaubai ma kukurei	Pouring out prosperity and joy
Mai iroun Iesu te kabaia Amen	From Jesus Himself the blessing. Amen.

The metaphorical linkage is forged in three short steps or, more accurately, verses. The first verse tells of the Israelites arriving in the Promised Land. The second focuses on the festive and commemorative events within which context diasporic Banabans now recall to (social) memory the pioneers' arrival on Rabi Island. The third verse rounds out the song by explicitly equating Rabi Island with the Promised Land (*te aba ni berita*). The refrain is the connecting link binding the verses together, driving home the message that the Promised Land was given to them by God.

### Conclusion

It is only by systematically including religion in the study of contemporary diasporas that we can hope to achieve a firm understanding of the practice and politics of diasporic communities. This is also, indeed especially, true of the Pacific diaspora. In terms of this particular study—how religious discourses and practices are used by diasporic Banabans living on Rabi Island—I wish to draw attention to three interlinked areas in which religion unfolds its agency on the culture and lifestyle of diasporic groups. These areas are identity, place, and memory.

First, religion exerts influence on the ongoing construction of ethnic identity in the diaspora. For Banabans, being Christian is a constituting feature of their identity as an autonomous ethnic group. The reference to Christianity allows them not only to retain their self-image as victims and survivors of colonial exploitation, repression, and displacement but also to formulate a moral claim to fair compensation for the injustice sustained. The articulation of Christian religion and ethnic identity forms the crucial precondition for the narrative equation of Banabans with the Israelites. Banabans use this metaphoric link to interpret past events in terms of religious redemption and being chosen by God. In this connection, they construe Rabi Island as the place of their collective salvation via divine intervention.

Second, religion is of great importance whenever a diasporic community is concerned to create sites of belonging and identification in the diaspora. To be sure, Banabans use the Christian religion to link their community to Rabi Island, but in this process of place making, they are also reconfiguring their ethnic identity in the diaspora. By linking their specific view of the past to biblical narratives, they authorize a teleology of displacement, recasting Rabi Island as their Promised Land in the diaspora. When diasporic Banabans take their archetypal narratives from the Old Testament, it is to underwrite their presence on (and ownership rights over) Rabi as manifestations of God's will. In today's postcolonial context in Fiji, where

Banabans are confronted with Fijian claims to Rabi Island, they are able, by equating Rabi with Canaan, to reply to Fijians in terms of shared Christian belonging. Banaban incorporation in the Christian organizations of Fiji thus supports their discourse of cautious empowerment and positioning in the diaspora. Against a background where metaphoric linkage is conveyed by everyday and ceremonial communication alike, an important role is played by theological texts, sermons, narratives, and songs addressed to younger generations, who need to be permanently reminded that Banabans, as victims and survivors of repression and displacement, equate Rabi Island with the Promised Land of divine providence.

Third, religion authorizes the social memory of a diasporic group. When Banabans cite the biblical narratives of Exodus from Egyptian bondage and deliverance into the Promised Land, they are condensing and preserving for future generations the manner in which they officially represent origin and arrival, displacement, and settlement. The linking of this foundational narrative to Holy Scripture hinges on a spatial anchoring, in this case building a memorial church. Such mnemonic devices, Holy Scripture on the one hand and a monument on the other, are intended to stabilize and give longevity to this identity-conferring Banaban narrative. It is by tying the narrative to a historical site and by architectonically consolidating memory that past events are articulated with Rabi Island, the better to build a second homeland there. Linkage between place and social memory helps Banabans to shape for themselves and perpetuate their collective identity in the diaspora. Thus, the Christian religion forms an integral part of the historical practice and politics of Banabans in constituting place, memory, and identity in the diaspora.

## NOTES

1. A striking example of this theoretical insistence on deconstructing, or opening up, prevailing categories is Avtar Brah's "diaspora space," which is based on the concept of Third Space: "My argument is that diaspora space as a conceptual category is 'inhabited,' not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. . . . The diaspora space is the site where the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native" (Brah 1996, 209).

2. On issues surrounding the definition of diaspora (and diasporas), see especially Safran 1991, 2004; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997; Baumann 2000; Dufoix 2008.

3. To this Katerina Teaiwa added the aspect of the dispersal of Banaba's land (2005).

4. On this issue, see Hermann and Kokoria 2005, 129. When last carrying out research on Tarawa in Kiribati (in September 2009), I was able to raise the matter with younger Banabans from Fiji. A schoolboy, with whom I have remained in e-mail contact, has

revealingly chosen “rabifella” as his e-mail address. On the role of electronic communications in network building and identity formation in a Pacific diaspora, see Howard and Rensel 2012 (this issue).

5. See Kiribati 2005 Census, Vol. 2: Analytical Report, 104 (2007).

6. Concrete calls for Rabi’s return have been heard from a number of Fijian families now living on the neighboring island of Taveuni, who consider themselves the traditional holders of Rabi. For recent demands raised from the Fijian side, see “Villagers Want Rabi Island Back” on [fijilive.com](http://fijilive.com), June 5, 2007.

7. On the history of mission work on Banaba, see Binder 1977: 23–27; Silverman 1971: 88–94.

8. On the importance of the traditional creator god Nareau for Kiribati and its inhabitants, see Beibure, Teraku and Uriam 1984: 1–6; Grimble 1989, 302; Maude and Maude 1994.

9. On the representation of original autonomy on Banaba, compare also Hermann 2005.

10. I wish to thank the interviewer here, Elfriede Hermann, who has kindly let me excerpt this passage.

11. The original village of Tabwewa on Banaba was traditionally expected to take the lead, a role then devolved on the eponymous village on Rabi. For this reason, close ties have existed between Tabwewa and Rabi’s adjacent administrative center in Nuku.

12. The church known as Te Kanuringa was completed in December 1979. Since 1963, religious services for the Methodist congregation in Tabwewa have been held there, initially in the assembly hall Emanuera—*Atua irouia I-Banaba* (God is with the Banabans), which was built next to the present church building (Benaia 1991: 69–70).

13. As mentioned earlier, the population of the island of Banaba was converted by ABCFM missionaries. In 1917, the LMS Church took over the work of the ABCFM on Banaba (on this point, see also Benaia 1991: 26, 31–32, 54, 58f.)

14. Exactly how far back in time the historical narrative goes in the specific form in which it is presently communicated has not been unequivocally resolved. One indication derives from the former administrative official and later professor of Pacific history at the Australian National University, Henry E. Maude, at the time a leading player in planning and overseeing Banaban resettlement. As Maude later recalled, the then leader of the Banabans, Rotan Tito, had been described to him on Rabi—as early as 1947—as the “new Moses” who had led his people into the Promised Land (see the Maude Papers, Part I. F. Papers on the *Banaban Action v. the Crown*. 6. Personal Correspondence and Documentation on the Action, “Recollections of Mr. Rotan during the 1930s,” Barr Smith Library Collection, University of Adelaide, Australia). In the historical documents from the early years of Rabi’s settlement, especially those written by Banabans, to date no other indications have come to light on such equating of Banabans and Israelites.

15. My insights into the historical changes undergone by Rabi Island's festival of commemoration are primarily based on my own ethnographic documentation of the festivities in 1997, 2004, and 2005. Surviving programs from earlier festivals (drawn up each year by the Council Office for distribution) enabled me to form an idea of the order of proceedings in earlier years, the 1980s and 1990s.

16. See "15th December Programme—2004," Rabi Council of Leaders, Youth and Sport Department, 1.

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## **DISCOURSES ON CHUUKESSE CUSTOMARY ADOPTION, MIGRATION, AND THE LAWS OF STATE(S)**

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THIS ARTICLE concerns Chuukese adoption, child exchange, and fosterage practices and how they are continued or discontinued when Chuukese migrate to Guam, Hawai'i, or the continental United States.<sup>1</sup> By focusing on one cultural practice and the system of values attached to it, I hope to pinpoint some of the major changes that take place when key identity-shaping factors diversify and are no longer shared by an ethnic group, let alone families within that ethnic group. We will see how, for Chuukese today, "cultural citizenship" is a "dual process of self-making and being made within the webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society" (Ong 1996, 738) but also that it is more than that: it is a dual process of self-making and being made within the webs of power linked to traditional society, their nation-state, and the United States.

### **From Chuuk to the United States**

The islands of Chuuk constitute one of four states that together with Yap, Pohnpei, and Kosrae form the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). The small islands and atolls of the Federated States of Micronesia are scattered across seven million square kilometers of ocean just north of the equator, between the Republic of Palau, which borders the Philippines in the west, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to the east.

Although the total FSM population is approximately 110,000, long-time researchers Francis X. Hezel and Eugenia Samuel estimated, "There are

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over 40,000 FSM citizens living in the United States and its territories today” (pers. comm. 2009).<sup>2</sup> By contrast, a 1994 FSM census estimate showed that 15,000 citizens were living abroad. Hence, within fifteen years, the number of people leaving the Federated States of Micronesia for the United States and its territories has almost tripled. About half of those, it may be estimated, are from the islands of Chuuk, the most populous of the four FSM states; the number of migrants is increasing by about 1,000 each year from Chuuk alone (Hezel and Samuel 2006, 1). A census I took in summer 2007 verifies the massive exodus of Chuukese. I went through lists of all eligible voters with community leaders from the villages of Chuukiyénú on Toon Island and Epin on the island of Paata, in the western part of the Chuuk Lagoon, and recorded where the people of their villages were living at the time. It revealed that in both villages about 45 percent of the eligible voters were not living on their home island but instead were reported to be residing in Guam, Saipan, Hawai‘i, or the continental United States.

In light of this contemporary outflow of people from Chuuk, one might ask how a distinct ethnic group of people maintains their shared values and traditions—which are a part of their personal and ethnic identity—outside the seemingly secure context of their remote island homeland in the Pacific. What fundamental elements of their culture do they cling to and maintain? How do they adapt? What are the identifiable variables of change? What aspects of a practice do they change or must they change for it to be continued in a different world where different values, laws, ideals, and traditions exist? How do institutions such as the workplace, the Church, or the state that perform wide-ranging functions traditionally performed by kinship groups influence everyday social, economic, and religious life (see Holy 1996, 2), especially in alien environments?

The consequences of migration for the children of migrants who are now growing up in the United States may be particularly dramatic. For instance, Caroline,<sup>3</sup> a Chuukese woman who was raised in Oregon, estimated, “At least 75% of the Chuukese born in Oregon that I know of have never been to Chuuk until late adolescence.” The Oregon community of Chuukese is one of the oldest. It began to form when the state of Oregon initiated college programs for islanders from the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) in the 1970s (see Hezel 2008; Marshall 2004; Lieber et al. 2012 [this issue]). Many ended up staying, especially after independence in 1986 when the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the newly formed FSM nation came into effect. The compact allowed FSM citizens to live and work in the United States and grants access to amenities such as health care and Pell grants.<sup>4</sup> Today, an estimated 3,000–4,000 Chuukese live in Oregon alone, and the numbers have been rapidly increasing over the past six to seven years.

Recent newcomers often speak little or no English and are experiencing difficulties as they try to establish themselves in their new surroundings, whereas the earlier migrants have settled down quite well (Marshall 2004). As with other Pacific societies, the Chuukese diaspora is developing primarily along familial and relational lines originating in the homeland. Religious denominations play a dominant role in crossing these lines and the formation of larger collectives (Allen 1997; Hezel and Samuel 2006). As communities have developed, ties between dispersed communities have developed and are maintained from Florida to Oregon, from Kansas to Maui. One of the largest transnational get-togethers of Chuukese youth living in the United States is the Micronesian Games. For more than twenty years, they have been coming together in Pasadena, California, from all parts of the continental United States and Hawai'i during the week of the Fourth of July (see also Hezel and Samuel 2006). Sometimes, people have even come from their homeland in Micronesia to participate in this event, either as individuals or with participating teams.

Although it would be worth a separate study to trace the movements of different types of persons such as students, chiefs, politicians, business people, and pastors as they commute between their island homes and the United States or between communities scattered across the United States, I have chosen to trace the movement of people who have been transferred as adopted children from Chuuk to the United States and back. The three cases presented below take us to the center of a complex set of issues revolving around Chuukese emigration and life in the diaspora of the United States and the repercussions this movement of people has for Chuukese society back home.

There are social, legal, economic, and political factors involved as people from Chuuk are trying to better their living conditions, both at home in Micronesia and in the United States. First, I examine these factors in the context of traditional views of adoption and fosterage that influence cultural practice in Chuuk and in the present Chuukese diaspora. Second, I describe the place of law in adoption and the influence of the "received" judicial system on the lives of Trust Territory residents since the arrival of the Americans in 1945. After independence from the United States, this received law was formally incorporated into the FSM and Chuuk State constitutions and codes. We cannot study adoption today—and it should not have been studied in the past (King 1999; McKinnon 2008; Powles 1997; Schachter 2008)—without including court proceedings. To do otherwise would imply an omission or even a denial of the "relationship between the domains of kinship and economy as well as the entanglements of kinship and property" (McKinnon 2008, 232). These relationships are fundamental to identity in traditional society, and they are protected by



the laws and constitution of the modern nation-state. The following case material on adoption will serve to illustrate and deepen our discussion.

*Case 1: Henrita*

The cell phone hanging from a rafter in the cook house began playing its familiar melody. Henrita, happily married and eight months pregnant with her first child, reached up from her chair and answered the phone. It was Aunt Susan calling from Portland, Oregon. "I heard you are pregnant," Aunt Susan said. "When is my baby due? When can I pick it up?" "What do you mean with 'my' baby?!" Henrita countered. "Are you the one pregnant or am I pregnant?" "Well, I want to adopt the baby and take it with me to Portland. Just let me know when the baby arrives so I can come out to Chuuk and take it with me." The second time Aunt Susan called in the same demanding tone of voice, Henrita talked back (*éppénuwa*), saying that her baby was not a toy she could just pick up and take with her to the United States. What bothered Henrita even more was that Aunt Susan was not the only relative making claims on her unborn child. There was her single older brother on Guam, who was telling everyone that he would be adopting the baby and that she had agreed to it. There were her parents on the outer island atoll and two or three more relatives also standing in line to adopt (*muuuti*) her baby. Some were more polite in their approach, but that did not change the general attitude and competition among her kin trying to adopt her first-born child. Fortunately for her, her husband had a well-paying job with the government on Wééné, the capital island of Chuuk State, which made them less dependent on their relatives and added to her confidence and determination to keep her child. Her baby was finally born and Aunt Susan kept on calling her, but Henrita remained firm.

What she did not want to tell anyone and could not express out of respect for her family was that she did not want her own life's history to repeat itself in the life of her child. For she, like most everybody else on her island, had also been adopted, but in the past, most adopted children would actually continue to reside with their natural parents and maybe sleep over at the house of their adoptive parents on weekends only. And even then, her home island was so small she could easily walk back and forth between the natural and adoptive parents if she pleased. It was no big deal back then. Adopted children even kept the last name of their natural parents, although rights over the child had officially been transferred to their adoptive parents at the time of the adoption. This transfer of rights to the adoptive parents always became evident at Christmas when

gifts or foodstuffs were being exchanged between the families in church. Her gifts would automatically go to her adoptive parents, not her natural parents. Similarly, when the island community went fishing, her adoptive parents were entitled to her share (*wiis*) of the catch, even though she had always been residing with her natural parents.

Change came for Henrita when her adoptive parents decided to leave the island. She said, "That day they came to our house and said they were planning to go to Guam to look for work and they wanted to take me with them. At first I said no, I did not want to go with them. But my natural father, who had been to college for two years, convinced me to go and take the opportunity to leave the island. 'You are smart,' he said, 'and the schools are much better in Guam than here on our island.'"

Henrita was about twelve years old when she left her parents' home on the atoll in 1989. At first, she and her adoptive parents stayed on Wééné until they had legalized her traditional adoption (§1404 and §1405 Chuuk State Code Title 23) and had obtained their passports. Then they immigrated to Guam. Henrita was the eldest child in her new family and missed her natural parents and siblings terribly (on separation trauma, see Douglass 1998, and on emotions involved in adoption, see Rauchholz 2008). In addition, she did not get along very well with her adoptive mother. She always felt that her adoptive mother had something to complain about her and held more affection for her own, much younger children (compare Fischer and Fischer 1966: 126–27). After a few years on Guam, the family moved to O'ahu, Hawai'i. Henrita ended up graduating from high school there and remained in Hawai'i for college. She met her husband there, and after graduation, they got married and went back to Chuuk, where her husband got a job with the government.

Henrita's story and experience with Aunt Susan is only one example of how people (attempt to) continue a cultural practice with the mindset of traditional adoption, whereas the physical setting and the legal, economic, social, and political parameters within which adoption was formerly embedded and practiced have changed dramatically.

### *Case 2: An Adoption Triangle: Between Tonowas, Feefen, and Hawai'i*

Another case, which paralleled Henrita's experience with Aunt Susan, was that of a young woman, Anna, from Tonowas, an island in the Chuuk Lagoon, and a middle-aged woman, Joyleen, from the neighboring island of Feefen who was living in Hawai'i. Anna had become pregnant out of wedlock when she was only seventeen or eighteen years old. It is always embarrassing to the family when this happens, the more so if the family of

the young girl is better off or of higher rank, which was the case here. Joyleen in Hawai'i had been looking for a child to adopt for some time but without success. Then word came to her of a young single mother from the neighboring island. She followed the lead, eventually sending a request through a go-between, asking Anna if she could adopt her child. An agreement was made for the adoptive mother to send US\$250 a month from Hawai'i to provide for the needs of the birth mother in Chuuk.<sup>5</sup> In return for this favor, the adoption was legalized and the baby sent off to live with her new mother in Hawai'i. With this move, a number of problems were solved for those immediately involved. For one thing, Anna, the single young mother, could relieve herself and her family of the child who would have been an ever-recurring theme in village gossip and a constant reminder to everyone in the community of her inappropriate behavior. The extended family would be sworn to secrecy for the future protection of family honor and the child. By agreeing to the adoption, Anna could regain her honor and could now go to college; she even had an extra source of income. The court in Chuuk easily agreed to the adoption with the best interests of the child in mind: better education, nutrition, and healthcare in Hawai'i, with brighter prospects for the future than could be expected in Chuuk.<sup>6</sup> Joyleen as the adopting mother was happy too. She was now eligible for childcare money, food money, additional welfare, and other benefits provided by the state. In addition, she would have someone to care for her in old age.

Like Joyleen, we must remember that Henrita's Aunt Susan had been quite desperate for additional sources of income as well. Making a living in Portland seemed impossible for Aunt Susan, who was working for minimum wage in a restaurant. "We need to help each other out to survive here," Aunt Susan had said, and "if you give me your baby you know that I can pay my rent. Your child will also go to a better school here in Portland than in Chuuk."

A compilation of the financial benefits that would have been available to Aunt Susan in Oregon, had Henrita agreed to the adoption, will illuminate what is involved. It will become clear how two different sets of values were incorporated into Aunt Susan's behavior as part of her strategy to survive and make a more decent living in the United States.

According to local Chuukese sources residing in Oregon, adults may be entitled to welfare payments of \$600 per person, per month, over a period of five years during their working life.<sup>7</sup> In cases of illness or unemployment, this money is supposed to help sustain a person and help provide for the cost of living, including rent and utilities. This means of support is what makes emigration of Chuukese to the United States possible in the first

place, and they are grateful for this help. Without it, most emigrants would not be capable of establishing their livelihood. Minor children of people with low income may also be entitled to \$600 per month. In addition, an amount of \$300 per month may be paid as food money for the first person in a household. For every additional household member, an additional \$150 per month can be added for food. Medical insurance is also taken care of by the state for families under these conditions. A mother and father may receive a reduced rate if they are working. The state also provides job training programs and English lessons to increase the quality of training and the possibility of employment for new immigrants. Chuukese community and church leaders play an active role in helping the newcomers apply for these programs. What some islanders have discovered recently is the possibility (in some states) of obtaining an additional \$800–1,000 of childcare money if a child below school age is being cared for at home. This has given additional impetus to the transferral of children for purely economic reasons. We saw this in cases reported from Hawai'i and from Henrita and her Aunt Susan.

With an infant in her household, Aunt Susan could have increased her income up to \$21,000 per year, with monthly amounts of \$600 for the general cost of living, \$800–1,000 for childcare support, and \$150 for food, or a total of \$1,550–1,750 per month additional income. In the United States, that is barely enough money for one person to live on, but Aunt Susan was already sharing her apartment with other relatives who were working and providing the income needed to sustain each other.

In the traditional Chuukese subsistence economy, an adoptive parent would provide for an adoptive child until he or she grew old enough to contribute to the welfare of the family by taking on household or subsistence-related chores such as gardening or fishing. In transnational adoption, a new financial dimension is added to these benefits. Sometimes people in Chuuk call a child treated in this way "Social Security," and the child's real name may be humorously replaced with this title. Certainly there are also other motives for transnational adoptions between Chuukese, situations where economic considerations play only a little or no role at all. A number of Chuukese commented rather critically regarding an increase in transnational adoptions and wished people would reflect more on the consequences of "moving around of children" and be more self-critical and less selfish.

What was somewhat unusual in Anna's case was that she did not give her child to any of the close relatives who voiced an interest in the child. Instead she gave the child to the highest bidder, someone living in Hawai'i, where she knew her child would have a brighter future than if it were to

be raised in Chuuk.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, families of lower economic and educational standing may offer their children in adoption to well-off relatives and even nonrelatives living in the United States. One childless couple I interviewed in the United States was constantly bombarded with such requests by close, distant, and even non-kin but they always declined in light of identity problems they expected in the future for the child and the potential for conflict with the “sharing” parents and their relatives. Although the idea of having a child seemed attractive to them and could have established their image as a complete and “real” family in the Chuukese sense, they knew from experience that the arrangement contained bittersweet seeds that could easily grow out of control. One consideration was the demands that could be placed on the child-receiving couple. Because they received a child, they would, by Chuukese custom, feel obliged to reciprocate such perceived generosity by sending money to Chuuk to support the biological family of their adopted child. Another matter of concern was the ever-present possibility of the child turning away from them or the hidden hopes of the biological parents of luring away their child from the adopted parents once he or she had become a successful adult.

### *Case 3: Joana*

The third case is of a young woman I will call Joana. She was born in 1982 into a large family who lived a simple life based on gardening and fishing on an island in the Chuuk Lagoon. Her family was not well educated, nor were they well off by modern Chuukese standards. As an infant, Joana was adopted by a female cousin of her birth mother who was from the same matrilineage and clan. The adopting family had only one older daughter and Joana became her new younger “sister” or companion. The families and lineage were sworn to secrecy regarding the adoption. Joana was intended to grow up feeling and believing that she was the natural child of her adoptive parents. This would strengthen her affiliation and emotional ties to her adoptive family and would become a central part of her identity within her family, lineage, and clan (*faameni*, *eterenges*, and *eyinang*). Unlike the birth mother, the adoptive mother had gone to high school and married a man who was employed with the Trust Territory administration on Saipan, the TTPI capitol. After FSM independence in 1986, the adopting family moved from Saipan to Hawai‘i, and after three years, they moved to Oregon. Joana visited Chuuk every now and then during summers as her family’s way of maintaining their ties to home as best as they could. One summer, when she was seventeen years old and visiting her “cousins” (who were her actual biological siblings), they confronted her with the truth

about her identity. As Joana's adopted mother related, they said to Joana, "You are our real sister. Why don't you come and stay with us? You belong here with us." At first Joana did not believe them, but her adoptive mother confirmed that she had been adopted but that she had always loved her as her own child. Joana knew that her adoptive mother was telling the truth and that she had cared for her very well. She also knew that she had been much better off economically growing up with her adoptive parents, not to mention her schooling in the United States. Nevertheless, this new piece of information turned her life upside down. She was confused. She did not know where she belonged anymore and felt caught in between. Even worse, she felt betrayed by her adoptive mother. Her trust in her had been breached. Why had she never talked to her about it? She also felt rejected by her birth mother and family. Why had they given her away? Had they not loved her enough to keep her? Why hadn't they given away one of her sisters instead? Why hadn't anyone told her the truth much earlier? Whom could she trust now? Joana fell into a deep identity crisis, and life for her was never the same.

Shortly after receiving this news she returned to the United States and finished high school. Her mother reported that Joana had become restless and argumentative, and that she frequently talked about going to stay with her "real" parents and family back in Chuuk. She felt pulled toward both sides. When she talked to her sisters in Chuuk on the phone, they would try to persuade her to come back to them and would gossip about her adoptive parents and their family. According to Joana's adoptive mother, "They were only envious (*nónówó*) of my daughter, because she was the most beautiful amongst her sisters and she was the smartest too. That's why they wanted her back and tried everything to convince her." Although Joana's adoptive mother did not want to let her to go back to her biological family in Chuuk, Joana made the decision to return. She wanted to get to know her biological mother and father and become better acquainted with her siblings. Joana went back to Chuuk in search of her roots, but her adoptive mother reported that "after not even a month she called me saying 'Mama, please buy me a ticket and get me out of here. I can't stand it here any longer.'"

Now that she was an adult, Joana had to make up her mind where she belonged. The knowledge of her adoption had confused her. She loved her adopted family but also felt an inner pull toward her biological family. She was a part of them but had been excluded from belonging to them. She wanted to change that, but it did not work out the way she hoped. She discovered that living in Chuuk was different from spending summer vacation there. It became obvious to her while living with her biological

family that they had developed in very different ways. She would not and could not fit in. Not only was there an educational and economic gap between her and her siblings, but their ways of thinking, talking, and living were so completely different that it became impossible for Joana to bridge the cultural gap between them. They were too Chuukese, and she had become too Americanized to live under the simpler conditions in her home islands. Also, when her biological family talked about her adoptive family they could hardly conceal their envy and seemed to celebrate Joana's homecoming as a major victory.

Her family in Chuuk made many demands on Joana, and for her, the situation eventually became unbearable. According to the *etak* principle used by Joakim Peter to describe Chuukese navigation and migration logic and practice (Peter 2000), Joana's home was not in Chuuk but in Oregon. She had become American—not fully, but too much to feel at home in Chuuk. Joana's experience highlights a major change affecting adoptions in Chuuk. Cultural differences in cross-island adoption of the past times were minimal compared to what had to be overcome in transnational adoptions like Joana's.

### **Traditional Adoption**

For many Chuukese, the practices of adoption, child exchange, and fosterage have always played key social, political, and economic roles in their islands' history.<sup>9</sup> What Aunt Susan was asking for was in line with traditional forms of adoption, where children were shared among close kin, just as food, labor, and other commodities of life were shared (Marshall 1976). "In a subsistence economy, having too many children for one's land and resources can easily mean malnutrition . . . also in old people from not having children to work their land and resources for them" (Fischer and Fischer 1966, 127). For this reason among others, a childless couple could approach a close relative with children and ask for a child, preferably an infant whom they would provide for and adopt as their own. In turn, the child would ideally reciprocate and provide for them in old age.

In difficult times, only chiefs who owned more land than average people had the resources to adopt children, whereas in times of affluence, chiefs might adopt many children so that they would have enough people working their land (Betzig 1988).<sup>10</sup> Adoption provided the child with added access to food, shelter, and other resources beyond what a nuclear family could provide. In addition, families with children of their own might be "in need" of a female or male child who could help them with certain subsistence-related activities for which they lacked support. For example, a girl might



reside with her adoptive parents if her help was needed to care for the family's children. And if a woman only had daughters, she might have an adopted son come stay with her to help with male-oriented subsistence activities such as fishing.

Child sharing was also an expression of love and affection between close kin, and to decline a request was considered rude and unloving, stingy (*kiichingngaw*) and uncaring, and without empathy or pity (*ttong*) for the relative making the request. These were, and still are, considered among the most negative character traits a person can embody in Chuuk (Caughy 1977; Käser 1977; Marshall 1976). However, because life on these small islands was hard and food was often scarce, young birth mothers and their families were happy to have the assistance of an adopting family because they played an important role in providing for the young mother's nutrition (see Rubinstein 1979).<sup>11</sup> Residence patterns of adopted children generally reflected what islanders viewed as being optimal ways of fulfilling everyone's needs.

#### *Adoption, Residence, and Need Fulfillment*

Given the small size of the islands, being adopted usually involved minimal spatial movement, and in the majority of cases (75–80 percent), children remained on their home island, ideally enabling them to wander between their natal and adoptive place of residence (Rauchholz 2009: 62–63). In other words, only one in four or five adopted children actually experienced a permanent change of residence resulting from adoption. Data from the Carolinian islands of Woleai and Fais help to illustrate the limited spatial and residential movement of adoptees in relation to the actual number of children born. These communities had recorded adoption rates of 92 percent on Fais (Rubinstein 1979, 221) and 93 percent on Woleai (Douglass 1998, 126). On Fais, only 20 percent of those adopted were actually residing on the homestead (*bogota*) of their adoptive parents at the time of Don Rubinstein's 1977 survey (Rubinstein 1979: 153, 227),<sup>12</sup> whereas on Woleai, Anne Douglass counted 25 percent at the time of her census in 1980 (1998, 129).

On the atoll where Henrita grew up, adoption practices paralleled those of Woleai and Fais. Other islands in Chuuk, especially those in the Chuuk Lagoon, had much lower adoption rates, ranging between 9 percent and 20 percent of the population (R. Goodenough 1970; Rauchholz field notes 2004–9, available from the author). These islands with lower adoption rates have almost always seen adoptive children residing with their adoptive parents. To a certain degree, this residence pattern seems to be connected



to the number of childless couples in want of a child. Ruth Goodenough's data confirmed this for Romónum, and data from Woleai, Fais, and other islands indicated that adopted children were more likely to reside with their adoptive parents if the latter were childless at the time the adoption took place (R. Goodenough 1970; Douglass 1998; Rubinstein 1979).

One case I recorded illustrates the way child transfers sometimes occur. A family had three daughters, two of whom were adopted by close relatives. Charity, a childless aunt of the birth mother, lived with her husband on another island and had adopted the youngest of the three. Melody, the eldest sister of the birth mother, took the oldest daughter to help in her household with her younger children. To compensate for the loss of her oldest daughter, the birth mother in turn adopted another girl.

One day Charity and her husband were on their way to the district center of Wééné where they had both found jobs. En route they made a short detour to Charity's adopted daughter's home island. As relatives approached their speed boat, Charity called out to them, telling them to inform her niece she wanted to adopt the older sister of the child she originally had adopted and to give the younger one back. This was because she could not care for the young child, who was only four years old, when working in Wééné. The older sister was already in school, would be more independent, and could help manage the household for the working couple. Thus, the younger child was dropped off and "traded in" for her next older sister, who with a few minutes' notice had to pack up and leave for the unknown. The four year old was happy to get to know her siblings and felt comfortable in her new "old" home, but within the next two years she was forced to change residence again when she was adopted by yet another woman to help with chores. She remembers waking up every morning in the new household and running to the beach, looking to see if her siblings were out so she could sneak over to play with them. The story continued when she was an adult. The sister she was traded for, with the help of her mother and the lineage, took one of her daughters against her will after a visit to her home island. To this day, family members have not overcome their hurt, but they conceal these emotions for the sake of harmony within the lineage and family (Rauchholz 2008, 165; see also W. Goodenough 2002, 78).

### *Adoption and Interisland Ties*

From precolonial times to the present, adoption not only has played a role in the establishment and maintenance of ties on individual islands; it also has been a means of establishing connections to other islands to provide

an additional source of support in times of need or to cement strategic alliances for warfare. These ties were often crucial for survival when storms destroyed an island and survivors needed to relocate.<sup>13</sup> Douglass's 1980 census found that 11 percent of adopted children on Woleai were off-atoll adoptions. These children were the primary agents of extending, intensifying, and fortifying the network of relationships that already existed among members of a family, lineage, and clan who were scattered across a sea of islands. It was kin who shared and kin with whom one felt safe. Children often accompanied an older relative who left an island to be married to someone on a different atoll. It was important for the person getting married to have someone from home join her. A man might also leave a son with someone on another island if he was asked to do so by a relative or clan mate while making a visit. Also, he might in turn ask to take a child with him from the island he was visiting. Saying "no" to such a request is not regarded as a virtue.

We must understand that in traditional Chuukese thought, one cannot just go from one island to the next without having a familial or relational connection of some sort to the island. Each piece of land was owned and inhabited by someone, and the spirits (*énúsór*) of the owners were guardians of such places. People feared not only atrocities of war but also sorcery and arousing or offending the guardian spirits of an unknown place should they happen to intrude. Even today some Chuukese will take a magic potion (*sáfeey*) with them when they travel to islands outside of their geographical "safety zone." Thus, adoption was a means of establishing or maintaining ties on a nearby or distant island. How could someone want to harm a person to whom they had entrusted their child's care?

### Traditional Adoption and Modern-Day Migration

Some families who have established themselves in Guam, Hawai'i, or in the continental United States are practicing a reverse form of adoption: sending a child (usually female) back to the home island to be with or care for an elderly landholder in order to secure land title and use rights to land back home. In such cases, the adopted children function as a link to their homeland for those in the diaspora. They form a kind of "homeland security" or back-up system should the emigrants ever need to return to Chuuk, and they also prevent the loss of land to others who have stayed behind. Distant relatives or nonrelatives may use the absence of such a personalized link to place their own kin into the household of a needy senior citizen, hoping for compensation for their services in the form of land traditionally given to such a caretaker (*péwín moor*). Should the needy senior citizen, for his or

her own social security and personal benefit, adopt the caretaking child, it would add to the security of access and title to the estate of the senior citizen on behalf of the adoptee during the senior citizen's lifetime and even more so after his or her death.

In such cases adoptees often report that they are deeply troubled by the separation from their blood family, which weakens what traditionally would be the strongest of ties in society: those between siblings, the "building blocks" of Chuukese society (Marshall 1983). Also, those who have been sent back to the home island are not only prone to feeling rejected but they may also feel unhappy about missing out on educational and economic opportunities in the United States (see Rauchholz 2008).

Metaphorically, children who were adopted off-island in the past served as ropes binding together families across vast stretches of ocean. Over time they settled permanently, grew rooted into their new homeland, and formed a widespread canopy of branches that eventually covered many islands. A family from Pwolowót might own land on Woleai and vice versa, even though the islands are at least 700 kilometers apart. The people who were adopted off-island in previous times shared a common "cultural citizenship," to use Aihwa Ong's term (1996, 738). This is crucially different from the adoption processes observed today.

#### *Issues in Law and Custom: Conflicting Values and Conflicting Rights*

A central issue of transnational adoption concerns the laws of nations to which people migrate. US immigration does not recognize traditional forms of adoption. Adoptive parents must provide legal documentation to confirm the adoptive relationship, or at least a legalized transfer of custodianship from the natural parents to the adopting parents, before letting an adoptee enter the country. In Chuuk, as well as in the United States, only legalized adoptions secure an adopted child the benefits of Social Security and other forms of insurance.

What we see as an emerging theme in the context of Chuukese migration to the United States is not only that some children are being shared "in the same way that land, food, residence, labor, physical possessions, political support, and money are shared" (Marshall 1976, 47) but also that they have become an economic good with a trade or market value—an object of exchange. This danger is inherent in the traditional mode of sharing combined with the will and desire to accommodate the desires of other, mostly elder kin, over the best interests of the child, as laid down in the Chuuk State Code (Title 23. Family Law §1406 and 39 TTC §254). It is also inherent in communal and relational patterns "that place the highest

value on communal rather than individual rights,” and where “the needs of the individual . . . often may be perceived as contradicting, even endangering, the health of the community, and particularly the community’s cohesion, the very life blood of Chuukese society. In such structures, the web of mutual obligations and interdependence constitutes the fabric of human life. The highest value is the maintenance of that web and the linkages that comprise it” (Klingelhofer and Robinson 2001, 1).

Thus, Chuukese traditional adoption ideals and practices clearly contain the potential for conflict with the constitutionally protected fundamental rights of the individual. In addition, there is a potential conflict between the rights of a childless adult or couple and the rights of a child. At the age of twelve and above, a child must be heard by the court in Chuuk, and if the child were to disagree with the adoption, the court would have to comply with the child’s wishes.

Henrita, for example, was twelve at the time of her legal adoption. She was not happy about it, but who was she to disagree with her parents and adoptive parents? She felt obliged to comply with their wishes. For her to have said “no” to her adoption in court was beyond the realm of possibility because she was bound by the tradition in which she was brought up. She shared the same values as the adults who were transacting the adoption. There was no way she would have embarrassed the whole family with a show of disobedience before the court.

I have heard of only one case in which an adoptee opposed the claims of his birth family in court, in the late 1970s. A young man had just returned to Chuuk from college in the United States. He had been adopted by the brother of his biological father, who had raised him and provided for him while in college. On his return, his biological father brought the matter to court, claiming he had never given up his son in traditional adoption to his brother. Because the adopted man was over the age of twelve, the court asked him with whom he wanted to stay and whom to accept legally as his father; he chose to stay with his adopted father.

Thus, the conflict between law and custom is a conflict of deeply underlying values: between the needs of the individual and the needs of the community, the worth of an adult versus that of a child. Each person has a value depending on rank, age, gender, achievements, and status. Status can be earned as well as inherited, but even then a person must prove himself worthy of being a mature (*miriit*) person. To be a child (*semiriit*) is to be immature, someone whose emotions, intellect, and character (*tiip*) are still soft—not yet stable and firm (Käser 1977, 2004). A young child is the responsibility of the community and is not regarded as competent to make decisions regarding his or her welfare or the welfare of others.

In the case of Anna and Joyleen, the child was transferred from Chuuk to Hawai'i. The child had become a valued object that Joyleen felt she needed for her well-being. However, she also was conforming to traditional practice and motivation; by adopting the infant, she took on the burden of raising a child born out of wedlock, thus relieving the burden from a young mother. The money she was sending to Anna could be seen as an expression of appreciation for the child, a modern form of reciprocity.

In Henrita's case, none of the above criteria applied. She was married and expecting her first child; her husband had a well-paying job; she was not in need of assistance, and the child was in no danger of being neglected. In fact, the proposed adoption would have resulted in the child growing up without a father. Aunt Susan had in fact placed her individual needs above the needs of her niece. However, the arguments she used to try to obtain the child from Henrita were based on traditional values of community, of sharing and having empathy, pity, and love (*ttong*). Aunt Susan asked Henrita to act on these shared values. What Susan failed to see, according to Henrita, was that Susan's behavior was in effect degrading, reducing her child to an object that could be transferred from one household to the next irrespective of the emotional consequences for the child (Rauchholz 2008, 2009). Aunt Susan did not go to Chuuk to help in the final months of the pregnancy and showed no intention of staying with Henrita to help her through the child's infancy. In the past, that would have been part of an adoption arrangement. We must also take note that before the introduction of powdered milk, the removal of a child from its birth mother could not take place until the child had at least been weaned. Henrita did what she wished her birth parents had done when she was a child: say "no" to her adopted parents.

### *Anthropology on Law and Custom in Adoption*

Anthropological accounts dealing with Pacific adoption have mostly dealt with traditional forms and practices of adoption, while the legal aspects have remained nearly invisible—basically because they were not, or were only rarely, formalized in court by the local island populations (Carroll 1970; R. Goodenough 1970; Brady 1976; Marshall 1976; Thomas 1978; Flinn 1985). In the case of Chuuk, Mac Marshall reported no legalized adoptions for the atoll of Namoluk in 1976. In a most recent development, Judith Schachter (2008) traced the history of traditional adoption and legal adoption in the state of Hawai'i, as did Julianne Walsh for the Marshall Islands (1999, n7).

By contrast, the TTPI and FSM courts have, from their earliest beginnings after World War II, always been confronted with family law, adoption, and tradition. In fact, two years before Joseph Weckler published the first article devoted purely to adoption in Micronesia (1953), the TTPI courts had already ruled on at least two cases in which the private property rights of adopted children were being challenged by the immediate biological kin of a deceased adopting parent. It must also be noted that these were the first two cases brought to court in the Trust Territories (King 1999: 368–71). Had the TTPI staff anthropologist heeded Chief Justice E. P. Furber's request for anthropologists "to devote one-third of their time to court activities" (King 1999, 366), they might have discovered the relevancy and urgency of dealing with issues of law and custom in the context of adoption. Who knows how that discussion would have influenced the later debates ignited by David Schneider in kinship studies. If anthropologists had looked at how adoptive relationships had ended, they could have gained insight into some of the more deeply underlying conflicts brought about by adoption. Ward Goodenough's earliest data from Romónum only hint at such a possibility when he discovered that almost every adopted child had returned to its natal place of residence after the death of its adopted parents or when the child had grown up (W. Goodenough 1978).

### *Views on Legal Adoptions in Chuuk*

In Chuuk, there is some uneasiness in public opinion about legal adoptions. What worries people is the finality of the legalization of an adoption in court. It excludes the option of getting one's child back or of preventing a child from being able to come back one day should he or she want to return. Especially people who have been adopted themselves, or those who have given a child up for adoption, show strong concern. The flexibility inherent in traditional adoption is seen to be lost in a legal adoption. People are justified in these fears, because the law is unmistakably clear regarding the rights and duties of natural parents after a decree of adoption has come into effect:

#### §1408. Rights and duties of adopting and natural parents

The natural parents of the adopted child are, from the time of adoption, relieved of all parental duties toward the child and all responsibilities for the child so adopted, and have no right over it.

(Draft Chuuk State Code Title 23 §1408 and 39 TTC §255)

To legalize an adoption as the law is written, and the people rightfully perceive, means a full transferral of all parental rights and duties to the adopting parents. The biological parents cannot, by law, exercise the influence they could exercise in customary adoption where coparenting was possible (Flinn 1985, 66; Thomas 1978). If they are unhappy with the treatment of their child by the adoptive parents, or have a disagreement of some other sort with them, they cannot take back their child as they could have in the past (Marshall 1976; Thomas 1978; Rauchholz 2008).

In this respect, legal adoptions are contrary to the traditional view, which holds that a child will always belong to his or her biological parents, the mother in particular, even if the child has been adopted. It does not matter who adopted the child, whether a close relative, a more distant relative, or somebody not related at all. In the usage of the word *neyi* (my child to keep), “my child” is limited to children who are not considered separable from the speaker. One will often add *wesewesen neyi*, meaning “really and truly mine.” A birth mother and her lineage mates may not express these feelings publicly, but in the most secret depths of her heart (*tiip*) the mother may conceal and harbor (*mwokkunooneey*) such sentiments.

However, for an ever-increasing number of adopting parents, legal adoption is preferable to the traditional form because it provides the adopting family with a stronger sense of emotional and economic security and stability. They know that with legal adoption their emotional and economic investments in the child will not be at risk the way they are in the more traditional form of adoption, where children would often return to their birth parents or the homestead of their matrilineage in their youth or as young adults (W. Goodenough 1978, 215; Rauchholz 2008, 163).<sup>14</sup>

For Chuukese who have jobs that include Social Security, health insurance, life insurance, and retirement, traditionally adopted children are at a disadvantage. Social Security today will only apply within the framework of law, not of custom, and only legally adopted children are covered by health insurance. Thus, for modern, middle-class, employed Chuukese, it is necessary to adopt a child legally if they are serious about keeping and raising the child as their own. Therefore, in the modern nation-state, the line is being drawn more sharply between adopted children (*mwúúmwú*) and those that are simply being cared for (*túmwúnúúw*) in the traditional sense.

### Conclusion

Most Chuukese in the diaspora are not formally legalizing adoptions in the United States court system. Typical adoption procedures as prescribed by



U.S. law, including the costs, the monitoring, and the training involved, are avoided by Chuukese altogether. Adoption is still generally based on kinship, whereas in the United States, adoptees are usually non-kin or stepchildren.<sup>15</sup> Even when Chuukese formally adopt non-kin, they perform the adoption through the courts in Chuuk rather than in the United States. So traditional adoption continues to a limited degree, but under the guardianship principle, with rights over the child limited to the time of absence of the birth parents. Birth parents can revoke the guardianship transferred to the adoptive parents if they deem it necessary, so this form of "adoption" is understood as customary in form.

In an indirect way, U.S. law is being applied in that the Chuukese and FSM judicial systems were introduced and implemented during the U.S. trusteeship over these islands from 1945 to 1986. From the beginning, the courts were forced to include local custom and tradition into their rulings, although it was not the court's intention to do so for fear of eroding its own credibility (King 1999: 367–68). The courts and their American judges ended up ruling "on issues of custom beyond the personal knowledge of the judge and *without having adequate evidence* before it. The method employed was simply to state rules as though no issue existed" (King 1999, 368; emphasis added). The courts have been evolving,<sup>16</sup> and after independence in 1986, the Chuuk State Judiciary Act of 1990 §1002 established "*a unified judicial system that gives due recognition to the traditions and customs of the people of the State . . . and provides for a means of resolving disputes where traditional and customary means are not satisfactory*" [emphasis added]. FSM state courts will only judge in cases where evidence of custom has been put forth by witnesses who have customary knowledge.<sup>17</sup> This seems to be a major difference in the way the courts approached Chuukese tradition under the American leadership during the Trust Territory times and the way indigenous judges are handling it today. Today, much time is spent in hearing experts with traditional knowledge, and nobody in the court seems to feel that this is eroding the credibility of the court. "But," I asked the late Chief Justice Andon Amaraich, "how do you uphold a custom or tradition in the court's decisions when that culture or tradition is rapidly changing?" He responded:

Two things: number one: there is no custom for all the islands. One island is different from the next. . . . Secondly, when they [customs] are changing? Again, the court has been evolving. If one person says "in his custom . . ." the court cannot accept that. The person must put in evidence through people who know and have knowledge. Even though I am a judge, I am from Chuuk,



I know the customs, but cannot decide on behalf of that but on whether the custom is still valid. So the court must take that into account, the changing of custom from generation to generation. The court must take that into consideration. It has to be proven by the person who advocates a custom. He must prove it is still valid. . . . The court's position is not static.<sup>18</sup>

This position is also reflected in the internal proceedings and staff development program of the courts in the Federated States. The relationship between law and custom is always on the agenda whenever key personnel of the FSM Supreme Court and the four State Supreme Courts convene for their official yearly meetings, for two reasons among others. First, it is a testimony to the flexibility of the courts. Although they acknowledge custom, they also accept change as a fact and take an active role in defining and redefining the limits or parameters and shifting parameters of their culture. Second, they must constantly deal with issues pertaining to the relationship between law and custom, because it is very difficult to reconcile two legal systems, the customary and the received legal system, which have been merged together under one constitution.

Underlying each legal system is a distinct view of the person. The received law "which concentrates its attention on the legal powers or interests of the individual" (Glenn 2007, 239) clearly opposes the traditional law or custom, which is a "law of relations" and of "mutual obligations" between persons of differing rank and status. This ranking of individuals, which legally places some people above others based on their line of descent, is what makes the workings of the courts so difficult. Translated to our discussion of legal and traditional adoption, the premise of received law to seek "the best interests of the child" (and of the individual) will continue its ambivalent relationship with the traditional ideal behind adoption, which primarily served "the best interests of the adults" (and of the group).

Although the issue of adoption covers only one small spectrum in the clash of different worlds, views, and values exposed in the discussions of migration and diaspora, basic issues of law and custom weave themselves through all areas of life. As globalization processes increase in intensity, and borders and boundaries of different cultures move closer together and even overlap, the challenge of being a cultural citizen attached to the webs of contradicting powers and worldviews will continue to increase as well.

## NOTES

1. The fieldwork for this article was conducted between November 2004 and December 2009 in Chuuk, Pohnpei, Guam, Hawai'i, California, Oregon, and Kansas and has

continued into the present through regular phone and Internet-based communications. The writing of this article has been financed in part with Historic Preservation Funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. The contents and opinions of this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Regulations of the U.S. Department of Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental Federally Assisted Programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127.

2. For a detailed case study of the different migration waves of an atoll population in Chuuk, see Marshall 2004.

3. Names and places of persons in the case material have been changed and the data rearranged to protect the identity of informants and the people being described.

4. A Pell Grant is post-secondary, educational federal grant program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education.

5. All currency figures are in U.S. dollars.

6. It must be added that Anna went to Guam to give birth, thus providing the baby with U.S. citizenship, which is a prerequisite for obtaining all the mentioned benefits of the state.

7. For more information on the Oregon Department of Human Services Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, see <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/assistance/cash/tanf.shtml> (accessed February 21, 2012).

8. Walsh 1999 describes how between 1996 and 1999, until government regulation was implemented, more than 500 Marshallese children were adopted by Americans. By giving their children to American couples for adoption, many Marshallese were hoping to provide their children with a better future in the United States. At the same time, many givers also hoped to establish a relationship with the receivers.

9. For more detailed accounts of traditional adoption in Chuuk and the Chuukic continuum, see R. Goodenough 1970; Marshall 1976, 1977, 1983; Thomas 1978; Rubinstein 1979; Flinn 1985; Douglass 1998; and Rauchholz 2008, 2009.

10. This view was also expressed to me in interviews with one elderly source from a chiefly lineage in the Hall Islands of Chuuk in 2007 and was confirmed by two additional sources from Woleai Atoll in 2009.

11. In fact, "many younger prospective fathers view their post-delivery duties of fishing and coconut gathering as an impossibly burdensome obligation" (Rubinstein 1979, 230).

12. According to Rubinstein (1979, 154), the percentages were "14% of the girls and 28% of the boys, including those children residing on their father's adoptive bogota

rather than on their own adoptive bogota.” Thus, the actual proportion of adoptive children with a change of residency away from their biological family is actually even less than the 20 percent, Rubinstein provided on another page in his dissertation (1979, 227).

13. Most of the islands of Chuuk and the Chuukic continuum that spreads westward toward the islands of Yap and Palau are located in a typhoon belt.

14. Adoption by law in the United States generally marks the closing out of relationships. It implies the “giving up” of the child, the severing of ties between the birth parents and the child. In contrast, adoption by custom in the ideal Pacific form is viewed as the opening up and beginning of relationships and the strengthening of ties between birth parents and adopting parents. In reality, most adoptions in the Pacific take place precisely because a relationship already exists between both parties involved and provides the grounds on which the adoption is enacted (Marshall 2008, 4; Rauchholz 2008; 2009, 55; against Schneider 1984).

15. Selman 2004 also has statistics on England and Wales from 1959 to 1984.

16. The late Chief Justice Anton Amaraich made this point during my interview with him in 2007.

17. Interview with Chief Justice Amaraich, 2007; copy of interview transcript in Rauchholz field notes.

18. Interview with Chief Justice Amaraich, 2007.

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**ISSUES OF CONCERN TO ROTUMANS ABROAD:  
A VIEW FROM THE ROTUMA WEBSITE**

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THE ISLAND OF ROTUMA is relatively remote, located 465 kilometers north of the northernmost island in the Fiji group, and only slightly closer to Futuna, its nearest neighbor. Rotuma has been politically affiliated with Fiji for more than a century, first as a British colony following cession in 1881 and since 1970 as part of the independent nation. Rotuma's people are, however, culturally and linguistically distinct, having strong historic relationships with Polynesian islands to the east, especially Tonga, Samoa, and Futuna. Today, approximately 85 percent of those who identify themselves as Rotuman or part-Rotuman live overseas, mostly on the island of Viti Levu in Fiji, but with substantial numbers in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and England.

Although this article is based primarily on postings from the Rotuma Website, which was created by Alan Howard in 1996, it is informed by research begun by Alan in 1959 over a two-year period on the island of Rotuma and among Rotumans in Fiji. Jan's first visit was in 1987, and we have returned ten times since then for periods ranging from a week to six months. For the past two decades, we have also made multiple visits to all the major overseas Rotuman communities in addition to keeping in touch with Rotuman friends from around the globe via home visits, telephone, e-mail, and, most recently, Facebook. Over the years, we have published a number of articles concerning the Rotuman diaspora and Rotuman communities abroad (Howard 1961; Howard and Howard 1977; Howard

and Rensel 1994, 2001, 2004; Rensel 1993); our focus in this article is on postings that reflect expatriates' views on issues that implicate their relationship to Rotuma as an ancestral home and as a key icon of their cultural identity.

### **The Rotuman Diaspora**

Like many other Pacific Islanders, Rotumans began emigrating from their home island as soon as the opportunity presented itself. To be sure, voyaging was an integral part of their cultural tradition prior to European intrusion, but European vessels provided a wider range of opportunities to visit, and settle, in distant lands. From early on, Rotumans were favored as sailors aboard European vessels as the result of a well-earned reputation for diligence and trustworthiness. The remarks of Joseph Osborn, aboard the whaling ship *Emerald* when it stopped at Rotuma in 1835, are typical:

They love to visit foreign countries & great numbers of them ship on board the English whaleships. . . . On board a ship they are as good or better than any of the South Sea natives: diligent, civil & quiet, 3 very necessary qualities. They soon learn to talk English & there is but few of them but what can talk a few words. (Osborn 1834–1835)

John Eagleston, captain of the *Emerald*, echoed Osborn's sentiments: "They make good ship men," he wrote, and "for a trading vessel are preferable to any of the other natives which I am acquainted with, they being more true & faithful & more to be depended on" (Eagleston 1832). Eagleston noted that he had had a number of Rotumans aboard as crewmen in the past, as well as other Islanders, but found Rotumans to be the best. Commenting in 1867 on the extent of emigration, Rev. William Fletcher, the first European Methodist missionary to be stationed on Rotuma, wrote that upwards of 700 young men were known to have left the island in recent memory (Fletcher 1870).

While many of the men who left the island—either as sailors or to take employment abroad (for example, pearl diving in the Torres Strait)—returned home after some time away, a significant number did not. They left the ships in Australia, New Zealand, England, or elsewhere and took employment, married local women, and settled into a new life. Rotuma's isolation made it difficult for emigrants to keep in contact with their home island, and most of them more or less disappeared as far as their home-bound relatives were concerned. For whatever reasons—limited literacy



curtailing letter writing; transportation into the Pacific being too complicated, sporadic, and unpredictable; or Rotumans being extraordinarily adaptive to and successful in new environments—communication was extremely limited at best. We have many testimonies from second- and third-generation diasporic Rotumans concerning parents or grandparents who over the course of their lives imparted nothing to their descendants about their Rotuman past; they had simply eliminated that part of their heritage from their social world.<sup>1</sup>

As members of the Fiji polity since cession, Rotumans have been able to move freely about the archipelago and have taken advantage of the possibilities this has offered. The flow of this migration path accelerated markedly during the last half of the twentieth century as young Rotumans moved to Fiji's urban centers to pursue education and employment opportunities. Also stimulating out-migration was a rapid increase in the population of Rotumans resulting from a dramatic decrease in the death rate following World War II while the birthrate remained high, which strained the island's carrying capacity. Thus, whereas the 1956 Fiji census found 68 percent of Rotumans living on their home island, by 2007 the figure had dropped to 19 percent. The overall number of Rotumans in Fiji increased during this time span from 4,422 to 10,137.

Furthermore, Fiji has been a way station for many Rotumans who have emigrated elsewhere, including Australia and New Zealand, where substantial identifiable communities have developed, often around Rotuman-oriented churches. Rotuman communities of lesser size and varying cohesion have developed elsewhere, including Hawai'i, the San Francisco Bay Area, Vancouver in British Columbia, and Fort McMurray in Alberta, Canada. In addition, a substantial number of Rotumans emigrated to England, where they are widely scattered, making organization impractical. A few families with Rotuman members settled in other places, including Sweden and Norway, for example. While no figures are available for Rotumans outside of Fiji, we estimate their numbers to be 2,000 to 3,000.<sup>2</sup>

Improved transportation and telephone services following World War II helped to relieve Rotuma's isolation, resulting in a substantial increase in the volume of visits to and from the home island and telephone contact with kin in far-flung lands. However, such contact remained episodic until the last decades of the twentieth century, when an airstrip was built on the island and a modern telephone system installed. It was still difficult for Rotumans abroad to keep abreast of happenings and conditions on the island, however, until Alan created the Rotuma Website in 1996. The website became a central place in cyberspace where people with access to the Internet could read news posted from Rotuman communities around

the world, including the home island. The news was sent to us for posting in the form of e-mail or letters from Rotuma, where Internet access was not available until late 2008.<sup>3</sup>

The Rotuman diaspora, insofar as the concept applies, corresponds to the “atopic mode,” as defined by Stéphane Dufoix:

This is a transstate mode, but it does not seek to acquire a physical territory. It refers to a way of being in the world between states that is built around a common origin, ethnicity, or religion that does not reduce one to being a subject of a host country. This identity is best expressed in dispersion itself. It presents two aspects that Emmanuel Ma Mung considers to be the main criteria of a “diaspora”: multipolarity—a presence in several countries—and interpolarity, the existence of links between the poles. This is a space of more than a place, a geography with no other territory than the space described by the networks. It is a territory without terrain. (2008, 63)

In effect, despite an abiding concern for the island of Rotuma as its origin, there is no political epicenter to the global Rotuman community, which exists primarily in cyberspace, where it has been recently reinforced by interactive applications on the Web such as Facebook.<sup>4</sup>

Being able to keep informed about happenings and conditions on Rotuma has resulted in a heightened interest on the part of diasporic Rotumans about conditions on the island and what could be done to improve them. To provide an opportunity for Rotumans to express their views on these and other matters that concern them, we created the Rotuman Forum (hereafter cited as “RF” in the quotation source notes) on the website, where they could post their opinions and respond to one another’s postings. This article provides a summary of the issues that have preoccupied expatriate Rotumans who have posted their views in the forum over the past decade. It also draws on news reports and other expressions of views posted by Rotumans.

### **About the Rotuman Forum**

When Alan created the Rotuma Website in 1996, he included a message board on which visitors could post messages and respond to previous postings. It was well used for a number of different purposes, including locating friends and relatives, announcing upcoming events, expressing views on various issues, and engaging in humorous banter reminiscent of family

gatherings on Rotuma. Individuals and groups made their presence known from such faraway places as Hong Kong, Laos, and Sweden as well as from places with well-established Rotuman enclaves—Australia, New Zealand, Canada, England, and the United States. Messages were mostly in English, although many contained a mix of Rotuman and English, and some were exclusively in Rotuman. It was heartwarming to see friends and relatives who had been out of touch rediscover one another and exchange messages.

However, the message board ultimately proved a disappointment. While the majority of the interactions were benign and bore the unmistakable stamp of Rotuman cultural patterns, especially in the role that humor plays, the venue came to be dominated by a small group of anonymous users who posted offensive messages marked by foul language, nasty personal attacks, and disrespect for Rotuman customs. When repeated pleas for civility failed to have an effect and in response to complaints from a number of regular Rotuman visitors, we reluctantly decided to remove the message board and replace it with two other venues: (1) a bulletin board for posting messages of interest to the global Rotuman community (this is a place to ask questions, to make announcements regarding events, to share information, and to find lost relatives, friends, schoolmates, and so on) and (2) the Rotuman Forum. The home page of the forum includes the following statement:

The Rotuman Forum is a webpage where viewpoints on Rotuman history, culture, language and politics can be posted. The purpose of the Forum is to give Rotumans, and other interested parties, an opportunity to share their views regarding matters of concern to the global Rotuman community. The Forum is managed by Alan Howard and Jan Rensel who ask that submissions be respectful to the views of others. We will not post views that indulge in name-calling or use insulting language. With those exceptions, we will post submissions in either Rotuman or English. In order to avoid embarrassment, we edit English submissions for spelling and grammar and post them after the edited versions have been approved by the author.

Both the bulletin board and the Rotuman Forum require users to send messages directly to us for posting. We have taken an active role in screening messages for unsuitable language and personal attacks but have otherwise posted messages without regard to the opinions expressed or biased information. And although we edit every submission for grammar, spelling, and clarity, we check with authors to make sure we have not distorted their meaning before posting items.<sup>5</sup>

The Rotuman Forum therefore deviates significantly in form from other Pacific websites on which views can be posted directly (Kava Bowl, Planet Tonga, Kamehameha Roundtable, and Samoalive, to name a few). On those sites, submissions are often posted anonymously (using pseudonyms) and may use language that would be unacceptable in normal conversations or oratory. In contrast, in addition to civility, since 1999 the Rotuman Forum requires submitters to provide their actual names and places of residence. Our rationale for this requirement is based on a notion of community (in this case, a virtual community; see Howard 1999: 160–62) that requires people to take responsibility for their actions and opinions. It also allows others to evaluate postings based on who the author is and where (both actually and metaphorically) they are coming from.<sup>6</sup>

There are other ways in which the Rotuman Forum differs from sites based on message boards or blogs. For one, postings tend to be much less frequent. Weeks may go by without a submission. For another, submissions are generally brief essays in which opinions are spelled out rather than cryptic comments. Finally, the individual forums, though topically coherent, are not the precise equivalent of “threads” in open postings. In some cases, we allocate submissions to a particular category even though the author may not be responding directly to any previous posting. In short, the Rotuman Forum has more in common with letters to a newspaper editor than with the spontaneous conversations that characterize most message boards and blogs.

In part related to format but also reflecting differences in diasporic experiences, Tongans participating on the Kava Bowl website have tended to focus on issues of adaptation abroad (see Morton 1999; Lee 2003, 80), including the burden of sending remittances back home (Lee 2007: 163–64), whereas Rotuman submissions have almost exclusively focused on issues relating to the home island. Our research in Rotuman communities abroad give almost no indication of problems associated with adaptation. In fact, all the evidence at our disposal suggests that Rotumans have been remarkably successful everywhere they have migrated, with virtually no manifestations of poverty. We have heard few complaints regarding remittances, perhaps because these are seen as essentially voluntary by Rotumans rather than based on cultural obligations.

Another interesting contrast concerns the posting of genealogies. In their essay in this collection, Michael Lieber and his coauthors report that diasporic Kapingamarangi use their section of the website Tarobuzz to upload genealogical information, which on the home island would be closely guarded. Such genealogical information is vital in both Kapingamarangi and

Rotuma in land disputes, but Kapinga abroad seem to be more interested in using such information as a means of constituting and negotiating key aspects of Kapinga history. Likewise, Helen Lee (2004) reported that genealogy was a popular topic in Tongan History Association Internet discussions in 1999. The focus there seems to have been on facilitating recognition of kinship ties as a means of strengthening a sense of community among diasporic Tongans. Rotumans, for whatever reason, have never shown an interest in making genealogies public.

Requiring authors to provide their names and place of residence provides some idea of the range of submitters. Social class does not appear to be a factor, in large measure because there is no apparent Rotuman underclass in any of the diasporic communities we have studied. Submitters range from professionals to office workers to housewives and students. And although a significant proportion of contributions are from first-generation expatriates, their children and grandchildren have freely contributed to the forum, sometimes based on visits to Rotuma, sometimes in response to issues that bear on their identity as Rotumans. For many of these second- and third-generation individuals, the Internet has provided an opportunity to explore their cultural roots in ways denied them by parents and grandparents who made no effort to transmit Rotuman cultural knowledge. In general, we have not detected any particular biases distinguishing submitters by gender, age, occupation, or place of residence.<sup>7</sup>

A more important variable affecting contributions to the Rotuma Forum has been access to the Internet, which until late 2008 was absent from the island of Rotuma, effectively keeping people living there from participating.<sup>8</sup> But over the past decade, the scope of participation has clearly expanded, including recent submissions from residents on Rotuma. And it is very common for Rotumans abroad to have access to a computer and the Internet (or to another Rotuman who has such access) at work or at school if not at home.

One might pose the question of how much the Rotuma Forum parallels discussion of similar issues on Rotuma. Although there has been a definite trend over the years toward more openness, the frankness of opinion expressed in forum postings goes well beyond what we have observed in public meetings on Rotuma. People on the island express their opinions more freely in less public settings where arguments over issues may occur but always at the risk of alienating one's neighbors or kin. The Internet provides a relatively low risk environment for expressing contentious views. As managers of the forum, we have further reduced the risk of social consequences by editing out personal affronts.

### Issues of Concern

To date, forty-five topical forums have been generated on the Rotuma Website. They can be grouped into seven major categories: (1) concerns for transportation and communication facilities, (2) environmental concerns, (3) development issues, (4) land issues, (5) Rotuma's sovereignty, (6) idealization of Rotuma, and (7) Rotuman identity.<sup>9</sup>

A wide range of issues has been discussed in the forum related to conditions on Rotuma, ranging from those that directly affect migrants who wish to maintain access to the island to those perceived as important for the well-being of people on the island. Foremost among the concerns of Rotumans abroad is the unreliability of transportation to and from Rotuma.

#### *Transportation*

Transportation irregularity has been a problem for Rotuma dating back to 1881, when it became politically united with Fiji as a British colony. One result of cession was that Rotuma was closed as a port of entry, so that all transportation to the island had to come through Fiji.<sup>10</sup> Rotuma's relatively small size and its considerable distance from the rest of Fiji (more than 400 kilometers) has made shipping a costly proposition for private companies. Expatriates (and others) find it difficult to plan visits. Konousi Aisake, an artist who lives in Canada, visited Rotuma with his family in August 2007 and reflected on the problem:

We have made it a goal in our life to visit Rotuma every four to five years—it has been 5 years since our last visit. This trip has been the hardest for arranging transport; the plane and boat are rarely operating, making it difficult for Rotumans overseas to visit home. We got lucky at the last hour—something came through for us and we spent five weeks on the island and with three days to spare made our overseas connection back to Canada. In today's global world it is hard to believe that rather than making it easier to go to Rotuma Island, it is harder, and fraught with tension. (news archive, August 2007)

And to potential returnees for the Christmas season in 2007, Sanimeli Maraf, the wife of the highest-ranking chief on the island, issued the following warning:

For those of you who plan to come over for the holidays at Christmas time, please make sure you allow for delays both coming to and leaving Rotuma, especially if you are taking the plane. It's a shame we don't have competition for the air service. (news archive, August 2007)

In addition to suggestions that the government of Fiji subsidize transportation to Rotuma, a popular solution suggested and debated by contributors to the Rotuman Forum is that the Rotuman people purchase and run their own vessel. Victor Jione Fatiaki, for example, reported on a scheme developed by people from the district of Itu'muta:

What our 'Otou Itu'ta Itu'muta committee established was that the Rotuman community could not rely on outside shipping companies to provide this essential service because the shipping companies that currently service Rotuma have higher priorities, i.e. servicing their home base first and then Rotuma as a commercial afterthought.

The 'Otou Itu'ta Itu'muta committee strongly supports the proposition that our relatives living on Rotuma will only receive the required level of logistical support when a Rotuman-owned and operated boat provides the "service."

Very often we heard from our relatives on the island that there is shortage of essential items on the island. There are two reasons why there is shortage: (1) our people do not have the cash to stock them for a month or more, and (2) the Rotuma route is only serviced once a month. The first reason is hard to solve but the second reason is what we are currently addressing—to have a boat capable of making at least two trips per month to Rotuma. . . . Getting a boat that is owned and operated by a Rotuman Company is a dream that we in Itu'muta have had for many years, and I am sure that any other like-minded Rotuman will agree that the number one priority for Rotuma is a boat, which is capable of efficiently (both operationally and financially) servicing Rotuma. (RF: A Boat for Rotuma, February 7, 2005)

Purchasing a vessel was adopted as part of Sosefo Inoke's platform during his campaign for the Rotuma seat in Fiji's parliament during the 2006 election. A Rotuman lawyer who had moved back to Fiji from Australia, he had a novel proposal that directly involved Rotumans abroad:

In my campaign I have suggested that there must be about 1,000 Rotuman families in Fiji. If each family sends a member of their family to Rotuma once a year on the boat, paying a fare of say \$150 that adds up to \$150,000 each year towards the purchase and operation of the boat, just on fares alone. If that member takes \$100 to spend in Rotuma that is another \$100,000 for the economy of Rotuma. This is the total Fiji Government 2006 allocation for development in Rotuma and you wonder why our roads and water and the wharf are in the neglected state that they are in. Many Rotumans go to Australia, New Zealand, Canada, US and Europe and spend probably \$5,000 there. No benefit to Rotuma at all. Why don't we think "Back to Rotuma for a holiday" and spend only a fraction of that so the money stays there and helps our poor brothers and sisters in Rotuma. Our people talk about tourists going to Rotuma but we don't think that we should be the tourists. This will also address our concerns about losing our culture and identity. This "Back to Rotuma for a holiday" is one of the messages that I have pushed in my campaign. (RF: A Boat for Rotuma, April 19, 2006)

Other Rotumans also endorsed this means of both reinforcing Rotuman identity among expatriates and facilitating development on the island.

A special hardship for expatriates abroad has been the inability to attend the funerals of close kin on Rotuma. Rotuman custom requires the burial of a corpse within twenty-four hours of death, which makes it nearly impossible for relatives abroad to get there in time. As a possible solution to this dilemma, Tevita Katafono suggested the possibility of a morgue at Rotuma Hospital to preserve bodies long enough for overseas relatives to make it to the funeral:

To all Rotumans who have family back in the island, which in a sense is everybody who has a drop of Rotuman in him/her.

I would like to put forward a topic for discussion: Do we need a morgue at the Rotuma hospital?

Given the isolation of Rotuma, and the infrequency of transportation to the island by sea or air, we often hear of distraught family members who have to go through more heartbreak and anguish because they cannot attend the burial of their loved ones who have passed away in the island.

This experience I know too well for it has happened to our family quite recently. There are few words that can explain the



added grief put on the family members who were living in Fiji and couldn't attend the funeral. The option of chartering a plane was out because it was a Sunday. After this sad event, I started to think of why we don't have a morgue in our hospital. (RF: Should the Rotuma Hospital Have a Morgue?, April 2, 2002)

Dr. Eric Rafai, the physician in residence on Rotuma at the time, responded to Katafono's question by pointing out several reasons why a morgue on the island would not be practical, including prohibitively high maintenance costs given the low death rate; excessive costs to the families of the deceased on the island; and the fact that given the Fiji government's hospital development, it would likely be a very low priority. He suggested instead that it would make more sense to acquire lifesaving machines such as a defibrillator and a ventilator. "These machines will improve resuscitation and should raise life expectancy," he wrote, with a result that the timing of funerals would become more predictable and give more time for preparation (RF: Should the Rotuma Hospital Have a Morgue?, undated).

Although it is nearly impossible for people abroad to get to Rotuma in time for a relative's funeral, they often will return for the *höt'ak hafu* ceremony on the first anniversary of the death when a headstone is put in place on the grave. Because modern headstones must be made abroad and are expensive, they are usually provided by returning relatives. This at least gives expatriates the opportunity to pay ritual homage to their deceased relatives on the island.

### *Communication*

Communication between Rotumans abroad and their kinsmen at home is a related issue. Contact with the outside world was limited to mail until 1933, when a radio-telephone facility was installed at the government station on Rotuma. This made it possible for telegrams to be sent, whereas previously a letter had to be written and sent on one ship with a wait until the next one arrived, often involving a period of many months. Still, the radio-telephone was noted for its erratic reception and transmission and for all practical purposes was limited to communication within Fiji. In 1990, it was replaced by a new, more powerful and reliable radio-telephone. Telephone lines were laid around the island during the 1990s, and a switchboard was installed at the government station with a trained operator in attendance. This made it easier for people to keep in contact with their kin abroad. Telephone contact thus became a major source of information exchange between Rotuma and the outside world, transmitted on a daily

basis. It also provided a ready vehicle for requesting money and assistance, a source of some concern for wage-earning Rotumans overseas. In 1995, Fiji Post and Telecom installed a satellite earth station and digital telephone exchange, making Rotuma accessible by direct dialing and greatly improving the quality of voice transmission. Making a telephone call, expensive though it may be, seems to be much more congenial to Rotuman styles of communication than the more tedious process of writing letters.

Still, there have been problems and complaints having to do with the cost of calls, which has resulted in unpaid bills and subsequent disconnections. In response to such complaints, Tomasi Sumasafu laid the blame on the abuses of his kinsmen back home:

The 250 disconnections eventuated not because of the high costs as claimed, but because of the abuse. You know and I know that the current telephone service in Rotuma is as good as anywhere in the world. Years ago, when only a Radio Telephone (RT) system was available, one had to shout at the top of his/her voice in order to be heard. I was in Malhaha last year, and I noted that parents no longer send a child to relay a message to a family in either 'Elsio or Pephaua [sections of Malhaha district], or even a couple of houses away. The message is relayed by phone. Kids ring one another at night to discuss the homework for the next day. An expensive exercise indeed.

From my experience, many people on Rotuma want a telephone "because every other household has one." The attitude is that if we don't have a phone, then "amis to kaunohoag kelea' 'e hanis ta" [we'll be the family that is to be pitied]! A typical Rotuman mentality. But someone will have to cut a lot of copra to pay the bill. We have to have a phone in Suva because it is a necessity, but most importantly we earn a salary and can afford to pay the monthly bill. Phones are being disconnected in Rotuma because people amass huge bills that they cannot possibly pay, which proves beyond reasonable doubt to the community that "aus ta kaunohoag kelea' 'e hanis ta." I understand that most of the phone bills in Rotuma are paid by "the children in Fiji," which is a burden they can do without. (RF: Issues of Concern, undated)

A new wireless system was installed in 2010 that allows for the use of mobile phones on the island, but the cost of overseas calls is very high by international standards. The installation of radio towers for mobile phones facilitates access to the Internet, but aside from Rotuma High School and

the government station, where an “Internet café” was established at the post office, access has been limited by a lack of personal computers and high access costs. Nevertheless, the increased ability of people on the island to ask for support from relatives abroad has generated some friction, as evident in Sumasafu’s posting on the Rotuman Forum, but expressions of concern for conditions on the island far exceed such complaints.

### *Environmental Concerns*

Visitors to Rotuma have frequently expressed dismay over what they see as a pollution problem and a lack of concern for the fragile environment. Yvonne Aitu, a young Rotuman woman who spent her childhood on Rotuma before attending high school and university in the United States, posted an article on the Forum after a return visit in 1999. Regarding the problem of pollution, she wrote,

Plastic bags were all over the place, *e ufa se sasi* [from inland to the sea]. There were batteries on the ocean bed rusting slowly, although I’m sure the amount of lead leakage to the sea is minimal. I spent afternoons in the beach area in front of our house picking up batteries and cans and plastic bottles; I dug holes and buried them. Some of this debris floated in from other villages, or from the monthly boat that visited the island. Our front yard will be full of buried garbage by the time I reach middle age. The famous plastic bottles of fizzy water/juice which is sold by the local supplier could be found lying all over the island. Not too much of hazard at the moment, but one that is growing steadily. Oh, and the number of flies is just incredible. (RF: Thoughts about Rotuma by a Returning Daughter, March 2000)

And Sefo Avaiki, who lives in Nanaimo, Canada, posted the following on the Rotuman Forum:

Rubbish and the environment is the primary issue we Rotumans living outside of Rotuma should be concerned about. Decades of careless discarding of refuse and abuse will eventually take its toll on the land if we do not begin implementing sensible solutions towards this obvious problem. Glass, tins and other debris polluting our beaches and “*fa’ ri*” [household debris] should be cleaned up. . . .

Rusty metal, including tin cans, should be collected in containers and shipped to Fiji for recycling or reuse. I am sure the increase in motor vehicles has added to the waste metal problems in our villages. Glass can be ground into finer particles and mixed with cement for use. New and improved composting technologies can be introduced and participation encouraged through education. Teach the children and parents about the simple things that could be done to help. Cardboard, newspaper and other recyclable materials can be collected and shipped to Fiji. Whatever is left hopefully can be incinerated.

Rotuma cannot afford to centralize rubbish collection. Encouraging households to participate in composting would be a better alternative. The lack of land in Rotuma should always be a primary issue when looking for solutions to solving our rubbish problem. Educating our people on how to RECYCLE, REUSE, REDUCE AND COMPOST will surely help. (RF: Environmental Concerns, March 14, 1998)

Avaiki was in the waste/rubbish management business at the time and expressed a willingness to discuss this issue with anyone who might be interested in initiating a program of action. In a later posting, he drew attention to what he regarded as a cultural key to the problem:

The idea that what I do on my land is my business cannot and must not be entertained. We Rotumans must realize that what is dumped into the soil, if hazardous, will in time seep through and destroy either our marine livelihood or worse yet our drinking water. So, we need to understand that as caretakers, guardians of our ancestors' gifts, it is our moral obligation to leave the land healthy and pollutant free for our descendants. (RF: Environmental Concerns, January 24, 2007)

Expressions of concern for the environment play off images of Rotuma as a still relatively pristine and extremely beautiful island. Rocky Peter's posting is characteristic:

I was born in Fiji and live abroad. I recently took my first trip to Rotuma and found the island beautiful; it is like a paradise. The only drawback is the lack of cleanness, which creates lots of problems with flies. People on the island need to be educated to take responsibility for the environment. (RF: Environmental Concerns, March 4, 1998)

It has been heartening to see that a group of young, educated Rotumans in Fiji have organized to actually take action to increase environmental awareness on Rotuma. Led by Monifa Fiu, a marine biology student at the University of the South Pacific (USP), the group, which formed in 2002, was initially concerned with the deterioration of the reef surrounding Rotuma—hence its name, LājeRotuma (reef + Rotuma) Initiative (LRI). At the request of Ms. Fiu, we devote a section of our website to the activities of the group, have posted their reports and announcements of events, and have assisted with their fund-raising projects.

In its environmental education and awareness development program, LRI aims to provide service to the island community under the following programmatic themes:

- Community outreach, including projects that range from the environmental education in schools to coordinated annual coastal cleanups to facilitation of communities in the development of their management plans.
- Building community resilience to climate change, including projects that encompass a range of adaptation measures to coastal erosion, monitoring the health of reefs, and climate witness awareness activities that enhance the island community's understanding of potential impacts of global climate change on Rotuma Island.
- Integrated fisheries management, which focuses on revival of the traditional use of the canoe. Fiu notes that canoes are being replaced by the use of outboard motors, which are totally dependent on external fuel supplies and engine parts. This is an added cost that creates an adverse impact on the island ecosystem in terms of engine parts disposal and fishing intensity.
- Sustainable livelihoods options: According to baseline information collected by LRI, there is a need for alternative income options in order to persuade communities to make informed decisions regarding the development and proper management of their natural resources.
- Research and capacity building, including activities that range from the experimental removal and reuse of *kama* (coral overgrowth), training and internship opportunities for local youth, and research on Rotuma's flora and fauna.

The group has been successful in gaining support from the global Rotuman community, government agencies, and funding agencies such as WWF (formerly known as the World Wildlife Fund).

*Development Issues*

Concern for the development of Rotuma is implicit in much of the discussion on the Rotuman Forum, but it was explicitly introduced by Fuata Jione, a Rotuman living in Australia, in May 1999. Jione began by presenting his credentials:

I was born in Itu'muta, Rotuma, in 1960. My parents are Tiu Jione and Sulu, who passed away 18 months ago. I was educated at Motusa primary and Malhaha high school till 1976, then completed high school at Queen Victoria School 1977/78. In 1979 I attended USP. I qualified with a Ship's Captain's Certificate from the Australian Maritime College and have worked in the Australian Maritime Industry since 1980. I've achieved a personal goal to become a Master of a vessel in Australia. My last visit to Rotuma was in 1998/1999 during Christmas for a period of 4 days.

Regarding the development of Rotuma and incorporating concerns about transportation to and from the island, he wrote,

I do not believe that major development in Rotuma is the way to go. Rotuma is too small and any major development cannot be sustained without significant population growth. But population growth will lead to major damage to the natural environment. The Rotuman Council's decision to ban tourism is not only sensible but very responsible. Wherever there is tourism crime has increased. Money as a prime motivator is a failure because it contradicts traditional values. The culture and the skills to live off the land are fading away slowly. I say this because my observation is that people in Rotuma are now becoming too dependent on money for their own survival. Rotuma certainly needs development in education and health. Diabetes and heart disease seem to be widespread and the way people live and eat in Rotuma now is a major contributing factor. . . .

We Rotumans have to look at ourselves as individuals and as a group and ask ourselves what has changed over the years and how we have managed to respond to changes. I do not think people are adjusting to change very well because in many ways I see the divisions among Rotumans stemming from old beliefs our forefathers had during their days of internal warring and cannibalism. We Rotumans have to distinguish between modern western values and

traditional values. It appears that Rotumans in Rotuma and Fiji are steering aimlessly and without control of their destiny. . . .

Development of a transport service between Rotuma and Fiji via sea and air should be set up by Rotuman corporations, preferably with an existing business organisation to reduce running costs from the use of the already established infrastructure. An aeroplane and a suitably sized vessel can be purchased and joint leases with either Air Pacific or Blue Lagoon cruises or Marine Pacific can be established to spread the cost of operations. I say this because I know there are a lot of influential Rotumans flying aeroplanes for Air Pacific and lots of marine management expertise in Fiji.

A united front is the only way to influence changes for the benefit of all Rotumans. We Rotumans are such a diverse group of people and I am sure one day our vision for Rotuma will come as one; however, we cannot ignore changes that are within our control and management. Once this is achieved the big picture will become clearer for all Rotumans and believe me it can be done only by the power of the people. (RF: *Developing Rotuma*, May 1, 1999)

This emphasis on self-reliance has been a constant theme in Rotuman history (see Howard and Rensel 2007). As a man named Fereti put it in his response to Jione's posting,

Maybe we ought to stop thinking about how to solicit goods and services from others but more in the line of what can we do about it as a people, for our island.

I am sorry if it offends anyone but I, personally, don't believe in handouts. It is very Rotuman to be proud to say, "We earned it." (RF: *Developing Rotuma*, July 19, 2000)

Sarah Mellado, who lives in Perth, echoed these sentiments:

After reading the various issues, one question springs to mind: what's happened to the hard-working Rotumans I grew to think we were? There was a time when our people lived happily without electricity and flushing cisterns, and computers!

Please don't get me wrong, I am not saying to keep Rotuma in the dark ages, what I am saying is that we can update our way of life without sacrificing our way of life. (RF: *Developing Rotuma*, March 18, 2004)

The ambivalence toward development in Jione's and Mellado's postings should also be noted. Like many other expatriate commentators, they stress the necessity of preserving central Rotuman traditional values and urge that development be selective. It is our observation that Rotumans abroad are more concerned—or at least more vocal—about preserving traditional values than people who live on the island. This we attribute to the iconic role that Rotuma and conceptions of traditional values play in the cultural identity of Rotumans abroad (see Howard and Rensel 2004).

Ambivalence toward development is also clearly expressed in the posting of Yvonne Aitu following her return visit in 1999:

When those of us who live in a “developed” environment visit Rotuma we often think, “Oh, if only we could have this or that on the island it would make life so much easier.” But I think I rather enjoy Rotuma as it is, with its flies and mosquitoes and pigs at the *pa puaka* [pigsty]. It's the special uniqueness that I hope we would all want to keep. Imagine for a second, that one day we had one of those high tech *pa puakas* with a loud speaker calling your pigs when it's feed time!! No more calling of “*lo lo*” for the pigs with the clanging of an old pan but rather a high tech loud speaker! (RF: Thoughts about Rotuma by a Returning Daughter, March 2000)

What most people agree on is that the schools, hospital, and roads need to be upgraded. In this regard, many commentators have expressed dismay that the government of Fiji has not done more to upgrade those facilities. However, the theme of self-reliance—that these are problems that are the responsibility of Rotumans (including those abroad) to resolve for themselves—is a pervasive theme in the Forum postings. The comments of H. F. Thompson are characteristic:

The lack of funding from the Ministry of Education, the PWD [Public Works Department] doing its own thing, and the need for upgrading and renovating the old hospital are three of the most important problems facing the people on Rotuma, and every Rotuman should be paying close attention.

The high school is where our future lies. Those youngsters are the ones who will take care of the island when we are gone. They are our legacy. So, every avenue should be explored to make sure that the high school has everything they need. It's a top priority. The hospital is another top priority. It's the only place sick people can go for treatment on the island.



The Rotuma Council should be doing a whole lot more instead of depending on outsiders and Fijians to take charge of Rotuma. Rotumans should be taking care of the problems in Rotuma. It's your island, so take charge. . . .

I know that there are lots of Rotuman communities all over the world who have been raising money to support projects on the island. The seven districts have representatives and should put some effort into raising funds for the high school and the hospital. Do not wait for the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. Rotumans have little power and not much say in these Departments. Non-Rotumans are in positions of authority and it seems like they give you the runaround and excuses. These are Rotuman problems and Rotumans should stop sitting back waiting for miracles to happen. Thousands and thousands of dollars are being raised by these districts; try and put some into the high school and hospital. (RF: Developing Rotuma, May 26, 2003)

In fact, there have been numerous fund-raising projects by Rotumans abroad to upgrade the hospital and schools, and much has been done. The Rotuma Website has served as a vehicle for mobilizing such efforts.

One of the more heated debates concerning development involves tourism. Rotuma has had very limited experience with tourism to date. The island has no hotels, restaurants, or other commercial facilities catering to tourists, although individual families have provided accommodations for visitors on a more or less regulated basis, sometimes blurring the line between guests and tourists. Three visits by the Australian cruise ship *Fairstar* in 1986, 1987, and 1989 and one by the MS *Society Explorer* in 1987 gave Rotumans on the island a taste of what large-scale tourism would be like when the ships disgorged up to a thousand people for a day. As we noted in a previous publication,

Tourism became a hotly debated issue in 1986 over the proposed visit of the *Fairstar*, an Australian tourist ship. Opposition, led mainly by the Methodist clergy, was based on the anticipated changes in Rotuman lifestyle that large numbers of tourists might provoke. Several influential ministers, in Fiji as well as Rotuma, argued that young Rotumans would be susceptible to corrupting influences, and that sexual modesty would give way to bikinis and promiscuous sex. They also expressed fears that greed would replace neighborly cooperation in the scramble for tourist dollars. Many people on the island were persuaded, but others saw no harm in such a brief (one-day) visit. . . .

One of tourism's underlying dilemmas was the question of who would benefit financially from such visits. Visiting vessels paid substantial docking fees, and the tourists spent significant sums on food, handicrafts, shells, and other souvenirs. The money from the 1986 and 1987 visits went to landowners of the beach area at Oinafa where the ships docked, to workers who helped prepare for the visits, to dancers who entertained, to handicraft makers, and other direct participants. Later tourist-ship visits were cancelled when different parties could not reach agreement over the allocation of landing fees. Also, no plan was formulated for using a portion of the money to benefit the island as a whole. (Howard and Rensel 2007, 315)

The discussion of tourism on the Rotuma Website was initiated in April 1998 (when the site included an open message board) by a contributor using the pseudonym Coolie:

While we don't trust tourism in Rotuma, I believe there's a safe way of handling outsiders who want to come to our island and experience its beauty. My best shot is to allow families willing to play hosts the freedom to do so at their own expense. They should also be given the freedom to charge their guests for accommodation if they feel necessary, provided it's legal. Also, there should be a limited number of medically healthy guests allowed per family per year. On the other hand, these families should be held responsible in making sure that their guests abide by the laws and customs of the land.

Several people responded positively to the idea of confining tourism to hosting by families, although many contributors expressed concern about drugs, immodest dress, pornography, sexual promiscuity, crime, and the erosion of Rotuman culture and values.

The issue lay dormant on the Rotuman Forum until a posting in April 2009 by a Rotuman woman by the name of Selina in Perth, Australia, whose family is planning "a very small scale 'holiday getaway,'" based on a selective customer base managed and controlled in Australia (RF: Tourism, April 7, 2009).

Henry Enasio, who retired to Rotuma three years ago after spending most of his adult life abroad, endorsed the plan but warned of the hurdles ahead based on previous experience. He noted that Fiji Unit Trust and Marriott Hotels wanted to build a hotel with an eighteen-hole golf course

on fifteen acres of prime land, but that the project was scuttled by a single individual who had rights in the land. He wrote,

The reason for her objection was basically the same old narrow-minded view of a traditional lay preacher—worried that tourism would erode our fundamental values, tradition and culture. However, Rotuma has long been influenced by videos, radio, Pacific Sky TV and by islanders who have traveled overseas. Although tourists may wear revealing clothing, have decorated belly buttons and weird hairdos, our own young girls in Rotuma have adopted those trends without harm. (RF: Tourism, May 25, 2009)

Enasio expressed the view that if the project had gone ahead, Rotuma would not be in such a predicament regarding air travel and that the benefits would have been “massive” for Rotuma as a whole.

H. F. Thompson responded with a rather vitriolic attack on expatriate Rotumans who advocate developing tourism on the island:

I would like to be able to take my family to visit my homeland and not be bombarded by tourists just because some greedy Rotuman who lives in some adopted country decided that life on this paradise island should be changed for the Mighty Dollar. I am just amazed at all the schemes and plans being hatched all over the world by Rotuman Tourists to exploit and bring chaos and crime to our homeland where we can go and visit and not have to worry about anything. (RF: Tourism, April 15, 2009)

Gloria Eno, an eighteen-year-old part-Rotuman woman living in Invercargill, New Zealand, echoed Mrs. Thompson’s sentiments:

Rotuma is everything to me. It’s a place in the world that I can go to get away from everything that I despise overseas. Rotuma is very special and unique in so many ways. I didn’t grow up with many island kids, and all of my friends who have listened to endless stories about Rotuma tell me how lucky I am to have a place like that in the world—a place where my children and grandchildren can go to see the simple beautiful things in life and be taught true Rotuman values and traditions, and they can learn more about living than kids who only know the modern world. . . .

I enjoy modern conveniences as much as the next person and I enjoy staying in hotels, but I would be sad to see one on Rotuma. I look at Rotuma Island as paradise . . . in a way *my* paradise, even though it may sound selfish; I don't want to share it with strangers. Not all tourists are bad of course! But how will we protect our island from the ones who are? It only takes a few minutes to think about what tourism and too many westerners have done to other places. I'm sure they, too, may have been paradises once upon a time, but with one bad move everything can change. Some tourists, when visiting Rotuma, will love and respect it for being so different and unspoiled, but others will see it only as an experience they have paid for. Those who see Rotuma in this way won't understand our ties to the land, or our respect for our ancestors who fought so hard to make Rotuma what it is. Our history lies in every single square metre of land. They will not honour the beliefs and traditions that our people have been taught since the beginning of time. And last but not least, they will not appreciate our simple love for each other and for our home. (RF: Tourism, May 28, 2009)

The most eloquent opposition to tourism was posted by Pasirio Kitone, a resident of Nadera in Fiji. His opinions take the form of a poem:

May Rotuma be protected from 5 star international hotel brands,  
 18 hole golf courses and mass tourism forever  
 So there is no stench with the sea breeze at the turn of the tide  
 That there is no excess seaweed on the beaches and in place of  
 once thriving coral colonies  
 So that there is no 24 hour room service and work on Sundays  
 May the bounty from the sea and harvest from the land be fresh,  
 abundant and toxic free  
 May the occasional lobster be shared by family and not sold to the  
 hotel  
 Alas, thus a can of Koro Sea will suffice for dinner  
 That there is no power house with a set of generators  
 Nor are the effluents from hotel operations recycled, carted and  
 dumped. Where?  
 May future generations be proud and thankful for the wise  
 decisions made yesterday  
 To preserve and protect  
 So that their culture and traditions be their identity

Of which they are proud to practice and know completely  
 May the dreams and aspirations of a teenager from Invercargill  
 live on  
 That our leaders and elders find alternative green means for  
 business  
 So villages, forlorn and trying, can thrive once more  
 May traditional respect and trust be ever strong influences and  
 values  
 So that a way of life and a “gem of green” be forever preserved  
 For all Rotumans

### *Land Issues*

Land issues are of special concern to those Rotumans abroad who envision returning to live in Rotuma some day or who wish to protect the rights of their offspring to do so. Rotumans inherit rights to land via bilineal descent (through both the mother’s and the father’s sides). Thus, all descendants of an individual holding rights in a parcel of land have legitimate claims to it. However, several contingencies complicate the matter, leading to a proliferation of disputes. To begin with, the land has never been surveyed, nor is there an official registry of land entitlement. In response to an escalation in disputes during the 1950s, when the population of Rotuma reached a twentieth-century peak of more than 3,000, the Rotuma Land Act (RLA) was passed in Fiji, and a land commission was sent to Rotuma in 1959 to implement it. Unfortunately, as a means of trying to simplify what they saw as a messy set of inheritance rules, the British colonial administration incorporated into the act a provision rendering inheritance strictly patrilineal, following the Fijian *mataqali* system. Not surprisingly, Rotumans on the island forcefully rejected the commission and threatened violence to stop it. As a result, no action was taken, and the lands have remained unsurveyed and unregistered to this day. However, the RLA has never been repealed and technically remains in force.<sup>11</sup>

Contesting land rights involves the mobilization of testimonies before the district officer, who acts as magistrate and is frequently neither Rotuman nor competent in the Rotuman language. Another complicating factor for expatriates is the informal principle that one’s rights weaken if one does not remain actively engaged with that part of the kin group that exercises hands-on stewardship over a parcel of land. Keeping relationships “warm” requires periodic visits to the island, sending remittances, providing building supplies and other land-associated gifts, and the like. Even under the best of circumstances, however, Rotumans living abroad are at a distinct

disadvantage, and the island is full of partially built homes that were left unfinished when disputes arose after expatriates began construction. To begin with, even if the returnees are knowledgeable, island residents are in a much better position to mobilize support for their claims and to manipulate relevant information. Often returnees can visit for only brief periods, while land cases can drag on for months or longer, giving local claimants greater opportunities to argue their positions. Furthermore, according to Rotuman lore, disputed land is likely to result in bad luck, so even if one prevails in a lawsuit, one still risks ill fortune. Given the cost of building a modern home today, it is no wonder that projects are abandoned when disputes arise. Part-Rotumans—the offspring of a Rotuman and a non-Rotuman—are additionally disadvantaged by having fewer possible claims through only one side of their family. The fact that most of them are deficient in the Rotuman language also places them in a much weaker position when it comes to disputes. (For a land dispute in Samoa resulting from return migration that involve some of the same issues, see Van der Ryn 2012 [this issue].)

Contributors to the Rotuman Forum have expressed their concerns about these matters in several postings. Sosefo Inoke, residing in Australia at the time, initiated a forum discussion with an article highlighting the issues involved:

One of the things that we must do is to fix our land ownership problems. It is a fundamental requirement for development. Until we can resolve our land issues and set up the processes and procedures for the proper settlement and resolution of our land disputes I believe we cannot effectively progress. It is a problem that we must face up to now and deal with. . . .

Some of us, maybe a lot of us, would prefer to let “sleeping dogs lie.” But the trouble I see with sleeping dogs is that they are likely to wake up at the most inconvenient time, vicious and uncontrollable. . . .

Some of us that have dealt with or been involved in land disputes know of the unsatisfactory situation that exists at the moment. Disputes are not being fairly and properly resolved with any certainty and finality. Some disputes are left up in the air and unresolved. Quite often the situation is worse than it was before the attempts to resolve it. There is confusion as to how disputes are to be commenced as well as to the appropriate tribunals or forums to hear them. The procedures as to appeals are also uncertain and ineffective. There are also in my view unresolved

fundamental issues as to the powers and jurisdictions of the tribunals and forums that are making decisions at the moment. If all these problems exist then it is no wonder that disputes are not resolved fairly, properly and with certainty and finality.

To resolve these issues, Inoke urged that a land commission be appointed anew:

I am not an alarmist but I believe land ownership will be in chaos unless something is done now. The appointment of the Rotuma Lands Commission must be done immediately as it is vital to the effective resolution of land disputes. Equally as important is the registration of land ownership and dealings which is the other function of the Commission. So long as we choose to ignore it I believe our social, political and economic development will be hampered. The little land that we have will be tied up in unresolved feuding and will not be used to its full potential, or worse, benefit only the few that have access to good lawyers and powerful political friends. (RF: Land Disputes, April 5, 2002)

But there remains a fear among many Rotumans that the original RLA will be put into force, thereby substituting patrilineal for bilineal inheritance of land. Henry Enasio, who lived in Sydney at the time, expressed his apprehension in a forum posting:

There must remain a dual ownership right for every Rotuman on the basis of both paternal and maternal lands. Otherwise we'll find ourselves in a situation where there are more clan members with less land who are stuck and unable to settle on their maternal lands as per the basis adopted by the Fijians. Also the reverse can occur where all the clan members are dead and no one is left to claim or inherit the land. Though hypothetical, such an extreme situation would result in ownership of the land being relinquished to Government. Such a drastic situation is contemptible and we Rotumans must not allow it to happen. (RF: Rotuman Land Commission, April 3, 2004)

Inoke made his view on this issue clear as well:

I, like many of us, don't understand why the push for registration of Rotuma land ownership to be the same as that for the Fijians.

There is no basis at law for such a one-sided land ownership system these days.

If anything, it is against the anti-discrimination laws and the provisions of the Constitution. . . .

Unfortunately, for the Rotumans the Rotuma Lands Act remains in the law books as law. Whilst the Rotuma Lands Commission remains nonexistent it has no real impact. It should not be difficult to change the Act because it seems most Rotumans do not accept the law as it stands. All it needs is our parliamentary representative to lobby the Government, through the Attorney General, to pass a bill amending the provisions in the Act dealing with land ownership. (RF: Land Disputes, June 17, 2005)

In the meantime, Rotumans abroad continue to be confronted with a host of practical and legalistic barriers to exercising their rights in land on the island.

### *Rotuma's Sovereignty*

Of all the topics discussed in the Rotuman Forum, none has generated more debate and more heat than the issue of Rotuma's sovereignty. As background to the issue, one must appreciate a number of circumstances and events that have affected Rotuma's relationship to Fiji over the years.

Following a war in 1878 between the French-backed Catholics and the English-backed Wesleyans, the victorious Wesleyan chiefs petitioned Queen Victoria of England for cession in 1879. In his letter to Sir George William des Voeux (who was acting high commissioner of Fiji in the temporary absence of Sir Arthur Gordon), Gagaj Maraf, the paramount chief of Rotuma, wrote that "it has also long been apparent to me that we (Rotuma & Fiji) should be under one Govt." Cession officially took place in 1881 (seven years after Fiji's cession), and Rotuma was made part of the colony of Fiji for administrative purposes.

We know of no publicly voiced opposition to this arrangement during the colonial period, and despite widespread dissatisfaction among Rotumans with their meager representation in the postcolonial legislature (initially one senator and no representatives), there were no serious calls for Rotuma to secede when Fiji was granted independence in 1970.

The military coup that took place in May 1987 in Fiji, when Sitiveni Rabuka overthrew the Bavadra government, sparked a change in attitude among a vocal minority of Rotumans and part-Rotumans. The Rotuma Council, composed of chiefs and representatives from the island's seven



districts, voted to remain with Fiji. But objections were raised by a small group of dissidents led by a part-Rotuman karate master from New Zealand who had been given the title Lagfatmaro. Lagfatmaro claimed to be “king of Rotuma,” and his followers agitated for Rotuma to declare independence from Fiji and for Lagfatmaro to be made king. They even went so far as to declare Rotuma a sovereign nation. Although the movement never gained traction, it stirred controversy regarding Rotuma’s sovereignty and the island’s relationship to Fiji.

The declaration of Fiji as a republic and its expulsion from the British Commonwealth following a second coup by Rabuka in September 1987 further fueled the debate about independence, with advocates basing their case on the fact that Rotuma had ceded the island to Great Britain, not to Fiji; hence, they argued, there were no longer any legal or historical grounds for Rotuma to be considered part of Fiji.

The issue was introduced to the Rotuman Forum by Saumaru Foster, a Sydney resident, in January 1998:

I have nothing but admiration and good will towards Fijians—and I include amongst them ethnic Indians and other minority groups. I believe that peace and friendship and justice amongst all the different peoples of Fiji should always be encouraged.

I therefore believe that it is precisely for these reasons that the question of Rotuman independence deserves to be seriously discussed— not the least because it is so intertwined with the notions of Rotuman culture and identity.

This “Rotuman Forum” is an ideal venue for such a discussion.

No one should oppose such a discussion either. Not the international community because it is a crucial point of the UN charter that independence for a group of people in such a situation should be supported. Not the Fijians because they have endured two coups in an attempt to assert their own indigenous identity and independence. And certainly not the Rotumans themselves who have lived unconquered by any other nation for centuries. (Of course, I am not implying here that conquest automatically confers on the conqueror the right to absorb the conquered.) In any case, it was by a treaty that Rotuma was ceded to the British. Fiji had its own treaty.

To suggest that Rotuma should be independent is not a flippant flight of fancy. Anyone who knows world history will understand that more unlikely propositions have come to fruition. And I dare

suggest that as the world shrinks with the increased internationalisation of its means of communication, the more likely and easier it will be for such a proposition to be actualised.

By independence for Rotuma, I'm not necessarily suggesting secession from Fiji. There are many types and levels of independence for a people and the nation-state is not always the best option at a given time.

However, what I certainly mean by Rotuman independence is this: Rotumans, as a distinct indigenous group (within the Fijian nation), should have the ultimate say in matters which affect their culture—the law (especially those governing land and its ownership and use), the language and customs and the chiefly system.

I would suggest that, given the present Fijian constitution and the way Rotumans, as such, are represented or not at the supreme decision-making bodies of the republic—Parliament, the Council of Chiefs and the Public Service, such independence is far from being the case! (RF: Rotuman Independence, January 26, 1998)

A dialogue ensued between Foster and an anonymous commentator who used the pseudonym “teenager.” In a highly articulate response to Foster’s posting, “teenager” argued that it was not for Rotumans abroad to decide what would be best for those living on the island:

It is truly amazing how so many folks who are unwilling to live the hard life of Rotuma think that they know what is best for Rotuma. What I am saying is without any particular opinion either way—whether Rotuma should have independence or not. It is not that I don't care what happens to my family, BUT as THEY have to live there—NOT me—it is for THEM to decide what they want. And contrary to the pedantic attitude of “more highly educated” individuals, regardless of lack of “formal” education, people living in Rotuma are very aware of what they want and need—it is NOT for those of us who are not willing to live there and be there to decide! (RF: Rotuman Independence, January 28, 1998)

Foster took issue with the notion that only those living on Rotuma would be affected by a change in Rotuma’s status and that therefore they should have the exclusive right to decide. He argued that Rotumans in Fiji should have a say in the matter as well since they would be directly affected by any change in Rotuma’s political status. He also located the heart of the issue in a concern for the continuity of Rotuman culture and identity:

I think that for many of us who talk about Rotuman independence our main concern is that Rotuman identity and culture, changing as they are, be preserved forever. This simply cannot depend on the goodwill of another race. Control must be in the hands of Rotumans (legitimately representing the interests of ALL Rotumans regardless of where they live). Also . . . by independence we do not necessarily mean an independent nation state. Although, even if this is what eventuates, there is no reason to suggest that we cannot coexist with Fiji in some very special way, e.g. it is perhaps possible that Fiji look after our defence and foreign relations portfolios. All these possibilities need to be discussed and pursued. (RF: Rotuman Independence, March 5, 1998)

In a subsequent forum, Sosefo Inoke, writing from Australia, reaffirmed the right of expatriate Rotumans to have a say in the matter:

To suggest that this is solely the prerogative of those who live at home is, in my view, a very blinkered and destructive outlook on how we could work together. Rotumans who live abroad have a very worthwhile contribution to make. Don't forget many if not all of us abroad have legal as well as social rights and obligations in respect of land and other matters in Rotuma. Let us not stifle healthy, well-meaning and constructive discussion.

Finally, I for one sought refuge overseas . . . to give my children the opportunities that I never had. Out of sight but certainly not out of mind. I believe I speak for most of the Rotumans overseas on this point. Hopefully, our children will continue our contributions to our home island in a bigger and better way. So please do not shut us out. We can make a real and valuable difference. (RF: The Coup in Fiji, ca. April 2002)

The discussion gained momentum following the declaration of sovereignty by Lagfatmaro and his followers and an aborted attempt by an American entrepreneur, David Korem, to absorb Rotuma into his Dominion of Melchizedek, a sovereign "country" whose only existence was on the Internet. Korem formed an alliance with Lagfatmaro's contingent and went so far as to draft a "constitution for the Republic of Rotuma." Several Rotumans on the island were tempted by Korem's promise of infusing Rotuma's economy with millions of dollars, but when it was discovered (from Internet sources consulted by friends off island) that he had served prison time for fraud and was under investigation by the FBI, he was deported from Fiji, much to the relief of most Rotumans.

Reactions in the Rotuman Forum to these radical attempts to declare Rotuma's independence from Fiji were overwhelmingly negative, with a number of commentators pointing to the economic benefits of Rotuma's association with Fiji. Among those opposed to secession, there was a range of opinion. Some argued for greater political and economic autonomy for Rotuma—in effect, a loosening of ties; others argued for tighter integration, including the suggestion by some that the name of the country be changed to “Fiji and Rotuma.”

### *Idealization of Rotuma*

An ambiguity prevails among diasporic Rotumans regarding attitudes toward and images of Rotuma. One frequently hears complaints about environmental pollution, a lack of facilities (especially concerning the hospital and schools), the frequency of land disputes, the decline of traditional values associated with caring and sharing, and so on. Listening to such complaints, one can get the impression that expatriates in general have a rather negative image of the island. But in the next breath, they are likely to paint an idyllic picture in song, in poetry, or in shared reminiscences. This tendency toward idealization is reflected in many of the forum postings. Henry Enasio's posting in April 2004 is representative:

As I reflect and reminisce about those vivid moments growing up  
in Rotuma, it reminds me of the good old days, of the kinship and  
life of peace and tranquility I have sorely missed.

From a distance I see the holistic beauty of Rotuma:  
an island in the sun, given to me by my father's hands  
with its emerald green and lush rain forest, cupped in leafy  
hands  
its white sandy beaches, soft as maidens hands  
with its sky blue crystal waters, bound by reefy hands  
abundant in fish, like an exotic dancer's twinkling hands  
that calls to me by the most seductive sunset I have ever seen  
from Ahau through Maka Bay to Uea.

From a distance I feel the soothing effect of Rotuma:  
that calls me all the days of my life  
from Lagi te Maurea with its cool and enchanting effect  
to the tranquility that captivates my senses

with the security that I can sleep at night with my doors and  
windows open  
with no worries of being robbed or mugged,

From a distance I smell the fragrance of Rotuma:  
the *Tieri* and *Ragkari* that graces the maidens heads  
to the *Sea* and *Kori* that also anoints their heads  
the fragrances that permeate, I have longed for in my head<sup>12</sup>

From a distance I hear the call of Rotuma:  
carried to me by the wind of my imagination  
with laughter of women and joy of children  
free of worries  
that begs me home

With these in mind, I know for certain the meaning of *Rotuma Hanua Aier 'Ontou* [Rotuma my true home]. For wherever I go, I will always long for and miss Rotuma all the days of my life.

It is there that I promise that I will one day return to retire and live for the rest of my life. To rekindle the kinship and repay Rotuma for what I owe it, and to be buried with the rest of my loved ones. (RF: Thoughts of Rotuma, April 25, 2004)

In fact, a small but steady stream of expatriates does return to Rotuma following retirement. Some play an active role in political affairs and have become community leaders, while others are content to settle into a quiet, comfortable existence.

Submissions to the website's literary section frequently resort to romanticized imagery, with particular places featured. Here is a portion of a poem by a seventeen-year-old Rotuman girl who spent her first ten years growing up on Rotuma before moving to Fiji. She sent the poem from Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates, where she and her father recently joined her mother, who is employed as a nurse there:

So many good times I've spent on the island  
ten whole years  
I did spend my childhood  
in a place that is always  
PARADISE to me  
ROTUMA I call HOME  
Traveling abroad is always a clear view  
but the best view

is standing at the *ka'ta*  
a rocky bridge  
where Lulu Beach facing  
Split Island  
Oh! What a beauty

Or the view of  
Islepi  
in Motusa  
With every reason to fall in love with the beauty  
of the beach

Or the view at  
Oinafa  
the white clear sandy beach  
with a glimpse of Haua Island

Such amazing sites  
I would love to see one more time

I miss the Christmas holidays  
when the clock strikes 6  
we all disappear with our *hafali*<sup>13</sup>  
ready for *fara*<sup>14</sup>  
how much fun we'd have  
roaming from place to place  
cheering each family with a *fara* song

Or the times we'd run just to escape  
the buckets of water  
coming towards our way  
good times . . . good times

I really miss the sea  
when every afternoon  
we'd gather at the '*aita*<sup>15</sup>  
at Pep Haua  
for a swim  
joking with each other  
telling sorts of funny stories  
What a life I will always treasure (Youth Corner: Good Old Days,  
April 2007)

This kind of nostalgic imagery plays a key role in preserving the cultural identity of Rotumans abroad.<sup>16</sup> But Rotumans not only are blessed with a truly beautiful island to nourish their sense of themselves as a privileged people but also can point to the success of so many Rotumans in cosmopolitan arenas. The long-term reputation of Rotumans for diligence and hard work—harkening back to the days when Rotuman sailors were favored by European ship captains—has served to promulgate a positive image that serves as a solid, unambiguous foundation for Rotuman cultural identity.

### *Cultural Identity*

What is interesting about conversations regarding Rotuman identity on the website is the importance accorded to dance performances.<sup>17</sup> This should come as no surprise, as dance is perhaps the most significant public representation of Rotuman culture to the outside world. (See also Wolfgang Kempf 2012 [this issue] for examples of the importance of music and dance for cultural identity.) The discussion focuses on the authenticity of particular performances. For example, in a letter to the editor of the *Fiji Times* posted on the Rotuman Forum, Monifa Fiu criticized a dance performance in Noumea, New Caledonia, by the Rotuman contingent:

Referring to the Festival of Arts preview on Sunday's *Dateline* Program,<sup>18</sup> which featured cultural items performed by the Fiji troupe at Noumea, it is disconcerting to see a cultural dance performed by Rotumans to be a hip-swaying *tautoga*. I expressed my dismay at the absurdity of the Rotuman dance being mistaken for Hawaiian hula and got a somewhat strange reply to my inquisitiveness: "Du! Ka 'ae ma sei hanue?" Translated, it means: "Where have I been, things have changed!" Of course change is inevitable; however, for culture and traditions, it encompasses the very essence of a Rotuman, I believe! For many, they are proud of whom they are and succeeding in life. As an involved young Rotuman, I am proud of who I am. I come from a small island some 465 km north of the Fiji Islands. Despite the mixed Polynesian ancestry, Rotuman culture is different with similarities to sister Polynesia. It is not acceptable that for a Pasifika audience, where a platform is created solely for the interchange of culture and education, Rotumans representing Rotuma falsely portray a cultural dance for a hula. As an involved young Rotuman, I urge young people to be proud of who they are! For the three "sina" who performed, it was a good show, but don't kid yourselves that it was

Rotuman at all. It is unacceptable, especially when you represent not yourselves but the Rotuman family for the world to see. (RF: Rotuman Identity, November 26, 2000)

In defense of the performance, David Rigamoto replied in a letter to the *Fiji Times* (December 5, 2000) that a learned Rotuman elder had been approached but declined to coach the troupe on the grounds that there were too few participants and too little time before the performance, so they opted for a “contemporary” over a “traditional” dance style, but even he admitted that the troupe was “the second fiddle.”

A second discussion of Rotuman identity likewise focused on what was regarded as a misleading performance. The topic was introduced in January 1998 in response to a documentary by David Gardiner titled *Rotuma: Our Identity*, which was aired on Australian television. A forum contributor named Sani initiated the conversation with an expression of dismay over the song that introduced the video:

I for one was ready to give the documentary “a fair go”. Well, we were all in for a shock—big time! What a way to introduce OUR island Home—with a song praising Sa’moa!!! (What the *fara* song actually means I have no idea, only that it is supposed to be a Samoan song. I know nothing about the Samoan language but I won’t be surprised if they find offence to the way their language is sung.) We were put off and disgusted and had to endure this outrage for what seemed a real long time. (RF: Rotuman Identity, January 8, 1998)

In response, Saumaru Foster replied,

Whilst it’s true that introducing a documentary called “Rotuma: Our Identity” with an incorrectly sung Samoan song might seem crass, it in fact is not. Let’s face it, that particular song (and the way it was sung incorrectly) is for all intents and purposes a Rotuman song. It’s been a popular song on the island for at least fifty years. So, perhaps it is part of the Rotuman identity to incorrectly sing that particular Samoan song! (RF: Rotuman Identity, January 26, 1998)

To this, an anonymous contributor responded that “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” and “London Bridge Is Falling Down” are also well known on Rotuma



but could hardly be considered parts of Rotuman identity. In fact, the commentators were highly critical of the entire documentary, which they considered to be superficial and misleading. This was neatly expressed by another anonymous contributor who commented,

I thought my Rotuman identity stems a lot deeper than fifty years.  
I guess the song is quite fitting to a program covering a skin-deep  
identity of Rotuma. (RF: Rotuman Identity, January 28, 1998)<sup>19</sup>

The issue of language and identity comes up in another context, that of teaching Rotuman language to children growing up abroad. Thus, Sefo Avaiki, who lives in Nanaimo, Canada, posted the following commentary:

Who am I? Where am I from? When my wife and I moved to Canada in 1981, our two older children were 6 and 2 years old. Upon arrival we made it a rule that there will be no English spoken in the house. Those educated in Rotuma will remember the strict rule of English only in the school compound, especially Malhaha High. Anyway, it wasn't easy after the birth of our third child because of the daily exposure to Canadian culture and language. It was worse when the children grew older, but we were firm in our decision to enforce the house rule. Today, though they speak Rotuman with a Canadian accent, they will not blame us for not teaching them the language. They have been back home and have realised the value of understanding and communicating in the language. Does their ability to speak make them more Rotuman than those that don't? I don't think so, but I think it enhances their ROTUMAN-NESS. We have always explained to them the importance of their identity, that it is inside, and be proud because that is all they will ever be—ROTUMAN. I know that I'm more Rotuman now than I was growing up in Rotuma. Why, you ask? I have now realised the value of what I have always taken for granted, my island Rotuma. I know I'm lucky, I have the best of two worlds. (RF: Rotuman Identity, March 14, 1998)

### Conclusion

What we have tried to highlight in this article are the issues that are of special concern to diasporic Rotumans as seen primarily through the filter of their contributions to the Rotuma Website. In one way or another, each

of the issues discussed implicates a living connection to Rotuma, either tangibly or symbolically. We do not mean to imply that all diasporic Rotumans have the same concerns, but we do believe, on the basis of our research among overseas Rotumans, that the themes we have documented are broadly representative. One further caveat: We have cited only a small portion of the entire corpus of postings from the Rotuman Forum. Many other, more specific issues have been raised and discussed in addition to those we have selected for this article. A full appreciation of the range of concerns would require surveying the entire forum, which can be accessed at <http://www.rotuma.net/os/Forum/Forum1.html>.

If there is one theme that stands out in the postings, it is the tendency to promulgate an image of Rotuma as a pristine paradise that existed in an imagined past and is threatened by contemporary trends. The imagery is of a beautiful, bountiful island unsullied by rubbish of any kind, of a people who freely share and care for one another, of customs that are uniformly uplifting. It is against this image that complaints about environmental pollution, economic development, land issues, the authenticity of cultural performances, and many other expressions of concern need to be understood. While idealization of one's homeland is not an unfamiliar theme among other Pacific Islanders, it appears to be particularly prominent among diasporic Rotumans.

We suggest that the Internet, including such vehicles as the Rotuma Website, greatly facilitates the construction of such an idealized, iconic image. The presence of a common electronic space for nurturing such an image—a space in which the image is continually reinforced by selectively beautiful photographs, odes to the island in poetry and song, and effusive reports by visitors of the Islanders' hospitality—easily lends itself to a utopian perspective. The motivation for diasporic Rotumans to latch on to such an image is clear enough. It provides the foundation for a favorable cultural identity, one that helps to support a positive self-image. If our roots are so distinguished, we have a firm basis for feeling very good about ourselves.

The Rotuma Website nurtures a positive cultural identity in another way as well. It is full of reports of Rotuman successes not only economically and occupationally but as athletes and artists as well, with whole sections of the site devoted to such accomplishments. There is very little evidence on the site of failures among diasporic Rotumans or of social problems. In part, this is undoubtedly a matter of selectivity with regard to what is reported, but it also is a reflection of the considerable success expatriate Rotumans have enjoyed in the places to which they have migrated.

## NOTES

1. We use the terms “diasporic Rotumans” and “Rotumans abroad” in reference to individuals who have emigrated from Rotuma and their descendants. We specifically have avoided using the term “migrant” because it implies movement and does not include the offspring of emigrants who were born abroad.

2. For an overview of Rotuman emigration, see Howard and Rensel 1994; 2007: 324–29. Because Rotumans have had an extremely high rate of marriage overseas, many of those we include in this estimate are the children of mixed marriages and may not identify themselves primarily as Rotumans, although our experience suggests that most take considerable pride in their Rotuman heritage.

3. For background information about the Rotuma Website, see Howard 1999, 2002. The URL for the site is <http://www.rotuma.net>.

4. As of May 19, 2011, there were 1,450 members in the Rotuman Facebook group.

5. For an extensive discussion of online power relations, of which our exercise of control of the Rotuma Website is but one example, see Franklin 2004, chap. 7.

6. For a more general contrast between the Kava Bowl and the Rotuma Website, see Clark 2005: 36–37.

7. Clark’s survey of Rotuma Website visitors in 2005 yielded 151 usable responses. Ninety-seven percent of respondents indicated that they considered themselves part of the Rotuman community. Most respondents were born in either Fiji (47 percent) or Rotuma (37 percent). They accessed the website mainly from Australia (33 percent), Fiji (23 percent), or the United States (16 percent), but other countries of access included New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway, Sierra Leone, Egypt, Bahrain, Tonga, Scotland, and Jamaica. Most respondents fell into age brackets of twenty-six to thirty-four (25 percent) or thirty-five to forty-nine (39 percent), but a good percentage were also fifty years or older (24 percent). Some 13 percent of respondents did not reveal their age (Clark 2005, 24).

8. See Ogden 1999 for a discussion of issues associated with the introduction of the Internet into Pacific Islands.

9. These categories are to some degree arbitrary, although our fieldwork experience among diasporic Rotumans confirms their significance. In our assessment of the forum postings, thirty of the forty-five topics relate directly to one or more of these categories. The remaining fifteen topics address specialized issues, such as a proposal for having a Rotuman gallery at the Fiji Museum, the use of the Rotuman language, and so on.

10. Rotuma was declared a port of entry in 2010 as a prelude to facilitating an export trade with Tuvalu. At the time of this writing, customs and immigration facilities were in preparation. However, transportation to and from the island remains problematic.

11. In 2009, a Rotuma Legislation Review team was appointed to receive submissions regarding amendments to the act. However, land issues are now much more complex as

a result of the potential commercial value of land. Proposals to build tourist accommodations, including a hotel, and the promise of a lucrative trade agreement with Tuvalu in which Rotumans would export produce from the land have raised the stakes. In addition, the rights in land of Rotumans, particularly part-Rotumans who reside abroad, have made the issue of defining who is a Rotuman of central importance. See Howard 2011.

12. *Tieri*, *ragkari*, *sea*, and *kori* are names of fragrant Rotuman plants. For a revealing example of the significance of fragrances for cultural identity, see Kuehling 2012 (this issue).

13. *Haʻfali* are sarongs.

14. *Fara* is a custom during the Christmas holidays in which youths go from village to village and sing and dance for the entertainment of selected households.

15. *Aita* means “the tree.”

16. Recent psychological research into nostalgia suggests that it is on balance, a positive, adaptive emotion that may help diasporic Rotumans to cope with challenging circumstances. See Sedikides et al. 2008. See also Miller and Slater 2000 for a discussion of the ways in which diasporic groups harness new communication media to create and spread ideal-typical constructs of culture, homeland, family, and identity.

17. For a discussion of identity issues among Tongans and Samoans on the Internet, see Franklin 2004, chap. 6. See also Lee 2007.

18. *Dateline* was a Fiji government-sponsored program shown on Fiji Television Channel One on Sundays. The program that Fiu referred to featured Fiji's cultural presentations by the various ethnic communities in Noumea during the Arts Festival. The Rotuman item, as stated by Monifa, was not a *tautoga* (traditional group dance) but a *mak Rarotonga* (Rarotongan-style dance introduced to Rotuma in the 1950s) performed by Rotuman representatives.

19. The response of Rotumans to a video in May 2011, *Salat se Rotuma* (Voyage to Rotuma), aired by Tagata Pasifika in New Zealand, has been in marked contrast. Virtually all the Rotumans who have viewed it and commented on the Rotuma Group's Facebook page have praised it as both a moving and an accurate portrayal of Rotuman culture.

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## **POHNPEIANS IN HAWAII: REFASHIONING IDENTITY IN DIASPORA**

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### **Voyagers among the “Sea of Islands”**

VOYAGING has long been a central feature in the lives of Oceanic peoples. Once they entered the Pacific Ocean, they became comfortably at home in a large and unbounded “sea of islands” (Hau'ofa 1993). This vision of home—as a large sea full of places to explore, harvest, or settle and full of people to visit, exchange with, or dominate—allowed its inhabitants to live a fluid and mobile lifestyle (Hau'ofa 1993; Heine 2008). Fueled by an enduring sense of wanderlust and a quest for adventure, resources, and prestige, their voyages were aided by their very fine sailing vessels and navigational knowledge. These crafts and skills were found throughout the Oceanic region, but they were honed to an exceptionally high degree in the region known as Micronesia, where they still exist.

Voyaging, in greatly modified form, continues to be an important part of Micronesian life today. The recent flood of Pohnpeian and other Micronesian migrants to Hawai'i is driven by various cultural and historical factors—ancient, colonial, and contemporary. Once in Hawai'i, Pohnpeian identity is both maintained and transformed through a variety of cultural practices. Their refashioned identity is not entirely self-made, however, but is also subject to the webs of power linked to the nation state (Ong 1996). The prevailing social climate in Hawai'i, which has been less than welcoming to Micronesian migrants, has challenged Pohnpeian abilities to adapt to

their new home. This article focuses on the struggles Pohnpeians face in maintaining a positive identity in this transforming and transformative context.<sup>1</sup>

### Pohnpeian Voyaging

Ancient principles of navigation known as *etak*, found in the western Carolinean atolls of Micronesia, have been used by Mortlockese historian Joakim Peter as a framework to understand the more recent Chuukese migration (2000). In particular, Peter highlighted the continual connection made in *etak* between home and travel abroad. First, a master navigator looks to the horizon, the edge of the heavens—a foreign space—casting about and expanding boundaries in a quest for necessary and desirable things for people back home. Second, *etak* navigation is itself a home-centered navigational system, in which emphasis is given to the island of origin. One's position along the journey is calculated by dead reckoning; it is based solely on the distance and direction traveled since leaving the point of origin, using the home island as a guiding point (Peter 2000; Gladwin 1970; Lewis 1994). Finally, as Peter noted, Chuukese voyaging is purposeful, planned, and with a distinct course of action. Voyagers are advised not to wander aimlessly and to maintain strong clan and trade connections for basic life support. They should also have a connection or relationship to people in the destination. Indeed, Chuukese custom advises “walking in the footprints” of others, retracing others' movements. Without such connections, Peter explained, Chuukese travelers are said to be lost or adrift while away from home (2000).

Voyaging was also a central feature of life for Pohnpeians of the Eastern Carolines of Micronesia; it was based on motivations and strategies similar to those of Chuukese, and on a home-centered navigation system similar to Chuukese *etak*. Oral traditions speak of six early, heroic voyages from various parts of Oceania to settle this high, fertile, sacred island, beginning some 2,000 years ago (Rainbird 2004: 86–97). These tales often provide the names, titles, and clan memberships of the navigators and crews who sailed; the adventures they encountered; and the important things they brought with them or developed on the island (Bernart 1977: 1–25; Riesenberg 1968: 1–2). Then, once the main island of Pohnpei was filled, a later voyage from the west brought two holy men, Ohlosipa and Ohlosopa, who constructed a settlement in the island's large and calm lagoon, a megalithic complex called Nan Madol, and established the Saudeleur Empire (Bernhart 1977: 26–76). A final voyage led to the overthrow of the Saudeleur and the eventual establishment of a less centralized Nahnmwarki chiefly system



(Bernart 1977: 77–104; Riesenberg 1968), one that still exists, in modified form, today.

But over time Pohnpeians became noted as Micronesian landlubbers. As the second largest island in the region as well as one of the most fertile, Pohnpei afforded its settlers such natural bounty that, once settled there, the overwhelming majority of its inhabitants decided to stay put. Although wanderlust remained a significant cultural feature, and exquisite outrigger canoes continued to be crafted, Pohnpeians increasingly exhibited a marked preference for limiting their canoe travel to within the safety of their large lagoon system. For those who did voyage beyond the reef, however, such endeavors remained culturally marked as a source of danger, resources, and prestige. They were in marked contrast to the everyday, very high value placed on clan, lineage, and certain affinal relationships for whom Pohnpeians are ready to offer hospitality and even to sacrifice their own possessions and their very lives. One Pohnpeian proverb states, “Out on the open sea, each man considers his own life” (Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci 2001, 400). A small, special feast marked a person’s departure from the island, providing them with additional strength to aid in their risky endeavor and also expressing a fear that they may never be seen again (Riesenberg 1968, 88). Those Pohnpeians who ventured beyond the island and successfully returned with knowledge and goods from the outside world were accorded especially high standing within the community—perhaps even a title within the chiefly system. Visitors from afar were also, and continue to be, treated with great respect and given the very best seats, foods, and goods at feasts.

In recent centuries, Pohnpeian travel beyond their own shores has undergone tremendous change. It has taken radically new forms, but ones in common with those of other migrants throughout the world. Their travel is today driven by needs and wants developed during the colonial period that are no longer readily served at home; they migrate to the seats of their former colonial powers or to nearby former colonial territories, and their connections are sustained by new forms of technology.

However, there are also many decidedly Pohnpeian cultural elements in this new migration. These include the Pohnpeian worldview that underlies it as well as the distinct pattern that is generated. Travel perpetuates some aspects of traditional Pohnpeian voyaging, including maintaining a sense of place and family, settlement patterns, means of survival and adaptation to new environments, and ways of perpetuating cultural identity (e.g., the discussion of “invisible luggage,” Kuehling 2012 [this issue]).

In addition, Pohnpeian migration trends have also been strongly influenced by the presence of foreigners and colonial governments over more

than 150 years of contact and by the opportunities for as well as barriers to travel they have presented (Graham 2008). In their recent migration to Hawai'i, Pohnpeians have left home thinking of themselves as a part of the United States and expecting a welcoming reception. However, once arrived, they have found themselves unnoticed, virtually invisible, and largely unprepared for life in their new home.

Yet, those Pohnpeians who have settled in Hawai'i have creatively blended their old traditions with those of others they encounter. A Pohnpeian sense of identity is refashioned in Hawai'i; it is done so differently by two distinct waves of migrants, reflecting the different generations who have settled there, and centers around the enactment of different cultural practices and mediums of communication. However, Pohnpeian identity is also being reshaped by others with whom they interact Hawai'i, those who have a stake in defining who they are and what they should become.

### **New Horizons**

Over the centuries since the original peopling of the island, Pohnpeians had become comfortably settled in their homeland. Contact with others was limited to neighboring islands within the region, largely for trade or warfare. This relative isolation ended in the early nineteenth century, when Pohnpei began to experience an intense period of contact with the outside world. This brought about enhanced opportunities for travel, including new means, destinations, and frequencies (for similar discussions for Chuuk, see Peter 2000 and Marshall 2004; for the Marshall Islands, see Graham 2008).

Pohnpei gained a reputation as a major port of call in Micronesia by 1833, just five years after its discovery by the Russian navigator Feodor Petrovich Lutke in 1828. Because it was the second-largest island in the region and had several good harbors, ample resources, and "friendly natives," a very lively trade quickly developed (Hezel 1983: 109–13). British and then American whaleships and merchant vessels quickly followed. The 1850s saw a peak of more than fifty American whaleships visiting and more than 150 beachcombers living on the island (Hezel 1983: 122–43; 1995: 55–57). A few adventurous Pohnpeians undoubtedly joined the crews of explorers, whalers, and traders as they sailed around other parts of Micronesia, the wider Pacific, and beyond.

Pohnpei's global significance and its inhabitants' horizons would further expand over the next one hundred years of colonization. When Pope Leo XIII recognized Spanish rights to the Carolines in 1885, Pohnpei housed a

base for their administration of the Central and Eastern Carolines, named La Colonia de Ascension. Following their defeat by the United States in the Spanish-American War, Spain relinquished its Pacific possessions in 1899, after a rather weak thirteen-year rule (Hezel 1983).

Secret negotiations with Germany resulted in their purchase of Spanish possessions in the Marianas and Carolines; the Germans then established headquarters in Pohnpei. The Germans promoted economic development, most often in the form of copra plantations. Their demands for labor from Pohnpeians, however, resulted in the infamous 1910 Sokehs Rebellion, which included the assassination of the German governor. Members of the Sokehs chiefdom who were involved were exiled to Palau, and inhabitants of Mortlock and the Pohnpeian outer islands of Mokil and Pingelap were resettled in Sokehs following a major typhoon that had destroyed their home islands (Hezel 1995: 101–2, 134–42).

At the outbreak of World War I, the Japanese sailed into Micronesia and took over Germany's possessions. The Japanese also wished to promote economic development and also established a branch of their colonial headquarters in Pohnpei (Peattie 1985, 70). Ruling with a firmer hand than the colonial powers before them, the Japanese largely controlled travel by severely curtailing traditional types of travel within the region and by keeping all others out. However, a few Pohnpeian youths were selected by the Japanese to travel for work elsewhere in the colony or (rarely) to attend advanced schools located in Palau or even in Japan (Peattie 1985: 94–95; Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci 2001, 28; Falgout, Poyer, and Carucci 2008: 14, 50).

Japanese-directed travel for Pohnpeians increased even further during World War II—in numbers of people, geographical extent, and the amount of force that lay behind it. Indeed, World War II resulted in the largest population movement of Pohnpeians in their history up to that time. For most Pohnpeians, their return home would have to await the conclusion of the war when they were eventually repatriated by American forces (Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci 2001: 266–67; Falgout, Poyer, and Carucci 2008: 204–7).

Following “liberation” (a term used mostly by the Americans) at the end of the war, the U.S. government assumed control throughout the former Japanese colonies in Micronesia. Once again patterns of migration were affected by the desires of a new colonial power. Pohnpeians were among the Micronesians recruited to work on various postwar projects within the region, particularly in Saipan and the Marshalls. The region itself, however, was largely closed to the outside world under the governance of the United States Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. However, an increase in

Pohnpeian and other Micronesian travel began with the general "education explosion" in the region in the 1960s, followed by the availability of airplane travel and scholarships for a new elite in training at U.S. colleges in the 1970s (Marshall 2004: 6–7).

The United States negotiated a Compact of Free Association (COFA) with the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) in 1986, which guaranteed free and easy entry to the United States. As a result, the migration of Pohnpeians dramatically increased. Technically, Micronesians from COFA nations—the FSM, including the states of Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Yap; the Republic of the Marshall Islands; and the Republic of Palau—now hold the status of non-immigrants when they enter the United States. Until recently, they were simply required to fill out a form (I-94) at the destination airport. Today, with heightened U.S. security following 9/11, they must present a passport on entry. Once this simple process is completed, they become eligible for residence, employment, education, and health care in the United States, for an unlimited period of time.

### **Today's Roots, Routes, and Flows of Pohnpeian Identity**

Pohnpeians, like other Oceanic peoples in diaspora, are indeed "doing what their ancestors had done before them: enlarging their world as they go, but on a scale not possible before"; they are setting down new roots in "new resource areas, securing employment and overseas family property, expanding kinship networks through which they circulate themselves, their relatives, their material goods, and their stories" (Hau'ofa 1993, 10).

Post-compact Pohnpeian migrants have chosen to travel primarily to the U.S. continent and to Guam, the Northern Marianas, and especially Hawai'i, with the numbers of people involved rising dramatically in recent years. They travel to America because of the promises made under the compact for access to employment, the availability of better health care, and education (Levin 2003)—all of which have become areas of increasing hardship back home (Graham 2008)—and, of course, for a bit of adventure.

As James Clifford suggested, "diaspora . . . bends roots and routes to construct forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identity outside the national time and space in order to live inside, with a difference" (1997, 251). Like most diasporic communities today, Pohnpeians have neither cut off ties to home nor been fully absorbed into the local community (Levitt 1999). In fact, the strategies Pohnpeians in Hawai'i employ in maintaining their connections and their sense of identity in their diaspora are complex. They maintain some direct ties with the homeland (for his discussion on the centropерipheral mode of diaspora, see Dufoix

2003, 62), but they have also developed a new sense of community with others who have settled in Hawai'i. They also serve as an important transnational link for Pohnpeians who have either settled in or are traveling to other locations within the region or on the U.S. continent (for his discussion on the atopic mode of diaspora, see Dufoix 2003, 63).

Perhaps the most formal and most direct tie to the homeland can be seen among the first-generation Pohnpeians, who maintain their citizenship rights in the Federated States of Micronesia. They continue to be eligible to vote in elections back home, and polling booths are set up in Hawai'i for their convenience (see Dufoix 2003, 62). The proximity of Hawai'i to the Pohnpeian homeland is also significant, making it relatively easier and more affordable for migrants to travel back home, especially for funerals of close family members. This, along with romantic images of Hawai'i and expectations of great opportunities that lie there, has made Hawai'i the number one choice of most Pohnpeian migrants.

A sense of Pohnpeian community has been forming in Hawai'i that shares features of Stephane Dufoix's "enclave mode" (2003: 62–63). This is not based on clustered residence, because Pohnpeians typically prefer to remain dispersed, both back home or in Hawai'i. They explain that they like their privacy, and they prefer to remain somewhat distant from other Pohnpeians so that any of their bad behaviors (such as drinking alcohol or having unsanctioned romantic liaisons) are not easily observed and known to others. Rather, they develop a nonmaterial enclave as a "network of associations that gather like with like. The enclave operates locally and helps its participants get to know and stay in touch with one another. [It is] based not on a formal link of nationality but on a shared identity" (Dufoix 2003, 62).

A Pohnpeian sense of identity in Hawai'i is maintained by the perpetuation of a number of valued customs (*tiahk*), especially in cultural performances that are often a blend of old and new. Members of the older generation in particular take care to perpetuate valued customs such as using Pohnpeian language and women wearing Pohnpeian skirts (*uhrohs*), especially in Micronesian contexts. Pohnpeians also participate in civic ceremonies at which they perform old and new dances and songs. Families regularly gather together for kava ceremonies and feasts, held for special visitors and various life-cycle events, that include foods imported from back home. Traditional important occasions such as funerals (even for those still located back home or now on the U.S. continent) and birth celebrations are especially important times to get together, but now Pohnpeians also celebrate Christmas, birthdays, graduations, etc. In addition, informal exchanges, large and small, continue on a daily basis.

Several churches in Hawai'i have a fairly large Pohnpeian (as well as other Micronesian) membership, and some hold weekly services in indigenous Pohnpeian language. Church plays a strong role in fostering a sense of community for Pohnpeians in Hawai'i, but its role is weaker for them than it is for the more clustered settlements of Marshallese and Chuukese. As a result, the local Marshallese and Chuukese communities have become more centralized and organized in their efforts both to maintain their cultural identity and to help members of their culture adapt to their new home.

In addition, new Pohnpeian groupings and events have taken root in Hawai'i—occasional kava ceremonies held at Old Stadium Park, weekend campouts at Sand Island Beach Park, and a Pohnpeian women's mutual aid group that hosts an occasional fundraiser including a luau and a raffle. One local Hawai'i radio station has a nightly program in the Pohnpeian language.

Not only have Pohnpeians established a new home on the periphery in Hawai'i, they also serve as a crucial connecting link (or what Ilana Gershon has called a "node" in a network [2007, 47]) to those even more distantly located on the U.S. continent. Indeed, as Gershon has indicated for other diasporic Pacific Islanders, those translocal ties have become increasingly important. Pohnpeians in Hawai'i are also a critical part of a transnational community. They also belong to Dufoix's "atopic mode" of diaspora, "a way of being in the world between states that is based on a common origin, ethnicity, or religion that does not reduce one to be a subject of a host country" (2003, 63). This includes features of both multipolarity—a presence in several countries (in this case, Guam, the Northern Marianas, Hawai'i, and the continental United States)—and also interpolarity—the existence of links between the poles.

Building on Hau'ofa's many insights about Oceanic voyagers, Gershon noted that "it is families and their transnational connections that sustain diasporas, making them both durable and visible"; further, "Ethnographers of the Pacific have long known that the Pacific is not just a sea of islands, but also a sea of families" (2007, 474; see also Carucci 2012 [this issue]). Of course, these transnational ties are shaped by culturally specific family structures. For Pohnpeians, the importance of a person's place of origin and genealogical connections remain very important considerations in diaspora. "Family" within the diasporic Pohnpeian context primarily includes members of one's matrilineal extended family and other matrilineal clan members but also, significantly, one's in-laws.

This family exchange network is what maintains the relationships as a form of "social remittance" (Levitt 1999). Family networks offer hospitality

for travelers—for those in Hawai'i or on the continent who are going back home, or those traveling in the opposite direction—for visits, to attend funerals, for school or other forms of training, and for even more permanent settlement. Although Continental's Air Micronesia remains the single carrier throughout most of Micronesia (excepting Guam and the Northern Marianas Islands), making air travel expensive, there is a daily airplane service to Honolulu and a variety of air carriers in Hawai'i are aware of significant Micronesian travel to the U.S. continent.

Pohnpeian transnational family networks are also maintained by the exchange of gifts that include items Pohnpeians deem important and by their customary methods of exchange. From Pohnpei, traditionally valued goods—especially of food (fish, various traditional raw and cooked foods, kava) and uhrohs—are transported from the islands in oversized ice chests and other large containers. These items are especially dear, being rather difficult to find elsewhere and also signaling the continued ties of affection with folks back home (see Alexeyeff 2004; Besnier 1995). This is especially the case for kava. Transport of Pohnpeian kava to the U.S. continent began and is perhaps still most commonly enacted as a personal gift to family and friends. On occasion, however, this practice has been transformed into a transnational business, with kava sold at very high prices and with “kava parties” on the U.S. continent that charge \$35 or more per participant.

Going in the opposite direction are modern American goods (especially items of technology) and money sent for important occasions. These are sent back with people returning to Pohnpei. Modern technology and the new ideas that they convey enter family homes in Pohnpei, producing some of the more worldly members of society. Such items are also used as new forms of presentations at feasts; they are thereby circulated to the wider Pohnpeian community.

Family networks maintain important social exchanges as well—by their continued expression of traditional ideas, beliefs, and values; by the transmission of newsworthy events, “the news of Pohnpei,” that is happening back home and throughout the diaspora via letters, telephone, websites, and e-mail; and by their maintenance of a sense of respect and trust among its members (see Liloma'iava-Doktor 2009: 12–16). Connecting links to family are very important in maintaining Pohnpeian identity.

### **Hawai'i's Newest Malihini?**

As we have seen, Pohnpeians refashion their cultural identity in Hawai'i through the continuation of old and modified cultural practices, and the creation of entirely new ones developed by them locally as members of a



robust transnational community. This is the case for all Pohnpeians who are busy adapting to life in Hawai'i. It is especially so for the youth, who often wish to emulate others and blend into their new homeland. Commenting on Pohnpeian youth, one mother explained, "The way of dress, they pick up on the way of American dress. Kids now pick up [that way of] dressing fast. Dress like one, feel like one." A Pohnpeian young person explained, "Here we can avoid participating in things [*tiahk*] and do our own thing. We can follow American customs. Be independent. We can choose what to participate in. Everything is optional [except the funeral of a relative]. This is good in some ways, for example, financially there is not so much pressure." But Pohnpeian identity is no longer solely in their own hands. There have been a number of significant changes to Pohnpeian identity that have been in the hands of others they encounter in diaspora. Pohnpeians are profoundly affected by how they are coming to be understood as members of the State of Hawai'i.

### "Who Are They?"

Who are Pohnpeians, exactly, according to others within the State of Hawai'i? Much of the public's understanding is based on their earlier experiences with immigrants. Hawai'i has been a destination for many immigrant peoples—most notably Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Portuguese, Spanish, and American *haole* (white people), as well as other Pacific Islanders, especially Samoans and Tongans. But until recently, there was little awareness within Hawai'i of the existence of Micronesia; of Hawai'i's many ancient, historic, and even contemporary ties with that part of the Pacific; or of people from the region who had settled in their midst. However, after the signing of the Compacts of Free Association the numbers of migrants from the region rapidly increased, with Pohnpeians lumped into a general, very misunderstood, generic ethnic grouping, called "Micronesians."<sup>2</sup>

These Micronesians are locally understood to be just the latest in a series of *malihini* (the Hawaiian term for newcomers). In 2002, a (largely inaccurate) cover story of the *Honolulu Weekly* titled "Invisible Malihini" highlighted the growing presence of Micronesians in Hawai'i (Bickel 2002). Following the publication of the article, Micronesians living in Hawai'i became somewhat of a hot news item. Today, much local understanding about Micronesians comes from media coverage. Subsequent stories about local Micronesians have unfortunately been overwhelmingly negative. They have focused on volleyball game disputes, head lice among school children, migrants with Hansen's disease, a murder, and rape cases involving



Chuukese men. In 2010, a bill proposed to the Honolulu City Council suggesting a \$500 fine or six months in jail for “smelly” riders on the public transit system left the ethnic designation of recent migrants and the homeless blank; nevertheless, many suspected that Micronesians were among those being targeted. In the past several years, a number of newspaper articles have specifically discussed Micronesian migrants’ drain on the state’s social welfare system and the problems they pose for its educational systems. These newest malihini have come to occupy the bottom of Hawai‘i’s socioeconomic ladder. They are often resented and referred to by some as the “Micronesian problem” (Heine 2008).

This negative reception was not expected by Pohnpeians and other Micronesians who migrated to Hawai‘i. After all, the traditional welcome extended to visitors to Pohnpei is one of hospitality. And, after a long contact history with the outside world; after having Hawaiian converts accompany the first Protestant missionaries in the area in the mid-1800s; after serving as a major Pacific arena during World War II and then as a U.S. territory for more than forty years (originally administered from Hawai‘i); after a variety of promises had been made in the postwar period (such as Reagan’s 1985 speech to the Marshallese, “you’ll always be family to us,” discussed in Carucci 2012 [this issue]); and now after agreeing to Compacts of Free Association that contain favorable provisions for their emigration—it came as a shock to many that their existence is largely unknown and that they are unwelcome in the fiftieth state.

And, of course, many Pohnpeians were well aware of Hawai‘i’s reputation as the land of aloha (see also Carucci 2012 [this issue]). One young Pohnpeian woman, a recent graduate from Chaminade University in Honolulu who worked at McKinley School for Adults and was a member of the Micronesian Community Network, expressed her initial disenchantment with life in Hawai‘i. She began by saying:

My initial reason for coming [to Hawai‘i] was to see the “paradise” that I heard talked about. But school was the reason I was permitted to come [by my family]. The “paradise” I heard about—everyone who came here and went back talked about its beauty, the beaches, the picnics, etc. I wanted to see it. But I found out it was not true within the first couple of days, due to an experience I had in Kane‘ohe [in Windward O‘ahu].

One day I decided to take a bus, but I was on it too long and fell asleep and missed the stop; I wound up at Ala Moana [the shopping mall located on the opposite side of the island], lost! My cousin said to cross the street, but the bus driver said, “Stand

here." I crossed the street, but there was no bus stop. People were there, and I waited thirty minutes. But no one helped; no one talked [to me]. At that moment, I questioned if this was "paradise."

I asked, "So how do I get to town?" Other people turned away, did not talk to me. I thought, "This is no paradise!"

Still, many questions about Micronesians remain for the local population of Hawai'i. Even those who have learned a bit about the different new nations in the region continue to wonder, "Who exactly are the 'Micronesians'? Are all those from the islands in the Federated States of Micronesia 'Micronesians'? Are the Marshallese also 'Micronesians'? What about people from Palau, or even from Guam and Saipan?" "Why have they come to Hawai'i?" "Are they all from subsistence-based economies? Do most of them live on welfare in Hawai'i?" "Are there schools back in their home islands? How many are there?"

To date, very little local press coverage has focused on the reasons behind the special rights afforded to Micronesians in the compacts, or the contributions they have made to overall U.S. military preparedness, such as postwar nuclear testing and the continued presence of a U.S. military base in the Marshall Islands (see Carucci 2012 [this issue]); the granting to the United States rights of strategic denial throughout the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau; and the continued overrepresentation of young Micronesian men and women in the U.S. military (Heine 2008). Little has been mentioned about Micronesians' varied contributions to Hawai'i's economy. Direct economic contributions are estimated to be \$50 million annually—in generated income, state income tax, expenditures, and compact impact assistance (Levin 2003, cited in Heine 2008). In addition, Micronesians have served as laborers on Hawai'i plantations, a job most other locals do not want; their presence stimulates additional trade between COFA nations and Hawai'i; and remittances are sent back home to help develop those island economies as well (Hezel and Samuel 2006). Even less is mentioned about Micronesian contributions to Hawai'i society—giving its people's exposure to other Pacific Islander cultural values (strong ones of personal interdependence, strong family support systems, reciprocity and respect, friendliness) and languages (at least eight Micronesian languages) (Heine 2008).

Even professionals who work with these peoples find it difficult to ascertain much information about Micronesians in Hawai'i. Recent requests from the State Attorney General's Micronesian Task Force for a new and more detailed census were unfruitful. Instead, we are left with the

following incomplete but educated guesses. The best source of information comes from the 2003 U.S. Census of Micronesians living in Hawai'i, conducted by Michael Levin, which counted 8,357; however, that census focused only on the island of O'ahu. Furthermore, figures were given only by country of origin—Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Palau. The highest rate of migration was from the Federated States of Micronesia, fully three of every four migrants; however, figures provided were not detailed by country of origin or ethnic background. In 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau, this time using only sample data from the American Community Survey (ACS) conducted from 2005–7, roughly estimated the number of COFA peoples in Hawai'i at 12,215 (second to those from Guam, at an estimated 18,305). Recent Hawai'i State Department of Education figures show most COFA students are from the Marshall Islands and Chuuk, with far fewer numbers from Pohnpei, Kosrae, Yap, Palau, Guam, and the Northern Marianas. The largest concentrations of Micronesians are found in downtown Honolulu and Waipahu on the island of O'ahu. Word of mouth has it that the Marshallese are known to cluster together in large numbers, particularly in Waipahu, O'ahu; in Kihei, Maui; and also in Ka'u on the southern tip of the Big Island (see Carucci 2012 [this issue]).

The 2003 census clearly shows that Micronesians living in Hawai'i come from the entire region and from a variety of cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds. However, with an increasing number from the rural and less-educated sectors of their societies and with their ease of entry into the United States under the Compacts of Free Association, most arrive largely unprepared for life in Hawai'i. Thus, Micronesians in Hawai'i face real difficulties finding good jobs and affordable housing, accessing good health care, and negotiating a rather different educational system—the very reasons that attracted them to Hawai'i in the first place. Compounding the problem is the fact that, since they are technically non-immigrants, they do not qualify for many federal programs (such as welfare, social security, or some medical assistance programs).

Indeed, poverty among “Micronesians” living in Hawai'i (as for all Pacific Islanders in the United States) remains greater in both incidence and severity than for all other Americans (Ahlberg 2000). Typically they occupy low-skill, minimum-wage jobs, especially in retail food and beverage sales and general office work. Unemployment is also unusually high, with nearly half living well below the poverty line (Levin 2003; Hammond and Filibert 2007, cited in Heine 2008, 20). Hawai'i's very high cost of living, especially for housing, is out of reach for most Micronesian migrants (Heine 2008; Carucci 2012 [this issue]). Micronesians in Hawai'i have a high percentage

of homelessness and residence in shelters and public housing. Most Micronesian children are placed in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classrooms, from which few exit; many teens drop out of high school, and fewer than 400 are enrolled in the public university system.

### **“Who Are We?”**

Hawai'i's lack of good information combined with negative stereotypes about Micronesians have had significant, yet varied, impacts on Pohnpeian identity. In some contexts that involve dealing with others in the wider Hawai'i community, Pohnpeians sometimes identify themselves as Micronesian. In the doctor's visits I frequently attend with an older member of my Pohnpeian family, this is the answer he and his family routinely provide. Often, this response is simply given to ignite a spark of recognition from others with whom they interact; on rare occasions, someone will follow up by asking them about their particular ethnicity or language spoken, or from which island they or their family originated.

On other occasions, this wider Micronesian identity is more self-consciously used by Pohnpeians to forge ties with various other ethnic groups from the region—for church gatherings, festivals, conferences, or social or political action groups (such as the Micronesian Community Network, Nations of Micronesia, and Micronesians United); significantly, beneath these umbrella gatherings, ethnic differences are usually highlighted by the participants.

At the same time, other forces at work in Hawai'i have significantly altered Pohnpeian identity. Recent local prejudices against Micronesians have led some Pohnpeians to hide their identities, particularly in public settings. Frequently mentioned are instances of young girls' change in their dress—the uhrohs, such an important symbol of cultural identity. A young Pohnpeian woman explained, “The Pohnpeian skirt [uhrohs] is stereotyped as ‘Micronesian,’ which is [thought of as a] bad thing. So some don't want to wear it so people don't know they are Micronesian. But, the problem is not the clothing; it's what's in it. The younger ones at [school] . . . I helped them not to be ashamed.” Another young woman stated, “Pohnpeian women don't want to wear uhrohs here, because they don't want to be identified as Chuukese.<sup>3</sup> Fewer and fewer wear them here. Also, fewer [Pohnpeian girls] wear long hair with combs.”

In the past few years, there have been a number of attempts by others in Hawai'i to help Micronesians to better adapt to their new home. The summer 2007 Pacific Islanders in Education conference held in Honolulu highlighted local Micronesians in Hawai'i schools and, for almost the first

time, a number of positive articles appeared in local newspapers, television spots, and other media. This served to increase the efforts of the Hawai'i education system to serve this population. Recently, Hawai'i Attorney General's Micronesian Task Force reported its findings and recommendations and will continue to propose resolutions to the state legislature. Findings were presented to Hawai'i's delegation in Washington, DC, who have been seeking to have Micronesians included in federal programs overlooked in the compacts and to have more federal monies to reimburse the state, especially for Micronesian health care.

The goal of these efforts has been to help Micronesians adapt, to help them succeed by making them more "like us"—like other local folks in Hawai'i and those on the U.S. continent. However, as times have gotten tough during the recent recession, the emphasis has once again shifted to their "otherness," especially their different political status, which, although they are not immigrants, has provided them with access to some social and economic benefits. In July 2009, the State of Hawai'i proposed a new plan, Basic Health Hawai'i, designed to severely restrict medical coverage for "Pacific Islanders" (clearly only the COFA migrants). This plan, and public demonstrations against it, including concerned Micronesians demonstrating at the state capitol, were widely reported in the media. Reports were often contextualized by an unusual, very brief preface about the negative impact of earlier U.S. nuclear weapons testing in the region on COFA migrants' health, but these reports were again inaccurate, because testing was limited to only the Marshall Islands. After a temporary court injunction in fall 2009, the state reinstituted the plan in summer 2010, only to have another case filed against it by the Lawyers for Equal Justice on behalf of COFA migrants. The court denied the state's attempt to have the case dismissed and filed another injunction in November 2010, but the state is appealing. In addition to the serious threats of the new health care plan, the entire situation has served to further marginalize and stigmatize Micronesians living in Hawai'i.

These efforts are very new and their impacts on the identities of local Pohnpeians and others from the Micronesian region remain to be seen. Hence, new questions can now be asked. For example, in this new context, one in which Pohnpeians have now settled in the land of the colonizers, will they increasingly become "Micronesian" to be more visible and recognized, better understood, and a more powerful minority voice? As one young Pohnpeian woman told me, "When I first came, I didn't like to be called 'Micronesian.' I am Pohnpeian. Now I realize here, 'Micronesian' [is good]. . . . I can be all these things!" Still, she pointed out that she has "great pride in being Pohnpeian and in my Pohnpeian [language]. . . . I make sure those I am around know I am Pohnpeian."

### A New Pohnpeian Identity?

In recent decades, Pohnpeian voyagers once again set forth toward the horizon, guided by their ancient navigational principles, motivations, and strategies. Once in Hawai'i, Pohnpeians have survived by perpetuating and adapting their valued customs and cultural identity. How will Pohnpeian identity be refashioned in the future as a result of meeting a host of unexpected challenges here in the land of aloha?

Will Pohnpeians become more "like other Americans"? Is this something Pohnpeians and other Micronesians want? Which Micronesians, how many, in what ways, how often, for how long, to what degree, are questions that remain unasked and unclear. Furthermore, among those striving for assimilation, what does becoming "like other Americans" mean? The path that it might take remains somewhat unclear and a rather diffuse target.

Only the future will tell whether the descendants of these newest Pohnpeian voyagers will maintain the connections with those back home and their way of life and be satisfied with "symbolic homelands" recreated in imagination and rituals performed as overseas residents (Heine 2008). Will Hawai'i become a new core area? Will the high cost of living and threats of lesser availability of health care allow Hawai'i to continue as a favored destination and connecting link? Or will it be bypassed as Pohnpeians and others from the Micronesian region seek out more welcoming destinations on the U.S. continent?

### NOTES

1. I write this article as an anthropologist specializing in Micronesia, especially the culture of Pohnpei, and have several years of experience living and working on a variety of topics on the island itself, beginning in 1979. I am also a professor at University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu. My recent interest in Pohnpeian migration is the result of several unexpected strokes of luck. First, a few of my adopted Pohnpeian family, section, and chiefdom members and other friends moved to Honolulu in the late 1990s; they were quickly followed by others, including short-term visitors who stopped over on their way to and from the continent, and those who settled more permanently. Although Pohnpeians are spread throughout the Hawaiian archipelago, most are located on O'ahu; my campus is located in Pearl City, adjacent to the town of Waipahu, which now houses the second-largest concentration of Micronesian migrants in Hawai'i. My area of expertise combined with the location of my campus led, in turn, to my involvement in several projects: Project Waipuna, which involved the training of ESL teachers about Micronesian cultures as well as service-learning options for college students to work as ESL mentors in the public schools; my membership on the State Attorney General's Micronesian Task Force; and my own recent researches on Micronesians in Hawai'i.

2. Historian David Hanlon has chronicled the original misnaming of region by Dumont d'Urville that has resulted in the reification of Micronesia as a coherent cultural entity by anthropologists and colonists; see especially Hanlon 2009. In contrast, Hanlon has forcefully argued in favor of more localized representations of particular cultures within the region.

3. On occasion, negative media stories have identified the Micronesians involved specifically as "Chuukese." Also, Chuukese women in Hawai'i now manufacture and wear Pohnpeian-styled uhrohs.

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## **YOU'LL ALWAYS BE FAMILY: FORMULATING MARSHALLESE IDENTITIES IN KONA, HAWAII**

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IN A FLOWERY SPEECH welcoming the Republic of the Marshall Islands into the world of nations in 1985, U.S. President Ronald Reagan noted, "You'll always be family to us" (O'Rourke 1986). Less than twenty years later, however, Enewetak Marshall Islanders on the Big Island of Hawai'i live with a sense of dread and fear of those around them.<sup>1</sup> It is easy for members of this transnational community to detect that not only do a large number of their neighbors not welcome them as family, they also wish they would go home. Just under the surface landscape of aloha that permeates the tourist literature, bumper stickers, and overt discourses of Hawai'i lies a minefield of ethnic and racially grounded stereotyping that makes Marshall Islanders—among the newest of immigrant groups to the islands—the least desirable and most despised of those newcomers who, in earlier Hawaiian tradition, were to have been loved and welcomed.

### **Disenfranchisement and Desire: The Historical Grounding of Identity Work**

There are currently (2010) over five hundred Enewetak people living on the Big Island, a community that has grown rapidly in recent years. Their motives for moving to this location are multiple but largely reflect disenchantment with life on their primordial home, Enewetak Atoll. Over 20 percent of the Enewetak population was killed during World War II, as

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the Allies invaded the atoll and eradicated the Japanese military forces that were based there. Valued for its strategic position, Enewetak became a staging area for forays into the western Pacific as U.S. forces moved rapidly up the island chains toward Japan. Enewetak residents, whose numbers were reduced to about 135 people after the battle, were moved to the margins of their own atoll during the final one and a half years of the war. With the U.S. decision to begin nuclear testing on nearby Bikini in 1946 and to monitor those tests from Enewetak, the Enewetak people's temporary residence on small northern "Native Islands" of the atoll continued. In December 1947, residents were forced further to the fringe as their atoll became more central to U.S. designs on world history. With the decision to expand nuclear testing to Enewetak, local residents were moved to Ujelang Atoll, 130 miles southwest of their homeland. Despite promises to return them to their home as soon as possible, Enewetak people remained on Ujelang for the next thirty-three years. During the 1950s and 1960s, they faced repeated periods of hardship and famine on this small, typhoon-ravaged atoll. The overall size of Ujelang was much smaller than Enewetak. Soil quality was poor, and exploitable reef space (directly correlated with fishing potential) was one-fourteenth that of their primordial homeland. After court battles and repeated pleas for help eased their plight slightly in the 1970s, residents finally negotiated to have Enewetak returned to them. A massive cleanup of WWII and nuclear-testing era rubble stripped large sections of the atoll of all vegetation and removed from four inches to two feet of surface soils. Following this cleanup and an initial replanting and building program, residents were allowed to return to some radiologically safe islets in the southern part of Enewetak in 1980.

Although they had dreamed of their return for decades, people soon became disenchanted. Only four of forty-eight islets had been thoroughly cleaned up and replanted, leaving the residents with a smaller resource base than had been available to them on Ujelang. Even though the Enewetak Rehabilitation Plan suggested that food plants would be fully productive by 1985, stripping the rehabilitated islets of topsoil and the bush plants that normally buffer salt spray along the outer fringe of the atoll meant total dependence on imported and USDA foods for decades into the future.<sup>2</sup> After ten years of such a diet (see Carucci 2004), diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension began to invade people's bodies. With the resource base obliterated, the course of daily life also changed. Fishing was restricted by the lack of resources required to build canoes as well as a shortage of fuel to power outboard motor craft, and gathering land foods was not possible in the early years.

In the midst of this disenchantment, the community began to explore the possibility of purchasing a parcel of land on the Big Island of Hawai'i in 1990. They controlled a small trust fund that had been set aside to rehabilitate the islet of Enjebi in the northern half of Enewetak Atoll. That fund was far too small to begin any meaningful rehabilitation effort, but it was large enough to purchase a sizeable parcel of land in the hinterlands of Hawai'i. The Enewetak/Ujelang Local Government Council (a dozen mature adults elected to represent the community), along with a few additional respected elders, visited the Big Island and viewed the land, a prime parcel for growing coffee located just south of Kailua Kona. Following an animated community-wide discussion after the council's return, the community ultimately voted not to pursue the purchase. Nevertheless, three young family heads, excited by the possibilities of an enclave in Hawai'i, moved to the Big Island in 1991. Within two years, they were joined by several siblings and their families, and by 1994 some of their parents were coming to visit for ever-longer periods of time. In 2002–3, the Big Island Marshallese community was nearing a thousand residents, over 400 of whom had immigrated from Enewetak or were born to parents who considered themselves Enewetak people.

### **Motivations and Constraints: Interactive Contexts and Identity Work**

If the initial impetus for their move was an underlying disquietude with life on the "New Enewetak" (Carucci 2004), those now residing on the Big Island rationalize their existence in Hawai'i in terms of increased opportunities. Schooling and health care top their list, although the convenience of many stores well stocked with a diverse array of goods is an equally important theme that emerges more subtly from Enewetak migrants' and transmigrants' discourses and daily activities.<sup>3</sup>

Alongside these positives, however, members of the community often talk of hardships (*intan*), which are cautiously weighed against the Big Island's advantages. In the words of one long-standing resident, "We live here in a life of difficulties. Nevertheless, it is okay if we are in a state of some hardship,<sup>4</sup> because there are a lot of children who are realizing their potential in terms of school. Perhaps there are more than ten children whom the two of us [my wife and I] have watched over during the time they [attended] school." The cost of living is one source of difficulty, he continued: "Life here is not like on Ujelang. As you know, [there] you just go out and fish and come back and eat, and then remain inactive for a while. But here, you can never just remain [sitting] still. You will be done

in. If you do not have some sort of work, you will be a goner [*Ne ejjelok am jermal, kwe jako*].” Or, as another resident put it: “Well, there is nothing here that does not have a cost. Everything is costly; and if you have no money, well, ‘I’m sorry’ [in English], you will become one of the unfortunate ones [*kwe jerata*].”

Another dimension of hardship has involved learning to live according to legal codes that are nonexistent in the Marshall Islands:

Well, when we came here to this place, we just built a house and remained, but now they are saying there are many laws [building codes], and that you have to build in this way and that way. You cannot just go ahead and build in accord with the needs that you see for yourself as in the Marshall Islands. As you know, there you have no hardship, but here we are always a little worried, for if you do not build in precise alignment with the law, maybe they will come and throw you off of the land that is yours. This is true, even though you have taken your own money and purchased that land, and they say it is yours.

This is perhaps the most critical juncture where Marshall Islanders have come to fashion new images of themselves in relation to others. Although people may have moved to Hawai‘i imagining a life of abundance, with access to goods, hospital care, advantages of better schools, and a better life, they come to see themselves in comparison with other residents of Hawai‘i as deficient, powerless, and insecure. Rather than a life of ease, Big Island Marshallese life is seen as a life of “hardship.” But such hardship is obviously relative, because life in most ways is physically less trying than life on Ujelang or even on Enewetak. However, relative to the opulence of many people around them, Marshallese life on the Big Island is arduous and taxing, both physically and psychologically.

But Big Island Marshallese hardship is not solely psycho-cultural, as issues of control and power provide the critical grounds for people’s insecurity. On the Big Island, Marshallese have no control over the larger milieu within which they live. This unanticipated insecurity has driven them toward insularity within their own group. It has heightened their commitment to “being Marshallese,” and their Marshallese identity has been fashioned and reinforced through an elaboration of daily routines that involve members of the community with one another and separate them from non-Marshallese. No matter how much Enewetak/Ujelang people may have believed in the American dream, after a short period of time, members of the Marshallese Big Island community discovered that the

progressivist and assimilationist myths did not include them. In response, their daily practices have solidified their community boundaries and elaborated the practices that stress their Marshallese identity, precisely because they have little power to alter the shape of the larger social scene within which they live.<sup>5</sup>

Nearby neighbors complain about the noise level of the outdoor-living Marshall Islanders; they express public-health concerns; they gripe about the numbers of vehicles collected in side yards. In each of these attempts to force Marshallese to conform to Hawaiian-American ideas of proper demeanor, their complaints mark the otherness of the newly arrived Marshallese, stressing their lack of being welcome. Neighbors also enlist the assistance of authority figures in law enforcement, in the health department, and in the schools to bring pressure on Marshallese to change their ways. These complaint and enforcement strategies reflect different appropriations of, and instrumental attempts to use, power. In Michel Foucault's terms (1989), these strategies are schemata of surveillance, discipline, and control, instigated at many different levels, not only by nearby neighbors but also by authority figures who are perceived as threatening by local Marshallese. As viewed by Enewetak people, these forms of surveillance and discipline are multilayered and beyond their control. Sometimes the voices are those of nearby neighbors who are seen as powerful. In other cases, they involve state authorities whose powers are feared because the extent of their authority is unknown. Therefore, Enewetak Marshallese see forces of this sort as a constant threat, far different from the consensus of authorities who assert control over community miscreants at the behest of the community as a whole on Ujelang and Enewetak. This newly complicated set of power relations is worthy of special attention—not because Ujelang and Enewetak people are forced to submit to the will of those around them, or because they will not assimilate into Hawai'i's landscape, but because, in creating a new identity in opposition to those who have fashioned them into "others" through categorization and disciplinary constraint, Hawai'i Marshallese have responded with identities that are more consciously constructed and, in many respects, more markedly Marshallese than those of their compatriots in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. In the latter setting, Marshallese feel that they control more of the grounds for their identities. Therefore, they are free to explore new types of internationalist identities unfettered by the daily surveillance of others living nearby.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, although the first Enewetak families to move to the Big Island were welcomed by local residents, including native Hawaiians, *kama'āina haole* (long-time resident white foreigners), and Hawaiian Japanese, this

sentiment changed as the size of the Marshallese community on the Big Island increased and began to threaten the status quo. Although the first families lived in or near Kailua Kona, a large segment of the Enewetak community has moved from its point of first landing to Ocean View, “the world’s largest subdivision,” in the northern sector of Ka‘ū, amid recently cooled lava flows of Mauna Loa. This move made sense to Enewetak residents because of the high cost of living in Kona, where most newcomers could only rent a dwelling. In Ocean View, they could purchase land and build their own dwellings. Nevertheless, the rapidly increasing size of the Enewetak community in Ocean View threatens other subdivision residents. In this locale, retirees from the U.S. mainland brush shoulders with Hawaiians, dealers in prohibited drugs, kama‘āina haole, working-class folks, teachers from the local schools, and other groups. Fancy retirement-home retreats abut many houses in the subdivision that are not built to code; other homes are surrounded by automobiles being stored for spare parts. Neighbors and subdivision officials in Ocean View frequently complain about Marshallese homes and the Marshallese style of life. Yet having long applied a policy of leniency toward others, officials are now unable to do much more than warn Enewetak residents that their homes are not built to code. The warnings, however, along with hordes of other complaints about “those people” (from the Marshall Islands), lie at the base of the Enewetak sense of being in a land beyond their control, a land where they are despised rather than welcomed, and a land in which “some people, they are good but, equally, there are many evil people out there as well.”<sup>7</sup>

A kind of paranoia and feelings of vigilance against the dangers presented by others is one dimension of identity formation held in common by Enewetak residents, by Marshall Islanders on Majuro, and by Marshallese residents on the Big Island. After years in relative isolation on Ujelang, life on Enewetak has brought many marriages with Marshallese from other atolls, and along with those newcomers has come the sense that local people have now lost control of their own identity. Enewetak residents now feel that others are changing “our customs” (*manit*), so now people are unsure of who they are. On Majuro, people live in fear of being taken over by Chinese/Taiwanese, much as residents say that before World War II people were afraid that the Japanese wanted to take over the Marshall Islands and eradicate local Islanders. On the Big Island, however, the sense of danger presented by outsiders is different. In this locale, the dynamics of power are also much different. On Enewetak, local residents could decide to restrict the number of outsiders allowed to live on the atoll. In Majuro, *alab* (land parcel heads) could refuse to lease land to Chinese/Taiwanese, thereby limiting their power (much as has been done in Laura district on

Majuro Atoll). In contrast, on the Big Island, people live in fear of their own powerlessness. Even though Marshallese reside on the Big Island as legal residents under the Compact of Free Association, they have no legitimized source of power that would allow them effectively to ask those around them who work so hard at "othering" them to simply go away.

Although people's fears of being kicked off of their land for breaking various codes are probably ill founded, they result from monitoring the ongoing derision of their community by neighbors and government authorities. With few exceptions, the large group of Hawai'i residents who are aware of the Enewetak Marshallese community have, through their comments and practices of exclusion, made far more attempts to fashion Enewetak people into radical others than they have to break through the layers of separation. Nevertheless, as members of the disempowered group, Enewetak residents are coparticipants in action scenarios that add to their own separation. As Aihwa Ong suggested, "Cultural citizenship is a dual process of self-making and being made within webs of power linked to the nation state and civil society" (1996, 738). Avoidance of Marshall Islands' residents of Hawai'i by others is frequently complemented by Marshallese insularity. Big Island Marshallese often pursue internal communal activities that contribute to their sense of separateness at the same moment they help fashion strong identities among Marshallese. Enewetak residents dominate the Marshallese community along the Kona coast, and Marshall Islanders as a whole live in much the same way they did in the Marshalls. They have their own churches and their own communal activities; they have continued to expand the parameters of their residential community in Ocean View and, since 2005, have been building a church nearby. In contrast, they do not often participate in the activities of the larger community.

The Ka'ū Cultural Fair was held in Waiohinu in early September 2002. Although many Hawaiians, Filipinos, and haole were in attendance, there were no Marshall Islanders in spite of a large part of the Enewetak group living in Ka'ū, just a dozen miles away. At an "Aloha Welcome" put on by the Na'alehu Elementary School, only one Marshallese family showed up. Although many at the school took this as a sign of noninterest, several Enewetak residents indicated that they feared attending this and similar events. By keeping very little contact with institutional officials, community members attempt to minimize their vulnerability. Others cannot complain about them or ban them from important activities like school if they cannot be found. *Tileek* (hiding out) is an interactive mode of choice. With the feeling that others do not like them, their hope is that they can extend their tenure by remaining "out of sight, out of mind." In 2002, Bilimon,<sup>8</sup> an Enewetak migrant whose house is built next to the main road that passes



through Ocean View, said: "If I bought land now, because I have greater understanding, I never would have purchased here. I would have purchased at a distance up there [away from the highway], on account of the fact that it would be a good place for me to hide out a little bit." In 2006, with his older brother having moved to a land parcel two blocks above him, hidden behind a hill in Ocean View, Bilimon reiterated: "Well, that place belonging to that guy, your other sister's son [Bilimon's older brother], it is much better than here because in that location he is able to hide out."

If tileekek is a mode of interaction perfected by Enewetak on the Big Island, it was certainly not invented there. Enewetak people say that the very first time they encountered white men they ran and hid in the bush, "like rats hiding under coconut fronds." During their thirty-three years on Ujelang, people complained about the isolation of life on that outermost atoll of the Marshall Islands, but they also used the isolation to their advantage and, in some ways, came to value it. Indeed, the distance and marginality helped preserve the independence of Enewetak/Ujelang chiefs from the power of Marshall Islands chiefs, much as had been the case in past centuries, and it helped build a solid sense of Ujelang identity, much as it continues to do on the Big Island today. Indeed, even daily patterns of eating within the community are laced with tileekek. Because all food should be shared, anytime people eat food when others are not eating, or any time they eat highly ranked foods, they hide their actions from others in order to break the rules of sharing without damage to the sense of group solidarity.

At the same time, hiding out forever in a place like the Big Island is unlikely. Therefore, even though most people have the intention of remaining in Hawai'i as long as possible, a tentativeness can be readily detected in most Enewetak residents' discourses. In 2002, Joniten spoke as though he were fighting a losing battle on several fronts, particularly in relation to the schools and in relation to Ocean View building codes. But he also said, "I am not yet gone, and many children have already reached their goal here [a better education, a high-school diploma]." In 2006, Joniten's agemate and cousin, Jonaten, sacrificed his dream of long-term residence on the Big Island, but it was a charge of spouse abuse rather than building codes or school-related concerns that forced him to return to the Marshall Islands. Prior to leaving Hawai'i, Jonaten had said, "Perhaps if they grab me [for not building properly], I will be gone. But we are continuing to try [*kate*], until they throw us out." Little did Jonaten recognize that his own demeanor within his own family would prove to be of far more concern to state authorities than the physical condition of his house.

### **Life, Land, Love (Cohesion/Solidarity) and the Grounding of Identity**

The tentativeness voiced by Enewetak residents of the Big Island represents insecurity about identity that is far less elaborated in the Marshall Islands. Even as Enewetak people worry about control over what constitutes "Enewetak custom" in the latter locale, personal and extended family identity is solidly grounded in long-standing relationships with land.<sup>9</sup> People live on lands inhabited by their ancestors, which provides unquestioned psychological comfort because the lands are inalienable. These ties only increase as one works the land, invests labor in it, ingests its produce, and ultimately infuses one's own substance into the land at death. That lands in Hawai'i can be bought and sold on a fee-simple basis, that the substance of one's clan ancestors is not indelibly embedded in these lands, and that people fear they may be forced off the lands they have purchased, worked, and infused with their own substance creates insecurity in the way members of the Enewetak community negotiate their senses of identity in Hawai'i.

In spite of these insecurities, many of the ways Marshallese fashion identities in Hawai'i rely on social practices of long standing. Enewetak people are hardly becoming radical American-style individuals. Rather, senses of self are highly dynamic and continue to be woven into the mesh of interrelationships that dynamically constitute the local Marshallese community.

One major event in which communal relationships are actively enabled is *Kūrijmōj* (Marshallese Christmas). Although the building of solidarity is hardly a new feature of *Kūrijmōj* (Carucci 1980, 1997a), the centrality of this celebration as the primary setting in which community is enacted is perhaps even greater on the Big Island, where people are dispersed across the landscape from Kawaihae to Ocean View, about a two-hour drive to the south. Frank, who lives in Kawaihae, noted, "There is a great deal of sadness here [on the Big Island] because people are separated one from another. Some are here, some in Waimea, some in Kailua, some in Ocean View, and it is only occasionally that we see one another. We are here in Kawaihae, and a long way from other people." Frank sees this as a cause for "creating a lot of sadness." Nevertheless, *Kūrijmōj* provides an antidote to isolation. Not only does *Kūrijmōj* continue to be a central social event through which happiness is created, it is also eagerly awaited as a time for gathering together. Indeed, although many activities during *Kūrijmōj* pit the abilities of song-fest groups against one another (Carucci 1993), on the Big Island, the very act of being with one another, far more than the rituals

of competition among opposed groups, makes the celebration of Kūrijmōj an occasion filled with joy.<sup>10</sup> In the 2002 competition, two respected elders spoke for their respective song-fest groups in nearly identical terms. Both noted, “If it were not for Kūrijmōj, we never would have gotten together and created happiness with one another.”

It is important to note that first-birthday celebrations (*keemem*), weddings, funerals, and weekly church services are equally critical ways that communal identities are maintained and renegotiated on the Big Island. Indeed, as others have claimed (e.g., Gershon 2007; Allen 1997), the church becomes a highly overdetermined site where continuities of identity are perpetuated in diasporic situations. However, as much as this is true of Enewetak residents on the Big Island, it is also true that the very setting that fashions community by physically bringing people together into a corporate unit also divides them. For the Enewetak community, the fissioning of religious groups began about a decade after the community was repatriated on Enewetak (see Carucci 2003), and by 2008 community members on the Big Island had split their allegiances among five different sects.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, churches provide a physical locale where spatially remote community members meet face-to-face, and it is this coming together as a community that replicates a social condition recalled with great nostalgia when thinking about life on Ujelang or Enewetak. Indeed, as much as religious affiliation can divide the community, Kūrijmōj provides one context in which an attempt at reconciliation has occurred between the various religious sects. Although most song-fest competitions still occur among the three *jepta* (song-fest groups) of UCC followers on the Kona coast (with a fourth Hilo *jepta* occasionally in attendance), occasional song-fest competitions (*kamolu*) are held with the other sects as well. However, it is at large and inclusive weddings sponsored by well-positioned families and, equally, at funerals that the sectarian divides are most commonly bridged, because ties of extended family crosscut the various religious sects. Indeed, for extravagant weddings and for funerals, all Marshallese living on the Big Island are invited.

As one would expect, capitalism has forced certain kinds of change on the community, but as noted, it has not reshaped Marshallese extended families into nuclear units. Rather, to cope with the high cost of living in Hawai‘i, already extensive families have extended their range. Equally, although young people and newlyweds often work as hourly laborers, both older and younger people perpetuate the structure of family subsistence pursuits, although modified to fit the exigencies of capitalism. Indeed, even though extended families are spread across the landscape in a more dispersed pattern than on Enewetak (or in former times on Ujelang), working

together on day trips to “make coffee” or “make macadamia” (that is, harvest these products) creates bonds of solidarity among members of extended families. These subsistence pursuits, along with such activities as joint shopping ventures, operate on the margins of capitalism, reproducing several features of “living in the ways of the past” at the same time that they forge new channels of identity, making and allowing people to come to think of themselves as examples of the modern.

The collection of raw materials and foodstuffs is another important component of identity making, central to how people define themselves to outsiders, and equally important to internal processes of identity formation. In contrast to residents of the southern Marshall Islands, for example, Enewetak/Ujelang people have long considered themselves as fishers. Majuro people, and others closer to the equator, were viewed as dependent on breadfruit, taro, coconut, pandanus, and arrowroot. These were the primary land foods in the northern Marshall Islands and were closely associated, both in myth and daily practice, with being a certain type of person—a planter (*di kalip*). At the internal level, other critical components of identity are engendered, because raw foods have long been gathered in gender-specific groups in the Marshall Islands, with males responsible for providing sea products and females focused on gathering most land foods.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, each of the identity-fashioning components of subsistence and food production have been sensitive to historical shifts, and the move to the Big Island provides only the most recent pragmatically inspired set of cultural reformulations in the alignments between food and identity.

Making coffee and making macadamia are conducted as extended family activities involving both males and females, young and old. Similarly, provisioning from the grocer also involves both male and female members of extended families, because these trips require excursions that rely on transportation by automobile. Although some women drive, the long-standing association between men and *wa* (sailing canoes) has resulted in an overdetermined relationship between men and *wa* (land-based vehicles) in the contemporary era. From these examples, it is clear that pragmatic conditions on the Big Island have required a renegotiation of the gendered division of labor and a concomitant revaluation of power relationships within extended families and communities. At the same time, these shifts are far from simple “westernization.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the male provider/female shopper stereotype that was once pervasive in the United States is not reflected in Marshallese practice. Rather, Big Island Marshallese subsistence activities are based less on gender groups and more on family groups. Equally, rather than nuclear families it is large extended families—even more expansive in their contours than extended families in the Marshall Islands—that pursue these activities.

Such large extended families are, in part, a response to the costs of paying rent or of purchasing land and building a dwelling on the Big Island. Large extended families also result from a plethora of students who join their extended families on the Big Island to pursue an education. This pattern was established in the 1950s and 1960s among extended families on Majuro, long before migrations to the Big Island began. As on Majuro, if households become too large, internal conflict increases. Unlike Majuro, however, the large household units on the Big Island provide a centralized source of labor. More family members can pick more coffee or gather more mangoes than just a few. In addition, bilingual students, or those recently graduated, can often provide translation assistance within a family on the Big Island, something of little value in the Marshallese-speaking urban center of Majuro.

### **From Face-to-Face to Technological Interface: Channels of Communication and Cohesion**

Equally important to the recontouring of identity-fashioning practices and the construction of sociality within the Enewetak community on the Big Island is the telephone, a device that perpetuates facets of the face-to-face interactions that are compromised by the dispersed settlement pattern in Hawai'i. People's dependence on the telephone to maintain close social ties with relatives in the homeland is legendary, with the cost of long-distance telephone calls to the Marshall Islands running into the hundreds of dollars. Indeed, residence patterns are often altered after Marshallese have been forced to default on paying their telephone bill and choose to move rather than face creditors. This, however, is a minor cost in relation to the extremely high value placed on maintaining social connections through the telephone. These social connections are nothing less than a manifest expression of a person's own relational identity, and international calls are far less frequent than the barrage of local calls that help weave Big Island Marshallese into a viable community despite their being spread out along the full length of the Kona Coast. Even though the phone is highly valued as a medium of Marshallese identity construction, the content of telephone conversations is discussed in far more ambiguous terms. Accustomed to an internal politics negotiated face to face, first-generation Enewetak immigrants to the Big Island recognize the limitations of the telephone because without "standing in front of [someone's] face, you will never know if s/he is truth-telling or lying." For respected elders in the community, telephone conversations serve as simulacra (Baudrillard 1988: 166–84), capturing a few critical dimensions of interpersonal relations without being able to

subvert the desire for the intimacies of actually being with other members of the community. Not surprisingly, youth have a different sensibility, viewing face-to-face and telephone communications as complementary, rather than considering the phone an inferior mode of interaction.

Among Big Island Marshallese, life-cycle and church-related rituals occur two or three times a week, becoming a burden in a location where transportation is quite costly. Nevertheless, such face-to-face encounters occur far less frequently than on Ujelang. Although occasions to meet in person with one's relatives in the Marshall Islands are extremely desirable, the high cost of travel makes them far less frequent, elevating the value of telephone calls as well as the risks associated with unpayable telephone bills.

The phone, then, is viewed as enabling at the same moment it introduces a foreign interlocutor into any long-distance conversation, an outside presence with considerable power. As one old resident commented, "On this island [Hawai'i], even speaking with people in your own family has a high cost!" By introducing an element of foreign surveillance into extended families, the telephone is simultaneously desirable and a source of threat. Given that "hiding out" is one of the community's adaptive strategies, the calls of bill collectors and others who have no position within the Big Island Marshallese community disrupt people's ideas about the boundary that should separate family and community affairs from the concerns of others. If Marshall Islanders on Hawai'i find the community-engendering possibilities of the telephone beneficial, and see bill collectors as invasive, survey calls are even more perplexing. As I sat through one such call in Bilimon's cookhouse, he answered questions of a telephone survey worker patiently but unenthusiastically. When he hung up the telephone, he immediately asked, "Why is it that *di palle* [white people/Americans] call and ask questions of this sort? Are they crazy, or what? What result [are they expecting to achieve]? Can they not see that they are destroying the peacefulness within a family when they call us here? We say that *di palle* are smart but, in actuality, they are really mentally disturbed [*relukuun tano*]."

Enewetak and Majuro present quite different symbolic appropriations and pragmatic routines in relation to telephones. Other than the land lines of businesses and government offices, virtually all telephones in Majuro are now cell phones. Easily regulated by pay-as-you-go cell-phone cards, communications by cell phone provide an inexpensive option to telephone line service on an atoll that from tip to tip measures twenty-six miles. At the same time, with increasingly apparent lines of distinction between wealthy and poor, cell phones provide one way to both enact and track such claims of rank. Poor families do without any cell-phone service, whereas

the wealthy and most highly ranked (often, government employees) carry several cell phones and distribute their different telephone numbers to select audiences as a way of controlling pleas for assistance from demanding relatives. Although land lines began as the standard on the Big Island, economically advantaged Marshallese now also carry cell phones. Because these are contract-service phones, service is frequently disconnected when overdue bills remain unpaid. Those with questionable credit histories, however, still have access to pay-as-you-go cell phones. Therefore, in this context, rank is often projected in a number of ways, all conflated into a multilayered social space. In some ways, the old-style rank that could be held only by the eldest lucid *alab* (respected elders) is still in evidence. Yet, attempted contestations of this type of rank can be seen among economically well-situated Marshallese who use technological devices like telephones to enhance their ability to position themselves at the center of communication networks that are themselves markers of persons of importance in the community. Those with such economic advantages have both land lines and contract cell phones. Others have only land lines or pay-as-you-go cell phones and, of course, some community members have neither. All of these links to potential sources of power overlap in ways that may seem seamless, while at the same time they are multilayered and highly productive in a cultural sense. Such uses are not only contextual but also strategic, contributing to the way in which families and communities “circulate knowledge” and, therefore, how they also renegotiate identities in a wide variety of transnational contexts (e.g., Gershon 2007, 490; Linnekin and Poyer 1990).

The local potentialities of telephone technologies in the varied contexts in which Enewetak people reside in the current day are founded on a much more constrained model developed on Ujelang. During the years that people lived in isolation there, radio communications (*wailej*) with Majuro and other atolls in the Marshalls and Eastern Caroline Islands provided a relatively dependable although very public form of communication. Indeed, as a social event, *wailej* (as a nominative category) designated the temporal period as well as the gathering each evening when people came together to make such calls. This same pattern continues until the current day on Enewetak, even if the more dispersed residence pattern (in comparison with Ujelang) makes *wailej* a less communal event. Nevertheless, a kind of elitism has now been introduced on Enewetak because a single satellite telephone is currently available at the Department of Energy (DOE) office. Exploiting familiar patterns of family networking, phone use by close relatives of DOE office workers is very common. Except in serious emergencies, all others must communicate by *wailej*, giving to those community



members who control access to the DOE phone a feeling of ranked status and others a reason to criticize their presumption of privilege (regarding the dynamic social import of newly emergent communicative strategies, see Howard and Rensel 2004, 2012 [this issue]).

The automobile is another technological device that has become integral to the way Marshallese fashion a sense of communal identity on the Big Island. Nuer people, who migrated from the Sudan to Minnesota, have said that “a car is like a bad cow” (Holtzman 2000: 64–70), and for Big Island Enewetak residents automobiles have become, in many senses, “bad sailing canoes.” Nevertheless, most Marshall Islanders’ encounters with cars have endured for more than a generation, and although cars have replaced canoes and outboard motor boats on the Big Island as foci of male activity—since men are often engaged in “sailing” and repairing the vehicles—these vehicles are also seen as imperative to the construction and perpetuation of community in a dispersed residential setting like the Kona Coast of the Big Island. In this sense, automobiles are much like telephones. Indeed, as with unpaid phone bills, automobiles are also one of the rough-edged situations where Marshallese often come into negative interactions with authorities—in this case, the police. Driving with an expired registration, or driving without a license or insurance, are all sources of state discipline. Nevertheless, relational identities cannot be fashioned without relationships, and automobiles are maintained in spite of their inordinately high costs because they bring Big Island Marshallese into face-to-face relationships with one another. Cars consume tremendous amounts of cash, but they also produce opportunities. Much as canoe builders were highly respected members of the community in the recent past on Enewetak and Ujelang, those who can repair and maintain cars are held in high regard by others within the community. However, whereas young canoe builders always apprenticed with an aged expert, young men frequently teach themselves to repair vehicles. Indeed, without an apprenticeship program, the large number of failures are clearly marked by the accumulating array of junk vehicles in the yards of Ocean View Marshallese homes. An eyesore for irate neighbors and a constant source of complaint, these mini-junkyards are viewed as a resource by budding mechanics, who constantly negotiate exchanges with other Marshallese residents to obtain a part needed for repair.<sup>14</sup>

### **Bonds that Bind: Insularity and Marriage**

Marriages have long required Marshall Islanders to publically project as well as renegotiate identity because they involve revitalizing relationships



among at least two groups. On the Big Island, marriage relationships underlie the reconstruction of in-group solidarities as well as the sense of isolation and “remaining by themselves” that outsiders attribute to the Marshallese. As has been the case since the mid-1980s, marriages between Enewetak people and other Marshall Islanders are quite frequent. Although intermarriage has blurred boundaries between these groups, it has certainly not extinguished them. Many Big Island residents with Enewetak ancestors continue to speak of themselves as “Enewetak people,” and speaking styles as well as a number of distinctive social practices are used as markers of group distinction. At the same time, marriages between Marshallese and other Big Island residents are almost nonexistent. Although this is likely to change in upcoming generations as today’s children raised and socialized as Hawai’i Marshallese mature, at the moment the sense of a Marshallese community, separate from others on the Big Island, rests squarely on the marital insularity of the group. Bilimon noted, “Oh, there are some [or many] Marshallese marriages with Hawaiians.” As he begins to enumerate these unions, however, it becomes clear that they are extremely infrequent. Moreover, of the marriages he lists, most are marriages between Marshallese women and Hawaiian-Filipino, Japanese-Hawaiian, and haole men who were working on Kwajalein, Enewetak, or elsewhere in the Marshall Islands when the marriages took place. Under the very different social conditions on the Big Island (where potential spouses from many backgrounds are present), only a very limited number of Marshallese women have married non-Marshallese Big Island men, and only one *di palle* woman had married a Marshallese man.<sup>15</sup> None of the “out marriages” contracted by Marshallese in Hawai’i as of 2008 involved Enewetak people.

### **Speaking Internally; Internally Speaking**

The Enewetak dialect of Marshallese has long separated Enewetak/Ujelang people from the residents of the Ratak and Ralik Chains respectively.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, in the 1970s Ujelang residents frequently defined their identity in opposition to Marshall Islanders, a separation based on speech style as well as various cultural practices. On the Big Island, however, the foregrounding of internal differences among Marshallese is managed quite differently. Extant differences in speaking style are often overlooked in public, where spoken Marshallese serves as a secret language, promoting privacy and solidarity while resisting disciplinary practices that attempt to force all residents of Hawai’i to speak in English. However nonstandard these forms of spoken English may be, Marshallese discourses at home, on school playgrounds, and in the corners of classrooms serve to perpetuate a solid

sense of Marshallese identity in the multivalent ethnic climate of Hawai'i. At times, children, youth, and even mature adults play with spoken English. Code switching is far more common in Hawai'i than in the Marshalls, and reformulated English phrases are integral components of Big Island Marshallese discourses. I heard English phrases with greater frequency in 2008 and 2010 than in 2002, pointing perhaps to a long-term demise of spoken Marshallese in Hawai'i and in other locations where Marshall Islanders live in the United States. Nevertheless, in the shorter term, Marshallese language predominates in the home and at all community activities, and will produce robust identities at least as long as Marshallese–Marshallese marriage continues to prevail.<sup>17</sup>

If the significance of different forms of spoken Marshallese has been diminished, they have not disappeared. Rather, distinctions in discursive style are only discussed in private settings, whereas the potent myth of Marshallese as an undifferentiated mode of speaking is more frequently asserted in public contexts as a symbol of unity in opposition to the speaking styles of very different others next door. The language is in constant flux, incorporating new reformulated elements from English, Hawaiian pidgin, and other sources at the very moment that the use of Marshallese as a preferred mode of communication within the community is paraded as an icon of core Marshallese identity. Thus, the repositioning of identity within the community relies on representations of linguistic unity, fixity, and opposition to other linguistic possibilities.

### Rethinking Land, Food and Atmosphere

Central components of Enewetak identity have long been transmitted through links to land, through consuming foods that are the products of one's own labor on those lands, and, as Susanne Kuehling (2012) notes elsewhere in this issue, through inhaling and existing in a certain "atmosphere" (*mejatoto*) that involves breathing scents and sharing in the vibrations and air of any location of cohabitation. At the same time, the many years that Enewetak people lived in exile on Ujelang, and the years spent consuming USDA foods since their return, have changed the texture and altered the density of these identity markers. Nevertheless, Big Island residents continue to use atmosphere, food, and land as identity markers even at a distance from the original products and places.

Atmosphere/air is the most pliable mode through which identities may be perpetuated and recontoured. Marshall Islanders believe it is imperative to live in a suitable atmosphere, breathing air and feeling vibrations that are positively inclined to avoid a sense of total disenfranchisement (*abnono*).

The unsettled life that one may lead in a location where the atmosphere is undesirable is extraordinarily dangerous, even life-threatening. Again, as Kuehling (2012 [this issue]) notes for Carolinians, Enewetak/Ujelang people on the Big Island work to fashion settings with desirable scents and sounds and to avoid those they consider threatening in their day-to-day lives. Although these practices are woven throughout each activity, they are particularly marked at ceremonial events like first-birthday celebrations, the celebration of Kūrijmōj, and funeral services.

Both food and land are equally important, but representations that rely on food are far more readily recontoured into markers of identity on the Big Island than are representations that rely on land. This reflects an uncertainty about land ownership under capitalism that is not felt with food. Like scent and music, food is a readily pliable representation, transformed into bodily substance on a daily basis. Continuities that might align people and land are much longer-term associative chains requiring people to stay on the land for many years, even generations. Although Enewetak residents of Ocean View have purchased their land, they live with the fear that those who sold them the land or someone else with a complaint about Marshall Islanders will, at some point, appear and attempt to take it back. Hence, great uncertainty surrounds these new lands.

People speak with a sense of satisfaction at the plentitude of food in Hawai'i. Nevertheless, they also yearn for Marshallese foods and use them in nostalgic ways that extend images of being "Marshallese to the core" into the current moment and the current location. For example, Linei, the wife of a former Protestant pastor from Wotje, said: "Oh, don't we yearn for (*iokwe*) Marshallese breadfruit! Such is its deliciousness. We are tired of eating the breadfruit from this island because they are very different from Marshallese breadfruit." Like many utterances of this sort, Linei's contains two levels of identity perpetuation: first, people continue to consume breadfruit here, much as in the Marshalls; second, local varieties in Hawai'i are seen as lacking some of the desirable attributes of Marshallese breadfruit.

For Enewetak people, who have lived for so many years without many of these products, Ujelang foods are used to represent this sense of who they really are. Tonita and Timilej (pseudonyms), for example, spoke with nostalgia about being on Ujelang, where "everyday there are many pandanus to chew, breadfruit to consume, and fish to eat. [These items] are extremely delicious and, on Ujelang, we just eat them to the point of impossibility [that is, until we could not possibly eat another bite]." Part of this portrayal speaks to former experiences shared with me, yet it also points out the critical importance of Marshallese foods on the Big Island

today. Not all of this is nostalgia. While I spoke with Tonita, we ate "sprouted coconut soup," a concoction made with sprouted coconuts that Tonita had just brought with her from the Marshall Islands. On my next visit, we consumed *juup in panke* (softened rice and squash soup). Although this is another standard type of food prepared on Ujelang and Enewetak, all of the ingredients in this meal had been purchased or raised in Hawai'i. At every meal, Big Island Marshallese consume the same sorts of food they eat in the Marshall Islands. Not infrequently, they also eat food imported from the Marshall Islands. Both of these practices, at different levels, help to construct and perpetuate core elements of Marshallese identity.

In addition, pandanus, breadfruit, and other plants have been transported from the Marshall Islands to the Big Island and planted in the soil surrounding people's homes, creating continuities of identity in people's lives. Biijen (a pseudonym), for example, said: "Yes, that pandanus is from Ruujia [Biijen's land parcel in the Marshalls], and it is extremely delicious. When it is mature, it will bear fruit and we will be able to take its fruits and chew on them just as if we were sitting on Enewetak." Biijen also spoke of two decorative trees that he had planted from "our [dual, inclusive] land parcel on Enewetak." These identity fragments iconically and indexically re-create the conditions through which continuities of identity are sewn into the land to make it into home. More subtly, a large (although not exhaustive) array of Hawaiian plants, animals, and fishes have been identified, classified, and discussed, thus bringing them alive for Marshallese. This may seem a trivial process of finding local tokens of long-standing types, but, left unattended, it obscures a significant process of transmutation. One of the most commonly consumed fish on the Big Island is *bwilak*, a variety frequently encountered when spearfishing along the Kona Coast. Although this fish has its own Hawaiian name and its scientific designation, *Naso lituratus*, as a regional subspecies, for Big Island Marshallese it becomes "indigenized" as *bwilak*, giving a Marshallese sensibility and familiarity to the local universe at the same time that people temporarily recognize differences. Thus, Tobin said, "These fish are not as delicious as are *bwilak* from Ujelang; those are so greasy; nevertheless, these are better than nothing." And one of Tobin's sister's sons says, "Well, these *bwilak* are not the same; do you see their skin? Its contours are a little different than the skin of *bwilak* on Enewetak." In subsequent years, however, without the comparative frame, the "new" *bwilak* will likely become the original in the minds of this transnational community, not a simulacra that points to a different original. Breadfruit (and similarly, pandanus) are often referred to by varietal names in the Marshall Islands, but on the Big Island they are just *mā* (breadfruit), since most local types are not known. Only the name

*mejwaan* (a type of breadfruit whose name literally means untrue [or wild] breadfruit) is used in Hawai'i to distinguish *Artocarpus incisus* (breadfruit with seeds) from other, more desirable varieties. Renaming the local universe by analogy with a set of Marshallese simulacra will occur only once, for adults and relatively mature adolescents who move here from the Marshall Islands. The "similarity to a prototype" will disappear for youth who have lived most of their lives in Hawai'i. It is with those upcoming generations that major modifications in expatriate Marshall Islands identities and worldview can be expected to emerge.

Unlike plants, land has not been physically transported to the Big Island. Nevertheless, land plays a central role in current constructions of identity. For example, when Kreita, an aging family head, was confined to a strict regimen of dialysis to perpetuate her life in the face of her diabetes-related disease, she eventually made the decision to return to the Marshall Islands so she could "see again the atoll one more time prior to my disappearance." She did not want to be embalmed or to have her body frozen. The sole option, according to her son, was to return while she was living, even though she realized that she would live no more than a few weeks once she distanced herself from the hospitals in Hawai'i that could "sieve" her blood. Kreita's choice to "return to the source" is an example of perpetuating one's sense of identity by re-linking, either temporarily or permanently, a person with his or her homeland. Similarly, residents attempt to travel back and forth with some frequency, in spite of the considerable cost, to perpetuate ties with community and land on Enewetak (for similar practices on Namoluk, see Marshall 2004: 84, 98–111).

Kreita's son, Joniten, however, has adopted an opposite strategy. As one of the founders of the Big Island community, the length of time he has spent away from home has become a marker of his seniority within the Big Island Marshallese community. He specifically discussed the length of his absence as one element of the "struggles" (*iñtaan*) he must overcome to remain in Hawai'i. Contrasting his experience with other long-standing Big Island Enewetak people, he noted that it was he alone who had never returned to the Marshalls. In Joniten's discourse, then, the incessant nature of his struggles on the Big Island becomes a central component in the sacrifice he makes for the community as a whole and, therefore, a unique defining feature of his symbolic power in the Big Island community.

The songs and speeches of Kūrijmōj are used, with some subtlety, to create continuities with the homeland.<sup>18</sup> For example, in "*Ilo jebiloklokin aelōn kein*," one of the Ocean View jepta songs from 2002, the singers project an image of "these islands of ours"—the clear referent being the Marshall Islands—onto the Big Island.

Ilo Jebloklokin Aelon Kein<sup>19</sup>

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1) Ilo jebloklokin aelon kein<br>rej ebebe ioon lometo<br>in aelon kein ad<br>Aelon eo am ej bed im romak<br>raan nan raan<br>kin naan eo ear<br>rubrube aelon kein | 1) In the scattered nature of these atolls<br>they (the atolls) float on the ocean,<br>of our atolls (collective)<br>Your atoll remains where it is, and shines<br>day-to-day<br>with the Word (i.e., God's Word) that<br>blew up (exploded) these atolls |
|---|---|

Chorus:

Tuuri im boklontak  
 jan ikijet im kalikar

Imejan lal in ke

e bar jetjet

Let im lot  
 enaj kaliktak  
 jan im eo im e bar ien  
 keke toto  
 Oh, rainin

Chorus:

Dive down and bring it up (toward me)  
 from the floor of the ocean and clarify  
 (place on display)  
 for the world to see that (literally: in the  
 face of the earth's surface that)  
 it is time again (literally: it is once again  
 fitted/aligned)

Which woman and which man  
 will shy away (literally: will fly to the rear)  
 from the uprising as it is time once again  
 to stand strong (literally: to flex muscle)  
 Oh, this day (today)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 2) Kwo bed ia, kwo mad ia<br>urak tom, jab ettolok<br>koba ippen doon<br>jooj tutu rake<br>Bwe momaan in aelon kein<br>rebed ippen ri-Ocean View<br>kin ke rej kemaramlok<br>aelon kein ad | 2) Where are you, where do you remain<br>move toward me, do not distance yourself<br>come together<br>all of us uphold it as a group<br>For the (real) men of these atolls<br>are with the people of Ocean View<br>because they are illuminating<br>these atolls of ours |
|--|--|

The second verse begins with the query, "Where are you?" and then entices the listener to become part of the group because "the men of these [nearby] atolls are with the people of Ocean View, because they are illuminating [continuing to bring light to] these atolls of ours." "Ocean View" refers to the name of a song-fest group (jepta) as well as a Big Island residence location, but the song elides the distance between Ocean View and the Marshall Islands ("these atolls of ours"), creating a continuity of spatial referents that unifies locales separated by vast expanses of ocean. The song relocates "our atolls" as if they were adjacent to and included Ocean View, not over two

thousand miles distant. Other Kūrijmōj songs perform comparable transpositions of space, whereas most of them accomplish a similar spatial displacement or reorientation by locating the singers of the songs (along with active listeners) as if they were elsewhere, in the Marshall Islands, where events described in the songs are discursively situated.

A battle among respected elders giving speeches at a song-fest competition in 2002 reinforced these spatial realignments. One of the respected elders, speaking allegorically, said, “And so the passport and [plane] ticket are really one and the same. You cannot go anywhere without those two things, the passport and the ticket, because they go together.” The respected elder from the opposite song-fest group, contesting the first elder’s analogy, responded, “Well, this thing is not true; the passport and the ticket are really different. And while you need both to fly to America, here in these islands of ours, you need only a ticket. There is no value to a passport, and if you give it to the [airlines] people they will just grab it and throw it on the ground, for it has not the least significance in these islands of ours.” The second respected elder transported the entirety of the Marshall Islands to Ocean View, where these particular activities were taking place, and argued that it was in the Marshall Islands (however much the audience might have been sitting in the fiftieth state of the United States) that the meaningful interactions of the song-fest groups are taking place. Whatever physical distance may separate Big Island residents from their homeland, the linguistic and psycho-cultural distance is often elided in the performances of Kūrijmōj.

### Conclusion

Big Island residents from Enewetak, now three decades after the arrival of the first community members, have adopted numerous strategies to build a strong sense of themselves as “Enewetak or Ujelang people” and as “Marshall Islanders.” In this environment, however, their sense of themselves has necessarily taken on new contours as a result of very different power relations—contours similar to and yet, in certain respects, quite distinct from those found in the Marshall Islands. There is an insecurity that occupies the sensibilities of Big Island Enewetak residents in reaction to others’ negative portrayals of them. Yet to the very degree that their sense of being cannot exist other than in relation to their own formulations of an internal image of the negative imprint of others’ stereotypes, however incompletely known, this insecurity has resulted in communal practices that help inscribe a well-defined sense of what it means to be a Big Island Marshallese. Although a variety of hybrid identities with new sets of innovative and blended contours lie on the horizon, the conscious sense that



Enewetak/Ujelang Marshallese are not wholly welcome members of the American family has produced a certain insularity within the community. This insularity, rooted in marriages, shared activities, and linguistic practices, helps perpetuate a strong sense of distinction precisely because the contours of difference are developed in direct relation to others' practices of distinguishing Marshall Islanders in Hawai'i. This odd juxtaposition of contested identities and projections of others provides the context within which a clearly bounded sense of Big Island Marshallese-ness has been developed today.

### NOTES

1. Research on which this article is based was conducted in the Marshall Islands and in Hawai'i between 1975 and 2010. Funding has been provided by the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, INBRE (National Institutes of Health), the Enewetak/Ujelang Local Government Council, and Montana State University. Although I am most appreciative of the support of these agencies and institutions, all interpretations expressed herein are those of the author. An initial period of over two years of research was conducted with Enewetak/Ujelang community members on Ujelang between 1976 and 1978 with a return visit to Enewetak for thirteen months in 1982. Frequent summer research visits to the Marshall Islands continued between 1990 and 2000 along with more extended periods of residence in 1990–91 and 1995. The author worked for eight months with the Big Island Marshallese community in Hawai'i in 2002–3 with repeat visits in 2005, 2006, 2008, and 2010. Research with Enewetak-Ujelang people in Majuro and on Enewetak was again carried out in July and August 2009. In addition, comparative research has been conducted on Kwajalein Atoll, Utedik Atoll, and with Rongelap people on Mejjatto (along with visits to Rongelap), as well as a brief visit with Marshallese residents of Arkansas. The assessments of members of the Ujelang, Enewetak, and the Big Island communities are grounded in the histories of life in these varied locations as compared with the lives of other Marshallese mentioned above.

2. Even in 2009, more than thirty years after the first replanting effort, coconut production remained around 25 percent of its predicted potential by 1985, despite coconut being the heartiest of food crops. Pandanus, breadfruit, and specialty crops like taro, bananas, and papaya lag far behind coconut production. Recent droughts have complicated agricultural rehabilitation, but lack of quality soil remains the largest single factor inhibiting successful plant growth.

3. These dreams are quite analogous to those voiced by Pohnpeians who have moved to Hawai'i (see Falgout 2012 [this issue]). However, although Falgout, following Hau'ofa, suggests that all "Oceanic peoples in diaspora, are indeed 'doing what their ancestors had done before them: enlarging their world as they go, but on a scale not possible before'" (Hau'ofa 1993, 10), I suggest that this typification is too speculative, too generic, and too generously indulgent of Euro-American bias. As for speculation, the actions of ancestors, particularly ancient ones, are knowable only in their most generic outlines. There is no doubt that Big Island Marshallese are reshaping "their world as they go,"



but it is questionable whether their world is now enlarged or only contoured and specialized differently from the world of their Marshall Islands ancestors. Larger worlds generically experienced by all Oceanic peoples are also far too reminiscent of a progressivist view of the world deeply interwoven with developmental and social evolutionary biases. Instead, I argue that each community must be scrutinized cautiously with careful attention to local practices linked to specific cultural and historical contexts.

4. Intaan (hardship or suffering) appears, on the surface, to be an unusual category to be used to describe daily life on the Big Island by a group of people who suffered huge losses during World War II as well as cycles of hunger, starvation, and even death during their lengthy period of exile on Ujelang. Yet, in the context of life on the Big Island, intaan is a type of “reconversion strategy,” as Pierre Bourdieu might refer to it (1984: 125–68), in which symbolic capital is evaluated and deployed in a very complex social setting. Now living in a capitalist society with ostentatious and visible indexical markers of rank distinction all around them, it is easy for Big Island Marshallese to see themselves as suffering. However, not only is today’s suffering rooted in contemporary social/psychological and lifestyle comparisons with others on the Big Island but this form of commentary is also directed at (outer island) Marshall Islands’ image of “the easy life” led by Big Island Marshallese. Hence, the subtext of this resident’s comment is, “In reality, life here [on the Big Island] is not easy at all. Instead, we have to endure a lot of hardship so that [your outer island kids as well as our own] can benefit from the education they are receiving in this place.” At yet another level, the respected elder who made the statement might also have been addressing two younger men in his household who had been grumbling about their elder just living off their wages and the support checks provided for the students who resided in his household. The young men were not personally monitoring this conversation, but the wife of one of the young men was within hearing distance of the conversation.

5. Certainly, Enewetak people have long fashioned *di palle* (literally, clothed people, and particularly Americans) into beings with substantial, even supernatural, power (see Carucci 1989). Indeed, the WWII battle for Enewetak and the nuclear tests that followed the war added substantially to their constructions of Americans as empowered beings. Nevertheless, on the Big Island, living in close proximity to powerful others and having to deal with them on a regular basis adds a much different dimension to the types of opportunities and types of threat that these others represent.

6. Marshall Sahlins warned against the idea that such newly fashioned cultural shapes are nothing more than a thing predetermined as a negative image of the irreversible effects of regimes of colonial power. Certainly, I agree that this “reaction formation” model of cultural construction is “culturally insufficient,” that history is neither made by colonial masters nor manifest as an “essentialized culture” lived as an error-filled tragedy (Sahlins 1994: 378–80). Nevertheless, it is equally important to recognize that the “novel local accents” in which new representations are uttered, and in terms of which new practices must be understood, do bear contorted and sublimated images of the colonialist/capitalist forces that have come to be part of their productive landscape (Sahlins 1994, 385). It is these emotive relations of de-centered power, of a force beyond their control, that make the contours of Big Island Marshall Islanders’ activities worthy of attention precisely because these contours always include an indexical mark of insecurity.

7. In an analogous way, many Honolulu residents have now fashioned Marshallese into the newest "most hated" group of Pacific others. One close friend who works at Kapi'olani Park told me that, although Marshallese were formerly invisible, beginning about 2006–7, as their numbers increased, they were scorned by other local visitors to the park. Some Marshallese workers in ABC stores and similar locales also have received threats on their lives simply by now having become a representative of a recognized and despised group.

8. Some of the Marshallese personal names in this essay are pseudonyms, whereas others are people's actual names, depending on their preference or on risk.

9. In this section, I do not mean to imply that Marshallese tradition is, in any sense, unchanging. Such a vision would only perpetuate what Sahlins called one of several "triste tropes of Western hegemony and local anarchy" (1994, 381). Indeed, elsewhere I have argued strongly in favor of a deeply historic and ethnohistoric rendering of the contours of social life in the Marshall Islands (see Carucci 1997b, 2001, 2003, 2004). I believe there is strong evidence that relations to land were overdetermined in the copra era of the late nineteenth century and that the twentieth-century pattern described in this paragraph bears the indelible imprint of those overdeterminations. In the pre-copra era, seafaring formed a much more central part of daily practice, particularly in the northern Marshall Islands, and cultural constructions of identity reflected those distinctions. In the post-independence, post-copra era of the current day, relationships to land in the Marshalls are being significantly reformulated once more, although present-day beliefs still draw heavily on culturally fashioned land-human connections.

10. Of course, "creating happiness" has been one of the core aims of Kūrijmōj long before Ujelang and Enewetak people came to the Big Island (Carucci 1997a). Nevertheless, in this new setting, the sense of separation (much like the value of family reunions for many Americans, even if the Enewetak/Big Island separations are much smaller scale) creates the altered context in which yearning for a past sense of community as a daily performed component of identity that is now lost creates the context in which being together is, in and of itself, enough to "create happiness."

11. By far the largest segment of the community were still loyal Congregationalists (UCC), with a second sizeable contingent attending Assembly of God, the sect that had been introduced as a competition to "*Protijen*" (Protestant, UCC) in the 1990s on Enewetak. Small numbers of converts attended services of the remaining three sects on the Big Island. By 2010, additional small new sects had gained a foothold among Marshallese.

12. Although Kosrae, a near neighbor to Ujelang, provides a sharp contrast to the specific types of labor accomplished by Enewetak/Ujelang males and females, with female fishers and males tending crops, the division of labor along gender lines remains important. Many other Pacific locales, however, have an array of gender-appropriate tasks similar to those on Ujelang and Enewetak (e.g., Feinberg 1986). At the same time, there is some overlap, with females allowed to fish within the reef, even if it is considered somewhat laughable, and males relatively heavily involved in collecting land foods during times of famine. With Big Island life also described as "living in hardship," it should not be surprising that the overlap in gender-appropriate labor discussed in this section becomes part of the daily way of life.

13. When I presented an earlier version of this article to an audience of anthropologists, sociologists, and historians, several of the non-anthropologists insisted on seeing Big Island Marshallese as a microscopic dot on a line that inevitably led to modernization/westernization. Not only does this perspective seem to be extremely paternalistic and ethnocentric, it radically oversimplifies the way in which local conceptions and daily practices come to have significance for Marshallese. If anything, the Big Island experience has led Enewetak/Ujelang people to see themselves as far more radically “other” in relation to Americans than they once felt themselves to be when living a relatively independent existence on Ujelang. At that point in time, Marshallese, Pohnpeians, and other nearby groups constituted the category of “other,” and Ujelang people felt they were more like Americans than were the others around them. However, as I attempt to show in this essay, those immediate Big Island others who must now take account of the Marshallese in their midst have forced Enewetak/Ujelang people to entirely reassess their similarity to and difference from those (now much more differentiated) Americans. One never hears a Big Island Marshallese talk about how similar they are to these “American” others who surround them.

14. By 2006, the accumulation of junk vehicles around Marshallese houses had become one of the most recent arenas of neighbor complaints and police “discipline.” One consultant told me that police had warned some Marshallese residents about accumulating junk vehicles. A meeting was planned for autumn 2006 to discuss several complaints, but he said the meeting would focus on junk vehicles. As with similar housing and sanitation complaints, actual enforcement is unlikely because other land parcels in Ocean View inhabited by haole and Hawaiian residents have more junk vehicles. (One land parcel has forty-four junk cars in the yard.) Marshallese residents see the old cars as a resource, using them within the community as a source of parts to repair usable vehicles. The number of junk vehicles tends to correlate directly with the length of residence in a certain location, and I counted as many as seventeen junk vehicles on one land parcel in Ocean View inhabited by a long-resident Enewetak family. Nevertheless, a midden of accumulating junk vehicles may also be disrupted when other motivations come into play. The consultant who told me of the autumn 2006 meeting, a long-standing community member concerned about maintaining good relations between the Marshallese and others living in Ocean View subdivision, had only four junk vehicles, fairly well hidden from view. As representatives of the community, he and his wife saw it as their responsibility to set an example for the other Marshallese families in Ocean View.

15. This union lasted less than one year. Another American woman, working for World Teach on Enewetak, married into the Enjebi chiefly family, a union that was quite viable in August 2009. This couple was establishing a residence on Majuro at that time with possible plans to move to Enewetak in the future.

16. Although dialectal variants meld into atoll-specific registers within the Republic of the Marshall Islands, it was relatively easy in the 1970s to identify three distinct dialects of spoken Marshallese: Ratak (sunrise chain) dialect, Rālik (sunset chain) dialect, and Enewetak/Ujelang dialect. In some respects, Bikini speech was said to be distinct from the Rālik variant at that time, but it was certainly not as distinguishable as the Enewetak/Ujelang variety. The first elements of an emergent nationalism have involved the elimination of linguistic variants of Marshallese, a process that itself has been highly contested as well as incomplete. If Enewetak/Ujelang speech is now much closer to Rālik speech than it once was, Ratak and Rālik variants are very much alive and well in this century.

17. Alan Howard and Jan Rensel have argued for a distinction between strong and weak versions of cultural identity and suggest that Rotumans manifest a relatively weak version (2004). Clearly, at the current historical moment, Marshallese on the Big Island represent the opposite end of the spectrum. Nevertheless, there are risks to classifying identity on such a linear scale, as if identity were an object with fixed properties. Marshall Islanders view the components of identity in relational terms, and it is those terms that I have chosen to adopt in this essay. Regardless of their daily practices, Marshallese of all stripes consider themselves Marshallese to the core, while at the same moment they objectify other Marshall Islanders as less authentically Marshallese if they do not speak Marshallese at home or if they do not contribute in full measure to community activities. Thus, although Marshallese identities may be currently strong in relation to Rotumans, and although Marshallese on the Big Island see their own identities as stronger than Samoans or Hawaiians, such judgments are always relative. The relatively new status of the Big Island Enewetak/Ujelang community, now just over thirty years in existence, the commitment to spoken Marshallese, and the persistent "othering" of Marshallese newcomers by their neighbors, are all core relational features of their currently "strong" cultural identities. At the same time, Marshallese on the Big Island as well as on Enewetak always see contemporary practices as degenerate, as features of identity now lost, both in relation to recently deceased past generations and, ultimately, in relation to the extremely powerful (*beran*) identities of the first Marshallese ancestors to inhabit the earth (Carucci 1997a).

18. As I did in *Nuclear Nativity* (Carucci 1997a), I choose here to use the Marshallese "Kūrijmōj" rather than "Christmas" to represent this celebration, because it has been culturally fashioned as a festivity that differs radically from anything Euro-Americans would recognize as Christmas.

19. My thanks to Alfred Capelle for assistance with this translation. The Marshallese transcription largely reflects the version written down by Ocean View song leaders with occasional alterations for clarity. Diacriticals are not included.

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## KAPINGAMARANGI PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES

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KAPINGAMARANGI PEOPLE, Polynesians who trace their ancestry to Kapingamarangi Atoll in the Eastern Caroline Islands, are no strangers to diaspora. They formed their first migrant community on Pohnpei Island in 1919, during the early years of the Japanese colonial administration of Micronesia. The community was located in Kolonia Town, the administrative and commercial center, on 21 acres (8.5 ha) in a place called Porakied (literally, “rocky place”) leased by the government to the Kapingamarangi (hereafter Kapinga) people as a place to stay while visiting, working, or living on Pohnpei. A homestead program initiated by the U.S. administration after World War II resulted in a second Kapinga community in Metalanimhw in the south of Pohnpei (Lieber 1984). By 1977, the Kapinga community on Pohnpei had grown to 750 people (compared with 485 on Kapingamarangi Atoll). By 1990, nearly 900 people resided in Porakied.

The growth of education and training programs under the U.S. administration (which had succeeded the Japanese in 1946) has been responsible for most of the travel of Pohnpei residents outside Pohnpei Island and Micronesia. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Micronesian Islanders, including a few Kapinga, were sent to Chuuk, Palau, Saipan, Guam, and Hawai'i. In

the late 1970s, representatives of U.S. mainland colleges came to Pohnpei to recruit students. The first Kapinga to emigrate to the continental United States were students at places like Chemeketa Community College in Salem, Oregon; Oregon College of Education in nearby Monmouth; and Suomi College in Hancock, Michigan. Most of the Kapinga who came as students stayed in the United States, and those in the Salem area now form the oldest and most stable Kapinga enclave aside from Porakied. A second wave of recruitment began in the early 2000s, but this time it was care institutions seeking young people to work with seniors (and with disabled children). Sea World recruited Kapinga for a number of different jobs in Orlando, Florida. By 2002, there were enclaves of Kapinga, mostly people in their twenties and thirties, in Florida and North Carolina. At this writing, there are over 400 Kapinga people scattered across the continental United States, Guam, and Hawai'i.

A main concern in this article is with the formation and maintenance of diasporic communities, including face-to-face and virtual communities in the contemporary context of considerable mobility and the Internet. At issue are not only the dynamics of community formation and transformation, but the very definition of community—one that is suitable for diasporic populations that remain connected via get-togethers, e-mail, Facebook, and other available means of interaction.

Our essay focuses on life experiences in the United States for Kapinga as opposed to other immigrants. For instance, the experiences of Kapinga people who are ill and have no medical insurance, who are arrested for domestic violence, who try to get driver's licenses, and so on, are common experiences shared with many other immigrants to the United States. These are not unimportant, particularly from the standpoint of social policy and social justice, but they tell us nothing about what it is like to live in the United States as a Kapinga person.

Put succinctly, our project is cultural. It is about the culturally specific concepts, the unstated assumptions that the concepts entail, and the resulting cultural models (in the sense of Shore 1996) that filter personal experiences and make them sensible to oneself and one's compatriots. Our cultural focus logically entails two research questions:

1. What concepts, assumptions, and models do Kapinga people replicate in the United States and how?
2. What is the interplay between Kapinga cultural concepts, assumptions, and models and the formation and transformation of diasporic communities?



Homer Barnett, who authored a theory of culture change that echoes throughout the articles in this collection (1953, 1983), reasoned that emigrant populations, whether they have come to a new place for personal reasons, by recruitment, or as a result of relocation by some third party (usually a government), are all assumed to undergo change through efforts to adapt to the new location. This is why Barnett saw the comparison of resettled communities as the closest one could get to a laboratory for the study of culture change (Lieber 1977). Barnett initiated the Pacific Displaced Communities Project, which sponsored twelve field studies in Melanesia, Micronesia, and the Philippines between 1962 and 1970, and one of the groups was the Kapinga who had resettled on Pohnpei (Lieber 1977, 1984).<sup>1</sup> Barnett attributed most adaptive change to a process of recombining cultural traits, a process that is apparent in the interplay between Kapinga in their discussions about genealogy, the ancient religion, and the distinction between ethnic identity and ethnic community described below.

Researchers for the Pacific Displaced Communities Project (of which Lieber was one) began with the reasonable (if naive) expectation that resettled populations would more or less replicate their cultural models of relationships between people and their physical and social environments. They also assumed that people would attempt to replicate their social organizations with whatever expedient alterations their environments demanded. In short, they expected resettled groups to recreate their communities. Most of the groups in the study appeared to have done so, but in ways that challenged the researchers' understanding of the relationship between cultural models, social organization, ethnic identity, and, more importantly, our understanding of what "community" might mean.

An extreme example of the relationship among cultural models, social organization, and identity was the Tikopian population who had resettled in the Russell Islands (Larson 1977). Although they had established a village with a school, a church, and a functioning political decision-making body, these were only temporary expedients. Eric Larson found that Tikopians were obsessed with Tikopian identity and Tikopian "custom." This obsession made it impossible to obtain consensus on the organization and conduct of community projects in the resettled community (Nukufero), because no alternative, regardless of how convenient or intuitively sensible, was acceptable unless it exactly replicated the way it was done back on Tikopia. Adaptive expedients were seen as violations of Tikopian custom, resulting in political paralysis of the community (Larson 1977). Thus, to adapt to new circumstances was to cease to be a Tikopian person. Tikopians saw themselves as a community, but not a bona fide *Tikopian* community. In this case, the relationship between Tikopian cultural models ("customs")

and their manifestations or enactments was a one-to-one replication: the map *was* the territory.

By contrast, Nukuoro on Pohnpei failed to replicate the kind of nucleated village organization of their home atoll, even though they had the land to do so (Carroll 1977). Indeed, their social organization appeared to have fallen apart on Pohnpei, and Nukuoro seemed unconcerned with their relationships with other Nukuoro or with Nukuoro identity on an island dominated by Micronesians. Vern Carroll showed that replicating their cultural models of personal relationships on Pohnpei made it impossible for Nukuoro to replicate their social organization or, according to Carroll, anything resembling a community (1977). The cultural dynamic involved is based on the notion that migratory movements are a result of unresolvable interpersonal conflicts that promote a tendency toward isolation in new environments.

Like the Tikopians, Kapinga people on Pohnpei had to adjust to physical and social environments quite different from those of their home islands. They had to adjust to new ways of making a living and to the constant presence of colonial personnel. But necessary alterations in housing, water sources, food resources, household personnel, and so on, never threatened Kapinga identity. By 1920, Kapinga had established themselves on Pohnpei as deep-sea fishermen, lending them an identity that became part of the fabric of the larger Pohnpeian social and economic networks (Lieber 1990). By the 1950s, Porakied had become a popular tourist destination—Pohnpei's Polynesian village. Unlike the Nukuoro, the Kapinga on Pohnpei lived in a single village whose households were organized much like those on the home atoll, and their political organization continued to be modeled on that of the atoll long after the political organization there had changed radically (Lieber 1977, 1994). Kapinga people in Pohnpei explicitly recognized that they lived in a different—and to some extent differently constituted—community from their home island, while sharing a common fate even in the face of occasionally conflicting interests (Lieber 1977, 1984). From the standpoint of community, the Kapinga on Pohnpei most closely resemble Banabans, Carolineans, and Marshallese described in this issue (see Kempf 2012 [this issue]; Kuehling 2012 [this issue]; Carucci 2012 [this issue]).

Later Kapinga resettlement in the continental United States has followed a different trajectory. Kapinga people who resettled in the United States most closely resemble Rotumans in Fiji in 1961, as described by Alan Howard and Irwin Howard (1977). At that time there were four Rotuman enclaves in Fiji, two small populations and two larger ones. The small populations were residentially scattered, so that getting together with other Rotumans took planning and was infrequent. The two larger populations included the community at the gold mines in Vatukoula and in Suva, the

capital city. Although the Rotuman community in Vatukoula had little resemblance to communities on Rotuma, the Rotumans there had a self-conscious, well-developed sense of themselves as an ethnic category and as a community and an ethnic solidarity that was largely the result of mining management policy, which pitted Rotumans against Fijians in a continual competition to keep workers from instituting collective bargaining.

The residence patterns, distribution of households over space, and spatial mobility that characterized Rotuma Island's social organization were most clearly replicated in Suva, where three spatially separate enclaves were organized around a combination of kinship and district of origin back home. The districts also served as an organizational focus for clubs, especially for sports teams in Suva. Mobility between households was also replicated, so that if relationships got tense within a household, people could leave to stay with kinsmen elsewhere. These factors, along with church services, kept Rotumans in contact with one another and formed a network that served to socialize new migrants into life in Fiji.

In a 2001 article, Alan Howard and Jan Rensel used the concept of "critical mass" to explain organizational contrasts between smaller enclaves and larger ones. That is, there appears to be a population size below which Rotumans are unable to coalesce into a functioning organization larger than a household. Above that mean, one sees the emergence of organizational clustering, e.g., clubs, church groups, and special interest groups.

We now present an account of Kapingamarangi people in the continental United States. We aim to show how the Kapinga people have replicated aspects of their home community in the United States, and we conclude with a reformulation of the concept of community based on our data in comparison with those in other contributions to this collection.

### **Kapingamarangi in the United States**

Kapingamarangi people were originally recruited to come to Pohnpei by agents of nonindigenous institutions—the Japanese colonial administration and Japanese commercial companies. Likewise, U.S. institutions recruited students to travel to the United States. These institutions were responsible for housing, orienting, and protecting them. From 1919 until 1982, all of the Kapinga on Pohnpei continued to be sponsored by the colonial administration in place. The Kapinga community on Pohnpei developed in this institutional context of sponsorship from the top of a nonindigenous institutional hierarchy. In contrast, the development of an ethnic Kapinga community in Salem, Oregon, has not been conditional on institutional sponsorship. Once a student stopped attending a college, staying on in Oregon depended on personal effort.

Table 1 summarizes the distribution of the Kapingamarangi population in the United States and its territories. Although we do not have precise data on ages of this population, we can still say that it is relatively young. Fewer than a dozen people (less than 5 percent of the total) are more than fifty-five years old, and most of these are in Oregon. The largest single age cohort in any of these enclaves is between zero and ten years of age. Teenagers are an even smaller cohort than the elders, with the rest of the population in their twenties, thirties, and forties.

All of the enclaves show mobility into and out of local groups. The enclave in the Salem area (including Monmouth, Independence, Keizer, and McMinnville), because it is the oldest and most stable population, shows more in-migration than out-migration. The Florida enclave, established in the 1990s when Kapinga people were recruited to work at Sea World, has helped to augment two more populations through out-migration. Kapinga living in Ashville and Durham, North Carolina, appear to move frequently between these two enclaves and Florida, while

**TABLE 1. Distribution of Kapingamarangi People in the United States.**

State	Male	Female	Adults	Children	Total
Alabama	0	1	1	0	1
Alaska	1	0	1	0	1
Arizona	6	1	6	1	7
California	7	14	18	3	21
Colorado	0	1	1	0	1
Florida	15	10	20	5	25
Georgia	0	3	1	2	3
Hawai'i	30	29	48	11	59
Indiana	1	1	1	1	2
Iowa	12	13	15	10	25
Kansas	1	1	2	0	2
Michigan	3	8	11	0	11
Mississippi	2	2	4	0	4
Missouri	3	9	6	6	12
New Jersey	3	0	2	1	3
North Carolina	34	35	38	31	69
Ohio	1	4	5	0	5
Oregon	34	36	41	29	70
Texas	4	2	3	3	6
Wisconsin	2	0	1	1	2
Guam	38	59	61	36	97
Military	10	0	10	0	10
Total	207	229	296	140	436

Kapinga in Florida move between their enclave and the two in North Carolina. From the point of view of kinship connections, visiting, mutual aid, and telephone contact, these three populations could be profitably seen as a single population. People move to be with siblings and other close kin, to find better jobs, to find affordable housing, to get driving privileges and cars (which the Florida enclave seems to have had difficulty acquiring), and to leave untenable family situations.

Housing arrangements in all Kapinga enclaves vary with income, affordability, distance to the work place, and whether there are compatriots in the vicinity. Income and affordability trump the other considerations, and part of affordability is the possibility of sharing housing costs—a major incentive for moving to live with close kin. In some cases, people live in extended-family households that differ from those on Pohnpei and Kapingamarangi mainly in the absence of elderly parents (or aunts and uncles). This is, of course, common in migrant populations. One result of mobility and the availability of affordable housing has been a population more or less scattered through the host community, as opposed to living near one another like the Pohnpei community. For example, it is unusual that four families have housing units in the same apartment complex in Salem, Oregon. In Salem and elsewhere, households are located anywhere from 1 to 10 or more miles (1.6 to 16 km) from one another.

It seems clear that there are three categories of people who make up the ethnic Kapinga population on the continental United States: (1) the student population that migrated to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s and remained, (2) the population that was recruited for Sea World and for jobs in senior care and disabled children's facilities, and (3) the children of the first two groups, born and raised in the United States. The earliest migrants are the well-established families with stable jobs and housing. A few of these are married to Americans, and all live middle-class lifestyles. This population lives in Oregon, Washington, and California, with a few of these people having migrated to Hawai'i. The second category, mainly in their twenties with a few in their thirties and two older than forty, live on the East Coast, principally in North Carolina (Raleigh and Asheville) and Florida (Orlando). This younger population was recruited as crafts people for Sea World and to care for seniors. A few of these workers have branched out into the food services and actively recruit friends and relatives from other enclaves. Gossip has it that this population has replicated the Pohnpei lifestyle for that age group—working hard during the week and getting drunk on the weekends. While the domestic violence that often accompanies weekend boozing has also been replicated, its ramifications in the U.S. setting are different from those on Pohnpei, where people shrug

off the violence as drunken comportment. In the United States, police and courts become involved, complete with court orders of protection.

Phone calls and private e-mails circulate news of these events in all of the enclaves, such that the gossip networks function with the efficiency of a modern technological infrastructure. This in itself is unremarkable, but the implications are anything but trivial. Kapinga people in the continental United States have managed to replicate the intergenerational differences (and tensions) that characterize the Kapinga communities on Kapingamarangi Atoll and in Porakied: an elder generation that is seen as sober, responsible, and “hopelessly square” versus a younger generation that the elders consider to be lazy, irresponsible drunks destined to embarrass them. In this case, however, the elders are located on one coast of the country while the younger generation is on the other. But even on the atoll and in Porakied, the generations tend to maintain spatial separation.<sup>2</sup> We take this as an indicator that Kapinga people are in the process of recreating their social organization above the household level—an organization that includes the entire Kapinga population.

Face-to-face contacts occur most often (but not exclusively) within local enclaves—sharing childcare, weekend get-togethers (e.g., poker games and bingo), and first birthday celebrations involve interactions among local households on both coasts. More elaborate gatherings involving months of planning are seen mainly in the Salem, Oregon, enclave. Celebrating Christmas and March 15 (a kind of thanksgiving celebration originating on the atoll in the 1950s) draws together residents of the Salem–Eugene area and, occasionally, Kapinga from the Seattle area and from Hawai‘i. Families take turns organizing these celebrations, and participating families contribute cash and food toward the events. A more recent innovation is a summer camping trip to the Oregon coast that lasts a week or more. These multi-family outings draw people from the Salem, Seattle, and Hawai‘i enclaves. Men commonly spend mornings on the golf course (a must in site selection). Although a recent innovation for U.S. Kapinga, this pattern is an elaboration of a much older tradition of picnicking that dates from pre-Christian days on the atoll involving families trekking to a remote spot far from the village for one or two days of feasting and play. The U.S. version combines the old version of picnic with the modern concept of a vacation. Another recent innovation is a Nukuoro–Kapinga club called *di malae*, which translates as “the meeting place” in this usage. Joint Kapingai–Nukuoro organizations are not new, but this appears to be a recognition of the de facto inclusion of Nukuoro in the Kapinga community.

Kapinga enclaves in North Carolina and Florida comprise loosely knit networks of people in scattered households in Raleigh, Ashville, and

Orlando. They communicate with one another, especially those who work in the same facilities, and they visit between enclaves. The Seattle area enclave is similarly a loosely knit set of scattered households that stay in contact through phone calls and occasional visits. The Salem area enclave seems to be the only one that has achieved a critical mass sufficient to organize ceremonial events that involve all of the households in the area (and beyond).

Since 1996, Internet technology has been an important method for maintaining frequent and varied contacts among Kapinga in the continental United States, Hawai'i, and Guam, playing a role very similar to that of the Rotuma Website for Rotumans (Howard and Rensel 2012 [this issue]). Finding no Micronesia websites on the Internet, one of us (Willys Peters) established Kapinga.com after reading the literature on starting websites and learning HTML programming. Kapinga.com, in its various forms, has moved several times as Peters found better interfaces for less money. Kapinga.com became MicroIslands.com in 1998 with the inclusion of discussion boards for Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap, Palau, Saipan, and the Marshall Islands. In 1998 the site was getting about 1,000 hits per day. This was an open site, taking what people posted and eventually dividing posts into categories. In the site's busiest years (1997–2000), politics and culture were the most popular discussion categories—and the hardest to separate.

Some of the major general discussion threads focused on

- Genealogy (personal concerns about who was related to whom and how)
- Advantages and disadvantages of assimilation
- Why people like living in the United States (e.g., freedom, important especially to younger people)
- "We've been away too long"
- Welcoming new people
- Maintaining connections with other migrants and with people back home
- Losing control over local affairs
- The advantage of dual citizenship
- Finding work, keeping one's job, and who is responsible for what

Homelessness of Micronesians in Hawai'i has also generated a lot of discussion, such as what can and should Kapinga do as a community to help? What can anyone do with or for people who can't make it?

The Rotuma Website has some interesting overlaps with Microislands.com and its successors, Taropower.com, Tarobuzz.com, and MyFSMid.com.

The themes of keeping in touch with people back home and being involved in supporting home affairs is prominent in Rotuman discussions (see Howard and Rensel 2012 [this issue]). MicroIslands.com had very similar discussions in the late 1990s. But in 2000 and later, discussions moved away from these topics, partly because the discussions were dominated by a very few people. Interest in island affairs dwindled on MicroIslands.net and Taropower.net, while Rotumans seem to maintain a consistent level of interest in Rotuman affairs and connections as well as a tolerance for varying points of view.

While the Rotuma Website separates announcements, news, humor, and forums (for specific topics), Tarobuzz.com combines all of these into a single forum, with notices, songs, history, and the like listed as separate topics. The most active of these forum topics was that of Kapingamarangi History, started by Mike Borong, who expanded the discussion by 2008 in a separate website, NgeiaoHale.com.<sup>3</sup> This excited more interest and response than any other topic on Tarobuzz.com. Of all specific topics on this forum, genealogy has excited the most participation, starting in and continuing into 2010. Typical of the posts has been a recounting of a particular sibling set (from around the turn of the twentieth century), their marriages, and their current descendants. Readers sometimes offer additions and, less often, minor corrections. A common response to this information is surprise from readers who had no idea that some or all current descendants were their own kin. On Kapingamarangi and in Porakied, genealogical information past three generations is not commonly known among people in their twenties, thirties, and forties because it is regarded as proprietary information. Very few people have the right to this sort of knowledge, and they deploy it strategically in only two contexts: (1) making a will and (2) engaging in land disputes that often follow. In these situations, the person recounting the genealogical justification for whatever claim is being made is a landowner or the steward of a land-owning group (Lieber 1974). Anyone of lesser position contributing to the recounting (unless invited to do so) would be considered rude, eliciting a response like “Why are you talking about *my* ancestors?”

The most striking aspect of the genealogical threads on Tarobuzz.com is the lack of any hint of proprietary control over the information and the longevity of the thread. No one seems to find the discussion itself remarkable or worthy of comment. Conversations are casual, not strategic, and nowhere is property even mentioned. It appears that, at least in these discussions, the relationship between property and genealogy has been severed, as has the relationship between knowledge and the authority to



recount it. This is a connection that is rooted in Kapinga conceptions of knowing, wherein one knows something through repeated experience, such that the right to know depends on the right to use the information in question (Lieber 1994). The outcome of this dissolution of relational constraints on communicating about genealogy is a recontextualization of genealogical knowledge as part of the public domain. Does this recontextualizing of genealogical knowledge indicate a fundamental change in what knowing means to Kapinga people in the diaspora? Or are we dealing with what Barnett called a “recombination” of cultural symbols (1953, 1983), such that genealogy means one thing in the atoll context and another in the United States? Part of the answer to these questions has to do with what participants think is going on. What is it about genealogy that makes this such an attractive discussion thread? Two years is a long time to maintain an Internet discussion thread, whose half-life is normally a matter of days.

One possible incentive for maintaining the genealogy thread may be that it makes it easier for ne’er-do-wells to take advantage of their compatriots by providing grounds for asserting kinship. Another possible incentive is that spelling out genealogical connections helps to forfend inadvertent incestuous relationships. But neither of these explanations is compelling enough to account for the persistence of the thread.

A more compelling explanation speaks to the central issue of this collection and the symposium from which it grew—that the longevity of this thread stems from its ability to convey messages about Kapinga identity that other forms of discourse cannot. Indeed, it is precisely the essentializing implications of genealogy that make it a powerful metaphor for talking about shared substance, regardless of where people are living, what language(s) they speak, and what lifestyles they practice. Disengaging property rights from the conversation removes the competitive incentives for excluding people who might otherwise be considered kin.<sup>4</sup> This would support and amplify the arguments that Helen Lee and Steve Tupai Francis (2009) and Ilana Gershon (2007) have made about the role of kinship in facilitating the organization of people in the process of resettling. While kinship relations within and between households tend to be particularizing in practice, sharing genealogical information serves to display the densely connected networks that bind people in all the complexity of descent, marriage, and adoption across generations. It is the complexity of connections that constitutes a community. Genealogies can do that kind of complexity; individual households cannot.

There are some indications in other discussions about Kapinga history that identification with other Kapinga people drives discussion and that

issues that could be divisive on Kapingamarangi or in Porakied are not in the diaspora. In an early thread on the history of Porakied, the grandchild of one of the principals in a bitter dispute over ownership of Porakied land and compensation for developing the land (in 1929) posted as fact the claims that this man had made about what was owed to him for years of labor on this formerly uninhabitable space. This could have been a very provocative posting, but no one took the bait. Only the moderator, Mike Borong, replied, thanking the person for sharing the information. In another discussion on the religious history of the atoll, a participant posted information he had from his grandparents about *talia* (a place of spirits). This began a series of exchanges on whether or not there was a pre-Christian concept of an afterlife on Kapingamarangi. Like the genealogy thread, this one elicited a pooling of pieces of information in an effort to put together a larger picture. Like the genealogy thread, it is a discussion that would not occur on Kapingamarangi or in Porakied, constrained as they are by church dogma in both places. In the islands, pre-Christian religion was and is considered to be a manifestation of Satan, precluding the possibility of discussion or debate. Like genealogy, the discussion of traditional religious practice is diaspora talk.

Finally, the conversations described here are explicitly described by participants as *hagaboo* (conversation or discussion). This is significant in that *hagaboo* is thought of and talked about as adult conversation, which is possible among pairs of people but most common among larger gatherings of adults. *Hagaboo* always begins with a specific topic for discussion in the expectation that everyone present will contribute. Topics tend to be intellectually challenging but can range from clarifying some enigma to sharing fanciful renditions of how something came to be (generating “just-so” stories). An example is a men’s house conversation about why the word that denotes one’s sensation when touched by a person or object (what Americans call “feel”) is the same word as “to hear.” This is a famous conversation because it ends with one man coming up behind another and scratching his back. When asked, “*Goe gu longono?*” ([Did] you feel [hear] that?) the second man said yes. The first man then retorted, “So are your ears on your back?” to the appreciative roar of the participants.

*Hagaboo* is an institution whose participants can be same-sex or mixed groups. It is contrasted with other kinds of talk, such as storytelling, reporting, testimony, banter, “coarse” talk (of a sexual nature), and play. *Helekai dadaagala* (banter and play) are more typical of conversations among younger people. Until about 2007–8, Tarobuzz.com (and its predecessors) included all of these kinds of talk. Since 2008, however, most

of the reportage, stories, and banter have shifted to Facebook. By default, Tarobuzz.com is a site for hagaboo, effectively replicating the generational bifurcation already seen in the enclaves.

### **Kapingamarangi Identity in the Diaspora**

As Larson reported (1977: 257–60), Tikopian identity can be a cause for Tikopians doing something, not doing something, or doing something in a particular way. While for Kapinga people, ethnic identity is not a cause of doing anything except, possibly, conducting the March 15th celebration. For Tikopians, ethnic identity is a political issue that shapes decision making and interethnic interaction. For Kapinga people, ethnic identity has rarely been a factor shaping decisions and their implementations—although it can be argued that participating in Tarobuzz.com and on Facebook, all in Kapinga language, is affirming one's identity as a Kapinga person.

Possibly as a result of centuries of isolation on their home atoll, interrupted on average less than one canoe of castaways per century, Kapinga people came to think of themselves as just plain folks, and all *baalangi* (outsiders) as exotic people (see Lieber 1994).<sup>5</sup> When it became necessary to interact with such people, what one really needed to know about them was what one could consistently expect from them in specific social contexts. What passes for ethnic stereotypes in Kapinga lore are sociological sketches of how people in different communities do things (Lieber 1990; Watson 1990). Thus, Kapinga contrast the sociological patterns of others with their own patterns; for example, when they greet people saying “come and eat,” they actually expect them to come and eat, in contrast with Nukuoro people, who do not. These comparative tidbits do not come together into a single coherent picture, however. No such portrait appeared in Porakied, the nucleated Kapinga community on Pohnpei, so there is no reason to expect that it should appear in nonnucleated enclaves in the United States.

Kapinga identity in the United States is contextualized very differently from that on Pohnpei. While it is true that Kapinga people look, talk, and do things differently from both Micronesians and white Americans, most Micronesians know who the Kapinga are and where they come from, and use the ethnic labels Kirinidi or Kirnis (from “Greenwich,” the British name for the atoll). To the extent that Kapinga people participate in the Pohnpei state legislature and other island affairs, the ethnic label matters to non-Kapinga people. This is not true for white Americans, who often mistake Kapinga people for Mexicans or Pakistanis. When asked where

they are from, Kapinga find it is difficult to answer in a way that Americans can comprehend. "Kirinidi" is out of the question. "Micronesia" evokes a response of "huh?" even in Oregon, where Micronesians have lived for more than thirty years.<sup>6</sup> "Pacific Islands" seems to satisfy most people.

If Kapinga people need an incentive to maintain an ethnic boundary, then the presence of other Micronesians in Oregon, Washington, California, and Hawai'i is a help. The point we wish to make is that the representation of Kapinga identity is the outcome of decisions Kapinga make about how to organize their relationships with other people, which is akin to what happens in other migrant ethnic enclaves.<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that all ethnic communities are identical in how they maintain or change their identities—only that the same kinds of decision processes are in play. Specific decisions vary.

In the Kapinga case, ethnic identity is rarely a conscious issue, partly because it is difficult to separate ethnic identity from other sorts of connected social identities (Lieber 1990).<sup>8</sup> Kapinga understand the person to be one part of a relationship. Different kinds of relationships, therefore, define different kinds of people. To the extent that one relationship is nested in others, the person is part of a relational hierarchy, for instance, a *hagahidinana* (household), a *madahanau* (land-owning descent group), a *madawaawa* (cognatic stock based on a named house compound on which ancestor lived),<sup>9</sup> and a *di golohenua* (community). Ethnic identity differs from personal identity largely in its level of inclusiveness. So, for example, a person with Kapinga ancestry is eligible to be considered an ethnic Kapinga because he or she is part of a *madahanau* or a *madawaawa*. That person has a Kapinga "half," but to be considered and treated as a Kapinga person requires maintaining personal relationships with other Kapinga people. These are all assumptions that are rarely made explicit. This—and the fact that it is rarely clear which level of relationship is operative in any given case—is crucial to understanding changes to Kapinga ethnicity. Examples will help to clarify how messy this really is.

Two younger Kapinga have died in the United States. In both cases, the people they were staying with used the telephone to notify others in the area along with relatives and friends elsewhere, who then phoned others. By this mode of communication, enough money was raised to send the bodies back to Pohnpei for burial. So, did people contribute money and urge others to do so because they are all Kapinga? Because they were relatives? Because they were friends? Because they were children of friends? That would depend on the relationship between the contributor and the deceased or between the contributor and the person asking for the contribution. Did either death galvanize ethnic sentiment or commitment? There is no evidence that this was the case.

In another case, a young Kapinga man was tried on criminal charges, requiring \$25,000 for his defense. Contributions were widely sought, but the financial burden fell most heavily on the few families who had the means to pay. One of the families was closely related to the defendant. Another had a close personal relationship with him. A third had no particular connection to the man, and while they resented the expectation that they contribute, they were also worried about their reputation among other Kapinga in the United States and on Pohnpei and Kapingamarangi should they fail to contribute enough. Is this an act of ethnic identity maintenance in any useful sense? We suggest that this is less about who is an ethnic Kapinga person and more about who is a member of the Kapinga community.

The most fundamental challenge to Kapinga identity—as it has been for other ethnic groups—is the most insidious in its effects, that is, perpetuation of language. Common practice in the Salem enclave is to speak only English to the children of the household, reserving the Kapinga language for conversations to which only adults are privy. This has been an adaptation strategy to make it easier for children to fit into peer groups and school. While it is rarely explicitly articulated, it is a strategy for parents who do not intend to move back to the islands. Their home is in the United States, and they expect their children's homes to be there. The separate webs of expectations—Kapinga and baalangi—do not neatly intersect.

Kapinga children are socialized partly by their elders, mainly through example, and partly by their peers (both in the United States and in the islands). What Kapinga children learn from their peers is American social expectations, in the same way that they would learn Kapinga expectations from Kapinga peers if they lived on Pohnpei or Kapingamarangi. The outcomes of these learning experiences are almost always a shock when they occur across ethnic contexts, as seen in the examples that follow.

Kapinga children learn what is permissible and impermissible, mentionable and unmentionable in American social contexts from their American peers. They internalize the boundaries that these dos and don'ts delineate. When these children spend time with older Kapinga at ceremonial events and other get-togethers, they are subject to the teasing that is common social banter. They are often teased if they are fat, although for Kapinga, this is a gentle sort of teasing, given that being chubby is a sign of good health. But Kapinga children are offended, hurt, and angered by this teasing in a way that any baalangi kid would be. It does not help to tell them that being called fat is not a Kapinga insult. Kapinga adults are offended when they criticize a younger person and the latter responds by defending or explaining himself or herself. Young people are expected to

remain silent and look ashamed when being criticized by an adult. It does not help to tell the adult that the kid learned to do that from hanging out with baalangi kids. Kapinga adults get angry and frustrated when their children do not act as their elders expect them to act. Yet these same adults have not taken the time to teach their children what they expect from them, which would require them to make these expectations explicit, to translate them into English (or stop using Kapinga to talk to other adults), to teach the children the Kapinga language, and to socialize them at home regarding Kapinga ways.

Perhaps the most difficult American rite-of-passage for parents with teenagers who grew up in Salem is when children leave the nest. American parents expect it. Kapinga parents do not. It is shocking and hurtful when it happens, although parents understand that this is the baalangi way. It is not that Kapinga elders do not appreciate the autonomy that American life makes possible. Owning one's own canoe on the home atoll gives a fisherman the autonomy he needs to escape the limitations of group fishing, including expanding the range of fish habitats that can be exploited and the timing of expeditions (Lieber 1994). Owning one's own house and car afford a similar kind of autonomy in the United States. But young people leaving home to rent their own place and go where and when they will is not seen as comprising the same kind of autonomy. In baalangi perceptions, leaving the natal home and living on one's own is what makes an individual an adult. Kapinga, in contrast, are rarely thought of as adult until their early thirties. It is here that the issue is joined.

Is it possible to be an individual and still be a Kapinga person? Has this group of teenagers and twenty-somethings been enculturated to assume that they are individuals rather than nodes in a network of relationships? How can we know that; what kinds of data are sufficient to answer these questions? If, as is likely, it takes three generations to answer these questions, are there benchmarks that would indicate a direction of development of the concepts of personhood and ethnic identity? The benchmarks, we believe, will be seen in the shape and content of the social networks of Kapinga people who are now children, in particular where and with whom they reside and interact on a regular basis.

### **Conclusion: The Replication of Community**

If diaspora poses challenges to people struggling to maintain themselves and some semblance of what they understand to be a community, it also affords opportunities for people to use their cultural resources in creative ways. Online discussions using self-assigned nicknames (many of which are

ancestral names) afford the opportunity of visiting people who live hundreds or thousands of miles away without the constraints of face-to-face expectations. With conversations removed from the anchors of space and conflicting obligations, opportunities arise to deploy old forms in very new ways. One example of this cited above is the genealogical discussion, a sort of conversation that would be unthinkable in Porakied or on Kapingamarangi, where genealogy is proprietary information used strategically in negotiations or conflicts over property rights. In online discussions, genealogy has been divorced from property rights and the authority to talk about genealogical connections. It has, in the American diaspora, entered the public domain. With no incentive to exclude someone from rights over property (and, thus, consideration as a kinsman), genealogical information has become a tool for displaying the complexity of descent, marriage, and adoption that includes a wider net of people, the farther back one goes.

If genealogy has been disconnected from its role in manipulating property rights, it has been clearly reconnected to other relational concerns of Kapinga in the American diaspora. To say that genealogy conjoins people as a somehow unified *kind* of people is to unduly simplify the matter. Genealogy is not about ethnic categories, but rather about how people are connected to other people over time. Genealogical discussion on the Internet has allowed information to be shared in the interest of generating and maintaining ties with compatriots over long distances. Barnett saw this process of recombination of symbols and constructs as the basis of all cultural change, by which he meant the meaningful content of and associations of symbols (1953, 1983).

Our discussion calls into question the meaning of community. The answer formulated at the time of publication of *Exiles and Migrants in Oceania* (Lieber 1977) was that community denoted any social organization that served to shape the careers of its members, regardless of where they are located. From this conceptual standpoint, the Nukuoro can be considered a community if it can be shown that Nukuoro on the atoll, on Pohnpei, on Guam, and in the United States have and share information (such as gossip) about one another among one another. The Rotumans in diaspora can be thought of as forming a single community if it can be shown that their utterances and actions and interactions serve to form personal identities that are known to and by other Rotumans, wherever they might be located. Howard and Rensel show that this is precisely the case in their contribution to this special issue (2012).

We propose that “social organization” is too broad a category to be useful for a definition. It is clear from the data presented above that it is the active participation of people in social networks that not only lends

them membership but also shapes the experiences other people have with them, what other people expect from them, and how other people characterize them. These, taken together, shape life experiences not only in that specific network (say network A), but in overlapping networks that contain members of A. We thus offer to our colleagues the following definition of community:

A community is any set of connected social networks that serves to shape the life trajectories (careers) of its members.

By this definition, not only do the Kapinga in the continental United States constitute a single community, but so do Rotumans in Fiji and elsewhere, as do the Nukuoro, who may not be crazy about one another but still keep tabs on one another. It also follows that a person may be a member of multiple communities and that communities may be nested in other communities.<sup>10</sup> Such a definition embraces virtual communities that have their genesis on the Internet as well as dispersed, ethnically based communities, which have their origins in congregated spaces such as islands. It is therefore more appropriate than traditional definitions for diasporic populations who develop and/or maintain ties via modern technology.

### NOTES

1. This research was the topic of the first Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania symposium in 1970 and resulted in the first published comparative volume on "diaspora" communities, *Exiles and Migrants in Oceania* (Lieber 1977).

2. Younger people learn a number of strategies to minimize contact with and avoid the attention of their elders. As they grow older, they get better at it (at least in the short term, before gossip fills in what people did not see).

3. Ngeia o Hale is the name of a residence site on one end of Hale islet on the atoll. It belongs to Borong's family.

4. It has long been clear that controlling the size of landowning corporations requires a truncation of group boundaries (Lieber 1974).

5. *Di gau henua* is the Kapinga term for other islanders, whereas white people are called *di gau baalangi*.

6. The exception here is within the justice system, as discussed by Manuel Rauchholz in this issue (2012).

7. Decisions of individuals vis-à-vis their compatriots is the single most popular theme in ethnic theater of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is the theme of the first talking motion picture, *The Jazz Singer*.



8. See Howard and Rensel 2004 for a discussion of strong and weak cultural identities. Howard and Rensel describe Rotuman identity, which parallels Kapinga identity in many ways, as relatively weak in diasporic settings.

9. These were formerly matrilineages.

10. Eve Pinsker, who worked in Micronesia, has used this formulation of nested communities in evaluating community development programs in Chicago and elsewhere (Lieber and Pinsker 2005).

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## RETURN MIGRATION TO AMERICAN SAMOA

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*E lele le toloa ae toe ma'au i le vai.*

(The duck may fly about, but in the end will always return to the water [its home].)

A common Samoan proverb used to refer to the need and desire to return home after a time spent away.

IT IS 1990. I am interviewing Dan and June Pouesi, Samoan-American residents of Southern California, as part of the production of the ethnographic video *A Chief in Two Worlds* (Van der Ryn 1991a). The topic of return migration to the Samoan islands, in particular to American Samoa, comes up. Dan says, "Most people say it's the ultimate dream to return to the island [Tutuila, the largest and most populous island in American Samoa]. But in reality, very few do return." June adds with a chuckle, referring to a commonly repeated phrase, "If everybody returned, the island would probably sink. There's quite a lot of Samoans outside of American Samoa." June continues:

I have no false dreams. I would not go back to Samoa to live.<sup>1</sup> But I think that many of the military people, when they retired . . . there were a lot of words about going back and several did go back. . . . [Some] were able to access their lands again; others met up with dispute of land back there [and were told,] "Well, you went out to work in California, or you spent your time and played

around in America, . . . but, we stayed here, and cultivated the land, it's no longer yours." And so you have that conflict. (Interview for film, not in final edited version.)

The number of diasporic Samoans who count American Samoa as their homeland is far greater than the 55,519 people living in the 78 square miles (202 km<sup>2</sup>) of mountainous islands that constitute American Samoa. Return migration to American Samoa, mainly from the Samoan diaspora based in the United States, has increased in recent years, so an increasing percentage of residents in American Samoa consist of "returnees"—people who have lived a substantial part of their lives away from Samoa. The recent global economic downturn, beginning in 2008, prompted American Samoa's governor to ask American Samoans to make room for family members returning to live on family lands. Soon after there was an influx of returnees, including many young and middle-aged people who needed to find jobs, but at least they had the security of family lands and, often, places to stay temporarily until better housing could be found or built.

Return migration is an important aspect of diasporic and transnationalized Samoan identity, kinship institutions, and communities. This essay represents a preliminary examination of return migration to American Samoa, mainly from a transnational conceptual framework. It is based on two in-depth case studies of return migration conducted in Tutuila in 2008 and interviews with five additional American Samoan returnees in 2009. The purpose is to identify patterns of return migration to American Samoa and to relate the analysis to transnational kin-based networks in which child rearing, ceremonies, political leadership, and economic support are fully a part. Samoan return migration connects to Samoan ways of addressing the values of kinship, money, socialization, identity, chiefly titles, land, and concepts of *tautua* (service), *alofa* (compassion), and *fa'aāloalo* (respect behavior) in social hierarchies. I explore return migration to American Samoa as a cultural act within a transnationalized Samoan system of life that helps describe the Samoan diaspora. I also highlight how differences in governmental policy with regard to key institutions, such as Samoa's indigenous system of *fa'amatai* (Samoa's chieftain or *matai* system), differentially impact patterns of return migration between the U.S. unincorporated territory of American Samoa and the independent country of Samoa (formerly Western Samoa).

Socioeconomic, cultural, environmental, and political conditions vary between islands, posing different realities when it comes to opportunities or desires to return. Patterns and possibilities of return migration are affected by the degree of geographic remoteness and size, population

density, environmental degradation, and resources, as well as individuals' sense of where they belong, the structure of indigenous kinship and political institutions, legal policies of government, and the life stages people are in. Those who return are (or at least were) part of the group's diasporic community. Consequently, the population of the Samoan islands is partially composed of people from the diaspora. Their identities have been fashioned in part by their migratory experiences and the ways they interrelate concepts of "home," "ethnicity," "kinship," "community," "place," "center," and "periphery" within the varying folds of their geographic and cultural experiences. Thus, the topics of "return" and "reincorporation" into the home community are critical components to examine within the more general topic of Oceanic diaspora and its concomitant identities.

### **Background of Contemporary Samoan Migration**

Major migration from American Samoa to the United States began in the early 1950s when the U.S. Naval Administration removed its naval operations from Pago Pago. Samoan naval employees and their families were offered free passage, jobs, and resettlement in naval communities in Hawai'i and on the West Coast of the United States (notably in Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego). Large-scale migrations out of what was then known as Western Samoa to New Zealand, for both employment and educational purposes, began about the same time.<sup>2</sup> Movement to the United States and New Zealand established links for a process of chain migration to develop. By 1972, authorities in Pago Pago concluded that approximately 500 people were leaving every year. The 1990 U.S. census indicated that 62,964 Samoans were residing in the United States, constituting the second largest Pacific Island ethnic group after Hawaiians. Not everyone leaving American Samoa for the United States sought wage employment. Others left for military service, higher education (some on government scholarships), or to be babysitters in households of relatives already established overseas (Janes 2002).

The division of the Samoan islands into two political entities has resulted in significant economic differences. For starters, wages in American Samoa are much higher than in independent Samoa. Two large, foreign-owned tuna canneries, established in Pago Pago Bay in the early 1960s, became the largest employers (after the government) in American Samoa. This situation also stimulated a new migratory path for citizens of independent Samoa, who enter American Samoa as "aliens." The canneries as well as other sources of employment in American Samoa became increasingly important as New Zealand's economy experienced economic slumps and

the government there began restricting Samoan immigration. As a result, American Samoa increasingly became a stepping-stone for Western Samoans to enter the United States, as well as a migration destination in itself for citizens of Western Samoa.

By 2010, the population of American Samoa had grown to 55,519, an almost threefold increase from its 1960 population of 20,051. While the population as a whole has grown rapidly, the proportion of “immigrants” has grown even more. Whereas the population of “foreigners” (neither U.S. citizens nor U.S. nationals) in 1980 was 34 percent, by 2008 that figure had grown to 55 percent (Jackson 2009). The vast majority (over 90 percent) of these immigrants are citizens of independent Samoa.

### **Previous Research on a Transnationalized Samoan Social System**

In the late 1980s, while conducting fieldwork in the Samoan community of Southern California (whose population was then about 20,000), I observed the salient ways that overseas Samoans (of whom about half were from American Samoa, the other half from independent Samoa) maintained connection and interacted with home communities and kin in the islands. Despite the huge contrasts between the urban concrete ghettos of Southern California and the lush, green, bucolic villages of the Samoan Islands, through my multisited ethnographic work I came to learn that both locations were part of a single “ethnoscape,” a Samoan transnationalized world tied together by flows of people, money, tangibles such as Samoan fine mats, and intangible cultural properties such as kinship and *matai* (chief) titles.

This fieldwork and film production were conducted just prior to the development of an anthropological literature in the early 1990s that adopted the terms and concepts of “transnationalism” to describe the social, cultural, and economic linkages maintained within ethnic communities between host and origin countries, which are important elements of identity and mobility patterns (Cassarino 2004: 7–8; Lilomaiava-Doktor 2004, 40). Previously, the term “transnationalism,” as originally developed by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr. (1970), mainly referred to activities within a worldwide capitalistic system in which groups such as corporations were largely dependent on transactions that took place across national borders. Less developed societies such as the Samoans were either left out of the equation or characterized as passive recipients of change. But my observations of Samoan transnational action and identity compel me to challenge the view of less-developed societies as passive recipients of change brought about by globalization.

On a fairly regular basis, Samoan village groups—for example, an *aumaga* (village association of untitled men), an *aualuma* (association of unmarried natal women of a village), or a church youth group—would come as *malaga* (visiting parties) from independent Samoa or American Samoa in groups of thirty to fifty to be hosted by diasporic Samoan groups in Southern California. The visiting groups engaged in Samoan dance and ceremonial and economic gift exchanges with their hosts before returning to their villages with financial resources to use for community projects such as a school, a clinic, or a new church building. These *malaga* are an extension and adaptation of a Samoan tradition of intervillage visiting and serve as a system for maintaining social ties between groups, creating avenues for links such as marriages, and redistributing wealth between whole communities.<sup>3</sup> I observed some cases where members of the visiting *malaga* remained in the United States to seek educational and employment opportunities as potential means of providing *tautua* to their families and communities back home in the Samoan islands.

Another important event I witnessed during my fieldwork in the late 1980s was the commissioned visit of a Samoan *tufuga ta tatau* (tattoo artist) to Los Angeles to perform *tatau* and *malu* (extensive traditional tattooing) on thirteen Samoan men and four women, which took place after the conferral of Samoan chiefly titles on some of the men by a visiting high talking chief from Samoa. The conferral of Samoan matai titles outside of their village of origin was understood to be a controversial act and a breach of custom because titles are supposed to be conferred in the village of origin with the consent of the wider descent group.

As a case study for a documentary film, *A Chief in Two Worlds* (Van der Ryn 1991a), I followed the story of Taituave John Hunkin, a Samoan who had been based in Los Angeles for thirty years. He had received the chiefly title of Taituave from his wife's descent group in Falelima, Savai'i (independent Samoa). It was conferred in Los Angeles. Later, he learned that the conferral of the title in Los Angeles would not hold legitimacy back in Samoa, so he embarked on a journey with his wife to have the bestowal done properly, in Falelima, where the title originates and is connected with an important post in the village meeting house. The film documents the journey to the village, concerns expressed by members of the descent group, the process of resolving those concerns, and the preparations for and conduct of the ceremony and exchanges. It also includes Taituave's return to Los Angeles, where with his now-registered chiefly title he begins to take a more active role in the community.

In the process of doing research I began to envision the Samoan transnationalized system as a large circle in which Samoa comprises the center,

and Pacific Rim countries—the United States, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and Australia—form the periphery from which money is extracted and processed in the manufacture of Samoan prestige. This conception turns Immanuel Wallerstein's 1974 world system model inside out. The idea that every cultural system has its own categories for what constitutes central and peripheral arenas of their cultural world is already well established. However, it is helpful to describe exactly how center and periphery or related concepts such as "home" and "overseas" or "off island" are socially and culturally constituted for describing patterns of action and mobility in these systems.

The recent writings of Samoan geographer Sa'iliemanu Lilomaiava-Doktor have taken up this topic in depth (2004, 2009). She has argued against explaining Samoan international mobility through the Western theoretical tropes conventionally used in migration theories. The construction of dichotomies such as rural/urban, periphery/core, local/global, micro/macro, and a focus on inequality and economic opportunity, she asserted, cannot entirely explain Samoan mobility patterns (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009, 3). Rather, she contended that Samoan mobility, and the experience thereof, is best interpreted through indigenous Samoan terms and concepts, such as *malaga* (travel) and *vā* (the space between)—a reference to the relationship between people and entities that both binds them together and separates them.

Lilomaiava-Doktor has suggested that the expanded geographic circuits that Samoan mobility now entails are centered mostly on people attending events so as to activate, engage, create, and maintain the all-important *vā*. Maintaining and reproducing *vā* through socio-spatial practices known in Samoa as the *vā-fealoa'i* (the respectful social space created through movement and interacting with others) is commensurate with principles of how social order is constituted, reproduced, and made attractive and enjoyable to people. Lilomaiava-Doktor demonstrated that the *vā* between social entities in the islands and other countries (what she described as *inei* and *i fafo*) provides a framework for describing and interpreting Samoan mobility as culturally nuanced and signifies cultural actions that occur between the Samoan Islands and overseas locations. While supply and demand in international labor markets are important influences, Lilomaiava-Doktor's argument is that more accurate understandings about mobility can only be achieved when theoretical frameworks incorporate local epistemologies, in particular local ideas about space, time, and social relationships that largely shape mobility patterns. Her argument demonstrates how Samoan indigenous concepts and practices support a transnational framework for analysis.



The Samoan international mobility patterns that Lilomaiva-Doktor has described and theorized about focus on Samoan visiting patterns for events such as church conferences, funerals, weddings, chieftain installations, graduations, traditional tattoo completions, guesthouse or church dedications, and so forth. However, her points about the importance of including indigenous Samoan concepts in the analysis of movement apply equally well to the study of return migration.

### **Conceptual Frameworks for Examining “Return Migration”**

Until the early 1960s not much specific attention had been paid to return migration. George Gmelch’s 1980 paper in the *Annual Review of Anthropology* was one of the first to stimulate “scientific debate among scholars over the return phenomenon and its impact on origin countries” (Cassarino 2004, 1). Gmelch defined international return migration as “the movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle,” though he stated that analytically distinguishing a “returnee” from someone who returned only to “visit” might be difficult in some settings (1980, 136). “It was generally assumed that those who left the Old World never returned. . . . The thousands of migrants who returned to their homelands, including an estimated one quarter of the 16 million Europeans who arrived in the United States during the early decades of this [twentieth] century, were barely noticed by social scientists” (1980: 135–36). Gmelch reported that part of the problem was lack of quantification: “While most countries gather information on incoming aliens, the same does not apply for returning citizens” (Gmelch 1980, 136). Certainly this is the case in the U.S. territory of American Samoa.

Gmelch reviewed a number of return migration studies in various countries (Ireland, Jamaica, Mexico, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Spain, Turkey) to elicit patterns and issues by which a typology of return migrants might be formulated. The following themes emerged in the studies: (1) motivations for the return; (2) whether return is seen as temporary or permanent; (3) whether return is seen as voluntary or involuntary; (4) how returnees, as well as others of the origin country, view the return (e.g., as a result of a “failed” or a “successful” overseas migration experience); (5) the process of adaptation and reincorporation in the country of origin; and (6) the social, cultural, and economic impact (positive or negative) on the home community. While all these themes are worth exploring, the data I have so far collected pertain mostly to themes 1, 2, and 3.

Jean-Pierre Cassarino’s 2004 working paper, “Theorising Return Migration: A Revisited Conceptual Approach to Return Migrants,”

summarizes four theories for the insights they provide for the analysis of return migration: (1) neoclassical economics and the new economics of labor migration (NELM), (2) structural approaches, (3) social network theory, and (4) transnationalism. Cassarino stated that these approaches “differ from one another in terms of level of analysis and with respect to the salience of the issue of return in their respective analytical frameworks” (2004, 2).

Neoclassical economics focuses on the experience of migrants in terms of how well they met their financial expectations, in other words, success or failure. A migrant’s return is viewed as a sign of a failed migration experience: an inability to earn expected income levels overseas forces the return. Alternatively, NELM takes the view that migrants go overseas to reach certain economic goals (e.g., savings) for themselves and their households. Return is seen as the logical result of having successfully reached those goals.

Unlike the neoclassical economic and NELM approaches, the structural approach takes into greater consideration conditions and institutional factors in the country of origin in relation to the returnee’s goals and expectations. It also focuses more on how returnees reintegrate into their origin country, including their contribution to local economic development and to social change in the origin country.

As introduced in the last section, transnational analysis focuses on “processes by which immigrants [called transmigrants] build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement. . . . [They] develop and maintain multiple relations—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span borders, . . . [They] take actions, make decisions, feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc 1995: 1–2, quoted in Lilomaiaava-Doktor 2004, 40).

The social networks framework similarly focuses on ongoing linkages between country of origin and host country; however, social networks are “not necessarily dependent on diasporas, as defined by transnationalists” (Cassarino 2004, 10). In other words, common attributes of kinship and ethnicity as a basis for creating linkages can be deemphasized relative to individual initiative and agency.

As the last section and the next illustrate, the importance Samoans place on maintaining and reproducing their institutions of large descent groups, chieftainship, and Samoan concepts of *vā* and *malaga* points to the appropriateness of a transnational framework for examining return migration. Within this framework and taking into consideration indigenous concepts, the NELM and structural approaches also offer insights.

**“Return” within Samoan Transnationalism**

In 2005 I was surprised to find that Taituave John Hunkin and his wife and youngest daughter had moved “back” to American Samoa. While he had previously visited on several occasions, this time he had returned with the aim of resettling. He wished to reclaim his natal land and build houses for his children in America to come back to live in if they so desired, thus offering them an inheritance that he could not give them if he had remained in America. Fifteen years earlier, in California, Taituave had expressed a desire to return to Samoa, and now, after retirement from thirty years in a blue-collar job, he had made the move, not to independent Samoa where he held a title in his wife’s descent group, but to his natal village of Leone in Tutuila, American Samoa. This move involved reintegrating himself into the local village polity through induction into local matai titles, starting with a title that is also the name of the land he needed to reclaim. It also meant dealing with the politics of land claims and adapting to the slower pace of island life and different ways of doing things.

Return migration within the transnationalist framework is understandable as “part and parcel of a circular system of social and economic relationships and exchanges which facilitates the reintegration of migrants. . . . returnees prepare their reintegration at home through periodical and regular visits to their home countries. They retain strong links with their home countries and periodically send remittances to their households” (Cassarino 2004: 7–8). As such, return migration is best understood as part of the diasporic phenomenon, and sending remittances home to family members in the islands from the diaspora represents a strategy for “eventual return.” But while this may be true, it is not the whole story.

As Ping-Ann Addo reflects in her article on Tongan uses of money in the diaspora (Addo 2012 [this issue]), the practice of sending remittances home is part of a cultural responsibility in a kin-based system where one’s social identity is largely constituted through the sharing of resources and valuables. Although sending remittances and making occasional visits helps smooth the way for a “return,” they may not necessarily be practiced as an individual strategy. Instead these practices may more strongly articulate with cultural values, identity, and social obligations. The thematic emphasis that both Gmelch and Cassarino place on “success” or “failure” in their typologies of return becomes useful only once one takes into account the subjective elements of how success or failure are defined from an insider’s (Samoan) perspective.

Remitting cash home to family and matai, as a new form of the Samoan tradition of *tautua* (for which the sender is told they will receive many

blessings from God), may or may not be viewed by the migrant remitter as part of a strategy for their eventual return and reintegration in their country of origin, particularly since *tautua* is an important criterion for being selected to hold a *matai* title. Remittances can also be viewed as kin obligation, as hardship, and (as I have seen in several cases) as a response to emotional blackmail (e.g., “if you love your family, you’ll send the money”).

Every Samoan descent group holds at least one or two *matai* titles rooted in their home village. The Samoan tradition of *tautua* to *matai* and extended family in the form of labor and provisions of food and working together for the village under the collective authority of the council of chiefs are central criteria for selecting new *matai* titleholders. Other criteria include genealogical connections, personal character, and knowledge of family history and Samoan culture and traditions.

Becoming a *matai* brings with it a measure of honor, respect, and authority in the community, but with the raised status comes the obligation to serve the extended family, descent group, and community through leadership, as well as through one’s ability to secure and provide financial and other resources. While the center and home base of the descent group is a village in one of the islands of Samoa, many of its members may reside internationally, largely throughout the Pacific Rim—Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Hawai‘i, and the West Coast of the United States.

The practice of Samoan emigrants remitting money to their relatives at home, particularly to help support the various home-based systems of reciprocity and exchange involved with life-crisis events and church and house dedications, has come to be seen as a new kind of *tautua* that can be rewarded with a *matai* title. Because only those titles bestowed according to custom in the village of the title’s origin are considered legal and valid in Samoa, receiving a title requires returning to the island for the investiture ceremony. This, in turn, requires large expenses of cash, traditional Samoan fine mats as well as other ceremonial valuables, and large quantities of food and livestock.

While Samoans in the United States contend with being part of a small cultural minority, a significant proportion of them do what they must to maintain their Samoan identity. Financial contributions to, and presence at, family and community events and expressions of *alofa* and *tautua* to the larger extended family are viewed as essential components of that identity. Commonly, the emotional and social costs of failing to make contributions outweigh whatever temporary economic difficulties may be incurred. For this reason *tautua* from afar is often described in terms of *alofa*.

In one case in my earlier Los Angeles-based fieldwork, a young man from a village in Savai'i arrived in California in 1987 together with the aumaga from his village on a fund-raising malaga. He reported that he had promised his father that he would return home with the malaga, but the malaga leader told him that he and all other unmarried members had to stay behind in California to look for jobs, to earn money to send home to their families and village. This was a better way to serve them, he was told. Having no relatives in California, he was adopted into another Samoan family, and eventually met and married a woman, also from Savai'i.

Economically surviving in the United States at lower-wage jobs was not easy, but the young man sent home what he could whenever he could, while he dreamed of returning home. During a research and filming trip to Savai'i, I visited his family and showed them a video of the young man and his family in the United States and delivered a package from them. I then filmed them speaking to him through the camera (a video letter). His father told him not to worry about having lots of money to return. He just wanted to have his son back. Yet, the son said, despite those words, it was impossible for him to think of returning with nothing to show for the many years he had spent away. Furthermore, he said, he had to have at least US\$3,000 (not a mandatory or set amount, but what he felt would be appropriate) for the village *usu* (the gathering of village matai and others to officially welcome and honor a returnee). Later, I learned that a number of villages in Samoa have chosen to ban the custom of *usu* for returnees because they acknowledged that for many it is a burden and deterrent to return. In this case, this young man returned only once, sadly, for the funeral of his father in 1997, ten years after he had left with the malaga.

### **Case Studies of Return to American Samoa**

While statistics show that “foreigners” (mostly people from independent Samoa) have become a majority of American Samoa’s population, no statistics are available for the number of residents who hold the status of “returnees,” that is, residents who have lived for some period of time overseas (primarily in the United States) and returned with plans of making American Samoa their main residence. However, my general impressions and rough surveys suggested that a large number of American Samoan households contained at least one person who had spent a period of time in the United States and could be considered a returnee. It also appeared that the majority of returnees’ extended families lived in the United States, with a minority in American Samoa.

The following case studies of returnees are based on interviews with four men and three women. Two of the men are in their thirties. The other two, who are in their sixties, returned following retirement after many years working in the United States. The three females range in age from thirty-two to forty-nine. All interviewees except the youngest, a thirty-year-old man, have been or are married and have had children. The time they have been back in American Samoa ranges from two weeks to seven years. All were born in Tutuila except one, who was born in Upolu (independent Samoa). For the sake of anonymity I use pseudonyms for each of these case studies. Each case is presented as a life story, wherein I focus on the reasons and context for leaving American Samoa in the first place and what brought them back with plans to stay.

The central theme common to all of the cases, though in different ways, is a concern for the *‘āiga* (family) and the need to take care of family members, secure family lands and titles, and perpetuate the family's place for the future within the home island and village. Family members, both in the Samoan islands and overseas, work closely together to take care of such needs. This theme is central to Samoan cultural identity.

### *Case 1*

Tasi, age thirty, a first-born son, explained that he left American Samoa in 1984 at age five to live with his grandfather in the Mission District of San Francisco. His grandfather had a policy of having the first-born son of each of his sons come and live with him, since he wanted to have some of his grandchildren around; officially or unofficially adopting grandchildren is a common practice among Samoans. His mother had a hard time letting go, Tasi said, but his father, a math teacher at the local school, really wanted to fulfill his father's wishes, so his son went. The parents of other first-son cousins of his father's family were already living in the continental United States. Tasi stayed with his grandfather and male cousins from 1986 to 1988, after which he returned to live with his parents in American Samoa, where he attended second and third grades. He explained that his parents missed him and also wanted him to stay in touch "with his roots and where he comes from." He mentioned that even at a young age he was a bit of a problem child, and had gone to live for six months with his uncle in Washington, D.C., but that had not worked out so his uncle returned him to his grandfather in San Francisco. His father traveled to San Francisco to pick him up and bring him back to American Samoa.

Two years later Tasi went back to live with his grandfather, this time in Alameda County in the San Francisco Bay area. He described how he

became more and more affected by “*palagi* [white] culture” until at age thirteen he got into trouble with the law and was arrested. His father went to San Francisco to plea bargain with the judge. Rather than sending him to juvenile hall, he asked the judge to let him bring his son back to American Samoa where, being closer to his roots and the more disciplined aspects of Samoan culture, he would be rehabilitated. The plea bargain was accepted and Tasi returned with his father to American Samoa where he continued his schooling and graduated from high school in 1997, after which he enlisted in the U.S. military. He served for seven years, followed by five years of civilian work, before he decided to return to American Samoa to stay. He said he wanted to help his parents remodel their house and to attend the local community college.

Tasi’s case illustrates a recurrent theme of relying on culture and life in Samoa as a form of behavioral and cultural rehabilitation for youth. It is not unusual for Samoan families overseas to shuttle youth back to Samoa to stay with relatives in order to rehabilitate them through Samoan forms of discipline in the more strongly socially controlled village environment. Tasi said that his second trip back to American Samoa as a teenager was more difficult than his first, since he had picked up a lot of *palagi* habits and ways of doing things. “Other kids would speak to me in Samoan and I would speak back in English, and they would call me a *palagi*, but eventually I picked up my Samoan language and cultural understandings.”

Having just returned to American Samoa two weeks prior to the interview after an absence of twelve years, Tasi underscored the difference between voluntary and involuntary return:

This return feels a lot different than the first two. For one, this time it is my own choice. . . . And it’s permanent. Yes, I do have plans to travel, for example next year to New Zealand and Australia, but I plan this to be my home base. I decided to return because I felt like it had been long enough. I needed to get in touch with my family roots. I am here for my parents. I guess it comes with age. I have a bigger picture now. (October 15, 2009)

When I asked if there was any economic reason that pushed him to come back, he replied no, that he had a lot of “good options” in Hawai’i where he had been working for the last four years after getting out of the military. Asked if he considered his case fairly typical, and whether he knew of a lot of cases similar to his, he said he did. About changes he found in American Samoa on his return, he said:

There are a lot of changes here since my last visit twelve years ago—more cars, more houses, more churches, more non-Samoan immigrants, businesses, McDonalds, and all the kids on cell phones. What is good for the economy and for people is all right with me, . . . but I am a little worried about our customs and traditions. For example, when I talked to my little cousins about making the *umu* [earth oven], they asked what that was. It's like they just want to go jump in the car and go to McDonalds. Now it's up to my generation to help instill the culture in the next generation. (October 15, 2009)

The flexible and open use of extended family to assist with child rearing at both ends of the migratory route is an important factor to consider in this system. It is also important to realize that, while Tasi's first two return trips were involuntary, they strongly influenced his voluntary choice to return later. Tasi said those trips helped him to maintain cultural and social connections. Informal adoption and child rearing by grandparents or other family members is a common occurrence in Samoan society, as will be seen in other cases discussed below.

### Case 2

Sina, who is in her early forties, began with the story of her maternal great-grandmother, whom she took care of as a young woman in Faga'alu. Reflecting the cultural belief in Samoa that taking care of one's elders brings people good fortune, she said, "I believe my life has been blessed through caring for my great-grandma." Sina's maternal grandparents and all their children, with the exception of Sina's mother (who had been left behind to care for the great-grandmother), had migrated to the continental United States. Before Sina's great-grandmother passed away, her mother's brother came to Tutuila from San Diego for a visit. The great-grandmother let her wishes be known that on her death, Sina's maternal uncle in San Diego was to bring Sina to the United States to continue her education and "look for a better future." The great-grandmother died in 1981 when Sina was halfway through tenth grade. The uncle came back for the funeral and in fulfillment of the great-grandma's *mavaega* (dying wishes) took Sina back with him to San Diego, where he was serving in the U.S. Navy.

Sina completed high school in San Diego and went on to college there, working at the same time, and learning, she said, "to be independent." Her sister came to live with other relatives in Seattle and attend university there. Sina traveled from San Diego to Seattle to attend the wedding of her sister and ended up staying there. Her parents and other siblings moved



from American Samoa to Seattle. Sina met her husband, who is from Upolu, at a Samoan church in Seattle and they married in 1992. She recalled that when they married he told her his wish, that if they were blessed with children he would like to return to independent Samoa to raise the children so they could experience the Samoan way of life. In 1993 they visited Samoa, Sina's first visit back to the islands since she had left twelve years earlier.

In 1997, after she had two daughters, they moved to independent Samoa, where Sina's husband attended Piula Methodist Theological College. Sina told me that it had not been her desire to return to Samoa, in particular to independent Samoa because she is not from there, and that she did not place great value on her children experiencing the hardships of growing up the way her husband had. She said that living at the theological college was very challenging for her, something she had never experienced before. However, Sina said that she now gives her husband credit for his decision. She reported that her two high-school-age daughters are doing well at school and also know how to cook and clean the house: "I hardly have to do any of the housework." In contrast, she described how all of her sisters' and brothers' children born and raised in Seattle have become high-school dropouts and are involved in gang activities.

Sina's story resembles Tasi's in that Samoan culture was seen as having a positive influence on raising children, which provided a motivation for return. However, the difference is that in Sina's case the whole nuclear family unit made the move back, not just an individual child. Also, the decision was made by her husband that they should go to independent Samoa, not American Samoa, where youth experience a more Americanized (and more "cushioned") version of Samoan culture. If it were not for her husband, Sina said, she did not think she would ever have returned.

After the husband completed his four years at Piula Theological College, during which time their first son was born, the couple and their growing family went to live in Fale'ula, the compound where trained Methodist ministers and their families stay to await their postings as ministers, while working for the Methodist church at a weekly wage of \$100 *tala* (equivalent to about US\$30), which Sina said was very difficult. To help them survive, they were given a house, free utilities, and land on which to plant their crops. After they had lived there four years with no postings, Sina's mother, who lived in Seattle, became sick. Sina and her immediate family moved back there to take care of her, leaving the Methodist church. Then Sina's husband's mother passed away, and Sina and her husband made the decision to return to American Samoa, as opposed to independent Samoa, because wages there are higher, and school for children does not involve fees and follows the American system. Sina now has a good government job

and her husband is a Samoan culture teacher at a private school run by one of the churches in American Samoa. They are both strongly involved in working with youth groups at the local church in her village.

### *Case 3*

Mele, a woman in her late thirties, returned to American Samoa with her husband three months before our interview. She explained that she, her husband, and children had left Washington state to go to Upolu to take care of her husband's mother when she became sick. They were not planning to stay. Her mother got better, but by that time Mele and her husband, who were both trained as ministers, received a call to start a church in his home village. At the time of the interview she was visiting her biological mother in Tutuila. Mele explained that her adoptive mother, her mother's sister, had taken her to live in Hawai'i and later Washington state when she was quite young. At first their children liked staying in the village in independent Samoa as a vacation, but once they started school and had to bear the discipline of corporal punishment practiced in the schools there they wanted to return to the United States.

### *Case 4*

Pita was born in 1977 in Apia, independent Samoa. His mother is from independent Samoa, and his father is from Tutuila in American Samoa. His parents had met and married in Lā'ie, Hawai'i, where they attended the Church College of Hawai'i (now Brigham Young University Hawai'i) and worked at the Polynesian Cultural Center from 1967 to 1969. Later, his mother wished to return to Upolu to take care of her mother, but his father could not leave because he was working for the U.S. military, so she went on her own. This precipitated a separation and eventual divorce, and his mother eventually remarried.

In 1988, at age thirteen, Pita moved to American Samoa with his mother, stepfather, and three half-siblings. He continued his schooling there, eventually graduating from the community college in American Samoa and going off to California State Dominguez University in Southern California, where he completed his undergraduate degree. He then began a career working for Continental Airlines. Then his mother in American Samoa became sick with cancer; she took her three younger children to stay with her parents in independent Samoa and went to New Zealand to seek medical treatment, which was unsuccessful. Before passing away she let Pita know that she wanted him to take over the responsibility of raising his half-siblings.

Pita explained that he moved back to independent Samoa to fulfill his mother's wishes, seeing that his stepfather was not going to take full responsibility for the care of the children and was already moving on to another marriage. Pita said he moved to American Samoa to get a higher-paying job to support his half-siblings and planned to help them all complete their education. He was making a trip to independent Samoa every two weeks to look after them and brought some of them over to American Samoa to stay with him.

#### *Case 5*

Rosa was born in American Samoa, but after her mother separated from her father she went with her mother to live in Upolu, her mother's home island. Her mother remarried, and Rosa was cared for by her maternal grandmother in Upolu before migrating to Hawai'i with her mother and sister. While growing up in Hawai'i she remembered making four return visits to American Samoa and independent Samoa to visit relatives and participate in various family events. Fifteen years ago, her mother decided she would be happier living in American Samoa, even if material conditions of life would be poorer than in Hawai'i, so she moved back. Rosa explained that because her mother went back to American Samoa, she decided to move back to help her. She intended to do so after she had gathered sufficient resources by taking a good job in Hawai'i and working for several years. However, she graduated from university with a master's degree in December 2008, just when the recession hit. Between December 2008 and July 2009, she applied for thirteen different jobs without success. As a single mother who needed to support three children, as well as to remit money home to her mother, she realized her best choice would be to return to American Samoa, even without much saved capital, as she (rightly) predicted that finding a decent job in American Samoa during the recession would be easier. Rosa's return was the only one of the seven cases in which the 2008 global economic downturn played a direct role, but only in terms of timing, since she already had in mind to return to be closer to her mother.

#### *Case 6*

Eli was born in the mid-1940s, shortly after World War II when both Samoas, but more particularly American Samoa, were engulfed by thousands of U.S. Marines who were stationed in the islands. The strong U.S. presence introduced an unprecedented amount of money and a taste for the material items money can buy. After the departure of the military, the economy of

American Samoa went into a slump. Eli was just coming of age at this time, when the mass out-migration wave was beginning. As a teenager he found a way to migrate to Hawai'i and then to Southern California, where kin provided a home and he received training to become a technical advisor and welder at a major oil refinery.

He married a non-Samoan, he said, in part to reduce the burdens of *fa'alavelave* (Samoan life-crisis events), which involve large contributions and exchanges of money and valuables. Eli, however, did regularly remit money to his family in Tutuila to invest in the family estate, particularly in the construction of new buildings, as well as to support *fa'alavelave*. The estate belonged to his mother's descent group. His father, who was from the relatively remote eastern islands of Manu'a, had come to live with his wife's family, and eventually a title was bestowed on him, even though he was an in-law, because his service, love, and devotion to his wife's family was so strong.

Eli gained skills as a mechanical engineer and had a long career working for Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO). By all measures his return to Samoa was a success. His father, who was the last *sa'o* (head chief) of his descent group, passed away in 1992, near the time of Eli's retirement from ARCO. Eli had already come home to receive a traditional Samoan *tatau*, the Samoan male knee-to-waist tattoo. Through his long-term *tautua*, mostly performed from overseas, and because of his return, Eli was selected by the descent group to succeed to the *sa'o* title. Subsequently, he rebuilt the descent group's guesthouse, then the village church (with the support of the whole community), and subsequently became the village mayor. In this village he is one of only two landholding chiefs. However, the other *matai* title is still vacant. Besides retirement benefits, Eli also receives substantial income from the rental or lease of lands or houses used by foreign businesses, such as a Chinese restaurant in the village, which is not far from the commercial and governmental centers of American Samoa. In this case, the importance of taking up the head *sa'o matai* title of the descent group figured strongly in his motivation to resettle in American Samoa following retirement from a long career overseas, during which he remitted funds and served the family in Samoa in other ways. During his absence, others maintained the family estate.

#### Case 7

Iakopo's situation differed somewhat from the others considered here. His grandfather had been head chief of a large descent group and had purchased land in the adjacent village from a chief there. Thus, in addition

to the communal lands associated with his chiefly title, he had approximately 20 acres (8 ha) of individually owned land on which he instructed Iakopo's father and his household of six children to live and raise their crops. Iakopo's father was poor, lacked formal Western education, and was a *taule'ale'a* (untitled man). His father died when Iakopo was not yet fifteen years old, so Iakopo dropped out of school to seek employment to help his family financially, deferring his own education. He boarded a ship to Hawai'i, where he arrived not knowing anyone, and found work within a few days, despite not knowing much English. Eventually, he ended up working in Long Beach, California, and saved enough money to bring his mother and siblings from Tutuila to join him. This is the main point of difference with Eli's story; Eli simply sent money home to be invested in the family estate, whereas Iakopo used his earnings to bring his family to the United States, effectively abandoning the family land.

Iakopo also returned to American Samoa after his retirement but with fewer savings and benefits from his career of more than thirty years in the United States. He said he spent many of the years in the United States in tautua to his wife's family in Savai'i. In fact, to honor his tautua and show of love to her family and his successful adaptation to life in the United States (e.g., he owned a house), the family there had bestowed on him an important title. This title was subdivided between various branches of the descent group, and other holders of the title continued to reside in the village in Savai'i, representing the descent group in the village council. Iakopo said that part of the reason for his decision to accept the title—which involved traveling to Savai'i and paying for the expensive feasting and gifting to the village in exchange for their acceptance of him as a title holder of the village—was access to land. He felt that taking the title would help secure land for his children when he passed away. In fact, the communal and collective ownership of land in the system would ensure they would have rights to live on that land if they so chose, though the chances of his grown children, born and raised in the United States, settling in a remote village on Savai'i may seem slim.

Land also was a strong factor in the decision of Iakopo and his wife to return and resettle in American Samoa after Iakopo's retirement. The land that his grandfather had bought was still there, though others had assumed some measure of *pule* (control) over it. Since all his siblings had moved away, the estate was not kept up, and control (if not a sense of ownership) had been somewhat lost. Iakopo's sister had also expressed a desire to return to American Samoa and build a house on that land. She had gone to the current sa'o of the descent group (who is not a relative), but had no success in securing rights to the land, since he was strategically maintaining

relationships with others who had an interest in it. Iakopo realized he needed to return to secure the land, not only for his sister but also for his children, since he had no property or land to leave them in the United States. The case is somewhat further complicated by the fact that, according to Iakopo, the land had been given by his grandfather to his father and is individually owned; thus it should be passed only directly to his children. However, when the grandfather bought it in 1919, he registered the land at the American Samoa Territorial Registrar using his chiefly name, which resulted in the mistaken interpretation of the land being communal land. Thus, use of the land was deferred to the current sa'o holder despite the fact that he is not related by blood to the chief who bought the land for his own children.

When Iakopo returned he first lived at the house of his niece, then pitched a tent on his land and planted crops, mostly taro, bananas, and breadfruit. His wife arrived with their youngest, school-age daughter, and they built a shack. In an effort to make claims to the land on which he was born and raised, he first went to the sa'o in the adjacent village and took a minor title with the same name as the land itself. He said that this was strategic in helping him secure rights to the land. His sister came from Seattle and also built a house on the land. His son came for several months, but Iakopo sent him back to the United States for fear that his son would exacerbate the conflict with the other person making a claim to the land. Iakopo wants to use the court system to sort out this conflict. He showed me a letter written by the other claimant referring to his labor of "sweat on the land cutting the trees down" over the years when Iakopo was not to be seen, which he presented as evidence of his ownership through usufruct. Iakopo's daughter, who was born and grew up in the continental United States, then moved to American Samoa with her two young children after separating from her Samoan-American husband, who was serving time in prison. Eventually, Iakopo was able to build a more substantial house for the family and is now in the process of building another one, which he proudly says he is doing for his children using his retirement pensions without incurring debt from a bank loan.

In 2007 the sa'o of the descent group passed away, and meetings were held among the various branches of the descent group regarding whom they wished to put forward as their candidate for the position. Iakopo says he could have been considered as a potential candidate, and others had urged him to pursue the title. However, he chose instead to seek a lower-ranking, but associated, *tulāfale* (orator) title, which was previously held by his cousin who passed away the previous year. This title is higher ranking in the village than his previous title and one that works closely with the

holder of the sa'ō title. It was also less contentiously sought after than the sa'ō title, for which there would have been dozens of contenders from various branches of the family. If the title had been in independent Samoa, the probable solution would have been subdivision. Iakopo followed formal procedures for obtaining a matai title, starting with registering his name for the title at the Territorial Registrar's office, followed by published announcements in the local newspaper for ninety days. With no objections, plans went forward for the installation ceremony in the village, involving the amassing of fine mats, cash, food, and ceremonial gifts to be distributed to the other chiefs of the village on the special day. Iakopo explained that receiving this title would give him more power vis-à-vis his land case, which he said was an important motive for taking the title, in addition to gaining recognition, status, and a role within the community.

When I asked Iakopo about his title from his wife's family in independent Samoa, he told me he has put that aside and is not that interested in it anymore. He spent many years serving his wife's family but now is investing in his own family (meaning descent group), which he was not so involved with during his many years in the United States. Perhaps he is even somewhat regretful about the former focus of his energies, considering that they do not now appear to be strategic to his current aims in American Samoa.

Iakopo told me that six months after he first returned to American Samoa he almost went back to the United States, because he was no longer used to the slow pace of life, nor did he enjoy the political problems he faced reclaiming his family land. Since his return in 2000, his wife has made many trips back and forth to the United States visiting children and grandchildren, but he told me he does not want to leave until after the land case is settled. In contrast, Eli informed me that he takes a cruise with his wife at least once a year—one year it was South America, the next year Alaska. His position and land is secured, his reincorporation smoother and economically more successful than Iakopo's, mainly because his family estate was maintained throughout his absence from American Samoa, and his tautua was invested throughout his time abroad in that estate, preparing for his eventual return.

Iakopo invested his resources by bringing his family to the United States. His transnational links with his home community in American Samoa were thereby weakened, and the family lands were taken over by others while he performed tautua and sought status, respect, and land for his children in Savai'i. It was not until rather late in the process that he realized the need to resecure his relationships within his own descent group and reclaim the family land, which he has done, but with much more difficulty than in

Eli's case (see Howard and Rensel 2012 [this issue] regarding land issues involving returnees on Rotuma; see also Lieber et al. 2012 [this issue] regarding the importance of genealogical knowledge for pressing land claims).

### Case Study Themes

These preliminary case studies and interviews reveal that American Samoans who returned to their home islands after years living in America did so for different reasons associated with different age groups, including (1) youths who were sent back for disciplinary reasons or to benefit from exposure to their cultural roots; (2) young to middle-aged adults who came back either to expose their children to Samoan culture or to care for elders or children; and (3) retirees, particularly male retirees, who returned to take matai titles or to secure land for themselves and their families that they could pass on to their children. For youths the return was usually involuntary; adult family members made the decisions, although in some cases (that of Tasi, for example), being sent back led to a voluntary return later on. Sharing responsibility for child rearing is an important part of this Samoan youth mobility pattern. An important factor for adults is the ability to return with enough capital to start a business, build new residential houses or guesthouses for the descent group, and support community activities.

Caring for one's parents and other elders is a central theme in Samoan culture, providing an impetus for movement in either direction, but this factor plays a particularly important role in the young adult to middle-aged bracket. It also appears that when caring for an elderly person is the primary reason for return, the concern to invest in family and community development may become secondary. Underpinning the Samoan practice of *tausi matua* (caring for elderly people) is the belief that one receives *fa'amanuiaga* (special blessings) in return. That theme was particularly expressed by female interviewees in my study, whereas among the male interviewees, particularly the retirees, the idea of *tautua* leading to a title was somewhat stronger. However, throughout all the case studies, the overriding theme was the Samoan value of family and community obligations.

The case studies demonstrated the applicability of the transnational model for understanding return migration to American Samoa, but not to the exclusion of other analytical perspectives such as the structural and the neoclassical or NELM frameworks. Returnees in the cases summarized here had varied types of overseas experience, with various levels of "success"; that is, return was not clearly a sign of either a successful or failed overseas migration experience, as the neoclassical or NELM approach



might define. Some returnees successfully reached their overseas migration goals, such as higher education, better employment, and purchase of a home (the “American Dream”), but if they have throughout this time maintained their input and service to the descent group at home, they still returned to take up the larger interests of their descent groups and village, often in a leadership position. Others might return only after pursuing higher education with a desire to contribute their skills in the American Samoan workforce, though the desire to contribute (and *tautua*) to community may sometimes override the desire to return, since salaries are generally lower in American Samoa than in the United States.

The two cases of return after successful careers abroad (Eli and Iakopo) reveal interesting similarities and contrasts. The maintenance of transnational kinship linkages between family in American Samoa and the United States during the tenure of residence abroad was stronger for Eli, in part because the household maintained its estate in American Samoa. The maintenance of these linkages assisted Eli’s reintegration into his community on his return, making it relatively successful. In contrast, Iakopo’s whole immediate family migrated to the United States, leaving the family land vacant. This motivated Iakopo’s eventual return to reclaim the family land but also made his reincorporation and reestablishment of identity and status in American Samoa more difficult. Iakopo spent many years in the United States serving his in-laws’ descent group in independent Samoa, which would have helped facilitate his and his wife’s return there but did not assist their return to American Samoa.

### **Contrasting “Return” in American Samoa and Independent Samoa**

Despite their low per capita income compared with the average in the United States, American Samoans are more affluent in cash than their counterparts in independent Samoa. Average salaries and wages in American Samoa are much higher than in independent Samoa, while welfare benefits are readily available to the unemployed. In addition, imported goods and foods are generally less expensive than the same items in stores in independent Samoa. Furthermore, the government of American Samoa funds free breakfast and lunch for students at all schools, whereas no such program exists in independent Samoa. These factors mean that, in general, American Samoans in American Samoa are less reliant on remittances from overseas relatives. These conditions also make American Samoa a target destination for citizens of independent Samoa, particularly for those who do not wish to migrate too far from home for employment purposes.

These economic differences between American and independent Samoa have implications for social life, attitudes, and institutions related to return

migration, even though they share the same basic cultural traditions, values, and institutions. For example, I noticed subtle differences between the two Samoas in cultural attitudes about living overseas. I have often heard residents of independent Samoa use the word *tafao* to summarize their or others' overseas experience, whether that experience was for two weeks visiting some relatives or ten years going to school and holding a job. *Tafao* means "1. Roam, wander about. 2. Be idle, or 3. Stroll about or wander" (Milner 1966, 226), and is just as readily used to refer to taking a stroll at night through the village as taking a trip overseas. The noun form, *tafaoga*, is a term used to refer to a picnic. So going overseas, no matter what one does there or how busy and grueling one's life there may be, is still considered *tafao*, comparable in some ways to going on a picnic—an enjoyable experience away, after which one returns home. From this perspective the real, valuable work is done by those who stay home, no matter how idle or busy they may be, taking care of and upholding family lands, titles, houses, properties, and positions within the community.

The ability of those who leave to remit money home to support family, church, and village activities, and to come home with capital to invest in various status-building projects, offers a redeeming value for their absence. No matter where one is, the principle of helping one's 'āiga, immediate and extended, is the expected and valued practice, particularly for those who remain at home. If migrants return without wealth to share with the extended family, they are still likely to be accepted and reincorporated into the family and village, but not without stigma. From the local perspective, their time overseas is often seen as wasted. While this view was strongly expressed by many in independent Samoa, it was not a common perspective among American Samoans I interviewed. Samoans who have experienced life in both places generally acknowledged this difference.

Given this attitude, a lack of money can operate as a deterrent to returning to independent Samoa, even for a visit, no matter how strong the desire to return to the home village. The village custom of *usu* is an additional economic burden, since the honor is expected to be repaid through a distribution of cash beyond family obligations. I would suggest that, on average, Samoans in the diaspora from independent Samoa may experience greater cultural, social, and economic pressures than those from American Samoa.

Differences in government policy between American and independent Samoa in relation to the matai system also affect return migration and lend themselves to a structural type of analysis. The basic structure of the institution of the matai system, as previously described, remains the same between the two Samoas. However, the government in independent Samoa

permits multiple simultaneous registrations of different people to the same matai title. Consequently, many independent Samoan matai titles now have many multiple holders, since families have subdivided their titles. Only a few paramount titles, such as Malietoa, are restricted from being subdivided. Individuals are also allowed to hold more than one title, and consequently many matai hold several titles, such as in their mother's father's descent group, father's father's descent group, through their spouse, and so forth. This policy encourages expatriates to make return visits in order to receive titles in ceremonies that include large distributions of money and valuables, and then go back overseas, where they are now even more committed (and obligated) to continue to support the system with financial and other resources.

American Samoa, in contrast, prohibits subdivision of matai titles. Each title may be registered to only one person at a time. Furthermore, any individual may register only one title at a time. Thus, if a person who already holds a title is to receive a new one, the old title must first be removed. A vacant title may be bestowed on an individual only after consensus has been reached in the descent group or a title has been won in court. Since there is only one holder of the title, it is a requirement that the title holder reside on island, and preferably in the village near to the guesthouse associated with the title, thereby representing the descent group in the village, acting as trustee for descent group lands, and promoting descent group unity and prestige in the community. Thus, the matai system in American Samoa encourages return migration with a permanent resettlement. In contrast, in independent Samoa, the matai system practice encourages new matai to go back overseas and support the system from there, since there are already other, local holders of the same title in the village representing the descent group in the village and acting as custodian of the descent group's communal lands.

### Conclusion

The Samoan proverb "E lele le toloa ae toe ma'au i le vai" that serves as an epigraph at the beginning of this essay expresses an important cultural value and sentiment—that it is important to return home. People leave seeking "greener pastures" for securing their own and their children's future as well as improving their family's standard of living at home. While the majority of Samoans who migrated from American Samoa since the early 1950s have not returned permanently to American Samoa, a small percentage of them have done so.

Because the population of American Samoans living on island is very small relative to those living off island, the percentage of island residents who are returnees is relatively large. My limited survey of households with at least one parent or a household head of American Samoan ancestry indicates that the majority of these households contain individuals who have had overseas experience, primarily in the United States. Nonetheless, the small land size of American Samoa and its limited employment opportunities relative to the American Samoans living off island and their social and economic aspirations means that most American Samoan migrants do not return permanently at any point in their lives. Yet Samoa remains a home in the mind of many, a place to which one can always return and live more or less "free" on family land, that is, without paying mortgages or rent.

The purpose of this essay has been to explore the phenomenon of return migration to American Samoa through case studies using analytical frameworks developed for researching such phenomena. A major point is that an understanding of indigenous concepts, institutions, and practices must be incorporated into any analysis for it to be credible. While the transnational framework is germane for understanding Samoan mobility, the NELM and structural forms of analysis provide additional insights.

Analysis of mobility must include considerations of cultural identity, social relationships, and membership in extended family networks that entail major economic and social obligations. Motivating factors for migration or return migration must be assessed not just at the individual level of the migrant but also at the larger household or extended family levels (a point of the NELM framework). In fact, decisions about who goes where and who stays or leaves may often be largely influenced by, if not completely in the hands of, the matai (chiefly titleholder) of the extended family, whether that matai is based in Samoa or overseas. This point depends somewhat on the migrant's age and status and his or her relationship to the matai.

While the literature on Pacific Islanders' migratory and diasporic experiences is expanding, particularly with regard to original out-migration and back-and-forth visiting, the specific subtopic of return migration remains understudied. This preliminary research on return migration to American Samoa, focusing on motivations for return, draws attention to some of the issues involved. More data and interviews are needed, and related subtopics and issues, such as the impact of returnees on the home-island community and culture, also require examination. Comparative research involving the role of indigenous concepts in patterning return migration should be particularly illuminating.

### NOTES

This project grew out of my previous research and film documentary on Samoan transnationalism (Van der Ryn 1991a, 1991b), and meeting up with Samoan friends made during that study in Los Angeles, who had returned to reestablish themselves in American Samoa after many years living in the United States.

1. It is common practice among American Samoans to drop the word “American” when referring to their home islands. However, the independent country of Western Samoa officially changed its name to “Samoa” in 1997. In this essay, I refer to the latter as “independent Samoa” to avoid confusion.

2. According to Unasa Va’a: “Where the mass migration from American Samoa in the early 1950s was an attempt by the U.S. Navy to take care of its own dependents, migration from Western Samoa in the period just before independence [from New Zealand] in 1962, ten years later, and subsequently, must be seen as a colonial attempt at reconciliation with its former colony” (1995, 7).

3. While malaga occurred from both American Samoa and independent Samoa, the use of malaga for raising money for community projects such as a village school would exclusively occur from a village of financially much poorer independent Samoa, where villages are responsible for building their schools, unlike U.S.-subsidized American Samoa, where the government funds construction of all educational and medical facilities (though of course not church buildings, halls, or pastor’s residences).

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## PACIFIC ISLANDS DIASPORA STUDIES

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IN THE LARGER WORLD of diaspora studies, the Pacific Islands barely receive a mention.<sup>1</sup> This is unfortunate because the story of the migration, settlement, and adaptation to new locations by Pacific Islanders is ancient, legendary, and an integral part of anthropological history. This special issue contributes to the conversation about diaspora by presenting rich narratives that establish the Pacific Islands as a fruitful area of inquiry.

Diaspora studies have blossomed during the last two decades with the establishment of various institutes<sup>2</sup> and university programs.<sup>3</sup> As in any relatively new academic discipline, there is still a lot of diversity in the concepts used to describe and analyze diasporas; there are also lively debates about appropriate theoretical frameworks. As this collection demonstrates, Pacific Islands diaspora studies are positioned to contribute to the field in unique ways.

It is not that migration is new. Nomadism is a time-honored vocation for the human species, as hunters, fishers, and gatherers moved from place to place in search of resources for food and medicines, tools and weapons, clothing and decorations. Movement involved a sense of anticipation, and sometimes desperation, with the belief that there was something better over the horizon, and a creativity that could recognize and exploit opportunities. Even after a portion of the human species adopted gardening and agriculture, some people were pushed and others pulled in migration patterns that continually reshaped the social landscape. The settling of the Pacific Islands is, indeed, a fascinating part of the human story, with an

early dispersal to Australia and New Guinea, and later dispersals through the islands of Melanesia, Micronesia, and the far-flung islands of Polynesia.

It is, rather, that the technologies of migration are new. The current state of communication and transportation, as well as contemporary ideologies of immigration, call for new models for studying human dispersion. The earliest anthropological models were part of a school of diffusion studies that sought the origin and traced the movement of cultural traits, ideas, and objects—sometimes as if these cultural products could move independently of people. Later models deployed the concept of acculturation to explain how migrants adapted to new environments. Here the focus was on the degree to which migrants assimilated to a new social context and in the process contributed to cultural homogeneity. Incidents of resistance or syncretism were construed as interesting aberrations in the process.

With improved technologies, migration has taken on a new shape. Movement is easier and quicker; connection and exchange with homeland communities is richer and more complex; and the ability to maintain difference in most host countries is greater than ever before. Thus, the dynamics of migration today tend to encourage heterogeneity and hybridity rather than homogeneity. In the distant past, canoe loads of voyagers from what are now known as the Society Islands migrating to the islands now known as Hawai'i became Hawaiians with a memory of a distant homeland (Havaiki). But in the present, Samoans migrating to Hawai'i remain Samoan, stay in contact with kin in Samoa, exchange material goods with them, and frequently travel back and forth. This is indeed a new kind of migration.

Diaspora studies requires a new approach because the diffusion and acculturation models are inadequate to describe, let alone explain, the current movements of people and what is taking place in migrant communities. James Clifford has suggested that, in the present age, a productive perspective on studying culture would emphasize travel and route and that anthropological fieldwork should expand to traveling with people on the move (1997: 25–26). So what is the nature of the discourse that mediates between the memory and values of the home community and the challenges and opportunities of the new environment—between, in J Kēhaulani Kauanui's terms, “rootedness” and “routedness”? (2007, 145).

### **Definitions of Diaspora**

While the ASAO symposium that resulted in these essays purposely avoided getting bogged down in definitional debates, the work represented herein



allows us to consider again what diaspora and the related concept of transnationalism are about. In a recent review of diaspora studies, Stéphane Dufoix avoided settling on a definition of the term “diaspora” either as a noun or an adjective (2008: 4–34). As he noted, some definitions are too broad, including all migration and settlement as examples of the phenomenon; others are so complex that they eliminate some cases that we might want to consider within the diaspora model. For example, William Safran included the notion that people in diaspora idealize their homeland as their only true home, to which they will someday return (1991: 83–93). Although this has been the case in some diasporas, we have several examples in the Pacific where the homeland no longer exists at all (some islets at Bikini), does not exist anymore as remembered (Banaba), or is not idealized (Kapingamarangi). Not all dispersed peoples plan on returning home (for example, the Carolinians on Saipan), and few actually do. When they do, it merits study, as Micah Van der Ryn’s study (2012 [this issue]) illustrates.

Etymologically, the term “diaspora” derives from the Greek word for scattered, sown, or dispersed. This is metaphorically helpful when we remember that scattered seeds often take root and grow where they land. In its sociological usage, the term was first applied to the dispersion of the Jews, beginning with their defeat by the Assyrians in the sixth century BCE and continuing during Greek and Roman conquests until 70 CE when all Jews had been expelled from Palestine. This dispersion is the paradigmatic case, and was, even at the beginning, concerned with identity and assimilation. The Jews adopted, to varying degrees, Hellenic culture and language, and they debated at length the issue of Jewish identity. The production of identity, and the presentation of identity—which are not the same thing—have been part of diaspora discussions from the outset. Other historical diasporas include the Armenian and Greek dispersals.

In the twentieth century, the concept of diaspora has been generalized and applied to other cases. Modern instances include Chinese, Indian, and African diasporas. In response, a consensus is developing around a minimal definition that distinguishes diaspora from migration.<sup>4</sup> Diaspora involves the dispersal of a people from a homeland to a host country or countries, the formation of a community within the host country that identifies with the homeland, and the maintenance of links between the diasporic community and the homeland. Ironically, even this minimal definition jeopardizes categorization of the Jewish experience as diaspora, since there was an imagined homeland without a Jewish community resident there. However, there was a lot of “cross-talk” between diasporic communities. Therefore, let us modify the definition as follows: *Diaspora involves the dispersal of a people from a homeland to a host country or countries, the*

*formation of a community within the host country that identifies with the homeland, and the maintenance of links between the diasporic community and the homeland and/or the maintenance of links among the diasporic communities themselves.*<sup>5</sup>

This definition still begs the question of what a “community” is. The term “diaspora” is often applied in a broader sense to a category of people. Thus, scholars talk about the Latino diaspora, the African diaspora, or even the Muslim diaspora. Clearly, we are now discussing multiple homelands, multiple cultures, and multiple host countries, but the presumption is that these are singular diasporas. A simple test will demonstrate that within these large categories there are a multitude of other identities, such as in the case of the Latino diaspora: Hispanic, Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc. Further, even diasporas from a single homeland may form communities in different lands that do not function as a single face-to-face residential group. Thus, Samoans in New Zealand, Australia, Hawai‘i, and California all form local communities, but these are linked to one another in what we might call a network of communities.

There is a similar range of variation in the use of the related terms “transnational” and “transnationalism.” One use of the concept of transnationalism intersects with diaspora when it describes the links that migrant communities form with other people. The reference here is not to nation-states; rather, transnational refers to connections among people who are neither defined by nor confined by nation-states. Nina Glick-Shiller has argued, “Transnationalism is fully developed only when people establish transnational relationships and interact with persons other than kin, but kin ties are often the foundation for myriad types of non-kin social relationships” (2003, 123).

Although this process does occur, it is not always clear how transnationalism overlaps with diaspora. On the one hand, some scholars emphasize the stable, and perhaps primordial, nature of diasporas. That is, the diasporic people do not mix with others but rather maintain a “purity” based on an idealized homeland, culture, and language. Other scholars emphasize the fluid and constructed nature of diasporas. In this case, the members of the diaspora continually create and re-create multiple, hybrid, and shifting identities, behaviors, and beliefs as they interact not only with the dominant culture but also with other immigrants in their neighborhood. An extreme example is the conversion of some Latino immigrants to the United States to radical Islam (Temple-Raston 2010). This example should remind us that the effects of transnationalism are not homogenous; that is, they can fracture and even create conflict within diasporas. Another example is the engagement of Samoan youths with hip-hop in San Francisco, where they

are building bridges to Latino and Black culture to express their experience, much to the chagrin of their parents (Fonoti 2009). In another context, the Samoan community in Seattle is wary of competition with Latinos and Native Americans for government programs (McGrath 2002, 314).

The use of the term “transnational” is not consistent in the literature. A meaning of the term to which I am sympathetic refers to the transnational flow of ideas, goods, and persons between diasporic communities and homelands (for examples, see Howard 1961; Howard and Rensel 1994). In a review of a book on the Chinese diaspora in Britain (Gomez and Benton 2008), David Parker praised the authors for a work that “historicizes long-distance networks of migration, remittance flow, and cultural interchange between Britain and East Asia” while highlighting “the indispensability of looking beyond national borders for the factors that shape emerging constructs such as the ‘British Chinese’ category [that] they regard as evidence of the ongoing pull of national allegiances” (2005, 415). Except for Samoans returning home, there is not yet enough discussion in Pacific Islands diaspora studies of the back-and-forth movement between diasporic and home communities.

### Variations in Diasporas

By now, it should be clear that the concept of diaspora has been deployed so widely that it is in danger of losing its analytic usefulness. If all migration is diaspora, then why have two concepts? At the same time, there is an acceptable range of variation for every social science concept that groups together phenomena so that their similarities can illuminate particular cases. On the one hand, Rotumans who migrated and lost touch with their kin back home were part of a diaspora (Howard and Rensel 2012 [this issue]).<sup>6</sup> On the other, there are some forms of diaspora that present a complexity that is not commonly discussed in the literature.

The simplest case would be a homeland that is intact and a single community of migrants that has been established across some international boundary. But variations exist in the nature of homelands. As noted earlier, some are no longer habitable (Bikini), or are difficult and expensive to return to (Rotuma, Kapingamarangi, outer atolls in the Marshall Islands). Some have become so remote historically that return is no longer a desirable option (Carolinians on Saipan). In the larger world of diaspora studies, some homelands have governmental regimes that do not favor return; in such cases, overseas communities may agitate for political reform in their homelands. Finally, both real and imagined homelands change over time.<sup>7</sup>

Host countries vary as well, in time as well as in place. Witness the difference between the Jewish experience in Poland from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries and the experience of Jews in Poland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some variations emerge in the perspective of the host country toward migrants in general or toward migrants from a particular homeland. Thus, the experience of Micronesians in Hawai'i (see essays by Carucci 2012 [this issue] and Falgout 2012 [this issue]) has not been the same as the experience of Samoans and Tongans in Hawai'i (Morton 1998, 2003; Spikard 1994; Ka'ili 2006).

A second kind of diaspora is the dispersion of one people to two or more countries. Tongans in the United States have a different experience from Tongans who migrate to New Zealand. This kind of diaspora opens up the possibility of communication between dispersed communities, a kind of three-way communication that includes the homeland as one node, migrant community A as a second node, and migrant community B as a third node. This changes the complexity of conversation and the possibilities of contestation. The dispersed Rotuman population (resident in many countries across the globe) carries on a lively Internet discussion about the way things are back home as well as the way things should be (Howard and Rensel 2012 [this issue]).

A third kind of diaspora occurs when people leave one migrant community to form a new one elsewhere in the same country (e.g., Marshallese moving from Oklahoma to Arkansas in the United States) or in another country (e.g., Tongans moving from New Zealand to Australia). This kind of "secondary diaspora" now has a homeland community, a "mother" migrant community, and a "daughter" community. Perspective, connections, and the flow of persons, ideas, and goods all change again. I once asked a Marshallese whom I encountered in Evansville, Indiana, where he was from. He said, "Enid, Oklahoma." I had expected him to name an atoll, but perhaps, in an odd way, he did.<sup>8</sup> Through "secondary diaspora" a kind of "diasporic archipelago" is formed, and this puts Pacific Islands diaspora studies into the larger conversation about centers and peripheries in diaspora.

Finally, there is variation in the level of generality and the size of the diaspora. Do the African diaspora and the Kapingamarangi diaspora belong to the same category? In the one case, we have several million people from a whole continent full of countries, and in the other, several hundred people from a single atoll. In the first case, there are many unrelated people speaking a variety of languages and behaving in a variety of culturally informed ways settling in a variety of host countries.<sup>9</sup> In the second case, there is a small group of interrelated people speaking one language and

behaving within a narrow range of culturally informed ways. I propose that Pacific Islands diaspora studies has something to contribute particularly to the study of the dispersion of smaller populations and how they interact with mass society as well as with other diasporic communities.

Thus far, most studies of Pacific Islands diasporas have focused on island or island group of origin. There has not been much discussion of areal (e.g., Polynesian, Micronesian, or Melanesian) diasporas or regional (e.g., Pacific Islands, Oceanic) diasporas. In part, this is a matter of perception by the inhabitants of the host country. In part, it has been an identity choice by migrants themselves. So far, in the Pacific Islands, we do not have the equivalent of an “African diaspora” or “Latino diaspora.”

Likewise, unlike the “Muslim diaspora,” Pacific Islands diasporas have not been defined by religion, although religion has played a part in the migration of many people to universities, Bible colleges, and theological schools.<sup>10</sup> For example, the diasporic Marshallese community that lives now in Enid, Oklahoma, and that has given rise to daughter diasporic communities in Indiana, Florida, and elsewhere, began with students enrolling at Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Enid.<sup>11</sup> (Later in this essay I discuss the role of the church within diasporic communities.)

Variations in size also raise questions about the “critical mass” required in a migrant community to fulfill the roles and carry out the functions of institutions. Scholars have viewed the Pacific Islands as having been a “natural experiment” in human adaptation to new environments of different sizes, as well as a demonstration of the cultural variations that develop as immigrant communities bringing different cultural resources to bear in new environments.<sup>12</sup> This work can continue now in the study of diasporic Islander communities.

### **Identity in Diaspora**

Identity formation in diaspora involves a range of institutionalized practices, although the process is not completely under the control of the diasporic community as they are variously obligated to the homeland and shaped by the larger community, including other diasporic peoples, in the host land. The homeland may be idealized or may be demonized; it may be distant from or present in the consciousness and practice of everyday life; it may be a patron of the diasporic community; or it may be dependent on the diasporic community.<sup>13</sup>

Anthropologists tend to assume that identity is linked to place, especially in the Pacific (Macpherson, Spoonley, and Anae 2001, 13).<sup>14</sup> The practice of “emplacement” is significant in the construction of identity (Englund

2002, 267; Marshall 2004: 134–37). A variety of practices and rituals may serve to transform the new place: gardening, house building, dress, cooking, producing crafts, and the activities of singing, dancing, and other types of performance. All of these may transform space, beginning with the air itself, which can be transformed by scents (Kuehling 2012 [this issue]), by sound, and by movement.

Identity is a fundamental question for people whose land of residence is not their land of reference. They face different problems than the people back home and thus deploy different strategies for adapting to life in the new land. For some, the problem is how to maintain cultural identity, but since the “other” has shifted, and the boundary has moved, identity takes a different shape than in the homeland (see, e.g., Howard and Howard 1977).

For others, the problem is one of finding a niche for a cultural and ethnic identity in a new sea of diversity. Part of that diversity may include different generations of the same people. As Suzanne Falgout suggests, identity formation may follow different practices in different generations (2012 [this issue]). Indeed, identity choice may be situational; for instance, Kapinga people tend to settle for a generic Pacific Islander identity when the “other” does not have a more descriptive category for them (Lieber et al. 2012 [this issue]). Lawrence Carucci (2012 [this issue]) reports that the Marshallese on the Big Island live with constant vigilance, considering themselves to be under constant threat from the surrounding society. Trying to “fly under the radar,” to not attract attention, they avoid public gatherings where their Marshallese identity might be exposed. Similarly, for Samoans in Seattle, Barbara Burns McGrath noted that “the actual frequency of government involvement in family matters is not known, but the fear is widespread” (2002, 313).

The problem, for some, is to minimize identification with other people’s stigmatizing identities, as shown in the cases of Kapinga in the United States and Pohnpeians in Hawai’i (Lieber et al. 2012 [this issue] and Falgout 2012 [this issue]). Banabans are insistent that they are not I-Kiribati, whereas Gilbertese claim that they are (Kempf 2012 [this issue]). The Carolinians on Saipan reinvented the ethnic landscape by positioning themselves as “people of our land,” thus forcing others to rethink their identity (Kuehling 2012 [this issue]). Identity formation, then, depends on the social and cultural context of those in diaspora but also on what diasporic people themselves bring to the table.

In a review of recent work on ethnicity and Brazilian identity, Jerry Dávila identified a concept that is “fundamental to the study of ethnic minorities in Brazil,” specifically “a modification of the continuum between

whites and blacks that has traditionally been used to imagine Brazilian society" (Dávila 2008, 187). Brazilians imagine that their society is composed of a "harmonious mixture of whites and blacks," and it is within this context that diasporas of Syrians, Lebanese, Japanese, and others must negotiate a place. That place seems never to be just "Brazilian," but some hyphenated ethnic designation that perforce perpetually marginalizes the diaspora.<sup>15</sup> The issue here is identification (by the larger society) as it is entangled with identity and the presentation of self in society.

Pacific Islands diaspora studies will mature as analyses of cases of diaspora consider the racial rhetoric of the host society. For example, compare Hawai'i's imagined "Rainbow" society with the various imaginations of California, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. On the other end of the identity process, Pacific Islands diaspora studies will mature as more examples emerge of migrants as agents in their own identity formation. McGrath provided four cases of Samoan migrants who manage their own connections with their diasporic community as well as with the larger society in Seattle. In one of the cases she studied, she noted, "Leilani chose to connect with other Samoans, but on her own terms" (McGrath 2002, 311).

The Pacific Islands have already been a major site for theorizing personhood and identity; thus, anthropologists have the ethnographic depth to interrogate identity formation in diaspora. Pacific Islands anthropologists have led the way in asking how the person is constructed, how a person manages multiple identities, and the place of agency and negotiation in identity formation.<sup>16</sup> They are now well positioned to extend these studies in the Pacific Islands diaspora.

### **Community in Diaspora**

The distinction between identification and identity, the emergence of migrants as agents who manages their own connections, and the realization that there are layers of connections with a variety of referent groups are perspectives from which to interrogate the concept of community. As McGrath noted, Pacific Islands diaspora studies reveal the rather slipshod use of the concept of community in social science studies (2002: 320, 333).

There is variation in whether or not migrants form communities at all, how they form communities when they do, and what shape communities take in the host country. Some communities tend to mirror those in the homeland, whereas others are shaped by a different reading of the social structure in a new setting, and some migrants fail to form community at all, at least with other migrants from their own home island. In an earlier



volume, Lieber noted that the Nukuoro who migrated to Pohnpei did not form a viable community, whereas migrants from Kapingamarangi did (1977, 355; see also Lieber et al. 2012 [this issue]). Likewise, in 1961, only one of four enclaves of Rotumans on Fiji replicated anything similar to the community organization of the home island (Howard and Howard 1977).

Institutions and traditions tend to function differently in diaspora than in the homeland. Our older model of the settlement of the Pacific highlighted the importance of the lineal effect and the founder effect. No one ancestor and no small group of founders could carry the full range of diversity from the gene pool, and thus the founding population was necessarily different from the population of origin. By analogy, no one family and no small group in diaspora can carry the full range of customs, traditions, and narratives from a homeland. Insofar as culture is contingent on the resources at hand, there is already in diaspora a reduction or narrowing of cultural resources. For example, in the context of the surrounding community, song and dance may be the most obvious and understandable markers of identity but making and storing fermented breadfruit may drop off the trait list. Adapting to the social and cultural context of the new land means that a selective process occurs where traditions and values are prioritized and accessed differently than in the homeland. Thus, there is the reshaping of tradition to deploy it in a new situation, and that may contribute to an objectification of culture.

It is important to note that families are in diaspora (Gershon 2007), but it is not enough to assume that the concept of “family” continues to include the same category of people that it did back home (see essays by Addo 2012 [this issue] and Falgout 2012 [this issue]). Wider categories of community, such as clan or *kainga*, continue to be important, but one must ask whether or not the meanings of clan and community have changed or, at least, whether the boundaries have shifted. Helen Morton has addressed the question of continuity of custom for Tongans in diaspora; she discovered that families rework the definition and nature of *anga fakatonga* (Tongan customs), while they vary in their adherence to customary practices and differentially (most obviously, generationally) accept or reject certain customs (1998).

In this issue, Falgout writes about “valued customs,” and the phrase itself implies a prioritizing process (2012). Kuehling cites the loss of language as significant in the loss of culture yet finds that there are subtle ways to reproduce culture, ways that can be concealed or revealed at chosen times.

Some institutions also operate differently at home than in diaspora. Manuel Rauchholz (2012 [this issue]) has made it clear that adoption by someone living on the other side of a village is quite different from



adoption by someone living across the sea. It is somewhat like the exchange of other objects (including valuables and land); when the object is safe in relationship, and nearby, people do not worry because they have access. But when the valuable (land or child) leaves the exchange system, people begin to resist such transfers.

We already know that institutions, even with the same name, differ according to the size of the island, the density of the population, and the resources available (Mason 1959). Robert Kiste and Michael Rynkiewicz (1976), for example, have shown that the incest taboo and marriage rules differ in their expression between a small isolated population (Bikini) and a larger connected population (Arno Atoll) within the same culture area. It should come as no surprise, then that the expression of cultural practices in a diasporic community differs from that in the homeland community.

How do these processes relate to incorporation in the host land? How much do people want to be associated with either community—home or host? What do they have to know to be included? The terms of incorporation into the new community are what J. Kēhaulani Kauanui has called the “politics of reception” (2007, 139). What do people have to do to avoid inclusion, if that is what they want? I constantly heard complaints from Papua New Guineans who had moved to Port Moresby that their *wantoks* (people from the same language area) were waiting by the front door on payday or showing up uninvited, expecting bed and breakfast. These Moresby residents wanted less inclusion and lower obligation to village values. This is such a common and serious problem that there was a popular song of complaint about it: “There Goes My Pay” (Goddard 2005, 13). Then, what is the process of reincorporation into the home community when someone, or a family, or a larger group returns? Where are the shared memories? (Kauanui 2007, 154).

The articles in this collection demonstrate that there is a difference between the way the academy views diaspora and the way the people involved view it. Although social scientists tend to focus on identity and community, people in diaspora may have other discussions. Alan Howard and Jan Rensel (2012 [this issue]) have documented what some of those discussions are, at least between different diasporic Rotuman communities, although not as much with the homeland itself. Their work resonates with a 2005 study by Angel Parham that demonstrates ways in which the use of the Internet creates different senses of place as well as different public spheres. Parham showed that the Internet can undermine the community as well as enhance it, depending on who is using the Internet and how the community is represented there.

Ping-Ann Addo (2012 [this issue]) suggests that Tongans in diaspora are “frequent debaters of tradition.” This is in line with the conceptual shift in anthropology toward understanding culture as contingent, constructed, and contested and the recognition of people as agents who navigate and negotiate their way through cultural settings. Addo’s work shows that the organization of labor in craft production has changed as has the understanding of money and its relationship to exchange. Traditional patterns of giving are being adapted to a new setting, with the younger generation questioning the giving of so much money to the church, and redefining the circle of “family” within which one must be generous in giving.

Both Addo (2012 [this issue]) and Kuehling (2012 [this issue]) suggest that changing perceptions and uses of money reflect different generational understandings of family and community. The obligations felt by the second generation seem narrower and weaker than the first generation. The sense of family and community is directed more toward the people one sees than the ones left back home. This raises again the question of how children learn culture and the degree to which they learn from parents or peers in diaspora.

Finally, out of the obligations of kinship and the institution of exchange has developed the practice of remittances, that is, sending money from the diaspora to relatives in the homeland. This institution looms large for the economies of some countries; the flow of remittances worldwide reached \$250 billion by 2007 (King et al. 2010, 98). Samoa and Tonga rank with Jordan, Lebanon, Senegal, Honduras, and Guyana, if not with the Philippines and Mexico, in terms of the percentage of the recipient country’s gross domestic product represented by total annual remittances (King et al. 2010, 98). What shape remittances take, and whether or not they are sustainable, continues to be an important topic (Macpherson 1992).

### **Religion in Diaspora**

Arif Dirlik raised one of the central questions about the intersection of the global and the local in the early twenty-first century: “How can we “make sense of two seemingly contradictory developments...: economic and political globalization that is taken generally to point to unprecedented global integration, and the resurgence of religions or, more broadly, traditionalisms, that create new political and cultural fractures, or reopen old ones” (2003, 147). He also raised two issues about diasporas. The first concerns the relationship between religion (whether declining or ascending) and diasporic communities. The second issue concerns the degree to which the processes of diaspora, with or without religion, serve positive functions

for the migrant community (e.g., social solidarity) and the degree to which they engender negative consequences for the migrant community such as conflict, either within the community or between the community and the host land.

In this issue, Wolfgang Kempf (2012) asks about the place of religion and the church in diaspora. He suggests that we do not know the answer because religion (not always the same as the Church) has not been a prominent category in diasporic studies.<sup>17</sup> Dufoix claimed, "Diaspora studies have long neglected the religious factor in favor of ethnicity and nationalism" (2008, 75). Further, "The reworking and transformation of rituals and practices in the migratory context" becomes, in John Hinnells's terms, "the diaspora religion" (Hinnells 1997; Dufoix 2008, 77).

In Pacific Islands diaspora studies, the primary religion is Christianity, as it occurs in a variety of local forms.<sup>18</sup> The church building is a primary site for the enactment of identity, but we have not asked enough questions about how that happens, whether or not it is changing, and, if the Church in Pacific Islands diasporas is declining in importance, what might be replacing it. For example, in this issue, Falgout (2012) observes that the Church is stronger in diaspora for Marshallese and Chuukese than for Pohnpeians. McGrath claimed that, for Samoans in Seattle, "two core cultural values serve to connect Samoans: the importance of family, and the centrality of the church in daily life" (2002, 308).

As an institution, the Church has played a significant role in Pacific diasporas as a site for meeting and celebrating tradition, especially for the first generation (see Carucci 2012 [this issue]; Falgout 2012 [this issue]; and Kempf 2012 [this issue]). But one must also ask whether or not the Church is fading in importance for the second and third generations. Addo (2012 [this issue]) notes that the second generation of Tongans does not feel as obligated to give as large a portion of their income to the Church as the first generation did, that they tend to exchange gifts interfamily and less inter-*lotu* (congregation); thus, there is a narrowing of obligations from the larger community to a more limited definition of family. If the Church is fading as a central institution, then is that a result of secularization, individualism, or acculturation?

The relationship between the Church and diaspora can be strong, as in the case of students migrating to attend denominational schools (as per the examples in endnote 10). The concept of diaspora itself can be part of a new narrative. For example, although the Filipino diaspora is largely motivated by economic necessity, some have interpreted it as a missionary opportunity (Pantoja, Tira, and Wan 2004).<sup>19</sup> The link between Polynesian diaspora and the Mormon Church, both in Hawai'i and Utah, begs more scholarly attention. It would be a mistake, a "conceit of modernity," Dirlik

called it, simply to assume that “religion must disappear in direct proportion to the progress of a modern culture identified with the Enlightenment goals of science and rationality, and expressed in social, cultural, and political life in secularism” (Dirlik 2003, 149).

### **Pacific Islands Diaspora Studies**

I have identified five areas where Pacific Islands diaspora studies intersect with the larger domain of diaspora and transnational studies: definitions of diaspora, variations in diaspora, and issues of identity, community, and religion. Every region has a contribution to make, as Sidney Mintz argued for the Caribbean (1998). What additional questions might be asked for the next phase of scholarly work in the Pacific?

The refinement of social science models involves a careful cycling between the specific (ideographic) and the general (nomothetic). The move from ethnography to ethnology is a long-standing methodological strategy in anthropology. When a critical mass of ethnographic descriptions has been built up, it becomes possible to draw comparisons across cultures and between culture areas. Some of that work is beginning to emerge, as with the comparisons between various Micronesian adaptations to life in diaspora—for example, in this issue, Pohnpeians, Chuukese, and Marshallese as they negotiate their identities in Hawai‘i. Others have compared the way in which Samoans and Tongans handle remittances (Ahlburg 1991; Brown 1998). There certainly seems to be a difference between the way that Tongans and Samoans have negotiated their place in Hawaiian society and the way that Chuukese, Pohnpeians, and Marshallese have, yet this has not been addressed adequately. One research strategy is to begin by drawing comparisons among the patterns that groups of Pacific Islanders develop in community organization, sociality, and connections with the homeland when they move abroad.

More than any other people in the world, Pacific Islanders have practiced dispersion, albeit in a sea of islands where communities have sometimes been seen as circumscribed by shorelines, and larger entities are marked by the imagined boundaries of an archipelago. Migration stories usually begin with a subset of the larger community that leaves, travels a long distance, and makes a landfall in another archipelago. The story of the voyages from Samoa to the Marquesas, from there to the Society Islands, from there to the Cook Islands, and on to New Zealand is a classic example. What began as one diasporic community, over time, gave rise to other groups of migrants who founded communities of their own. The process

continues today beyond the sea of islands, in a series of chain migrations. These “secondary diasporas” eventually form a “diaspora archipelago.” The Marshallese have created a diaspora archipelago, with communities on nearly every Hawaiian island, in California and Oregon, Oklahoma and Arkansas, and now Indiana, Ohio, and Florida. Pacific Islands diaspora studies is well positioned to develop a theory of “secondary diasporas” as a contribution to diaspora studies in general.

Gabriel (Gabi) Sheffer made the provocative observation that diaspora studies have emphasized “the ‘positive’ role diasporas have played in the economic development of their host lands and homelands and the political support they render to the latter,” and lately has also addressed “their ‘negative’ involvement in terrorism and criminal activities on behalf of their homelands and brethren” (2006, 126). In a dramatic way, this exposes the ambivalent position of diasporas in their host countries. They are not clearly under the control of the national government in their new home and, thus, are suspect, particularly in times of crisis. Sometimes they are neither clearly identified nor counted, and their leadership is not easily addressed. The political nature of diasporas has not been fully explored among Pacific Islanders. How do various diasporas relate to their country of origin, their host country, and to relevant international organizations such as the United Nations, multinational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and transnational religions? For example, some Marshallese triangulate the U.S. government, nongovernmental organizations concerned with nuclear fallout, and lawyers. This will only increase with climate-induced migration where, unfortunately, the Pacific Islands will suffer considerably (Burkett 2011).

Finally, Pacific Islands diasporas exist within a “transnational space” that includes other diasporas, both from other Pacific Islands and from non-Pacific homelands. How do Pacific Islanders negotiate their identity in spaces filled with more recognizable ethnicities? Indeed, how do Micronesians find an identity at all in spaces inhabited by Polynesians, a much better known identity? What is the effect of other communities’ languages and customs, songs and symbols on younger generations of Pacific Islanders in diaspora? What kinds of connections might Pacific Islands migrants make with diasporas or ethnic communities from other places in the world?

Exploring the concept of diaspora and its companion, transnationalism, opens an inquiry into the lives of diasporic communities with specific questions about the experience of migration, settlement, and adaptation to physical and social environments. Although we have yet to reap the full

benefits of this particular lens on life, I am confident that the concept is well suited for coming to grips with the multitude of issues, well illustrated in this collection, faced by migrant communities in an increasingly interrelated global world system.

## NOTES

1. For example, in Roger Waldinger's foreword to Stéphan Dufoix's *Diasporas*, a list of diasporas is given: "Indian, Armenian, African, Scottish, Dutch, Muslim, Catalan, Cuban, Greek, Mexican, Central American, and southern" (Waldinger 2008, xi), but the Pacific Islands are not on the list. Dufoix himself offered little more, also leaving the Pacific Islands out of his list (2008, 1). The journal *Diaspora* began publication in 1991, but a search of the contents through 2005 (fifteen years) reveals no articles on Pacific Islands. Indeed, the mission statement of the journal lists "traditional diasporas" and "new transnational dispersions," but neither of these includes the Pacific Islands.

2. Especially notable is the International Institute for Diaspora Studies, a division of the Zorgan Institute, which is linked to several Canadian and European universities, and publishes *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*.

3. More than a dozen universities now boast a BA in diaspora studies. The discipline has become so popular that it has a presence on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2204871062](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2204871062) (accessed January 26, 2011).

4. Dufoix summarized the evolving consensus regarding the term "diaspora": "The current use of this word, contradictory though it may be, raises issues about the voluntary or involuntary migration of people; the maintenance or the re-creation of identification with a country or land of origin; and the existence of communities that claim their attachment to a place or, to the contrary, to their spatially free-floating existence" (2008, 2). Russell King and his coauthors offered: "Three core criteria help to define a diaspora: dispersion across international space, orientation to a homeland, and a clear sense of common identity sustained through ethnicity, language, and religion" (King et al. 2010, 36).

5. Other definitions include as many as six criteria (Safran 1991) or nine criteria (Cohen 1997).

6. These Rotuman migrants were not unlike the Hawaiians who joined whaling crews, some of whom ended up in the Pacific Northwest (Barman 1995; Barman and Watson 2006; Duncan 1972; Koppel 1995).

7. See Zlatko Skrbis's discussion regarding the lives of Croats in Australia before and after independence from Yugoslavia (1997).

8. Linda Allen's 1997 dissertation reveals diaspora hybridity with the title "Enid 'Atoll'."

9. Indeed, within the African diaspora, one would have to ask, for example, whether the experience of the Siddis (Habshis) of India has any similarity to the experience of

the Garifuna of Belize. Colin Palmer has argued that treating all African diasporas alike risks perceiving them through the lens of one particular diaspora (2000). Paul Zeleza has urged scholars to move away from a single model of African diaspora (2005). Minkah Makalani reviewed the discussion about diversity within the African diaspora (2009).

10. One of the most obvious cases is Brigham Young University in Hawai'i and Utah. However, there are a number of Pacific Islands students elsewhere in the United States. For example, Papua New Guinea students associated with "holiness" denominations have formed the Papua New Guinea Christian Student Fellowship in America, which coordinates gatherings of students from Penn View Bible College (Pennsylvania), Pensacola Christian College (Florida), Hobe Sound Bible College (Florida), Kentucky Mountain Bible College (Kentucky), God's Bible School and College (Ohio), Wesleyan Bible College (South Carolina), Indiana Wesleyan University (Indiana), and Mt. Vernon University (Ohio), among others. (<http://pngchristianstudentfellowship.blogspot.com/>)

11. Education is obviously an important factor in migration and diaspora. Worldwide, in 2006, a total of "2.7 million people were pursuing higher education outside their own country" (King et al. 2010, 84). See Lieber et al. 2012 (this issue). But neither education nor religion has defined categories of diasporic Pacific Islanders.

12. What difference would it have made if Solomon Islanders and not Society Islanders had discovered and settled Hawai'i?

13. The extent of formality in such obligation to homeland is illustrated by the Greek diaspora in the present day. In September 2010, the Greek government developed a "Diaspora Bond." "[Finance Minister Giorgos] Papaconstantinou said the government plans to try to sell debt abroad, saying there were as many living overseas as in the country itself. 'A Diaspora Bond which will tap the market and the willingness of Greeks abroad to contribute something to this effort is something we want to do. We'll be rolling something like this out sometime in 2011.'" (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-09-15/greece-may-miss-revenue-target-sell-diaspora-bond-papaconstantinou-says.html>)

14. See also Linnekin and Poyer 1990, 6; but compare Siikala 2001: 22–34.

15. Jerry Dávila attributed this concept of "the hidden hyphen" to Jeffrey Lesser (2007) (Dávila 2008, 188).

16. A few references will illustrate this depth and range of identity and personhood studies: Read 1955; Burridge 1979; Iteanu 1990; Josephides 1991; Strathern 1998; Strathern and Stewart 1998; and Hirsch 2001.

17. This is also the claim of Kokot, Toloyan, and Alfonso 2003.

18. We should not overlook Hindus in Fiji or Muslims in the Solomons, however. See, for example, McDougall 2009.

19. This perspective contrasts with a diasporic community that, for example, focuses inward on solidarity in the face of mistreatment by employers, as is the case in the migration of Antillean domestic workers (Dobie 2004: 166–67).

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