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CENTRAL CAROLINIAN ORAL NARRATIVES: INDIGENOUS MIGRATION THEORIES AND PRINCIPLES OF ORDER AND RANK*

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Within anthropology two competing theories have been proposed concerning the original dispersal of Austronesian peoples in Micronesia and Polynesia. The first is the so-called "northern route theory" put forward by Peter Buck (1938a:47) and revived in a more complex form by William Howells (1973).[1] This theory is so named because it proposes that the original inhabitants of Micronesia entered the area from the west (i.e. Indonesia and/or the Philippines) proceeding to occupy the various islands of the region as they moved on to the east. Eventually such migrants entered Polynesia from the eastern extremity of Micronesia thus bypassing most of Melanesia which lay to the south. In contrast is the "southern route theory" delineated by George Grace (1961) and supported by Shutler and Marck (1975). This hypothesizes that the Austronesian peoples entered Oceania via the islands of Melanesia. If so, the ancestral populations I hat settled Micronesia most likely arrived from the southeast and then occupied the islands of the region from east to west.

In earlier years traditional narratives were frequently used, albeit with caution, as one type of supporting evidence for these theories.[2] More recently they have not played an important role in such studies largely because the tales contradict the accepted models of settlement derived from linguistics and archaeology.[3] However, it should be noted that the linguistic/archaeology model *is* the southern route theory. Therefore with the recent revision and revitalization of a northern route theory, the oral narratives might be taken as support for this hypothesis which otherwise has depended primarily on physical anthropological evidence for confirmation.[4]

This paper will reexamine those tales of the central Carolines that include migration motifs and demonstrate that such stories cannot easily be utilized for such purposes. I reached this conclusion because the narratives appear to follow a consistent pattern of development that suggests a degree of "tailoring" to conform to important principles of order and rank that obtain between the societies of the region. As a general conclusion, of course, this is not unique. Raymond Firth (1961:168-83) clearly detailed how traditional narratives on Tikopia were used to validate the social order on that Polynesian island. The central and western Carolinian narratives discussed in this paper demonstrate that parallel processes operate in Micronesia and that the "tailoring" follows some very specific lines.

Linguistic and Archaeological Evidence of Settlement

To date linguists have provided the most complete model of hypothesized population movements within this region of Oceania (Matthews 1951; Grace 1961; Dyen 1965; Shutler and Marck 1975). They have concluded that the nuclear Micronesian languages are most clearly related to the Austronesian dialects of eastern Melanesia.[5] Thus migrations into Micronesia, as stated above, probably came from the east moving to the west. Within the area of immediate concern, an easily identifiable linguistic chain exists linking all islands from Ulithi to Woleai to Lamotrek and on to Truk (Quackenbush 1968). The languages of western Micronesia--Palauan, Chamorro, and Yapese--are not closely related to nuclear Micronesian nor, for that matter, to each other. Given these relationships it seems most likely that the coral islands between Yap and Truk were settled by migrants moving from the region of Truk.

Very little archaeology has been done in the central Carolines and that which has occurred is quite recent (see Craib 1983). Until additional work fills in some important gaps and resolves a number of inconsistencies, the evidence that has been accumulated is subject to varying interpretations. Nevertheless, work on Truk indicates that those islands were settled by 2000 B.C. (Shutler, Sinoto, and Takayama 1978:97). The earliest reliable date from Lamotrek demonstrates that the island was inhabited by 1000 A.D., and possibly as early as 300 A.D., although we are not convinced of the accuracy of this latter date.[6] Radiocarbon dates from Mogmog, Ulithi, indicate that this atoll was settled by 400 A.D. (Craib 1980:198). The earliest radiocarbon date relating to human settlements on Yap is 176 A.D., obtained by Gifford and Gifford (1959:200). Given the significantly older Trukese dates, the archaeological work thus far com-

pleted does not contradict the above linguistically derived model.[7] The remainder of this paper will try to determine if the traditional narratives have anything to contribute to this question.

The Oral Traditions: Settlement and Resettlement[8]

Of the sixty-six narratives published by Lessa only two make reference to the original settlement of islands. The first (no. 5) "implies that Fais was populated from Ulithi," after that island was fished from the sea (Lessa 1961:35).[9] The second (no. 9) tells how Ngulu was settled. In this narrative a Ulithian man, Halengloi, visits Yap and renders outstanding service first to his Yapese patron and then to his host in Guror. Consequently, he is rewarded with the gift of a wife. Halengloi expresses a desire to his new wife on four separate occasions to eat a particular type of fish *(likh).* He is told that if he wants this type of fish he should go out fishing for it. He then sets out with his wife and several other men:

> Now Halengloi was a pelu, or navigator. He had never before been to the island of Ngulu but he knew about it. The people from Yap, however, did not. Halengloi . . . sailed far to the south. . . . Suddenly, all the people on the canoe shouted, saying there was something in the distance. Halengloi told them it was the island of Ngulu. . . .

After returning to Yap, the island is given to the Guror chief (Halengloi's host) by the Gatchepar chief (Halengloi's patron) and the former then permits Halengloi and his wife to return to Ngulu as settlers.

> This is why Ngulu belongs to the chief of Guror in the district of Galiman on Yap. And this is why the people of Ngulu have the customs of both Ulithi and Yap and also speak these languages. For their ancestors came from there.

In the Woleai, Ifaluk, and Lamotrek region oral narratives gathered by Sarfert, Hambruch (in Damm 1938), Burrows (1949, 1963; with Spiro 1953) and Spiro (1951) have been published. Several of those gathered by Burrows are most relevant to the topic under discussion in this paper.

Burrows (1949:151-53; also in Burrows and Spiro 1953:7) provides an account of the first settlement of Ifaluk. It is of such importance as to warrant reproducing here:

> Long, long ago, a chief of Garpar (Gatschapar) village, in Gagil district, Yap, ordered some of his people to go out and colonize the outer islands to the east. He himself remained in Yap. In charge of the expedition was a man named Tatar, who was accompanied by his sister, Iau. They went first to Mogmog on Ulithi; then to Wetegau in Woleai, then to Ifaluk and the other islands--Faraulep, Elato, Lamotrek, Satawal, and so on to Puluwat and Truk. The chain of command, ever since, is from Yap to Mogmog, from Mogmog to Wetegau, Wetegau to Ifaluk, from Ifaluk to the other islands.
>
> On Ifaluk Tatar left one man and one woman from each of the eight clans. The two from each clan were brother and sister.

Safert apparently makes reference to this same narrative, gathered during his work on Ifaluk in 1909 (Damm 1938:79, 83-85). In his account, however, the first settlers on Ifaluk were a man named Modj and his wife. Modj (Mosh or Maur) is an important legendary figure who appears in several other tales, most of which deal with interisland warfare (Burrows and Spiro, 1953:10-16; Burrows 1963:72-77). I shall discuss these later.

The most important points to emphasize from the three tales thus far cited are that they specify that the outer islands--Ngulu, Ulithi, Woleai, Ifaluk, Faraulep, Elato, Lamotrek, Satawal, and Puluwat--were settled from Yap; and secondly, owing to this, these outer islands are subservient and owe allegiance to Yap. This political charter and the derivative status ranking prevailed in the region until recent years (actively until ca. 1910).

There are no other published narratives dealing with the settlement of these islands, but there are a number concerned with resettlement (those relating to warfare mentioned above) that have relevance to this discussion. Burrows (1963:72-77; Burrows and Spiro 1953:10-18) again has published the most extensive tales dealing with the topic. In these narratives, gathered on Ifaluk, the recurrent theme is one of neighboring islands conquered by, and resettled from, Ifaluk. For example, one tells of Mosh (Maur) who travels to Woleai and marries there. The Woleai men are jealous of his success with a local woman and therefore beat Mosh and leave him for dead; but Mosh revives and makes his way back to Ifaluk. The Ifaluk men then set out to avenge this beating:

> They went to Woleai in many canoes--two hundred, three hundred.... Everywhere they attacked the Woleai people and speared them, men, women and children.

After a prolonged chase between islands of the atoll and the use of various strategies:

> The Ifaluk men caught the rest of the Woleai men during a bonito drive, attacked them and killed them. Then they went on to Falalus and killed the women and children too. The canoes returned to Ifaluk, leaving only Ilimeng and her boy on Woleai (the Woleai wife and son of Mosh, who had been spared). The people had a great feast at home . . . then . . . Mosh told them it would be too bad to have no people on Woleai. Then he sent people from Ifaluk to settle in Woleai:
>
> > One man and his sister from the clan Kovalu.
> > One man and his sister from the clan Sauvelarik.
> > One man and his sister from the clan Mangaulevar.
> > One man and his sister from the clan Rapevelu.
> > One man and his sister from the clan Sauvel.
> > One man and his sister from the clan Bwel.
> > One man and his sister from the clan Kailangailuk.
> > One man and his sister from the clan Kailangalualea.
>
> Each of the men became a chief in Woleai. Little boys went too with the women, their mothers. These people with Mosh's wife and son, repopulated Woleai.

Ifaluk also had a war with Lamotrek. According to that narrative the war was precipitated by provocations and depredations on the part of Lamotrek, so:

> Mosh called his people together. . . . He told them to make ready, for they were going to make war on Lamotrek. . . . [The Ifaluk men] came first to Elato, but the Elato people, when they saw the Ifaluk fleet coming . . . fled to Lamotrek.

The Ifaluk warriors then attacked Lamotrek using a strategy of dividing forces and attacking from behind a smoke screen:

> The Lamotrek men fought bravely against the party that had come in behind a smoke screen. But they were at such a disadvantage with the smoke in their eyes, that they were driven back and at last fled into the bush. Here the other Ifaluk party was lying in wait. They fell upon the disordered defenders and

> killed every last one of them, then went into the houses, killing, killing, until not a man, woman, or child was left alive. So the fleet returned to Ifaluk and reported to Mosh that Lamotrek has been depopulated, and . . . Ifaluk . . . avenged.
>
> Then. . . [Mosh] told them it would not be good for Lamotrek to remain without people. He ordered each clan to send one man and his sister. All these could take their families along if they wished. So Lamotrek was repopulated from Ifaluk.

During my own work on Lamotrek (1962-1963) and Woleai (1965), I collected these same two tales, but my versions were less detailed and did not include the passages concerning the sibling-sets that putatively resettled the conquered islands. My versions did state that the Ifaluk conquerors killed the original inhabitants, albeit in a less traumatic fashion. And, importantly, I believe, my versions emphasized that the first of the new settlers represented the historically important chiefly clans of the island.

The Recurring Themes

In several earlier publications I have noted that central Carolinians commonly structure various domains according to a few organizing principles (Alkire 1970, 1972, 1982). One of the more frequently encountered of these principles is that of *quadripartite divisions.* This emphasis on units of four appears in many narratives including those tales collected by Lessa quoted earlier.

A second principle important to central Carolinians is that of the *solidarity of siblings* (Marshall 1981; Alkire 1978b). Certainly the tales collected by Burrows on Ifaluk emphasize this. In each case of settlement and resettlement Burrows' informant stated that sibling-sets were involved. From these examples it seems clear that central Carolinians *do* make an effort to incorporate important cultural themes or organizational principles into their oral narratives.

It is my contention that a third theme is also emphasized in these narratives, a principle I would label *priority of settlement.* Furthermore, the inclusion of this theme has led to the tailoring of narratives so that they are of limited use in reconstructing cultural history.

Status and rank are of great importance in most of Oceania. In the central Carolines, seniority (e.g., chronological age, generation standing, lineage, and subclan seniority) and control of land are two interrelated

variables that are used to establish relative rank (Alkire 1965:32; Alkire 1978a:117). These variables are interrelated because those social groups that first settle on an island or in a particular locality are the ones that first invoke ownership rights to surrounding lands.[10] For example, in recording the individual histories of clans on both Lamotrek and Woleai, I found that those clans of highest rank invariably were the ones that either controlled the most land or claimed to have once done so. Given the apparent importance of this principle, it seems quite likely that social groups of current high rank could seek to validate or legitimize their claims to such rank by emphasizing some form of historical priority and seniority. The oral narratives cited in this paper contain elements that support this hypothesis.

For example, the narratives collected from Ifaluk informants were clearly constructed to emphasize the status-superiority of Ifaluk. Not only was Ifaluk described as having been settled earlier than neighboring islands, but in addition present-day populations on such neighboring islands were said to have derived *from* Ifaluk. Of importance in this regard is the fact that the tales of conquest and resettlement always emphasized that the original population of the conquered island was completely annihilated; thus no present-day residents could claim descent from settlers who had some other historical priority on the island. In those versions collected on the conquered islands, conquest and annihilation were not denied but priority in resettlement was given to currently high ranking clans (and the clans of informants).

The importance of a principle of priority of settlement is further illustrated by the *sawei* exchange system that linked Yap to all of the outer islands (Alkire 1965). The islands of this system were roughly ranked according to their distance from Yap and, therefore, their presumed order of settlement from Yap--the legendary homeland of the original migrants to the outer islands (see the first of Burrows' legends). In other words, if a priority of settlement principle is not to be contradicted by sociopolitical realities, then a legendary charter of the system would have to hold that the outer islands were settleld from Yap, the highest ranking island of the system. In this context it is interesting to note that on Lamotrek one also finds "contradictory" narratives relating to the origins of some clans. In these stories such clans are described as having come from the east (frequently Kusaie). On Puluwat (to the east of Lamotrek and on the periphery of traditional Yapese control) Gladwin (1970:4) implies that all islanders trace their origins to Truk. The principle seems to be that narratives gathered on those islands closer to Yap and Yapese control are both more consistent and more detailed in identifying Yap as the ancestral homeland.

Historical Evidence: The Saipan Case

One final body of data can be drawn upon to underscore the importance of priority of settlement. These are data relating to the Carolinian community settled on Saipan in the Mariana Islands.

Historical and archaeological evidence have established that Saipan was inhabited at the time of first European contact by the Chamorro people who dwelt throughout the Marianas (Thompson 1945; Spoehr 1954, 1957; Craib 1983:923). Following a series of Spanish-Chamorro conflicts those Chamorro who survived the bloody wars were removed to Guam in the early 1700s. Saipan was thus without any permanent residents from that time until 1815 when a group of Carolinians was given permission by the Spanish authorities to settle on the island. It was not until some fifty years later that Chamorros began to return to the island in any number. It is of interest to this paper that members of the present-day Carolinian community of Saipan now emphasize a number of legends that give their community historical priority on the island.[12]

Today Carolinians on Saipan are outnumbered three to one by Chamorro residents. There is resentment within the Carolinian community about their lack of political and economic power on the island that derives from their minority status. Members of the community have additional reasons for dissatisfaction at this state of affairs for, in their minds, it is contradicted by the priority of settlement principle. According to their oral traditions the Carolinians were the *first settlers* on the island. A manifestation of this history, made tangible, is a concrete marker erected on Managaha islet at the entrance to Saipan's Tanapag Harbour:

> 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 Sept. 18, 1970.

(The inscription is then followed by a list of Carolinian sponsors and subscribers to the project.)

One should note that the inscription states that Saipan itself was named Seipon by the Carolinians, and this is explained as a Satawalese compound whose formal meaning is empty place or empty container, i.e. an uninhabited place. This contention of Carolinian priority is further em-

phasized by informants who cite the numerous Carolinian place names on the island: Tanapag, Oleai, Garapan, and Halahal (Managaha), all Carolinian labels for important locations on the island. Furthermore, Carolinians expressed bitter resentment when the Saipan municipal government (dominated by Chamorros) changed the name of Oleai Village (named after Woleai Island) to San Jose Village.

The monument, of course, makes reference to the Carolinians only as the "first permanent colony on Saipan after the Spanish conquest," but more recently informants have projected the Carolinian presence further into the past by listing place names on other Marianas islands that suggest a "Carolinian origin" predating 1815. On Guam, Umatac "blazing oven" and Mongmong "arrowroot" are such examples while on Tinian the name of the island itself, like Seipon, is interpreted as a Carolinian word, meaning "rising sun".[13] One informant had even worked out an extensive migration itinerary whereby the Carolinians arrived en masse in the Marianas from Jerusalem via Pakistan, Malaya, Java, Kusaie, and the central Carolines.

Conclusions

In conclusion, there is a body of evidence that demonstrates that Carolinian oral narratives and traditions are frequently structured so that they incorporate important cultural themes, elements, and principles. Examples of these include a focus on sibling-sets and on quadripartite divisions or tetradic groupings. Most important to this paper, however, are the narrative consequences of a cultural emphasis on status and rank and the direct relationship these variables have to seniority and priority of settlement. Regardless of the actual historical order of settlement on these islands, when a socioeconomic system linking various islands became established and differential rank within and among the islands became an important part of that system, then it became obligatory for the traditional charters--i.e., myths and legends--to be tailored to conform to the principle that populations of lower ranking islands were derived from the islands of higher rank and that clans of lower rank must have arrived after clans of higher rank. This suggests that oral narratives from this area of Micronesia can only be used with extreme caution in reconstructing cultural history. This conclusion agrees with those of writers who have examined similar problems in other areas of Oceania.

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NOTES

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1. Whereas Buck described the migration through the Carolines as a relatively simple west to east movement, Howells (1971:260-61) suggests that during the initial west to east movement only the larger high islands of the archipelago were settled. His contention is that the low coral islands were settled later by migrants moving out in various directions--some east to west--from these older, high island population centers. Given the fact that the high islands of the Carolines are quite scattered and the coral islands more numerous, I find it difficult to accept that early migrants would have missed or bypassed all of the coral ones, especially since they had no way of knowing they would find any more suitable volcanic ones.

2. Some examples of early ethnographies, besides Buck 1938a, that place considerable emphasis on traditional narratives include Buck 1938b:14-96; Buck 1958:1-73; Burrows 1936:27-56; Burrows 1937:17-41. In addition, of course, Thor Heyerdahl (1952:709-763) emphasized traditional narratives in his discussion of the settlement of Easter Island. His "tendency to see myths as texts possessing strict historical validity" is criticized by Metraux (1957:225).

3. In addition, central Carolinian oral traditions emphasize mythology rather than legend (cf., Spiro 1951:289). In myths one generally is presented with characters interacting without reference to specific localities other than heaven and earth. Those tales that are specific, about locations generally focus on the adventurous and/or amorous escapades of mythical beings and the need for filial or sibling loyalty.

4. In Buck's (1938:47) earlier discussions he emphasized phenotypic similarities between Micronesians and Polynesians. Howells (1973:79) bases some of his conclusions on blood types and enzyme similarities. See Simmons et al. (1965:152) for a different interpretation of blood type and genetic evidence.

5. "Nuclear Micronesian" refers to those Micronesian languages that show close resemblance in phonology and lexical items. These include the languages of the Gilberts (Kiribati), Marshalls, and the Carolines, but not Chamorro, Palauan, Yapese, or Nauruan, all of which are significantly different.

6. Similarly we do not have confidence in the 3310± 85 B.P. date of specimen N-3125 for the reasons detailed in Fujimura and Alkire 1979:72-77.

7. If one discounts those dates from Truk, and eliminates the questionable early dates from Lamotrek, the archaeology can still be interpreted as suggesting that the outer islands were settled from Yap. Consequently, much more work remains to be done before archaeology provides complete answers to these questions.

8. Oral narratives on Ulithi have been published by William Lessa (1961, 1980). E.G. Burrows (1949; with Spiro 1953) and M.E. Spiro (1951) gathered material in fieldwork on Ifaluk.

The only other collections on this region were published by A. Krämer (1937), E. Sarfert, and P. Hambruch (in Damm 1938) who were ethnographers on the German Southseas Expedition of 1908-1910. This writer has gathered a number of myths and legends on Woleai, Lamotrek, and Faraulep, but they remain unpublished.

9. The core of this legend involves three brothers who go out from Ulithi fishing. On three Successive days the two older brothers catch fish while the youngest (Motikitik) catches baskets of food:

> On the *fourth* day, the older brothers caught fish as usual but Motikitik caught something else. . . . Motikitik pulled up an island to the surface of the water and their canoe was right in the middle of the island, which was Fais. . . . *Motikitik said the middle of the island belonged to him, but he told his brothers that one could live on each end of the island.* (Lessa 1961:36. Emphasis added--relevant to subsequent discussions and note 10.)

10. The legend mentioned in note 9 above makes this point in the italicized passage.

11. It is interesting to note that on at least three occasions during the last twenty-five years some of the inhabitants of the Lamotrek/Elato/Satawal area have talked about trying to cut their administrative ties with Yap in order to amalgamate either with Truk or some other unit of the Trust Territory.

An anonymous reviewer for *Pacific Studies* has also made the interesting point that, in contrast to the outer islanders, Yapese and Palauans emphasize an autochthonous rather than a migratory origin for their peoples.

12. I have discussed some political and cultural aspects of this situation in "The Carolinians of Saipan and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands," in press (revision of Alkire 1983).

13. These issues are also discussed in Alkire 1983.

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