

Laura Marie Torres Souder-Jaffery, *Daughters of the Island: Contemporary Chamorro Women Organizers on Guam*. MARC Monograph Series no. 1. Guam: Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam. 1987. Pp. xi, 259, photographs, bibliography, index. US\$20.00 hardbound. US\$13.95 paperbound.

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The University of Guam's Micronesian Area Research Center has chosen well in publishing *Daughters of the Island* as the first monograph in its new series. It focuses attention on a topic on which little information has been available: the role of Chamorro women in contemporary Guam. Souder-Jaffery focuses on women identified by their community as key activists and community organizers. She is uniquely qualified to conduct this study, as she is herself a Chamorro woman activist as well as a scholar cognizant of issues in contemporary social science. This book is a revision of her 1985 doctoral dissertation, sub-

mitted to the American Studies department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Souder-Jaffery did extensive interviews with the nine women that provide the case material given in chapters 4, 5, and 6 of the book. Many of these women she has also known since childhood, enabling her to elicit rich information on their family lives and careers.

In the first three chapters, Souder-Jaffery addresses the problems of writing about the history and contemporary experience of the Chamorro women of Guam. She sensitively treats the relationship of history and consciousness, noting that what is today considered Chamorro "tradition" is an amalgamation of Chamorro, Spanish, and American ways (p. 8). This syncretism does not prevent Chamorro identity from being important in women's lives, as her case histories show. Furthermore, ancient patterns persist despite lack of consciousness of them (pp. 212-213). Souder-Jaffery cites the records of early Western observers of Guam to show that precolonial Chamorro women had control over their children and property and considerable standing in the public sphere (chapter 3). The power of women within the family and an emphasis on maternal relatives have persisted in spite of the increasing restrictions put on Chamorro women by the Spanish administrators, the Catholic Church, and later the American naval administration.

Only in the 1960s did "modernization" and greater exposure to the American mainland bring many women out of the family context back into the public sphere. This change, perceived by some Chamorro women as a break from the "tradition" that they know, is perceived by Souder-Jaffery as a return to more ancient traditions of women's strength. As she and other Chamorro scholars rediscover and communicate Guam's past, Chamorro women's views of their own history will probably change. Some might see this as a violation of social science "objectivity," but I see it as a legitimate reconciliation of Souder-Jaffery's roles as scholar and as activist.

The historical background given by Souder-Jaffery puts in perspective the situation of the particular generation to which most of the women in her case studies belong. These women were "either adolescents or adults at the onset of the modern period [the 1960s]" (p. 8). Thus, they are "transitional figures" (p. 9), having experienced both the modern and traditional periods within their lifetimes. Souder-Jaffery develops this theme in her concluding chapter, saying that in their activism these women have sought "modern solutions but are motivated by traditional values" (p. 207)--the moral well-being of their children and their families. To work for these values, these women felt impelled to go beyond their homes and become active in the larger community. Several

ultimately were elected to the Guam legislature, but they do not consider themselves “feminists.”

Souder-Jaffery does see a split, however, between the women who went off-island to college and those who stayed on Guam. The women educated off-island “adapted modern organizational strategies,” working through professional women’s organizations and formal political organizations. The women who had remained on Guam preferred to organize through the more traditional networks of church and family (p. 208). All of her subjects, however, used a network of extended family and friends to organize community activities or for help in maintaining their own family obligations when outside duties were pressing. Some of the women were consciously aware of “networking” and some did not become aware that they were using this strategy until it became apparent through the interviews.

Souder-Jaffery devotes a whole chapter (chapter 4) to Cecilia Bamba, who clearly deserves the chapter title of “Lady Extraordinaire.” Mrs. Bamba’s short life was full of tragedy, but also of accomplishment. As a young girl she lost both parents--her mother died after the birth of her younger brother and her father was beheaded by the Japanese (p. 77). She herself died of cancer at age 51. She was raised by her grandmother and great-grandmother, married at the age of sixteen, widowed at the age of forty-four, and had ten children. This amazing woman, nevertheless, was a leader in countless community organizations: the Agana Heights Women’s Group (founder), the Red Cross, the Girl Scouts, the Guam Memorial Hospital Volunteers Association (founder), the Guam Women’s Club, the Women’s Association of the Democratic Party of Guam, and others. She was a delegate to several U.S. Democratic party conventions (though she later followed her husband in switching to the Republican party) and several international women’s meetings. She worked as a partner in her husband’s businesses, supported him in his political career, and later herself became a senator in the Guam legislature. She went to Washington and successfully lobbied for restitution for Guamanian lands taken by the U.S. government (pp. 109-115). This woman’s life clearly deserves a full-length biography and Souder-Jaffery, who had a close personal relationship to her, apparently has the material for one. I hope that she writes it. This would give her an opportunity to explore issues there is no space for in a chapter-length treatment, such as what motivated Mr. Bamba’s switch to the Republican party and whether Mrs. Bamba had any qualms in following him. In the space she does have Souder-Jaffery shows the relation between Mrs. Bamba’s extended family and her political career; her

grandmother's help in the home made it possible for her to spend more time outside of it.

When I finished this book, I had many questions that remained unanswered. Souder-Jaffery mentions several Chamorro values--hospitality, humility, respect for elders-- but I was left wanting much more detail on contemporary Chamorro culture, so that I could better understand the context in which these women were functioning. She mentions several times the Chamorro word *chenchule'*, which is translated as meeting "mutual obligations through exchange of services" (p. 56), and several times refers to the importance of a "Chamorro system of reciprocal exchange and obligation" (p. 183; see also p. 209), but gives no specifics except to say that the mothers side of the family is more important. Some information about it can be inferred from the case study of Geri Gutierrez, who says that in preparing food for social functions she helps people who have formerly helped her, and recruits others to help them as well (p. 192). Non-Chamorro readers could use more explanation of this important concept.

Another Chamorro custom that is mentioned in the notes (p. 235) but not explained is that of nicknaming. The women in the case studies are sometimes referred to by their nicknames ("Ding" for Clotilde Gould, "Chilang" for Cecilia Bamba, and in the notes Souder-Jaffery lists four nicknames for Elizabeth Arriola), and they sometimes refer to Souder-Jaffery by her nickname, Loling. In what contexts are nicknames used or not used, and what does it indicate about the relationship between the people? The reader should be told.

Other Chamorro customs are mentioned in passing but not explained, for instance, the support given by *comadres* and *compadres* (p. 191), which Souder-Jaffery implies, but does not explicitly state, are the godparents of one's children. Similarly other kin terms are used in referring to people, but not explained. Also, several of the older women's names are prefaced by "Tan," and the *tan* is referred to and glossed once as "female elderly" (p. 56), so *Tan* is apparently a title for a female elder, but that, again, is never explicitly stated.

It would also have been useful to include a discussion of the differences between "formal" and "informal" organizations. Souder-Jaffery uses these terms without explaining how she is defining them. She states that "local women rarely . . . organize for themselves at the formal level" (p. 166). She mentions in many of the case studies, however, the church-related organizations of Christian Mothers and the Sodality of Mary. If these are not formal organizations, what are they? Is it necessary to have a board of directors and a set of bylaws to be a formal

organization? If this is what Souder-Jaffery means she should say so. More information on Christian Mothers also would be appreciated, as it seems that this is a grass-roots organization of long standing that is primarily Chamorro.

I would have found the historical information in chapter 3 more useful if it were organized in terms of typical women's life cycles during the precolonial, Spanish, and American naval administration eras, and then compared with a typical scenario for a woman of the generation to which the subjects of the case studies belong. Admittedly women are all individuals and make different choices about when to marry and bear children, but I would like a better sense of the major events in Chamorro women's lives and how they are marked or celebrated, both today and in the past. The women profiled are all, in some sense, exceptional women, and could be understood better with a background knowledge of the more typical expectations for women's lives.

The concluding chapter includes suggestions for further research: comparing the generation studied in this work to their daughters and comparing the women's organizing careers to those of their husbands and brothers (pp. 216-217). I hope that Souder-Jaffery continues this work and that she continues to make people aware, on Guam and in the wider world, of the strengths and the contributions of the Chamorro women of Guam.