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WORKING WRONGLY AND SEEKING THE STRAIGHT: REMEDIAL REMEDIES ON ENEWETAK ATOLL

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Classical approaches to righting wrongs among Pacific societies have been couched in terms of normative models of authority, and particularly in relation to societies with positions of ascribed authority, chiefs, and those with acquired authority like Melanesian center persons (“big-men”). In this article, I contend that typological approaches to the analysis of perceived wrongdoing are of limited utility in the assessment of how wrongdoing is culturally fashioned and socially redressed. Instead, I suggest that constructions of wrongdoing are culturally relative. Moreover, ideas and feelings about just and unjust action within the community are also relative and depend upon varied logical scenarios that community members use to construct and project their social identities. Specific cases from Ujelang and Enewetak Atolls in the Republic of the Marshall Islands are considered in relation to contested issues such as land and chieftainship, the moral value of monogamy versus polygamy, and the symbolic use and social valuation of alcohol and suicide. These cases demonstrate that differently positioned social actors rationalize their ideas about wrongdoing and injustice in a variety of ways as they develop and maintain empowered senses of identity within the community.

ENEWETAK AND UJELANG ATOLLS, westernmost outliers of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, are the primary residence locations for the Enewetak-Ujelang community. The small, but rapidly growing, community is strongly egalitarian in relation to nearby Pohnpei or even to the central sections of the Rālik and Ratak chains of the Marshall Islands. Nevertheless, its members possess a strict sense of hierarchy supported by respect for authority and moral obligation to family, clan, and community. Their sense of solidarity, constantly threatened by growth and social differentiation, is mani-

fest in claims that “the people of Ujelang-Enewetak are really just one big family: all are really one.” The way in which these crosscutting egalitarian and hierarchical sensibilities are interrelated in the search for recognition and justice by those who feel they have been wronged forms the focus of this article. Internal as well as external manifestations of interpersonal and intergroup relationships shall be considered.¹

The complex colonial history of Ujelang and Enewetak Atolls in many respects makes these locations ideal settings for the exploration of transnational and intercultural apologetics. Local residents claim that in the nineteenth century German colonizers “purchased” Ujelang Atoll from inebriated chiefs for use as a copra plantation. Descendants of these former Ujelang residents contend that their forebears found it difficult to work their land for minimal compensation under the plantation supervisors, and many left for Pohnpei, the Marshall Islands, and even Fiji. Outside laborers were recruited, including Enewetak people, and the marriage relationships they established with Ujelang people are now used to lend historical grounding to current claims of unity between the two neighboring atoll groups. Ujelang was eventually abandoned as a copra plantation before World War II, when the Japanese administered much of Micronesia. It was used by Japan as a “weather station” during the war but remained uninhabited after U.S. Navy personnel swept the atoll near the war’s end.

Enewetak was developed as a Japanese military base during World War II and, along with Kwajalein, became the site of a major Allied-Japanese battle in February 1944. While over 20 percent of the Enewetak population was killed during the battle, these traumatic experiences were soon overshadowed by experiences of exile and famine as the community was relocated to Ujelang Atoll (in December 1947) to allow the United States to conduct nuclear tests on their home atoll. Even the relocation was differently experienced by various members of the community, since before the war a group of Ujelang people had migrated from Jaluij to Enewetak and married into the community. For them, the move to Ujelang was as much homecoming as it was exile. The community remained on Ujelang for over thirty years. In 1976 an agreement that returned Enewetak to its primordial owners was signed and in 1980, after a substantial cleanup effort, the community returned home. Ownership of Ujelang was also given to the Ujelang-Enewetak people in partial compensation for hardship and the loss of use of parts of Enewetak Atoll.²

This brief historical overview of interactions with Japan and the United States sets the stage for an understanding of local ideas about transcultural apologetics and compensations. These larger-order ideas about social justice, however, cannot be appreciated without first understanding the strategies

employed by local people in their day-to-day lives to create moral order in conditions where people feel they have been wronged.

Local Contexts of Apology for Perceived Wrongdoing

Any discussion of the moral order in the Marshall Islands has implications in terms of local formulations of personhood and the embeddedness of different sorts of social persona in local notions of rank. The socially negotiated character of personhood has been well explored in various writings about the Pacific (i.e., White and Kirkpatrick 1985; Lutz 1988; Shore 1987, 1990, 1991; Black 1978, 1983).³ A Marshall Islands persona, it has been noted, is “not so much an autonomous self . . . as part of a larger community of selves” (Marshall 1996:249; Carucci 1987b, 1995). But local formulations of personhood are an integral part of local ideas about rank and chieftainship as well. In the ideal formulation, persons in positions of power in the Marshall Islands frequently talk about legitimate and correct modes of acting. Through their exemplary actions, the most empowered persons also instantiate and give evidence of ideal and proper actions. Through this combination of proper action and “straight” or “suitable” talk, highly regarded chiefs and others in positions of power gain the right to judge, using command-form utterances (i.e., *kwon*, *komin*: “you”) without offense to direct the actions of others. Those who are lower ranked accept these proclamations, even if they do not always adhere to their seniors’ statements. A person’s rank and concomitant acts of authority are legitimized in terms of age, generation, gender, clan, and claim to chiefly identity but most critically in terms of one’s claim as an insider rather than an outsider. Colonially inspired positions have been refashioned into meaningful local statuses, and their occupants frequently use their positions to make claims to power. On Enewetak and Ujelang, these newly fashioned statuses are concentrated in the domains of religion, governance, and locally implemented programs to ease atoll repatriation. While it is common for any power claim to be contested, claims made by those holding new statuses are almost certain to be brought into question (Carucci 1997a:205–210).

The local strategies for righting wrongs on Enewetak, as formerly on Ujelang, must be understood in relation to these parameters. Nevertheless, it is also important to keep the quest for locally meaningful actions in the foreground and resist the temptation to generalize too quickly on purely institutional or functional grounds. At a recent conference of Pacific scholars where islanders’ strategies for dealing with injustice were being discussed, the varied cultural scenarios for dealing with feelings of injustice were ultimately divided into the all-too-classical “Melanesian” and “Polynesian” ap-

proaches to such matters. While it is clear that issues of justice are closely related to cultural conceptions of identity, personhood, and rank—to notions of who has a right to speak and who speaks for whom—grandiose European divisions into Melanesian and Polynesian styles of “righting wrongs” seem to me to lead us astray. Indeed, the Enewetak-Ujelang community defies the seemingly clear-cut distinctions between these “Melanesian” and “Polynesian” modes of dealing with injustice, since in this small, outer-atoll context there is a dual value placed on both hierarchical authority and egalitarian approaches to social justice.⁴ Therefore, while persons of rank (and particularly chiefs) speak with unequal voices, disempowered persons also have a number of strategies to extract retribution for wrongs that they are dealt. Lacking a system of formal law, structurally disempowered persons adopt strategies of public display to make their overlooked injustices visible to others in the community. While these strategies do not always bring about immediate redress of perceived injustice, the actions do place their pleas within the public arena. Should an internal dispute continue, local residents may use other strategies to gain a hearing by cosmic authorities like God or the ancestors. The depiction of these strategies, given below, illustrates that grand-level typifications, like the differences between Melanesian and Polynesian models of justice, contribute little to the analysis of social action. Instead, given the dual value Enewetak and Ujelang people place on stellar activity and hierarchy, on the one hand, and on humility, sharing, and an egalitarian ethic, on the other, social actors consistently manipulate the cultural symbols available to them in order to create meaningful and empowered positions for themselves in a variety of social settings.⁵

What, then, are the particular structural features of the Enewetak and Ujelang community that make it seem to anthropologists as if it mediates the distinctions between Melanesian and Polynesian modes of dealing with injustice? Most apparently, in contrast to highly ranked societies like Hawai'i during the dawning days of European colonialism, the Enewetak and Ujelang community is relatively small in scale. The community has shown a rapid growth from 139 immediately after World War II to around 440 persons in 1977, to the current population of over 1,200 persons. Even at 1,200 the group retains fragments of its small-scale, outer-island flavor. A core component of community identity that is integrally intertwined with its small scale is a strongly egalitarian ethic. Enewetak and Ujelang people constantly appeal to this ethic to bring into question the absolute authority of “inside others,” that is, those who share identity as local people (“people of Enewetak”) yet differ from others by their claims to positions of rank. While this ethic is itself threatened by the group's expanding size, it still forms an important component of the way in which Enewetak and Ujelang people

distinguish themselves from many other atoll groups in the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia.

In contradistinction to this ethic of egalitarianism, yet coexisting with it, is the authority of chiefs and elders (both male and female). Inherently chiefs are ranked higher than those who “exist (or remain) on other pathways” of social relationship (as local people describe their so-called lines of kinship), and, along with chiefs, those who are older serve as the voices of justice. Chiefs, in particular, are the mediators of an ultimate authority that, like themselves, has a noncorporeal, superhuman source. Indeed, current-day chiefs are empowered from above by relationship pathways that lead to ancient god-chiefs who are represented as stars in the heavens (Carucci 1980, 1988, 1997a, 1997b). This pathway to the deities gives chiefs their “outsider/insider” rank. As outside arbitrators, chiefs should ensure just outcomes to earthly disputes. But when wrongdoing is left unattended by chiefs and elders, Marshallese believe that those who created the damage will be sanctioned by noncorporeal beings, usually ancestor spirits, ancient gods, or God. When disputes arise in which people feel wronged, it is a family head’s job to mediate the disagreement if the disputants are all within the same family, but for more far-ranging controversies the chief intercedes and, ultimately, decides who is right. As head of an extended family or clan, the mother’s older brother (*wüllepa-*) is placed at a necessary distance to be able to weigh fairly controversies within that family. As head of an intermarried series of clans or extended families, a chief’s high-ranked position places him or her in a position to posit fair outcomes to community disputes. As beings with paths of connection to the heavens, primordial chiefs, far more empowered than their earthly descendants, provide logistical guidance for seafarers and moral guidance for the community as a whole (cf. Lutz 1988 for Ifaluk). The presence of these absolute authorities, in the ideal, separates the dispute resolution strategies of Ujelang and Enewetak people, at least in a relative sense, from approaches to adjudication that are often associated with “typical” Melanesian societies.

A second significant way in which Ujelang and Enewetak differ from the classically described Melanesian methods of situating wrongdoing relates to the presence of absolute “others”—groups out there who are inherently unlike “us.” Ujelang and Enewetak people’s very strong sense of community identity is vested in equally stringent distinctions between “us” and “them.” Indeed, during the move from trust territory status to free association, the Ujelang-Enewetak community made a strong appeal to the United Nations to maintain its long-standing independence from the Marshall Islands and, at the same time, remain independent from Pohnpei state in the Federated States of Micronesia. While an increasing rate of intermarriage with

Marshall Islanders has had effects on this ideology of entirely independent atoll identity, it is still an idea that is frequently and vigorously supported in local discussions of “us” versus “them.”

But “we” and “they” are also manipulated at internal levels within the community as a mechanism to ensure normative conformity. Clans are units with absolute criteria of membership, and it is not surprising that they are the locus of insider-outsider types of arguments. Even within bilateral extended families, which have flexible boundaries, inclusion and exclusion are negotiated using the criterion of moral and just demeanor. Personal actions are critical to interpersonal relations on Ujelang (cf. Flinn 1996), and parents, like others in positions of power, constantly classify recalcitrants as outsiders as a method of bringing their actions within the norm. While this strategy points to the extremely high value placed on the persuasive power of public and communal judgments of one’s person, it also indexes the communal nature of personal identity. A wide array of linguistic and social devices are used by those in positions of power on behalf of communal others to bring pressure on people to alter courses of action judged to be undesirable. Their logic usually operates along the lines seen in this attempt by the head of a group of women to reorient the actions of two young inebriates: “We [endeared, four or more] mothers of yours beseech the two of you to stop drinking. All this fighting, it is bad. Do the two of you think you are Chuukese? If you want to be Chuuk people, go on, move there to Chuuk. But do not make trouble here; it is bad. Go home and sleep.” On the opposite side, the lack of a strong ideology of individuality means that persons are not constrained by concomitant requirements for consistent action across contexts. Today’s troublesome inebriate can be tomorrow’s ideal community citizen. In the above statement, the boundaries between “us” and “them” are manipulated to override consistency of the “I” or “you” in order to create a desire for actions acceptable within the local community.

The above features certainly seem to align Ujelang and Enewetak with the classic depictions of Polynesian social orders (Goldman 1957; Sahlins 1968), where persons who claim rights to culturally empowered identities have substantial authority over the less empowered. Yet, even though these similarities may be legitimate in a grand-classificatory sense, the classifications often distort as much as they clarify. In particular, the top-down authority model only makes sense in the ideal, as it is being discussed. It never works so smoothly in daily life. Subsequent sections of this work concentrate on some of the cultural sites where contradictory elements of the ideology come into conflict in practice. In particular, I shall focus on social actors who are situationally disempowered and whose displays of disenfranchisement make apparent the weight of psychological disaffection that results

from social and structural constraints. Frequent difficulties in the righting of wrongs occur in such instances. Ultimately empowered, superhuman entities like God legislate correctness rather simply by bringing misery to certain segments of the community, by making misguided humans ill, or by killing them. In ancient times, local residents claim that chiefs, the earthly representatives of these deities, acted with similar caprice. Indeed, one particularly capricious leader, a warrior called Maankolo (the one in front with hair standing on end), received this moniker as a result of his unpredictability (Carucci 1985). Given multiple sources for feelings of injustice, those who are structurally disadvantaged must bring attention to their sense of disenfranchisement. They must make their cause public and then attempt to align the community's empathic sentiments with symbolic renderings of their sense of abuse.

Chiefs, Counter-chiefs, and Claims of the Community

Claims of priority between chiefly lines are vested in the relationship between older and younger siblings. The tools of contestation include the ability to establish the shortest, most highly ranked pathway to the original ruling chiefs of Enewetak. No less important, however, are issues of demeanor and practice (cf. Flinn 1996). Using a bilateral logic of relationships through extended families and given multiple linkages through land, all Ujelang and Enewetak people claim to be chiefs (cf. Howard and Rensel 1996), and they support their claims with stories that link them to one or more of the primordial Enewetak and Ujelang chiefs. These contested accounts are not only symbolic mechanisms of personal empowerment, they are strategies that test the compassion and generosity of today's standing chiefs.

The return to Enewetak after thirty years of exile created a major arena of discord in relation to land (an equally frequent topic of disagreement throughout the Marshall Islands). On account of its shortage and its new importance in relation to nuclear compensation payments, land has become doubly important.⁶ Moreover, disputes over land cannot be unilaterally negotiated, since multiple parties are continually contesting the potency of their linkages through land. Nearly every sand spit on Enewetak has a plethora of histories to establish and legitimize different claims to the location, but some locations are of particular importance. Other than the stories of those who currently use such locations, these are tales of disenfranchisement that incorporate historical discussions of injustice. The dispute over the windward end of Enewetak islet indicates that this location is of particular importance, since local people have rewritten their stories of disenfranchisement into a discussion about true and false chiefs. Like the gold-plated portrayals of

their noncorporeal primordial ancestors, true chiefs should be “truly moral”: compassionate, generous, and able to judge correctly between right and wrong. Current-day chiefs, often accused of self-interest, are always measured against this (unattainable) ideal.

The Jittök-en (windward end) land dispute has been an ongoing point of discussion since 1978, when the community first agreed on a set of land boundaries before their repatriation on Enewetak. It is particularly volatile because the center of the American village on Enewetak islet was constructed here. Many buildings remain, and, on the easternmost tip, the complex known as “the lab” (the former Marine Biological Laboratory or, earlier, the U.S. Coast Guard facility and navy boat ramp) houses the representative residues of Americana (centrally generated power, air conditioning, running water, flush toilets, paneled trailer living quarters with televisions [VCRs], and a well-stocked supply of imported food). Those with legitimized use rights to this land parcel, in theory, also have rights to the flotsam that accumulated after the war. Numerous firefights have erupted over this land parcel since 1978, and the issue is far from resolved. In between recurring arguments over the windward end of the islet, the only solution that can coexist with the counterbalancing need for a display of community solidarity is silence. The silence represents a lingering respect for chiefs, yet the dispute over this parcel is a commonly noted reason that people of the current day claim that today’s Enewetak chiefs are no longer deserving of respect.

There are two major accounts of the windwardmost land parcel. The first is that of the Enewetak chiefly line; the second, the community view. Numerous minor variants of these two stories also exist. All accounts agree on certain points: the owner of this land parcel, Neoj, was the last representative of her line.⁷ As she neared death, she made certain statements about her desired disposition of the land. The living community must honor her wishes in order to maintain proper balance in the social and noncorporeal universe. Indeed, if the atoll’s residents cannot settle the dispute in a just or correct way, it is thought that the deities will decide the dispute between the reigning chiefly line and the local people.

One core firefight in this dispute came in 1982 when the aged younger brother of the feeble Enewetak chief made the argument the central issue at an atollwide council meeting. In his rendition, Neoj did not specifically allocate the disposition of the Jittök-en land parcel, because she wanted it to return to the larger extended family of which her soon-to-be extinct line was a part. Neoj was related to the two old chiefs and their offspring through this larger extended family. Indeed, the two were the only living elders of that line in 1982.

The community, allied against them, contended that Neoj had specifi-

cally given the land parcel to one of her adopted children. With the exception of a couple of atoll residents, every Enewetak person can trace a relationship pathway to Neoj's adopted child. This account, in other words, was a way to legitimize common atoll rights to the church, council house, school grounds, and dispensary as well as to the other buildings and building materials on this parcel. When "the lab" reverted to local control, it too would be communally held. The old chief's version placed total control over the land and its products in the hands of the Enewetak chiefs and their close relatives.

In many respects, the argument over the Jittök-en land parcel has been a referendum on the whole notion of chieftainship. At the same time, it is part of the larger attempt of Enewetak people to represent the 1980 repatriation as a definitive point of rupture between the old and the new. When traders and missionaries first arrived on Enewetak, space was made for them on the Enewetak chief's centrally located land parcel, Lojitak. In those days, the chief is said to have been held in high regard, and, at the same time, he is said to have been considerate and generous toward those who lived under his guidance. During the later years on Ujelang, the centrality of the chiefs came into question. The respected Enjepe chief Ebreame died in the mid-1960s, and by the time people were repatriated on Enewetak, the Enewetak chief, Ioanej, was losing his effectiveness. The abilities of the offspring of the two chiefs were continually questioned in 1982. As the chief's younger brother brought the issue up, in part he was asserting his own rights and ability to assume the chiefly position when Ioanej died. Yet, Ioanej's two oldest sons also supported his younger brother's position, and their actions were seen by the community as a way to gain access to goods for the family's own use. Otherwise, these goods would be divided in a relatively equal way among community members.

In a sense, the outcomes of the dispute might have been irrelevant. If the chiefs proved themselves generous, as good chiefs should, they would provide community access to the lands on which they lived (as their fathers and grandfathers had) and distribute the goods throughout the community in an equitable manner. In 1982, however, arguments centered on the contents and use of one warehouse: did access and use fall to the whole community, or was it to be reserved for the chiefs?

Ultimately, the chiefs simply appropriated the land for themselves. They increased their use of the land, built new dwellings on it, and buried some members of their families on the land as well. Each act was a local representational strategy to lay claim to the land (see Carucci 1992 for a related case). The dispute became very heated, additional council meetings were called, and many members of the community spoke about their understandings of

the matter. Stories about the chieftainship began to circulate with greater frequency, particularly a story that contended that today's chiefs were illegitimately empowered. According to this story, a renowned nineteenth-century Enewetak figure, using his superior knowledge of "clothed person's talk," had misled German authorities into believing he was the chief and had also convinced them (or become convinced by the Germans) that the chieftainship itself passed along a path of males rather than females. By this account, the entire twentieth-century line of chiefs and the very principle of passing the chieftainship along a male pathway were incorrect. The descent line should be female, it should come from the renowned nineteenth-century figure's mother's older sister, and, most important, following this true (but hidden) chiefly line, one of the most generous and kind respected elders on the atoll should be chief today.

In spite of this heated rhetoric and other grumbling about the conduct of the chiefs during this time, the community disowned neither the principle of patrilineal pathways nor the chieftainship itself. This fact, I believe, points up how deeply ingrained the ideology of hierarchy, prototypically invested in divine chiefs, actually is. Indeed, atoll residents talked about what might happen if they abandoned these chiefs, and, despite claims of their false empowerment, many still feared superhuman punishment if these chiefs were just abandoned. Therefore, while people no longer felt that the chiefs had the personal power of living gods, as did ancient chiefs, they feared that if they just "tossed them out," these predecessors, along with God, might become so upset as to cause harm to the community.

Instead, people decided to wait, claiming that if they had been treated unjustly, God and the ancestors would respond. Some claimed that the spirit of Neoj would appear to straighten out the injustice, but it was God who made the first statement. God's decision was delivered in the form of a typhoon in December 1982 that, at 135 knots, created substantial destruction on Enewetak. In particular, the eastern section of Jittök-en, including all of the disputed land parcel, was demolished (not surprising, inasmuch as the eastern tip of the islet is only four or five feet above the water at high tide). For local people who disagreed with the chiefly family, the typhoon represented God's selective admonishment of the chiefs for their deleterious actions and improper claims.

With Age Comes Rank: Alcohol and the Assertion of Injustice

While inherent rank is a feature of the ideology of chieftainship, rank is also present in the way that Ujelang and Enewetak people conceive of age. With age comes rank, and the most common cases in which ordinary people feel

wronged arise as a result of the application of rules that differentially distribute power in accord with age. In the prototypical case, the younger, lower-ranked member must obey the dictates of any older sibling or any member of an older generation. The theory is not fully as simplistic as it might appear. In some sense even high-ranked chiefs and respected elders, like Ioanej, lose power as they become “senile” (*ppāl*). Overt trappings of respect remain, but those who are younger often do not act in accord with the professed desires of these truly aged persons. The discrepancy, however, also has to do with the control of knowledge. At the most general level of ideology, a largely linear relationship exists between increasing experience and increasing knowledge. Young children are, with frequency, said to be “crazy,” and as they become enculturated humans, their craziness is replaced with knowledge and experience. Only in truly old age, when one loses control of the vast array of types of knowledge he or she can bring to bear on community affairs, is a person once again referred to with frequency as “crazy.”

Cultural categories commonly classify human experience in less than perfectly adequate ways, and Marshallese culture is no different in this regard. Young children become very accepting of the admonishments of their slightly older sibling caretakers, but on both sides of the child-adult boundary, issues of unjust treatment are encountered. Mature, unmarried youth and young married adults alike find themselves so near the liminal boundaries of their social category that expectations and practices do not come into easy alignment. Feelings of injustice are the result, and youthful adults (or adult-like youth) must adopt some form of action to bring the abuse of one's person to the attention of the community as a whole. The ego-altering attractions of alcohol provide one common route to recognition, while suicide, I believe, provides a much more adamant expressive avenue to gain the community's attention.

For drinkers, the socially inebriated self, really an alter ego who adopts moral strategies and practical actions typical of aggressive young male warriors, is able to lobby in behalf of the abused.⁸ Statements about feelings of moral injustice that a young man (typically) would hesitate to make about his older sibling and would not dare say to his mother's older brother are common topics of discussion among age mates in a drinking circle. In public drinking establishments in Majuro (government center of the Marshall Islands), fights often erupt among drinking groups when the stage management and audience separation techniques used in daily life break down (Goffman 1959: ch. 3), that is, when younger siblings and younger-generation clan mates come into direct conflict with their “elders.” On Ujelang and Enewetak, however, small-scale drinking groups comprising age mates fre-

quently drink in isolated spots in the bush, in uninhabited houses, or in the houses of single males. Since the drinking circles are carefully selected, internal fights are infrequent. Indeed, while they are formally prohibited, such gatherings are considered by many to be harmless, and they are likely to be psychologically beneficial. Nevertheless, inebriates frequently become more bold, and as they move into the community to confront those who they feel have done them wrong, they begin to incur the wrath of their elders. Nevertheless, the wrath is tinged with ambivalence (toward the person, if not the drink), because the person involved is not entirely responsible for his or her own actions (Marshall 1979, 1981; Carucci 1987a). As an inebriated soul begins to use an ever more aggressive manner, his or her actions become a central community concern.

One particularly notorious encounter occurred on Ujelang in 1977 between a favored grandson of the Jittök-en chief and his mother's older brother (by adoption), at that time the Ujelang magistrate and one of the most empowered figures in the community. While I did not hear the initial admonishment, the young man (whom I shall call Jahnsten) was offended when the magistrate denounced him in a public setting for engaging in polygamy.⁹ In addition to his wife of long standing, Jahnsten was cohabiting with his wife's attractive younger sister. He had built her a separate house on the old chief's land parcel and, in conversations with me, said that he wanted to marry her.¹⁰ His plans, however, were complicated by the fact that the magistrate was the Jittök-en chief's adopted son, and Jahnsten's recently pubescent paramour was the magistrate's adopted daughter (genealogically, his sister's daughter). If Jahnsten planned to marry the girl, he could not avoid asking for the magistrate's blessing.

Jahnsten was a renowned drinker, a trait that local people claim he "took from" his father (a highly respected in-married man from Sapwuahfik [Ngatik] who had "killed himself" by alcoholic overindulgence). Within a couple of weeks of the public shaming, Jahnsten excused himself from a drinking circle, where he and a group of age mates and one older man had been sharing a home-brewed batch of "yeast," and approached the magistrate's house. The public accusations of bigamy and the young man's paramour had been the topics of discussion in the drinking circle that inspired the young man to "walk about for a while." Some of those in the drinking circle claim that Jahnsten left the group because he intended to ask the magistrate about marrying his daughter (sister's daughter). Others say that he wanted to discuss the shaming incident with the magistrate.

Whatever the case, soon after his arrival at the magistrate's house, loud shouts could be heard reverberating through the village, and community members rushed quickly to the magistrate's lanai. My adopted father and I

ran from a nearby cookhouse and were among the first to arrive. Within minutes, nearly half of the community encircled the house. Two mature men held Jahnsten, while another respected elder attempted to calm the magistrate, occasionally grabbing his arm as he moved toward his daughter's lover. The magistrate denounced Jahnsten's drunken state and told him to leave his house and land. Jahnsten screamed back, filing his complaints that the magistrate had lied and that those lies had been improperly recorded in the community's collective memory.

As the shouts abated slightly, the adult monitors relaxed their grip on Jahnsten and, using his considerable strength and notable size, he broke loose, grabbed a sizable boulder, and hurled it at the magistrate. The bulky elder dodged and turned his back, and the large rock glanced off of his shoulder. Suddenly, women began shrieking in the loud wails that accompany a death. The two men seized Jahnsten by the arms again, and two of his sister's daughters rushed forward, wailing and sobbing to beg him to return to his own house. After a few minutes of shouting, during which he reasserted his claims of abuse, Jahnsten allowed himself to be led from the scene, toward his own house.

In this instance, both parties felt wronged, but the magistrate freely voiced his opinions in public while Jahnsten, though both married and respected among his peers, could only use the drinking circle as a forum to express his discontent. Not yet satisfied with his peers' agreement that he had suffered abuse, Jahnsten ventured into the village to find a more public arena in which to announce his dissatisfaction. Here, he did not argue with the magistrate about polygamy or his desire to marry the daughter but, instead, focused on the fact that the magistrate had "lied" by not presenting the community with the facts of the case (that is, that he hoped and planned to marry the young woman [honorably], not just to court her without permission).¹¹

While used with greater frequency by unmarried youth, alcohol provides one of the only avenues available to the structurally disempowered to display their disenfranchisements (see Carucci 1990 for a related argument). Marshall notes that alcohol is commonly used as a disinhibitor in a variety of societies (1981), but it is the way in which Ujelang and Enewetak people culturally contour inebriation that is of particular interest. On Enewetak, inebriation is given certain social performative shapes, and those who become inebriated are able to speak with (partially) embodied voices from which they can make appeals to common understandings of just treatment. The partial dissociation of the inebriate's persona from his or her everyday self gives a person license to bring to light injustices that arise in a small-scale society in which all deserve to be heard, yet it is taken for granted that

people have different rights as a result of their rank. While the liminality of the performance allows for the confrontation of hierarchy, the residual connections between the persona of the inebriate and his or her everyday self also remain important, for it is these residual ties that allow claims of having been wronged to be tracked and assessed by other members of the community.

Just as the qualities of disinhibition only provide the clay from which the social and moral characteristics of the inebriate are fashioned by Enewetak and Ujelang people, so the liminal nature of the performances does not adequately account for the negotiated outcomes. Therefore, while the above scenario fits Victor Turner's idea of a "social drama," Turner's analytic frame automatically forces the observer to see the drama from the level of the system (1974). The drama moves through four stages: a breach of norms, a buildup phase leading to a crisis, redress, and "the realignment of social relations when a new equilibrium is achieved" (Myerhoff 1978:149). While it is tempting, even useful, to be drawn into this social relational model, in fact the way in which the issues of justice are negotiated as well as the outcomes for the participants are far more semiotically nuanced. The contours of Jahnsten's life have been altered as a result of the social drama described above (see note 11). Generic equilibrium has not been the outcome, but rather an ongoing negotiated discourse about the position of polygamy in the community. While the postmissionization "norm" is now monogamy, stories of historically viable Marshallese polygamy abound. In Foucault's terms (1988–1990), the entire delegitimation of once acceptable sexual practices that took place in Europe and the United States during the past four hundred years is not equally represented in the Marshallese worldview. While polygamy represents but a small and disjointed fragment in discussions of Marshallese considerations of sexuality, fuel recently has been added to discussions of multiple spouses (note 9) by senators and representatives in the emerging Republic of the Marshall Islands who, people contend, have readopted polygamous practices as a measure of their own increasing rank. These debates will almost certainly become more heated in the future, as local custom becomes increasingly reified and commodified. As elsewhere in the Pacific, Marshall Islanders will continue to gain a reinvigorated sense of cultural identity, which will require a further disentangling of local "tradition" from colonially inspired practices. Although monogamy may ultimately "become" Marshallese custom, polygamy may also become a marker of rank in a more assertive version of Marshallese identity.

If Jahnsten's inebriation is thought of as a "social drama," it is true that, from the perspective of the system, "norms" were breached. Nevertheless,

in terms of the negotiated nature of community justice, it is more fruitful to say that the magistrate and Jahnsten were drawing on different symbolic formulations of “that which is just.” These formulations reflected their different social situations at the time. While it may be analytically useful to see any inebriation scenario as a liminal, norm-breaching event, this systemic perspective leads to the unacceptable idea that there is a single, systemwide, norm, shared by all under all circumstances throughout time. But Marshallese culture is historically and contextually varied, and elsewhere I have argued that what may be “time out” from normative action in the adult-dominated community is “time in” from the perspective of young unmarried Marshallese males (Carucci 1987a). The norms themselves are positional and relative. It is only the anthropologist positioned in the analytic stance of the observer of the system who creates a unified norm. Indeed, in the above case, the magistrate’s position also shifted as a result of the encounter with Jahnsten. Even though he was simply representing “norms” of propriety and just action (from a systems-oriented view), after the incident the community continued to talk about this encounter for a number of years. In subsequent elections, a portion of Jahnsten’s extended family, which was also part of the extended family of the adopted magistrate, chose to vote against the magistrate because they felt he had failed to treat seriously Jahnsten’s sincere appeals about his paramour. In addition, several of Jahnsten’s age mates along with some of Jahnsten’s paramour’s age mates and close friends also decided the magistrate would not receive their votes. The (mythic) “norm,” in other words, took on an altered character as a result of this incident, and while the magistrate won the next election, by the following election community support had shifted to another candidate.

It is important to recognize that justice, although generated out of the crosscutting logical possibilities of the worldview of Enewetak and Ujelang people, is not a monolithically constituted phenomenon, unchanging through time. Instead, notions of just action are situation-specific, inherently negotiated, and changeable through time. Social actors develop arguments about just treatment as part of the way in which they position themselves vis-à-vis their compatriots in an ever-changing world. From the adult perspective of a church member and distinguished elder, *kadek im bwebwe* (drunk and crazy) may be a viable depiction of the liminal condition represented by young, single, inebriated males, but from the perspective of those young men, the world is fashioned out of different material and the fabric is tinted with different moral colors. While their stories are multifaceted, in the view of young men, liminal portrayals like the one outlined above provide a core mechanism through which their voices are made public and through which unjust treatment can be brought to the attention of a large part of the community.

Mediations of Power between the Corporeal and Noncorporeal Spheres

Those who contemplate suicide often express feelings of being greatly wronged, often by those not only older, but of opposite gender as well. With an ideology of shared matrilineal identity, the mothers (a person's gentrix as well as classificatory mothers) and the mothers' brothers are the most-honored personae within a younger person's milieu. Indeed, as one becomes an aging mother with many children and grandchildren or an aging mother's brother who can speak for his sisters' entire clan, elevated rank and authority are taken for granted. Yet, along with honor come distance and unapproachability. It is not surprising, therefore, that these persons are said to be frequent intended recipients of the message carried by a suicide.

While inebriates always invoke ambivalence, persons attempting suicide leave little question about their commitment to their feelings of having been abused. Marshall Islanders learned from the Japanese that it was honorable to die for one's beliefs, and the sacrifice of one's own life provides an ultimate righting for the wronged. Marshall Islanders see it as a way to make living survivors feel extremely guilty for a perceived moral abuse. By choosing suicide, the perpetrator (a victim only in the sense of the community's judgment that he or she has been wronged) renegotiates an ongoing exchange between the living and the dead (Weiner 1976; Schieffelin 1976). Such an individual actively disrupts the extant social interrelationship between living and dead to point up an abuse of his or her person. The perpetrator seeks to create a sense of loss among the living by, simultaneously, acting in an honorific manner among noncorporeal humans, who themselves are able to see the differences between right and wrong in a much clearer manner than the living.

Any death brings about a renegotiation between corporeal and noncorporeal beings, though beings who are the closest to life, the recently dead, are most frequently involved in such negotiations. Persons carry their core personality traits across this boundary, since such attributes are determined by one's clan identity and clan identity does not change at death. Those who were cantankerous in life (*lej*) will cause difficulties after death by intervening in the day-to-day lives of the living, causing illness and, should the spirit being be spiteful, even death. Cosmic sanction is unquestionable and unquestioned, and the will of God is often mediated and enforced by lower-order ancestor spirits. Living residents constantly reshape their lives in order to bring their actions into line with the messages they receive from noncorporeal beings, who always act and adjudicate in a moral manner. Those who commit suicide thereby benefit from several sources of empowerment. First,

“victims” of suicide draw immediate attention to their plight. Second, they transform their very being into that of a moral agent for God who can bring about consequences for those who formerly maligned them during their lives. And third, they command acknowledgment and greater respect from the living. Whereas a person attempting suicide feels his or her voice has not been properly heard or acknowledged, as a noncorporeal spirit he or she will command immediate respect. Living persons must respond to messages from noncorporeal beings (mostly communications through the recently deceased) by changing their own actions or through exchange (sacrifice). The social persona of the deceased suicide victim, in other words, is recognized and valued not only through the process of public mourning, but in the exchanges with noncorporeal beings that follow the death.

Although I have not interviewed anyone about their discontent just before a suicide, suicide has skyrocketed since the return to Enewetak Atoll. In large part, those who feel wronged are near the boundaries of adulthood—mature youths who have not yet married or young married people who have not yet reached an age to attain the benefits of fully mature adults. While suicide is more frequent among males than among females, young women also attempt suicide with increasing frequency on Majuro and Ebeye. The single suicide on Ujelang Atoll occurred just before the community’s return to Enewetak. It involved a young male who is said to have been upset with his mother’s failure to recognize him and help build a place for him in the community. The young man grew up elsewhere in the Marshall Islands and only returned to Ujelang a couple of years before his death. While the young man had some knowledge of what it is to be an important person, the seemingly unbridgeable distance between his own station on Ujelang and the attainment of those ends must have provided an unresolvable contradiction. His sense of importance was marked by his position as a chiefly descendant and the praenomen he shared with a famous rock star. At the same time, on Ujelang he was largely a foreign newcomer whose father was from elsewhere. He had quit school to move to Ujelang, and even though his mother was a chief’s daughter (and he had been socialized on an atoll where descendants of females became chiefs), on Ujelang he found himself in a society where chiefly descent is transmitted through males. Therefore, while he may have grown up thinking of himself as a person of importance (a chief), on Ujelang it was his cross-cousins who would become future chiefs. While his age mates indicated he was laconic and filled with sadness (*būromūj*) before his suicide, he did not complain to any of them or tell them of his plan to commit suicide. In speaking with me about his death, several local residents surmised that his suicide was a message sent to his mother, and to more distant local relatives as well, for his disenfranchisement with the life

he was living on Ujelang. He could not confront his mother directly without disavowing the ideal caricatures he should use to depict her. But, through suicide, her own culpability along with that of the entire community was brought to the surface. In this way, the true victims of Marshall Islands suicide are said to be the living.

Representing the Historic Wrongs of Others

In the above sections I have attempted to indicate some of the more extreme ways in which justice is sought by those Enewetak and Ujelang people who have a limited array of symbolic resources given the array of social personae taken for granted on the atoll. In analyzing these cases, I hope to make clear the way in which an egalitarian sense of justice is always brought to bear on embedded structures of hierarchy. A consideration of the emergent international application of this local sense of appropriate redress and compensation provides a contrastive arena in which the same principles come into play.¹²

Given the complex history of colonial interactions on Enewetak and Ujelang, community members initially had no contextual frame that would allow them to place Japan or the United States in a position from whence the community could demand compensation. Instead, from the perspective of local people, these foreigners were conceived of much as high-ranking foreign chiefs. Such primordial chiefs, possessing sacred powers and charismatic force, blessed the land and made it productive. They acted with dignity to mediate local disputes, since their social and physical distance from people and land gave them the ability to judge without bias. Like the chiefs, the colonizing foreigners also appeared to act in accord with their own desires, and who could question their seemingly whimsical decisions? The overwhelming display of force during the battles of World War II left Enewetak people with impressions of the Americans' invincibility and chieflike character. When they were asked to leave their home atoll to allow the United States to use it for nuclear tests, Enewetak people felt that they could not refuse. Not only did they fear what might happen if they disagreed, they also had been told that their sacrifice would benefit all of humankind.

On Ujelang Atoll, with a fraction of the resources that had once been available to them on Enewetak, people soon found themselves living in conditions of cyclical famine. Not surprisingly, members of the community came to think of themselves as morally blameless yet abandoned by government officials in Washington, D.C. Even though they asked to return to their home at various times in the 1950s and early 1960s, it was ultimately a resident member of the Peace Corps who suggested that they stage a "strike" in

1967 to attempt to draw attention to the untenable conditions under which they were living on Ujelang. In planning for the strike, a few young leaders suggested that the entire community board the field-trip ship and travel to the government center where they would camp out in front of the district administrator's offices until he agreed to listen to their stories of hardship and suffering. Many Ujelang residents were fearful that they would be dumped into the sea if they boarded the ship for Majuro, but the bold young mayor and several others in the community supported the strike, recognizing that such a display of victimization would be a perfect strategy of community empowerment. Eventually the strike brought results. A trust fund was set up to compensate local people for their suffering. But increased publicity did as much to secure compensation as did local people's actions. Even though many felt that something had to be done to improve their lives, many of those who participated in the strike talk of being "amazed" when the compensation trust fund was forthcoming.

Throughout these early years when Ujelang people were testing the waters of international justice, they acted as though they were being pulled along by the current. While they felt they should be compensated for suffering, only community leaders used instrumental terms to describe their actions in acquiring these funds. While community leaders attempted to boost their own position through such descriptions, others spoke of the trust fund as "very good fortune," "a gift from God," or "assistance from the Americans because of their kindness." People on Ujelang described themselves as being just like one of the lost tribes of Israel. I believe that people's expectations during this era were low because of the chiefly model they applied to their colonizers and the commoner model they applied to themselves. The crosscutting egalitarian model was an integral part of the local consciousness during this era, but it was a model applied within families and within the community. It was not a model applicable to sacred, foreign chiefs.

In recent years, Ujelang and Enewetak people have achieved some success in international negotiations for nuclear compensations, including repatriation to Enewetak and an ongoing resettlement program. Not surprisingly, Enewetak people's conception of themselves has shifted concomitantly. Equally, the community has moved from being viewed as provincial or "backwoods" by Marshall Islanders to secure a more polished, though controversial, image. Part of the change can be measured by the frequency of intermarriage. Once viewed as poor marriage mates, recently enriched Enewetak spouses, like those from Bikini, have greatly increased in attractiveness. Another part of the change can be seen in the jealousy that certain groups in the new nation-state now have toward Bikini, Enewetak, and the other atoll groups that have received nuclear compensations. Indeed, in the

case of Bikini and, to a lesser degree, Enewetak, there is a certain irony in the way they have moved from being the most provincial to being the most internationally known communities of Marshall Islanders. Not surprisingly, the way in which past misfortunes have been turned to advantage by the nuclear-testing communities has been a source of resentment. Along with this renown, Enewetak people's expectations have also changed; many residents now suggest that compensation for suffering is due them. This shift, I believe, is a result of their altered perception of themselves. With an elevated community image, the Enewetak-Ujelang community now approaches the bargaining table on a much more equal footing, and exchanges among equals should themselves be relatively egalitarian. Therefore, even though the wrongs to be righted have not changed, community demands have begun to shift toward a more egalitarian model of compensation. No longer do people see the initial trust fund as a "gift from God" or as beneficent treatment from the chieflike Americans. It is compensation due for having given the Americans use rights to Enewetak Atoll. And as the community increasingly comes to see itself as an equal exchanging partner with the United States within a larger sphere of international justice, the demands for restoring Enewetak Atoll to full use have also increased.¹³

Toward a Contextual Analysis of Proper Treatment

In many senses Ujelang and Enewetak people have an absolutist sense of propriety along with a clear-cut vision of when some action is wrong. Perhaps these sensibilities have contributed to the recent welcome that country-and-western music has received in the Marshall Islands.¹⁴ Equally, the righting of wrongs, *jolok bōd*, involves casting off improprieties or wrongdoing. Since most wrongs are of a social nature, compensatory actions come in the form of a balanced public plea of injustice and a public apology or display of forgiveness. Wrongs within a family should be corrected with the entire family; those that involve the community require community apologia. Not all wrongs are of equal consequence, and different faux pas require different degrees of compensatory action. At one point, wrongs against high chiefs, even something like elevating one's head above the level of the chief's head, are said to have required a common person's death. Among siblings close in age and rank, a simple public acknowledgment of incorrect action is often an adequate compensatory gesture.

The wide range of activities that are employed for righting wrongs of different types in part points to the crosscutting ideological constructions that are used to describe social relationships on Ujelang and Enewetak Atolls. The alternate application of these ideologies makes the two atolls particu-

larly valuable in the consideration of Pacific patterns of compensation for wrongdoing. The atolls' small scale combined with their historical isolation in the not-too-distant past give them a strong egalitarian ideology, yet, at the same time, their residents possess a contravening ideology of rank associated with the rights to authorize and legitimizing their own chiefs and community leaders, and a strong sense of difference from surrounding others. These two contravening ideologies are selectively employed by social actors in varied social settings. In certain settings, therefore, subordinates employ an array of justice-seeking strategies for the disempowered that include the balanced exchange notions of latent vindication explored above. While absolutely egalitarian social situations are rare, public settings like council meetings often involve complex negotiations for just settlement based on relatively balanced claims of power among those in attendance. Historically, as the position of Enewetak and Ujelang has changed in the eyes of the outside world, the community's self-perceptions and justice-seeking strategies have shifted as well. The crosscutting valuation of these hierarchical and egalitarian justice-seeking strategies is continuously worked out in day-to-day practice. Close attention to the multifaceted results are particularly important to an understanding of human action at the interpersonal and community levels. Perhaps more important, however, in the complex emerging national and international arenas, the socially situated understanding of different ideas about justice and particular justice-seeking scenarios is imperative to a more multifaceted appreciation of the human condition.

NOTES

1. Research on which this article is based was conducted in 1976–1978, 1982–1983, 1989, 1990–1991, 1993, 1994, and 1996. Funding was provided by the National Science Foundation, two National Endowment for the Humanities grants, and through the generous support of the Enewetak and Ujelang Local Government Council. The comments of Dr. Jan Rensel and Dr. David Akin and other members of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania session in 1996 on “Righting Wrongs,” along with the astute suggestions of two anonymous *Pacific Studies* reviewers, have been particularly helpful in various stages of rewriting. I am also grateful for the continued support of the Enewetak community and for their willingness to allow me to share so intimately in their lives. Nevertheless, ultimate responsibility for the depictions of scenarios of being wronged and of redress along with the analysis of those scenes rests with me.

2. Another group of former Ujelang people resides on Jaluij Atoll. They are upset by the decision to give Ujelang Atoll lands to members of the Enewetak community. Neither group of former Ujelang residents considers the “purchase” of Ujelang by Germans legitimate.

3. Some of these works extend beyond the bounds of the Pacific.

4. Typifications of this sort go back to Rivers's *History of Melanesian Society* and before. They are elaborated in other classic locations like Margaret Mead's *Growing Up in New Guinea*, where she speaks of the similarities between attitudes toward discipline and respect between Manus and American youth, and the differences between these styles and those in Samoa (e.g., [1930] 1975:216). Within the political-economic and social organizational domains, grand-order comparisons like Mead's further contribute to the reification of the difference between Melanesia and Polynesia. In *Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief*, for example, Marshall Sahlins notes that "the qualities of command that had to reside in men in Melanesia, that had to be personally demonstrated in order to attract loyal followers, were in Polynesia socially assigned to office and rank. . . . Magical powers such as a Melanesian big man might acquire to sustain his position, a Polynesian high chief inherited by divine descent as the *mana* which sanctified his rule and protected his person against the hands of the commonality" ([1963]1968:169–170).

Undoubtedly, there is some increment of legitimacy to these grand-level comparisons. There is something substantively different between Hawaiian high chiefs and Kawelka big-men like Ongka (Strathern and Ongka 1979). Nevertheless, comparative frameworks like the one employed above by Sahlins and similar statements in Goldman's writings on Polynesian social organization (1957) are largely European classifications reified by European eyes. As theoretical poles of contrast—ideal types—they are resuscitated whenever pieces of thoroughly decontextualized data superficially fit the type. When there is not a fit, anthropologists simply overlook the Melanesian-Polynesian "dichotomy." If there is a historical distinction of value here, it must be internally inspired, probably more along the lines of a Papuan-speaking versus Austronesian-speaking division of the Pacific, rather than along the European, racially inspired Melanesian-Polynesian divide (Scaglione, pers. com., 1997). And even these high-order contrasts are only meaningful at the most generic levels of ethos or worldview. In contrast, the vast bulk of cultural material fashioned by anthropologists must be related to its multiple contexts of generation and use, be those interactive anthropological contexts or the varied situational scenes in which the daily performances of local people transpire. Without close attention to social and historical context, grand-level contrasts become entirely detached from the critical issues of meanings and use. As Deborah Durham suggests, contrasts such as "hierarchy and egalitarianism, interdependence and autonomy" are likely possibilities in any society (1995:111–112). It is the particular contours and arrangements of such structural possibilities that lend shape to a particular cultural milieu, just as it is the wide variety of performative contexts that allow social actors and social scientists, each with his or her own particular ends, to be able to draw connections between embodied knowledge and meaningful social practice.

5. Pacific ethnographers of the current era are hardly unaware of the need for greater historical and contextual grounding. In his more recent discussions of Fiji and Hawai'i, Sahlins moves in this direction by multiplying his depictions of the social order in a variety of ways. The monolithic view of chieftainship he outlined in 1963, for example, takes on a more multifaceted character in 1985, when he depicts chiefs and other social actors as being embedded in cultural universes in which power and solidarity are classificatorily and morally antithetical to one another (see, for example, Sahlins 1985:76). Geoffrey White, representing the "Melanesian side," also challenges the vast, decontextualized suppositions about chieftainship. In his depictions of Santa Isabel, White (1991) describes something of the false opposition between Melanesian big-men and Polynesian chiefs, and the modes of authority they represent. He shows how discourses about chiefs entered Santa Isabel and how they came to represent more potent and generalized (regional) forms of

authority, resulting, ultimately, in the coronation of Dudley Tuti as “paramount chief.” At the core of White’s argument is the notion that chiefs (and concomitant notions of rank and hierarchical authority) are part of the way in which empowerment is manufactured through the fabrication of *kastom*.

Not unlike White, Frederick Errington and Deborah Gewertz show how discourses about chiefs as hereditary, permanently privileged leaders have become part of the rationalizing process that accompanies the construction of a class-based society in Wewak, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea. In their terms, “this modern-day rhetoric of ‘chiefs’ was, in fact, proving increasingly useful to politicians in particular, and to members of the middle class in general, as a way of justifying growing class differences. It summarized and made more palatable the shifts in life’s opportunities that everyone knew were taking place. It presented a transformed present in terms of a reinvented, stable past which defined distinction not in terms of continuity but of difference” (Errington and Gewertz 1997:8). Recent volumes by Jolly and Mosko (1994) and White and Lindstrom (1997) address further the issues of hierarchy and of chiefly control, respect, and leadership as they relate to particular societies and, in some cases, specific contexts of use. Inasmuch as these discussions of rank imply claims of moral authority vis-à-vis other social personages, they are of considerable value in dealing with the issue of justice and moral redress.

I do not mean to say that the earlier comparative statements in which Melanesian and Polynesian societies were typified by anthropologists as fundamentally different are entirely false, but they were certainly incomplete. They conveyed messages of generic difference and general function in somewhat divergent types of societies but could not tell readers much more than that. To get beyond grand-level comparisons, to get at the notion of meaning, it is imperative to move to the level of particular societies and consider the specific ways in which historical, structural, and contextual features are played out in people’s lives. Only when meaning and social practice are taken into account is it possible to see just why particular members of a group like the Enewetak-Ujelang community adopt specific strategies for righting wrongs.

6. The entire land space of Enewetak is approximately 2.75 square miles, 0.67 square miles for Ujelang, and 70 square miles for the thirty-four atolls and coral pinnacles that constitute the current-day Republic of the Marshall Islands.

7. Pseudonyms are used throughout, not to keep people from figuring out the details of this case (for it is far too obvious who the participants are in this instance), but because it is a grave offense to associate the names of deceased atoll residents with falsehoods. The crux of the issue comes down to different attributions of what Neoj said in her final days, and, as local people say, “Those [other] guys are just lying.”

8. Local people recognize a separation between the inebriated self and the day-to-day self, and many of the remediation strategies are oriented toward reestablishing a connection between these enactments of person (Carucci 1987:10). Nevertheless, as part of a course of action that brings community attention to those who feel abused, the multiple-person components of the inebriate (me, but not me) provide an ideal framework for voicing complaints that challenge components of the social and moral order that are taken for granted.

9. This practice is said to have been common in olden times, but it was banned by the missionaries and had fallen into disfavor. Most recently, a resurgence of polygamous prac-

tices among Republic of the Marshall Islands representatives, senators, and well-paid government officials has created quite a stir, particularly among committed church members. While some might wish to call these socially acknowledged affairs and lovers something other than polygamous marriage, I follow local practice, which fails to make the distinction. In the representative words of one middle-aged church woman: "So is it then O.K. that he has a high position and yet there are 'two with him/her' (*ewor ruo ippen*)?" This is precisely how the marriages of former chiefs are described: "there were [however many] with him/her." Elsewhere I have distinguished between "marriage," which is determined by such things as cohabitation, provisioning/providing for, and shared (though not exclusive) sexual relations, and being "wed" (through public ceremonial recognition, usually a church service) (Carucci 1980). By these conditions, which I extrapolated from local description and practice, the government officials are married to multiple spouses. In the narratives people develop to describe the government officials, they depict them as cohabiting, providing money or food for their (illicit) spouses, and keeping multiple dwellings. They qualify as being married because they fit the local definitional criteria for marriage, although they are not wed.

10. This (common law) marriage did eventually take place, but the polygamous relationship that Jahnsten envisioned in 1977 was not long-lived. He and his young wife's older sister separated in the early 1980s, and she subsequently remarried.

11. The polygamy issue was viewed quite differently here by Jahnsten and the magistrate. For the magistrate, a dedicated church member, polygamy was a sin, as was taught to Marshall Islanders by Congregationalist missionaries. For the young man, a nonbeliever, polygamy represented a long-standing Marshallese practice that, in the 1970s, was beginning to enjoy a slight resurgence. Indeed, at the time, Jahnsten considered his bigamy to be something of a marker of his relatively high rank among his age mates.

In retrospect it appears that Jahnsten's short-term empowerment among his age mates ultimately was sacrificed and brought into line with 1970s community norms concerning polygamy. Community feelings about Jahnsten's sororal polygyny have continued to influence his career. Since the incident, Jahnsten has not been able to renegotiate a highly empowered identity within the community even though, prior to that time, he had been considered one of the up-and-coming leaders in the village. Rather than becoming an undisputed leader, Jahnsten, now a middle-aged man, holds a position of mediocre rank in the community. His marriage choices ultimately left him married to the younger, less-empowered sister, while the older sister, his first wife, maintains some bitterness over the incident. His children by the two sisters, rather than being particularly close, are more distanced from one another than typical parallel cousins would have been, in large part because the lands that would once have been used by both sisters' children have been prematurely subdivided in order to minimize any disputes.

12. Holly Barker outlines a few of the recent responses to nuclear testing by selected residents of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (1997: 290–306).

13. Currently the Enewetak community resides on three islets in the southern half of Enewetak Atoll. These three islets and one other were thoroughly cleaned and replanted in hopes of restoring them to something like their original condition. Some of the remaining forty islets on the atoll were "cleaned up," ridding them of unacceptable levels of radio-nuclides, but, owing to the severity of the environmental damage, none of the atoll has been thoroughly rehabilitated.

14. In particular, I have in mind the following country music tropes: an aching sense of having been wronged, an appreciation for the underdog, and sharp boundaries between propriety and injustice.

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