

## **Ethnic Institutions and Identity: Palauan Migrants on Guam**

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**Abstract**—There are over one thousand Palauan migrants residing on Guam. They have been able to adapt to life on Guam relatively successfully while continuing to view themselves as Palauans and retaining close ties with Palau. The primary mechanisms in the maintenance of their identity are the Palauan institutions. Similar in many respects to those found in Palau, the migrant institutions have their base in the kinship units, *telungalek/kebliil*, but vary from the original as accommodation to life on Guam has demanded. These institutions give the migrants a context in which Palauan language and role relationships can be experienced and channels of reciprocity with Palau and among the migrants maintained. They also make adjustment to life on Guam easier by providing a source of financial, social, emotional, and spiritual support to the migrant.

Palauan migrants residing on Guam present an example of a migrant ethnic group that is in the process of adapting to a new social environment. My research was conducted among the Palauans of Guam from September 1977 through January 1978. One of the issues this research addressed was the maintenance of a Palauan ethnic identity while living on Guam. This article presents a brief description of the Palauan population on Guam and its social institutions, as they relate to the maintenance of Palauan ethnic identity and assist in a successful adaptation to life in the new environment.

### **Methods**

The residents of Ngerchelongs Village (Babeldaob, Palau) now living on Guam were chosen as the informants for this study and the identified universe of Palauans was interviewed in its entirety. A village rather than a random sample of the Palauan population on Guam was chosen, as the universe of Palauans on Guam based on available data resources was impossible to identify. Though only adults were interviewed, there is a large enough population of Ngerchelongsese on Guam so that a cross-section of age, religion, sex, educational level and income is presented. The sample included 15 households comprising a total of 31 adults.

A questionnaire consisting of two forms was developed to provide consistency and structure for the interviews. One form was oriented toward the activities of the household as a unit, and was directed to the head of the household. The other form

concerned the experience of the individual and was administered to all available adult members of the household. A household was included in the sample when either its head or his spouse was from Ngerchelung. The forms provided an open-ended framework of basic information with informants' further elaboration during the conversations.

### Distribution of Palauans on Guam

**POPULATION SIZE**—Official data sources provide little information on the Palauan population of Guam. Neither census data nor Bureau of Planning surveys break down ethnic categories in sufficient detail to set Palauans apart from other Trust Territory citizens.

McGrath (1971) estimated that as of 1970 there were 1,230 Palauans living on Guam. Four hundred of that number were students. According to McGrath's estimation, Guam was hosting the largest population of Palauans anywhere outside of Palau District.

Informant estimates of the current Palauan population of Guam range from 500 to 2,000. The average estimate was 1,220, with a standard deviation of 542. Several informants added that about 400 of the total was comprised of elementary, high school, and college students. In the spring semester of 1977 the University of Guam reported 76 Palauan students in attendance; the largest single group of non-Chamorro Micronesian students. Palauan students accounted for 27 percent of the Trust Territory student population at the University.

**AGE/SEX DISTRIBUTION**—The population of Ngerchelungese on Guam at the time of the study was 75 with a mean age of 21.6 years and a standard deviation of 15.7 years. The estimated mean age for Palau District based on the 1973 census is 22 years. Fifty-six percent of the Ngerchelungese population on Guam is male; as are fifty-nine

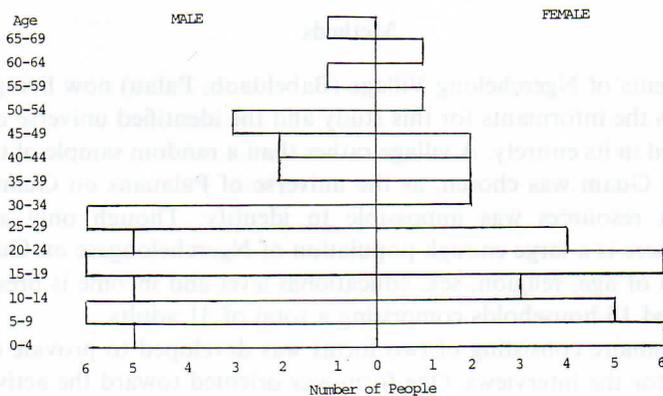


Fig. 1. Population pyramid of Ngerchelungese on Guam, November 1977 - January 1978.

percent of the adult Ngerchelongese migrants and fifty-two percent of those under 18 years of age. Fifty-eight percent of the Ngerchelongese on Guam are adults. Data from the 1973 census show that in Palau District males are 51 percent of the population and those under 18 years of age represent 58 percent of the population. Males comprise 52 percent of the juvenile population. The slight emphasis on older males in the migrant population is consistent with the search for wage labor as a reason for migration. The following age/sex pyramid illustrates the population of Ngerchelongese migrants on Guam (Fig. 1).

**GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION**—The Ngerchelongese on Guam are not widely dispersed. Over 90% of the households interviewed are located in one of the three contiguous villages of Dededo, Tumon and Mangilao. The nearby villages of Barrigada, Maite, Chalan Pago-Ordot, Yigo and Harmon also have Ngerchelongese households. Informants reported that on first coming to Guam they commonly stayed with relatives living in Tamuning; however, no Ngerchelongese are currently residing in that village. The recent commercialization of the village and the destruction caused by Typhoon Pamela in May of 1976 may have contributed to a Ngerchelongese exodus from Tamuning.

In the Tumon area, a high-rise apartment complex known as Tumon Village is a locus for Ngerchelongese settlement. Here households are in a state of transition consisting mainly of newly married couples and middle-aged migrants who have recently arrived.

In Dededo, most of the households are within walking distance of each other in a section of the low cost housing project run by the Guam Rental Corporation. This government-subsidized residential development is comprised of well-landscaped and tended single family dwellings made of concrete. This development tends to house families who have been on Guam for some time.

A rural area near Pago Bay along Route 15, 'the back road to Andersen Air Force Base,' serves as the locus for Ngerchelongese residents in Mangilao. Palauan residents of this area are longtime inhabitants of Guam, most of whom own their lands, having purchased them in a group action over ten years ago. Houses in this area are both of tin and wood, as well as concrete. These rural householders garden to provide supplemental food resources.

### **Migration and the Palauan Family Structure**

Traditional Palauan family structure is comprised of three units: 1) *ongalek* (nuclear family), 2) *telungalek* (consanguinal extended family; property holding family unit based on matrilineal descent), and 3) *Kebliil* (clan, focus of division of labor on occasions of customary exchange). Large gaps exist in the relational networks among the Palauans on Guam, as the greater proportion of the migrants' relatives continue to reside in Palau. Owing to the demands for interaction that are placed upon them, gaps in the relational networks on Guam must be filled by

relatives who are more distant in degree of kinship than relatives who traditionally meet these demands. For example, Palauan custom requires that children make funerary payments to peers of a deceased parent. In Palau children receive financial assistance from maternal cousins; on Guam paternal cousins and even Palauans unrelated by kinship often help with these payments. Actual obligation to help in these cases, as a result of *keblilil* responsibility, is nonexistent or tenuous at best, but obligations of friendship and intraethnic commitment are strong.

The Palauan relational units found on Guam are extensions of family units based in Palau. There has been too little time since this population of first generation migrants established itself on Guam in the late 1940's for larger family units to develop.

The migrants came in the early years primarily for work, eight of the ten informant households established on Guam for over ten years having come in search of work. Once a family member was able to find employment, other relatives would come to Guam and stay with him until they could also find work. A job allowed them to send for their families or to begin one. A third of the heads of households married in Palau and brought their families to Guam after they found work. Two returned to Palau several years later to find a wife, who they then brought to Guam. The others married on Guam or elsewhere in Micronesia and in almost every case married Palauans.

It is common in Palau for adopted children to be part of the household. Palauan adoption provides care for children born outside of marriage, serves to cement relationships between families, and helps to extend the network of kinship obligations. These adoptions are normally handled between the biological and adoptive parents without the involvement of the Trust Territory Courts. Comments by informants on Palau and Guam indicate that Trust Territory land management laws are forcing a change in this practice. Legal adoptions are becoming necessary to protect the inheritance rights of adopted children, as the Courts increasingly recognize only those rights and statuses provided for by law and duly registered with the appropriate authority.

Three of the Ngerchelongese households on Guam are involved in adoptive relationships, as either donor (one family) or host families (two). The adoptions are registered with a Trust Territory Court, as U.S. Immigration requires that adoptions be legal before they can serve as a basis for permanent residency on Guam. Each of the adoptions involves children one of whose parents is of the same *tehungalek* as one of the adoptive parents.

Chamorro families have "adopted" two Ngerchelongese migrants. The adoptions are customary and not the result of a court decree. However, adoptive status has allowed these migrants to become a functional part of the host families and to build close ties with them. These adoptions differ from normal Palauan adoptions in that there are no exchange obligations.

The Ngerchelongese households on Guam are primarily nuclear families, but almost half of the households support additional people as is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Ngerchelongese households on Guam: size (November 1977—January 1978) and number of visitors during the previous year.

household	size of household	number of nonnuclear household members	number of visitors: year prior to interview
A	12	3	8
B	4	—	3
C	1	—	5
D	6	3	10
E	4	2	12
F	3	1	4
G	3	—	20
H	4	1	3
I	9	—	5
J	4	—	4
K	5	—	20
L	5	—	5
M	7	—	6
N	5	1	2
O	3	—	—
Total	75	11	107

The nonnuclear household members are either younger siblings of the husband or wife, or more distant, younger relations, such as cousins, nieces, or nephews. These relatives, almost 20 percent of the Ngerchelongese migrants, are students in every case except one, who is employed.

### Migrant Economic Institutions

Economic institutions, as described in this study, serve either as sources of income, or as the means of redistributing income. Of the Ngerchelongese adults on Guam, all have been or are currently employed on Guam, with the exception of three women who have been too busy raising children and maintaining households. It is interesting to note, however, that these three women were employed at wage labor in Palau. Thus, the entire adult Ngerchelongese population on Guam has had some experience at wage labor. Six Ngerchelongese wives and one student are currently unemployed. The student, however, is a veteran, and provides income for his household through G.I. benefits. (See Table 2 for a profile of employment.)

In several cases household income is supplemented by government housing subsidy, food stamps and aid to dependent children, a situation not uncommon to many non-Palauans living on Guam. Government assistance, however, is used only as a supplement to income which is the direct result of wage labor.

Gardening is a supplemental source of food for almost half of the households.

Table 2. Profile of employment among the Ngerchelongsese resident on Guam, November 1977—January 1978.

household	currently employed			previously employed on Guam			employed on Palu in past		
	husband	wife	others	husband	wife	others	husband	wife	others
A	1			17	5, 16				
B	10			5					
C	10	5			20, 8			20	
D	7			12			12		
E	3							21	
F	17			10, 29	6				
G	4				5			7	
H	3	6		5, 10, 7	5			5	
I		5	14, 15			5, 15		5	13, 10
J	3		18	11, 15		5, 17	14	16	14
K	+							7	
L	3				5				
M	3	6		7			22		
N	3			7	6				
O	9, 18			5, 7, 10			22		

1—federal government (civilian)

2—Government of Guam

3—Continental/Air Micronesia

4—Continental Hotel

5—other hotels

6—restaurants

7—retail/grocery stores

8—bookkeeper

9—security

10—mechanic/gas station

11—mason

12—carpenter

13—general construction

14—stevedore

15—baker

16—teacher

17—U.S. Military

18—student

19—theater operations

20—agent/sales

21—secretary

22—Trust Territory Government

+—non-Micronesian

Three households, located in Mangilao, are able to garden to the level that the produce is a significant contribution to the household's income. Agricultural land in Dededo is also leased and farmed on a part-time basis.

Each municipality in Palau is represented on Guam by a village club, if there are enough people to form one. Any one household may have membership in two or more village clubs, depending on place of origin of household members and village alliance resulting from adoption and *telungalek/kebliil* association. The economic function of the clubs is centered on redistributive activities and assistance for members in finding employment on Guam.

The village clubs attempt to meet on a monthly basis, at which time dues are collected, news from Palau shared, and plans for upcoming social activities are discussed. Dues for most village clubs range from two to five dollars. The money is kept in a bank account and is used as an emergency fund. The club will vote to use the

dues if there is a sudden death in the migrant community, or if there is an urgent need to return to Palau and personal funds are inadequate. Should a year or so pass with no significant depletion of the club funds, some of the money is used to support a club social, such as a party or picnic.

The village clubs on Guam first appeared in the mid 1960's. Until that time there had been a Pan-Palauan Club which served many of the same functions as the current village clubs. Dues were collected, social activities planned, emergency assistance rendered, and requests from Palau for assistance were frequently channeled through this club. As the size of the Palauan population on Guam grew, the Pan-Palauan organization was unable to serve such a large group. In addition, the family and village networks on Guam developed to the point where needs could be met in a form more consistent with Palauan institutions. Membership in the Pan-Palauan organization dropped as the village clubs grew. There are currently about thirty adults in the Pan-Palauan club. Most members have been residents of Guam and members of the club for twenty or more years.

The village clubs established a federation in 1978 to obtain an old government building in the area of Two Lovers Leap for use as a *bai* (meeting house). The *bai* is used as a social center for parties as much as for meetings. The federation maintains the *bai* and acts as a point of coordination when it is necessary to mobilize the entire migrant community.

Village clubs on Guam have no formal ties to the clubs existing in the namesake villages on Palau and the functions of the clubs differ. The clubs in Palau organize community service within the village and reinforce the traditional political structure of the village by reflecting it. In recent years the village clubs have also acted as credit unions. The migrant village clubs focus support on the individual members in times of crisis and rites of passage, rather than the traditional clubs which stress the needs of the community.

Though no formal ties exist, the migrant village clubs have received requests for assistance from village clubs in Palau. Several years ago the Guam Ngerchelong Village Club received a request to purchase equipment for the village baseball team. As baseball is a focus for competition between the villages and a great deal of pride is involved, money was quickly raised among the village club members, equipment was purchased, and within a few weeks the team was fully equipped. In November 1977, another request for assistance was received from Ngerchelong. The government had just completed installing power lines in the village, and to celebrate a large party had been scheduled. Through the village club Ngerchelongsese on Guam were asked to contribute money to help purchase food for the party. The request for help was put into circulation via the various family groups on Guam. The current head of the migrant's village club acted as purser, with the family groups collecting among themselves and turning the money over to him. He went to Ngerchelong with the money the weekend of the party, and a list of everyone who contributed, along with the amount, was read to those assembled.

Contributing to the party served two important functions: 1) membership was

reaffirmed in the migrant village club, and 2) the collection served to give status to those families who were able to generate a respectable sum of money from their Guam-based kin. Individuals as well as family units were able to enhance their standing.

Traditionally, village club leadership has followed the pattern of village leadership, club leaders being the senior members of the highest status *telungalek/kebliil* of the village. In the Ngerchelongs Village Club on Guam, there has been conflict over whether to follow the traditional pattern of organization or adopt a more Western pattern. Several years ago, it was decided to try the Western system of electing leaders. The man elected as president of the club was a *rubak* (hamlet leader) and of high *kebliil*. Though the Western system was used, the person elected had a traditional claim to the role.

Ngerchelongs Village Club's experiment with the Western system did not proceed smoothly. The club president had been a career member of the U.S. Military and was well acquainted with Western ways. Since the club members had decided to use the Western system, he attempted to give them what they had apparently asked for. Minutes were kept of club decisions and distributed among the membership. Other details of club organization were also attended to in a Western manner. This resulted in a drop in the membership and greater tension among the remainder over whether the innovation should be retained, or the traditional system reactivated. Current club leaders run the organization in a more traditional manner, but, unlike the prior club leader, they have no claim to traditional leadership positions. They have been on Guam for many years, however, and have been successful in obtaining property and securing responsible, well paying employment.

Aside from the village clubs, youth clubs and family clubs are also found among the Ngerchelongsese migrants. The family clubs are based on *telungalek* membership, serving primarily to organize the family's response to *siukang* (occasions of customary exchange) obligations. Other traditional *telungalek* functions, such as the control of land or manipulation of family status via transactions in kinship, appear not to be served by the family networks on Guam as they are still too skeletal to allow these issues to be addressed. *Telungalek* on Palau handle these functions for their Guam based kin. Thus, family clubs are restricted to organizing the meeting of their responsibilities to those back in Palau. Youth clubs are usually organized in association with the village clubs and attempt to provide social and service activities for their membership.

The village clubs are economic institutions serving as a focus for Palauan redistributive activities on Guam, and as the channel for the flow of funds and goods to Palau. The clubs also serve to provide emergency insurance and emotional support in times of personal crisis. Social activities are held by the clubs and, in general, they help to promote solidarity among the Palauan migrants by serving as a context for interaction where Palauan social roles and identity can be reinforced and maintained.

### **Migrant Religious Institutions**

The Ngerchelongs village population is mostly Evangelical Protestant, as a result of missionary efforts during the 1950s. Although Northern Babeldaob was the center for Modekngai activities until World War II, the greatest concentration of adherents is currently found on Peleliu. Modekngai is a nativist religious movement which had its origins in Palau around the turn of the century. The villages of Ngerard and Ngardmau were the center of Modekngai activity in the early days and are adjacent to Ngerchelongs. Thus, many Ngerchelongsese are Modekngai. Few Ngerchelongsese are Catholic, the other major religious system on Palau.

Five of the fifteen informant households are Modekngai or a mix of Modekngai and Protestant. Except for one Catholic household, which takes part in the activities of a local parish, all of the other Ngerchelongsese households are Protestant. Religious activity of the Protestant and Modekngai groups on Guam is centered in institutions that are uniquely Palauan—the Modekngai community and the Palauan Evangelical Church.

The only facilities for Protestant worship during the late forties and early fifties when Guam was opened to Palauans for work and school following World War II were those of the U.S. Armed Forces. Palauan Protestants who had been attending services on the military bases established their own group with the help of a U.S. Air Force chaplain in 1951. They had a separate organizational structure and activities, yet continued to make use of military facilities when not meeting in each other's homes. This group, known as the Palauan Evangelical Church, held its services in Palauan and used Palauan texts for Bible studies. From 1956 through 1958 a deacon from Palau served as preacher and pastor for the congregation. In 1958 land in Tamuning was purchased and a temporary building erected. This building was replaced in 1964 with the concrete church that presently serves the congregation.

From the beginning, the congregation has supported its activities and building projects from within. Palauans comprise the board of deacons. All major decisions are made by this group. Currently, the Pastor is an American missionary. The only significant outside help over the years has been the assistance of missionary pastors familiar with Palau and the initial assistance of the military chaplains.

The Palauan Evangelical Church has regular Sunday services, Bible study in Palauan, and, until recently, a preschool. Church services are offered in Palauan and English. Palauan services are led by a German missionary who has spent many years on Palau and is in retirement on Guam.

Total church membership is estimated at about 400 Palauans, but church attendance on average Sundays is much less than the nominal membership. At Sunday services, I counted an average of 35 Palauan adults and 10 American adults in attendance at the English service and about 50 Palauan adults at the Palauan language service. Church facilities have been made available to a Japanese Christian group; frequently they attend the Palauan services as well as their own. Other Micronesians, Koreans, and Americans attend the services.

Modekngai adherents have been on Guam since the end of World War II. In the early years, services were held in the homes of members. A house was acquired in the Camp Watkins Road area of Tamuning during the middle sixties for use as a meeting place. A new concrete house in the same area was recently dedicated as the Modekngai meeting house. The meeting house also serves as a hostel for Modekngai followers in transit through Guam. Services are held at the meeting house on Modekngai holidays. Informants estimate membership in Guam at about 100 adults.

Although the Palauan Evangelical group does not have organizational ties with other Protestant groups on Palau and on Guam, the Modekngai group is quite involved with its Palauan parent group. Forms of worship and organizational structure are reported to be consistent with those found on Palau. There is a steady flow of Modekngai visitors to take part in religious activities held by the Guam community, although shopping and visiting are also incentives for the trip. Two self-employed Palauan businessmen are Modekngai and heavily involved in group activities. One is a store owner who receives a shipment of seafood from Palau monthly, which is sent by the Modekngai group there. He sells the seafood and sends the proceeds back to the Modekngai in Palau. The other businessman is frequently host to Modekngai visitors and activities.

### **Migrant Legal-Political Institutions**

Traditional legal and political institutions are based on *telungalek/kebliil* and derive their authority from a complex of reciprocal obligations embodied in these family units. The relative status of *telungalek/kebliil* determines the leadership of the hamlets and villages as well as broader regional confederacies. Leaders at the various levels are chosen from among the leadership of the highest ranking *telungalek/kebliil* within the village or relevant political unit.

There is no *Uong* (ranking male leader of Ngerchelongs Municipality) among the Ngerchelongsese on Guam but several people do have claim to a position of traditional authority if they were to return to Palau. These people are given respect within the context of the family networks and the village clubs, but if a problem arises, experience with the Western institutions is the criterion by which advice is sought.

If interpersonal differences arise among the Guam based Ngerchelongsese, elders are consulted for advice or sympathy. Should the differences become serious enough and if family members of sufficient authority over the offending party are not present on the island, the matter may find its way to the village club. The last resort is a trip to Palau to have the familial institutions intervene in the person of a parent or family leader of the offended or offending party. Should all else fail informal ostracism can be imposed by the other migrants.

Almost all of the Ngerchelongsese on Guam are permanent registered aliens and thus have little vested interest in the official American institutions of the island. As a result, unless the issue is one of direct consequence to the Palauan population, little

enthusiasm is normally generated by local politics. The focus of political interest among the Ngerchelongese, and most other Palauans on Guam, is Palau. The activity of the Legislature and issues such as war claims, political status, and the constitution are central issues for discussion because these issues have a direct impact on the possession of land and the lifestyle that the Palauans on Guam hope to return to.

The Palauan migrants on Guam have provided themselves institutions derived from those found in Palau. These economic, religious, and political institutions are the result of the experience and needs of the Palauan migrants. While different in many respects from those found in Palau, these institutions still serve as the matrix for the experience of a Palauan identity on Guam. This is accomplished by providing a stage for the playing of Palauan social roles, the use of Palauan language and material culture, and the maintenance of ties with the parent institutions in Palau. They also enhance a successful accommodation to life on Guam by providing the migrant with emotional, economic, and social support. The same institutions that encourage him to remain a Palauan also help him find work, gain an education, survive emotional crises, and develop ties to people, property, and organizations on Guam.

### Ties With Home

The ties between the Guam-based and Palau-based Ngerchelongese are strong and mutually beneficial. Relatives on Guam serve as a source of help in customary fund raising activities. A constant exchange of island-style and Western food flows between the two islands. Having relatives on both islands ensures places to stay when traveling, thus reducing the cost of travel to just the air fare. Children are sent to Guam for school to receive better educations than available on Palau since the children can stay with relatives. Obtaining a job on Guam is also much easier with a place to stay and advice on whom to see.

In Palau there are a number of circumstances in which *siukang* (exchanges in which cash and valuables are transferred between families) occur. *Siukang* are usually related to rites of passage occurring at the time of birth, marriage, and death. It is hard for the Palauan to build capital with a large number of relatives and the extended network of obligations that follows. Money is kept in circulation by *siukang*, which occur almost every payday. Though it is hard to accumulate capital, there are times when it is necessary for major expenditures. The institution of *ocheraol* exists to provide for these occasions. *Ocheraol* follows the same obligation pattern as the other *siukang*, the wife's *keblil* providing food, the husband's providing money.

Normally, the amount of cash required for *ocheraol* is considerably greater than that necessary for other *siukang*, ranging from several hundred to several thousand dollars depending on kin relationship to the host and ability to pay. Relatives on Guam are rarely asked for assistance in most *siukang*, but owing to the size of the demand for cash, *ocheraol* frequently induces a letter or trip to Guam by an

individual seeking aid.

The general perception of Palauans in regard to their relatives on Guam is that these people are wealthy. This perception is reinforced by the fact that Guam-based Palauans do give more at *ocheraol* than Palauans on Palau. DeVerne Smith (pers. comm.) noted that when she was in Palau recently conducting fieldwork, *ocheraol* which resulted in the greatest cash intake were those where several *ochell* (family members thought whom valuables can flow into the family) girls were living on Guam with their husbands. The Ngerchelongese on Guam, for the most part, are not wealthy even by Palauan standards. One factor in their ability to give more may be that they are not called upon as frequently to contribute to *siukang*; thus they are able to build a little capital.

Almost every Ngerchelongese household on Guam has contributed to at least one *ocheraol* in Palau. Two households whose husbands are still in their early twenties have been sheltered from such obligations by their families in Palau until they are older and can shoulder the burden. Two of the fifteen households have contributed to two *ocheraol* and one has contributed to five. In every case but one, the migrant was living on Guam at the time of the *ocheraol*. All of the *ocheraol* were related to the building of a house.

The number and size of requests for assistance vary from household to household, with those individuals who have claim to roles of traditional leadership receiving the most requests. The greater number of requests may also be tied to age, as the households whose heads were middle-aged received more requests than the younger households over a similar period of time. However, at least two older people who have been on Guam for a long time received fewer requests than their age cohort. Thus, length of time away from Palau may be inversely correlated, all other factors being equal.

Requests for assistance with *siukang* other than *ocheraol* have been as frequent as twenty-four times a year for one household (Table 3). About half of the households reported three to six requests a year with the rest reporting zero to two requests. As the number of requests for assistance received by a person residing on Palau in any particular year would be closer to the twenty-four reported by one Ngerchelongese household on Guam, it appears that distance may be a factor in the relatively small number of requests. When questioned about this phenomenon, most informants felt that they were asked for help much less than they would be if they were living on Palau and that the distance was a factor.

Aside from the *siukang* money flowing to Palau, there is a steady circulation of food (Table 4). On the average there is an exchange of packages of food about once a month between households on Guam and Palau. Four households approach a frequency of exchange that occurs every two weeks. The least frequent exchange was three times per years. Packages coming from Palau normally contain seafood, taro, tapioca and betelnut. Packages originating in Guam usually contain frozen or cooked meat, baked goods, canned goods, clothing, machinery and households goods that are not easily obtainable in Palau. When nonperishables are sent, the mail is

Table 3. Participation in Palauan *siukang* among the Ngerchelongese on Guam during the year prior to being interviewed.

household	number of years head of household is on Guam	frequency of involvement in	
		Palau-based customs	Guam-based customs
A	21	6	3
B	12	2	4
C	30	1	10
D	17	1	1
E	9	—	1
F	11	—	—
G	8	6	7
H	2	1	1
I	20	6	10
J	1.5	2	3
K	13	24	6
L	15	6	4
M	21	1	2
N	9	3	—
O	17	2	10

Table 4. Exchange of packages between Guam and Palau during year prior to interview.

household	frequency per year	
	receiving packages	sending packages
A	3	4
B	12	12
C	12	6
D	24	12
E	6	2
F	2	1
G	24	24
H	24	24
I	24	24
J	4	4
K	6	12
L	4	4
M	6	3
N	24	24
O	4	4

frequently used; however, perishables require air freight.

The flow of packages is primarily between close family members such as parents, siblings and in-laws providing mutual benefit to both. Island foods, not easily

available on Guam for a reasonable price, are made available on a semiregular basis and at a level of quality not obtainable on Palau. Meat is much too expensive in Palau to be purchased locally and is considered a rare treat. The variety of clothing, appliances, and other material goods available on Guam at relatively lower prices makes such packages most welcome. The exchange of packages also helps to keep interactions, and thus role relationships, with relatives on Palau active and current. Recipients of packages at both ends are also able to share the contents with extended family members and thus use the packages to increase the obligations others owe to them; an advantage in *siukang*. Frequently packages will be sent from the wife's relatives to her husband. This pattern follows the practice in Palau of the wife's family supplying food to her household. This is not only a courtesy, but a means of increasing the husband's indebtedness to his wife's family. Thus, customary obligations can be maintained and increased over long distances. The effect on the maintenance of kinship ties between Guam and Palau appears to be positive.

It is common throughout Micronesia for relatives living away from the home village to provide a place to stay when one is traveling. This is the case because the visitors are family and an obligation exists to care for them. Good grace is maintained with the relatives back home and reciprocal travel benefits are ensured.

People living in urban area, such as district centers or Guam, receive the brunt of the flow of visitors. They are located near the commercial and service centers of the region and people have more need to travel there. The cost of air fare from Koror to Guam serves to screen out a great deal of the potential flow; however, in recent years, a steady movement of Palauans through Guam has resulted because of government jobs, war claims, the sale of land, and scholarships.

Fifteen Ngerchelongese households hosted over one hundred visitors (persons not residing on Guam who stayed in the home at least one night) in a one year period. The average number of visitors per household was seven (Table 1), though two households reported over twenty adult visitors in the year prior to the interview. Visitors included parents who stayed for a few months; younger siblings who came for school or work and stayed indefinitely; friends or other relatives who passed through to other districts or the Mainland; or, friends and relatives who came to shop, see the sights, and make use of the medical facilities on Guam. Smith (pers. comm.) noted a few cases where trouble making young men were sent to Guam to avoid further trouble at home. At the time interviews were being conducted for this study, almost half of the households were hosting visitors. All of the households have hosted visitors at some point within the year prior to the interviews. Some of the visits have extended over periods up to five years.

Travel is not all one way, however. Quite frequently at least one representative from the Guam-based portion of the family will go to Palau for *ocheraol* and other *siukang*. Mothers delivering infants on Guam will often return to Palau soon after the birth to undergo preparation for *ngasech*, a ritual of presentation following the birth of a first child. Palauans working for Air Micronesia are able to make extensive use of travel privileges, taking vacations to Palau or the Mainland and going to Palau for

family business as necessary at minimal cost. A member of a Guam-based Ngerchelongese household will visit Palau at least once every two years on the average. Households with employees at Air Micronesia are able to make the trip much more frequently. The visits normally extended from two weeks to a month and are usually periods of vacation for the traveler.

Almost every Ngerchelongese interviewed made no visit to Palau for two years after migrating to Guam. The expense and effort of getting established on Guam precluded unnecessary travel. As this was also the period in which residency on Guam was being established with U.S. Immigration, movement off the island, except for a trip to Saipan to pick up an immigrant visa to the U.S., could endanger the ability to stay on Guam legally.

Travel to Palau is important as it maintains membership in the home community. Children growing up on Guam are introduced to relatives and put in touch with their kin networks. As a result, their inheritance rights are protected, a place is ensured for them to return should the need arise and they are made aware of their cultural identity in a way not possible on Guam. The same benefits accrue to the migratory parents. The gifts brought from Guam also help to enhance the migrant's status upon return to Palau for a visit.

Aside from the more physical ties to Palau just discussed, affective ties also exist. In almost all of the Ngerchelongese households, Palauan is the language of everyday communication. At least two households report that the parents communicate with the children in English but to each other in Palauan. Only one household (a Palauan married to a non-Palauan) reports English as the predominant language.

In every case except one—a widower advanced in years with his own business on Guam—the Ngerchelongese plan to return to Palau at some point to take up residence again. Ngerchelongese view Guam as a place to get an education or make money. Their stay on Guam is an interlude which will eventually end. After the children finish school, when adults have worked long enough to qualify for retirement benefits, have enough in savings to open a business in Palau, or when adults have finished their education, they will return to Palau, most to Ngerchelong.

When asked where they consider home to be, over three-quarters of the respondents identified Palau as home. Those referring to Guam as home still indicated that they plan to return to Palau to stay. They explained that their household was in Guam and they considered home to be where their household was.

Ties to Palau also exist in the form of land rights and titles. There are at least three migrants and potentially more who, if they were to return to Ngerchelong, would have claim to roles of traditional leadership in the municipality. There have been requests from Palau for one of them to return, but to date economic and educational ties have resulted in his staying on Guam. Land is owned or may be inherited back in Palau by almost every migrant. One informant described a problem over land pulling him back to Palau. His *telungalek/kebliil* is dying out, as there are too few women to carry on the line and too few men to assume positions of authority. Traditionally his *telungalek/kebliil* has claim to a great amount of land. Unable to defend the large

holdings of land, the claim to this land is being challenged by several *telungalek/kebliil* with larger memberships and greater internal demands for land usage. The "rising *kebliil*" as usurpers are mounting their attempt to gain the land through the use of the Western system of land registry. His claims are based on a traditional migration legend which recounts the history of his *kebliil* and verifies its claim to the disputed land. The migrant plans to return to Palau in the near future to defend his family's claim in Court. These and other social obligations exert pressure on many Palauan migrants to return home.

### Maintaining Palauan Identity

The information reported in this article supports the argument for the existence of a distinct Palauan ethnic group and identity on Guam. Almost every criterion offered by Medding (1969 : 5-9), Barth (1969 : 12), LeVine and Campbell (1972 : 85) to determine the distinctiveness of an ethnic group from others seems to be met by the Palauan migrants.

The Palauan language is almost universally the preferred means of communication among Palauan migrants. In relation to Barth's "signals of identification," the Palauan language is one of the primary cues, along with general physiotype, that signals Palauan ethnicity. Yet, language cannot be taken as the sole criterion for Palauan ethnicity. Some children of Palauan parents, raised away from Palau are unable to speak more than a few words of Palauan, yet they consider themselves to be Palauan and are accepted as such by other Palauans and by Ponapeans, Guamanians and Hawaiians as well.

The most essential criterion for being Palauan appears to be membership in *telungalek/kebliil*. Being born of a Palauan mother assures such membership and gives access for the majority of Palauans to the social institutions upon which the Palauan lifestyle is built. Public identification as a Palauan follows membership in these family institutions. Thus, in a case where the father is Palauan and the mother is not, the children are regarded as non-Palauans for the most part, as they have no unconditional *telungalek/kebliil* membership. The reverse situation results in the children automatically being accepted as Palauan, since they are unconditionally of their mother's *telungalek*.

Being adopted by a family also confers the individual with *telungalek/kebliil* membership and a Palauan identity. When the adoption of a non-Palauan occurs early enough in the person's life the chance of total acceptance of a Palauan identity is enhanced, as the child can be reared in the Palauan culture. For all practical purposes, the person is identified by one and all as Palauan, though the non-Palauan birth is not ignored. Several individuals, on Guam and Palau, who are full-blooded Japanese but adopted into Palauan families at an early age are Palauans in every functional way. If questioned about their birth, everyone will acknowledge Japanese origin, but this does not lessen their Palauan status.

If economic institutions are looked to as an indicator of Palauan ethnicity, the

*telungalek/kebliil* is central. Non-Palauans may incur obligations in the Palauan economic institutions through marriage. These obligations arise not from their ethnic status, but from their relationship to the *telungalek/kebliil* of their spouse. However, economic institutions do offer a means of access to status as a Palauan. When a non-Palauan provides economic assistance or service to a Palauan family in a situation where there exists no preceding obligation through marriage, it is possible that he or she may be adopted by that family. With adoption, the individual gains *telungalek/kebliil* membership and thus a functional Palauan identity.

Palauan institutions are a key factor in the maintenance of a Palauan identity on Guam. The migrant institutions act as arenas for traditional role relationships and values. Membership in village clubs or participation in *telungalek/kebliil* activities serve as "signals of membership," if not criteria, for maintaining a Palauan identity on Guam. The importance of these institutions is underscored by a comment once made in reference to a person who had withdrawn from the village club associated with the home village in Palau. It was said that this individual was acting as if he no longer wanted to be Palauan.

The migrant institutions help maintain a Palauan identity by providing an alternative to structural and behavioral assimilation. This alternative is in many respects a reflection of the Palauan social matrix, allowing the migrant to function in almost all major areas of concern using Palauan roles and values. As we have seen the Palauan migrant community on Guam does vary in some aspects from the way things are done on Palau, such as participation in *siukang* as well as the organization and functions of the village clubs, so that it is not simply an extension of the Palauan social context but a migrant ethnic community. While participation in these institutions is not mandatory, the nonparticipant becomes an exile from values and roles learned in childhood and from the use of his native language.

The Palau-based institutions provide the matrix from which the migrants and their versions of the institutions come. Final authority in *telungalek/kebliil*-based migrant institutions resides in Palau, as that is where the senior family members live. Interaction with these institutions via the migrant versions or as the result of individual obligation is important in the maintenance of ties of mutual obligation. The self-perception of most Ngerchelongese migrants is that they will return to Palau. Land and friendly relatives are necessary for this to become a reality and both are dependent upon continued ties of obligation.

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