



Famoksaiyan: Decolonizing Chamoru Histories Identities and Futures

Lina Perez Taitingfong
2nd Year Tribal Governance MPA
Alan Parker
May 20, 2006

Introduction

This paper includes research which was presented at the Sons and Daughters Club of Guam in San Diego, California on April 14-15, 2006. The research and documentation was used as a shared presentation section for the distribution to other Chamoru¹ and non-Chamoru scholars, professionals, and Chamoru activists regarding the Decolonizing of Chamoru histories, Chamoru identities, and Chamoru futures. In collaboration with and respect to my present program the Tribal Governance MPA at The Evergreen State College, I have used this opportunity to research and write a comparative analysis paper of the United States Tribes vs. the Chamoru status of the island of Guahan² in regards to the different status' the tribes have and where we as Chamoru people could be.

Chamoru Creation Story

As the first speaker on the panel of Decolonization of Chamoru Lives and Lands I chose to start my presentation with a short exercise of reminding my audience of why we were there and whose time we should be watching. The exercise began with simple movements of paddling, casting of nets, cultivating the earth, spreading seed, harvesting, and etc. This allowed my assistants to get the projector set up and helped recapture the audience's attention to why we have come together. Shortly after the exercise I proceeded with oral Chamoru history the Chamoru creation story Fu'una and Puntan. Reason for beginning with the exercise and oral history was to start another process of thought and to also strategically start our decolonization process of recognizing the realities of our time and our purpose of the conference. Many if not all of the Chamoru oral

¹ Chamoru: Refers to the native peoples of the Mariana Islands, their language and culture.

² Guahan: The native word for what is now known as the Unincorporated Territory of the United States.

histories have been purposely documented and categorized by westerners as legends and myths leading many Chamorus to not take into account these stories as oral histories and traditions. As a reformulation or a simple reminder I had hope to recapture the Chamoru spirit in guiding me to share our oral traditions for the many who do want and are ready for decolonization to have a history, a place, or a story to begin their journey of self-decolonization.

Status of the Chamoru People Pre-Colonial

Chamoru coastal people were given the responsibility of being guardians of the ocean and the land which it lays. There is an understanding of no ownership, but the shared responsibility and obligations to the ocean as it provided food, travel, life, and death. The responsibilities and obligations were to be passed down through traditions and knowledge of survival and sustainability for the generations to come. There was an understanding of respect to the sea and all other environments. As the age of discovery and colonialization have overshadowed the many accomplishments of indigenous peoples, it should not be wrong to presume the coastal Chamorus should be acknowledged in taking righteous claim to ownership as the first peoples of marine biology and oceanography as Chamorus that is where there life began and ends.

The Chamoru inland people were stewards of the land. Chamorus knew the land was not to be owned, but to be shared and cared for. The profession of cultivating and harvesting began as Chamorus were born into the universe. Everyone was looked to as equals and understood they

were guardians to the land as they knew the cycles of when and what to plant and when to harvest.

These ideas do not correlate with any of the histories you will find in western texts, but could be further analyzed in the Chamoru people as they recognize themselves as one people and recognize each other as Chelu³. As Chamorus recognize one another any where in the world whether they are blood related or not there is an understanding of brotherhood and sisterhood amongst them. The term Chelu should be also recognized as one of the Chamoru customs for it places an unspoken responsibility to other Chamoru people whether they are related to them or not. Anyone can witness this as the reciprocity of the term is thrown back and forth in dialogue in Chamoru conversations either new or old.

Colonialization of the Chamoru People

Chamoru oral history and culture took on major shifts from 1521 on forward as it began an interpretation and the beginning of any documentation known about Chamorus and their lands. Most of these accounts have overtaken the Chamoru oral histories and have laid claim to the Chamoru people and their status.

Some accounts have been used to describe the physical stature, culture, and environments of the Chamoru people. Author Pedro Sanchez utilizes some of these accounts specifically from a well known Missionary Pale San Vitores as he recounts the ancient Chamorus physical figure as:

³ Chelu: Chamoru word for brother or sister.

The Marianos are in color a somewhat lighter shade than Filipinos, larger in stature, more corpulent and robust than Europeans, pleasant and with agreeable faces. They are so fat they appear swollen. They remain in good health to an advanced age and it is very normal to live ninety or one hundred years. (Pedro Sanchez, pg.6)

As this Chamoru author continues to use these documentations he helps the perpetuation of certain colonial expectations of what Chamorus should look like. In Sanchez's willingness to use and document these ideals he helped to further create a mind set of what should or should not be Chamoru.

Sanchez further illustrates this demise through his continuation and usage of the non-Chamoru documentation of the past for he writes about the class and caste structure. His dedicated piece of the suggested class and caste system begins with a reflection of Chamorus either agreeing or disagreeing with. A great number of these ideals are a reflection of the physical stature of what a Chamoru should look like as the Chamoru description of the exotic islander does not perpetuate the many Chamoru that walk the earth in present day. The exploitation of the Chamoru historical context has lead to the ideas of the noble savage who is over taken by the oppressor and is now liberated into civilization.

Sanchez proceeds with his ideas of the Chamoru class structure which he fails to refer to his sources whether he has used passed documentation or if he is using traditional oral histories. His illustrations are a similar synopsis of a romanticized version of a Pacific Islander movie which involves rulers and his

followers. This vision that Sanchez and many other authors perpetuate have all been on a similar narrative. The reconstruction of the lost paradise and utopia of the Chamoru people is administered by two separate levels of consciousness in creating and intentionally reinforcing elements to the noble Chamoru class and caste structure.

These class structures which are suggested consist of the matua⁴ the highest in the Chamoru social order. The atchoat⁵ consisted of the middle position of the social order in the Chamoru society and it is documented that they are the only other persons who could become part of the matua class. Last and described as the lowest of the social order are the manak'papa⁶. All three classes were suggested to have privileges to some degree. However, as Sanchez further permits these standards he does not suggest at any time these could be false assumptions put on the Chamoru people. It has not been dismissed by any known scholar to dismiss any of the documentations of the past as it does not reflect the Chamoru people of today. In today's Chamoru society there is no known class or caste system in the sense that Chamoru work together and all have special gifts. Present Chamorus struggle with fitting or being part of the western class structure of being poor or being rich for no one is recognized as equals in the name of economics and welfare.

Economic value has been taken away from the special talents and gifts Chamoru people are skilled with either as weavers, story tellers, suruhana⁷(nu),

⁴ Matua: Top of social order of the Chamoru.

⁵ Atchaot: The middle of the social order of the Chamoru.

⁶ Manak'papa: Lowest of the social order of the Chamoru.

⁷ Suruhana(hu): Medicine woman or man.

peskadot⁸, hunters, teachers, or lanchero⁹. These skills were no longer used on a daily basis of survival, but were used during cultural celebration days as part of show and tell of the Chamoru people and culture. As revitalization movements are pushed forward these skills are becoming more valued, but at the same time there is still a price to be paid out to attain these skills.

The imbedding of a class or caste structure devalued community and enforced individualism as a person and as a community. This idea also helped proceed with the division of the family structure. Ideas of ownership and the value of material objects have divided many families of the past through present day. Gifts of special skills are no longer as respected and utilized to their full capacity in the sense of community and family obligation. Recurrence of similar readings, gives readers and Chamorus who won't or don't question his documentations, a false professed thoughts to circumvent these types of ideologies. Sanchez is highly regarded as a respected author in the Chamoru community for his book was a first of its time. In Chamoru custom it is very disrespectful to question an elder's word. There is no intention of disrespect, it is just believed that the strength and complexity of what has happen to the Chamoru people rests not on a single reading or interpretation, but rather on a multiplicity of interpretations, voices, and struggles evident across Chamorus of the past, present, and future.

In the past and in present day, oral traditions tend to become scarce with the pen and paper. It allows others to interpret and document their thoughts and

⁸ Peskadot: Fisherman/woman.

⁹ Lanchero: Famer.

views on what Chamoru history has been about. Western academia has been one of the most devastating tools put on indigenous cultures. Specifically in the sciences they have caused the most harm and devastation in the digging of historical and religious burial sites. The studying and prodding of ancestral skeletal remains has left Chamoru ancestral spirits in sorrow. This in turn reflects the lack of practicing oral traditions and not acknowledging oral traditions as our true history, our genealogy, our language, our culture, and our life. Many Chamorus walk the earth not recognizing their true self as their histories have been written for them in books. The devastation of this process is a manifestation of the many Chamorus who do not fit in the Western world and cannot adapt to the thinking and teachings of another. This can accurately reflect the continuity and persistence of colonizing practices, as well as the critical limits and possibilities it has engendered in the present historical moment. However, as indigenous peoples of the past and present we must evolve and make things right. Although, much has been lost with western academia it can no longer be ignored and allowed anymore wrong doings. One great example of making change and progress is The Evergreen State College Tribal Governance MPA program. The program is designed to make a better understanding of western governance in a tribal context and take western colonial tools and integrate Tribal Governance, culture, language, and history to proceed to a better future. This program further illustrates the practicing and enforcing of tribal sovereignty in their efforts of tribal self-governing. The task is not so much construction of bridges, but rather being able to expose the traces of empire and history, and

recovering memory in the hierarchical construction of the control and its items of analysis.

American Occupation and the Organic Act of 1950

It is believed and documented that the Chamoru did not have a central government. A district type government through village and council was their description of Chamoru self-governance. (Sanchez, pg.11) No other documentation supports Chamoru governance to be recognized as having a formal type of governance in pre-colonial times.

The Treaty of Paris of 1898 had ceded Guahan and her inhabitant as rewards of war to the United States of America as a result of the end of the Spanish-American war. This entailed the separation of Guahan and her sister islands the Northern Mariana Islands as the sister islands were sold to Germany. Guahan and her sister islands became separate entities of two separate and powerful countries. The native peoples were left at the mercy and determination of another oppressor. In part of this decree the rights of the Chamoru people were to be determined by the United States Congress. These sister islands and their surrounding seas are the ancestral homelands of the Chamoru and from then on have led two separate histories as far as colonialism.

August 10, 1899 was the first American proclamation to be made and enforced within the Island of Guahan. The document was addressed as follows:

Proclamation to the inhabitants of Guam and To Whom it may concern: ...Now therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me by His Excellency, The President of the United States, I, Richard P. Leary, Captain, United States Navy, and Governor of the Island of Guam, do hereby announce and publicly proclaim my actual occupation and administration of the island, in the fulfillment of the

Rights of Sovereignty thus acquired and the responsible obligations of government thus assumed. (Sanchez, pg.87)

The short piece of the proclamation is a full declaration of the United States colonialism unto the Island of Guahan and I Man Chamoru¹⁰. This declaration was used to enforce western thought and implement western colonial governance unto the I Man Chamoru. In 1917 Governor Smith initially established the first Guam Congress which consisted of 34 Chamoru leaders who were appointed by the Governor Smith. The Guam Congress was used as an advisory council to the Governor. By establishing this advisory council he was able to use their relationships to the community to further improve the standards of the Chamorus to their western counterparts. (Sanchez, pg.109) The Guam Congress was established under similar conditions that Native American tribes have been recognized as self-governing tribes. This comparison is in conjunction and a shared sentiment that guest lecturer Philip Deloria shared as he views some self-governing tribes to be, "playing politics as kindergarteners". When asked about how he viewed the current status of the United States Territories, he also suggested that the territories are at the "infantile or pre-school development stages of learning how to play with politics. (Tribal MPA Core, Fall 2005) Mr. Deloria consciously reawakens some of the fears that precede the following happenings. The fact in which Chamoru people were given the tasks of make believe in that they would be able to be consultants in their own welfare and their own status as a people.

¹⁰ I Man Chamoru: Describes the Chamoru population as a whole.

An image was circulated by the Guam News Letter on July 1912 in an attempt to illustrate the true intentions of these foreign ideals and government as expressed in Deloria's view on politics of the United States territories. With the slogan, "More Like His Dad Every Day," the cartoon portrayed the Chamoru people as a dark-skinned child being elevated to the stature of a parent, here the pronounced American symbol, Uncle Sam.

This representation not only reduced the Chamoru people to an inadequate child under the guidance of a superior and advanced patriarch, but did so in a racist manner, emphasizing the primitiveness and dark color of the uncivilized child. The racial paternalist manner of its intended depiction, reinforces the caricatures and the notion the child should be elevated or by means of expressing the certain levels of health and medical issues to be of the utmost importance. (Guam New Letter, July 1912) The examples uncover the intentions and sentiments toward the Chamoru people and their land. As the United States Navy maneuvered these ethnocentric colonial ideals unto the Chamorus and Guahan as it intentionally set the pace for transformation.

With the Guam Congress positioned the Chamorus were left to play politics. A movement was set to define the political status of the Chamoru people, but became overshadowed with wanting and thriving for United States citizenship. The drive became pronounced amongst the Guam Congress and the other Naval Governors to come. The implementation of assimilation became more apparent as English only laws, American policies, and American networks were being embedded into the Chamoru lives.

Chamorus were being used more and more as maneuvers to incorporate these new ways living and governing. The Chamoru lives where being supplemented with enforcement and implementation of the island court systems, police departments, health departments, education department, and an economic industry. As the islands transformation moved from a little tropical “paradise” of the pacific to the largest military fortress, the Chamorus are viewed as adaptive to the new laws, policies, and way of life.

A brief intermission of the United States rule on Guahan as the Japanese took over the island in 1941 during World War II. The island and her people were once again under another foreign hand. After three years of Japanese colonialism the United States recaptured the island and regained the island and her inhabitants. This recapture has been documented as the, “Liberation of the Chamorus”. Liberation to the Chamorus was the largest debt they would ever pay to their colonizers as the Chamoru land was heavily bombarded by the United States leaving the land and people in despair and in hunger. The hunger was suppressed by the enormous amount of canned goods. Disparity was being overlooked with the more “civilized” western clothing and quansit¹¹ huts.

The war casualties were high for the United States and Japan, but for the Chamorus there are no official records or count that was conducted. With no casualty count for the Chamorus there was no count for the Chamorus who lost there land and were referred to as refugees. The Chamoru refugees became the largest donors to the re-establishment of the United States Military installation.

¹¹ Quansit: A term used to describe the housing warehouses that were made available to some of the displaced Chamorus.

The climatic elements of this “paradise island” and people are all too familiar in the motive and narrative of the seemingly never-ending themed history of the United States. There needed to be a “great tragedy” for the United States to be able to come in and save this lost paradise. In the next few years a continued drive for citizenship was pushed forth. In turn lead to the transfer from the United States Navy rule to the Department of Interior.

Four years after the recapturing of the island the Chamorus and island were given a new fate of the implementation of the Organic Act of Guam. According to Sanchez approximately 100 Guamanians¹² testified on several issues, but did not voice opposition to the proposed legislation. Among those who came forward and testified included recognized officers, Guam Congress members, businessmen, and ordinary citizens. (Sanchez, pg. 299) The representation of the Chamoru people was obviously not there to denounce such legislation. There is no evidence if anyone opposed the enactment or if the opposition was brought forth would the enactment be disregarded.

The Organic Act of 1950 granted an unincorporated status to Guahan and all those who presently inhabit the island as secondary citizens to the United States. The United States replaced the native name of Guahan and has officially renamed the island Guam; a local government was to be set forth which would be overseen, by the United States Department of Interior. The Governor would still be appointed by the United States President, until the first gubernatorial election in 1970. This first election allowed the Chamoru of Guahan and all other residing citizens the right to vote for their designated Governor. With all this

¹² Guamanian(s): The Chamorus and who ever else is a resident to the island of Guahan.

history thus far, it is only suggestive to question the thoughts and ideas of: What has happened? And was this really thought through? The political gain some may view is also viewed as the main losses to the native inhabitants to the island.

As the enactment of a recognized Unincorporated Territory of the United States what did the Chamoru gain or loose? First they gained a statutory United States citizenship which was granted by the Jones act of Congress in 1917 and not by the United States Constitution, leaving the Chamorus and citizens of Guam at any time have their United States citizenship to be taken away. As part of the enactment it left the statutory citizens no rights to vote in federal elections. Guam has a non-voting delegate in the House of Representatives who could only speak in debates and vote only in committees. The ideas of gaining a citizenship similar to the other United States citizens have not proven to be beneficial or have not gained any respect.

In a personal interview with Professor Kristina Ackley she views some of these indoctrinations as hegemony to be:

“... dealing primarily with power relations, or the ways in which empowerment is given to some, and the ways some people are disempowered. Hegemony deals with ideologies, or the ways in which people talk about issues such as nationalism. What makes an American? What values and ideas do [we] as Americans hold true? A short answer is that hegemony is the coercive ways in which power is maintained by a society – non-military, less overtly violent ways that power is maintained. People can participate in their own disempowerment when the ideology of the society values specific moral and cultural traits that they believe in. To go back to the American example, you can say that Americans like stories about people succeeding on their own without the help of others, or the idea that everyone starts on equal footing, and we all have the chance to be Bill Gates or President of the United States or whatever. That can lead to people not supporting public funding for disadvantaged people, and leads people away from supporting a

more equal distribution of wealth. After all, John Doe's thinking goes," if maybe I can be rich someday too, I won't want people taking it away from me." There is still the promise that John Doe can be wealthy even if that never happens. But thinking that way actually ensures that power still stays in the same hands, except now those in power can hold onto that power without holding a gun at John Doe's head. John Doe still stays powerless because of the ways our society justifies power relations, and gets people to "buy into" the system." (4/10/06)

As professor Ackley shares her views on hegemony a further look at the emphasis on similar catch phrases of the American Dream such as: "Be all that you can be" or "More Like His Father Everyday" have proven relevant to the hegemonistic views that Chamorus are seeking. The threat or force is not necessarily viewed or displayed, however these and other similar patriotic slogans have continued a disconnection of the Chamoru people from their homeland and a further separation of their people as their false sense equals is not true. The continuation of cultural hegemony can be seen throughout Chamorus in all the patriotism and assimilation, but these hegemonistic ideals are hopefully becoming overshadowed with cultural revitalization and struggles for self-determination.

The United States had and still has an array of options which could be granted to the Chamoru of Guahan, but the question remains; Do Chamorus want to engage in another status of being a territory? There are three types of territories: legally administered, occupied, and disputed. The United States Congress and the Department of Interior rule over each type in varying degrees. Under the legally administered territory there are five types of classifications: 1) Unorganized Territory which has no organic act. 2) Organized Territory which

has an organic act. 3) Unincorporated Territory which has an organic act, but with only select parts of the United States constitution applies and they may not apply for statehood. 4) Incorporated Territory: Congress applies the full law of the constitution, but the territory is not a sovereign unit like a state and are eligible to apply for statehood. 5) Commonwealth Territory: a semi-autonomous area under the authority of the United States, but with a local constitution and the ability to govern its internal affairs to a greater extent than the other mentioned territories they could also apply for statehood. (Retrieved on 4/13/06)

With the above mentioned status' the Guam legislature took the an initiative in 1980 by hiring a consulting firm to conduct a feasibility study on Guahan's residents to find out if any of the following status' would be likely sought after by the citizens of Guahan. The results indicated that 39% of the residents were happy with the present territorial status; however the next highest majority of 30% is interested in gaining statehood. The other areas of interest included 5% for Independent status, 8% for a Commonwealth status, 4% for a Free Association status, leaving the third highest majority of 14% not sure. (Sanchez, pg. 439)

The results which were done in 1980 were a collaboration of all the current residents of Guahan. Chamorus have never had a Chamoru only vote due to the fact that the other citizens all fall under protection of the Organic Act of 1950 and the United States Constitution. Initiatives have been brought forward into having an indigenous-Chamoru only vote, but each time it has failed. Other movements on indigenous rights issues, self-determination, and possible commonwealth

movements have been sought after, but unlike the many successes of the Native Tribes of the United States there are no agreements such as the Treaties that have come forth to protect and regain Tribal sovereignty and Self-Governance.

As a result of the ill fate of spoils of war the Chamorus have not yet found a way to regain their inherent sovereignty. Their status is at the hands and mercy of the most powerful governments in the world. An agreed citizenship or status has not been defined by all Chamorus. With ideas lingering in determining what status they would like to achieve, they have other issues of understanding how they will proceed and succeed if given another status.

Chamoru Governance

One of the seemingly undeniable questions is Chamoru Governance. If granted full authority to the right to govern the Chamorus would be allowed to create a governmental framework to meet their needs. Chamoru Education should be one of the top priorities by creating an educational system which evolves around Chamoru values, Chamoru language, and Chamoru culture, but also enables the generations to the knowledge and skills needed to carry forward their sovereignty and right to govern. In the interest and needed interest the Chamoru people can fully apply their needs by preserving the islands natural resources, first by cleaning up the surrounding environments and educating the residents to the different alternatives to properly disposing of waste and limiting waste.

In accordance to regaining full authority to the right to govern the Chamoru administrators should consider International Relations. International relations

can entail a variety of options. One option that should be recognized amongst the international community is inherent sovereignty. By forming alliances in the international realm joint strategies and initiatives on common issues and concerns could collaborative be dealt with. An establishment of international laws could protect the rights to language, natural resources, and cultural property rights. Development of beneficial and profitable trade and commerce can occur to help with the economic impacts of the struggling nations and communities. Acknowledge and sponsor research by native scholars on self-determination strategies, environmental protections for indigenous homelands, intellectual property laws, etc... Allow international agreements for the creation of rules and procedures for indigenous nation diplomacy based on protocols that are grounded in the culture and traditions of indigenous peoples. (Alan Parker, 11/10/05)

Summary

In summary of this paper for the most part the thoughts and energy have come from a personal journey that has included the past histories of the Chamoru people, the past histories of Native American Tribes, the present status of the Island of Guahan and the Chamoru people, and the Native American Tribes of the Northwest and their present status'. This point in time the Island of Guahan and the Chamoru people are living under an undesired status which was enacted unto to them with no means of respect of outright human universal liberties of what should be right. The people have not come to any certainty to

where and how they would like to be other than not wanting the status that they are presently in.

As for comparison to the Native American Tribes and where the Chamorus could be is not relevant in present day situation. The Chamorus have never had a signed agreement to retaining or acknowledging their inherent sovereignty. At this point in time the local Government of Guahan are left to play with the little authority they have and are obligated to care not just for the native Chamorus, but all the other residents who have made Guahan their home. In hopes of succeeding into a desired status as a whole it is unrealistic to hope for at this time the Chamorus would ever regain any recognition or regain any authority over their ancestral homelands. One possibility in regaining their strength is by rejoining their sister islands as a whole unit. The Chamorus should highly consider some of the examples of the economic ventures and prosperity the Native American tribes have come to. In further succession the Chamorus should consider the interests of international relations for the hopes the tragic story of loosing their sovereignty will not be jeopardized.

Brief synopsis of personal feelings after the conference

As young Chamoru warriors are called to fight and conquer. There lies fear within because of the time and place which was set for their journey. Famoksayian! Famoksayian! Famoksayian! It's in the air the spirits are brought together. The displacement of our ancestors has gone on long enough. The Aniti is overwhelmed. Our ancestors lie listless, on shelves, in boxes, on display, in a land and sea that is not our own. Famoksayian! They call as their selected emerge with their calling. The energy over takes those who won't listen, but these spirits walk and can't go away. All they want is to be set free. They call to the spirit land and ocean spirit to bring the forces together. "It's only the beginning" they say. Now is your time to find your place as your spirits call to you as you are joined with the spirits that roam displaced.

Spirits Displace

4/16/06

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