



“A MARSHALLESE TALE OF MODERNITY IN THE PACIFIC RIM: BRIDGING
THE MODERN AND THE TRADITIONAL”

Desmond Narain Doulatram
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Abstract

The indigenous Pacific was the last conquest of the New World order stemming from imperial ambitions culminating to the end of two decisive World Wars that would permanently engrave the modern global hierarchy to follow built on the notion of power. The word Modern is the root word of Modernity hence its opposite is traditional. Exemplary writers and theorist such as Foucault have argued that the path to modernity is to forego traditional feudalism yet we see the modern world of the 21st century practicing more tolerance than ever where elements and foundations of self-determination are permanently etched into societies' moral compass through universal legal frameworks conforming to Human Right obligations and international law. The father of the Modern Republic situated in Micronesia known as the Marshalls Islands best reflects this reality. Referred to as the founding father of the modern Republic of the Marshall Islands, Amata Kabua represents a story of royal hegemony at the face of imperial hegemony where an interactive conversation takes place within the construct of Bayly's interdependent reality. Existential circumstance stemming from existing structures essentially led a path to reclaim sovereignty under a new global system driven by Wilsonian ideals of freedom and self-determination. This paper offers an alternative decolonized frame of thought that holistically captures the moral argument of modernity at the face of global endeavors of equity using the moral case of the oppressed. It reiterates the inevitable possibility of successful resistance through the moral deeds of a very capable indigenous leader who founded an independent nation at the face of colonial audacity.

Key Words: Amata Kabua, Human Rights, Modernity, Self-Determination

Introduction

Most historians would agree that the Japanese colonial experience in Micronesia, particularly the Marshall Islands, was largely defined by the global system of exchange revealing an interdependent reality that pushed Japan to extremes in order to retain dominance as an imperial super power in WWII. Yet, rarely do we magnify our lenses to incorporate what Bayly would refer to as an interdependent reality where nations and its people mutually construct each other.¹ Woven into the Constitution of the Marshall Islands is this very reality, weaving the Pacific orientated Marshallese alongside its most favored nation, the US. Its preamble reveals and reminds us that “This society has survived, and has withstood the test of time, the impact of other cultures, the devastation of war, and the high price paid for the purposes of international peace and security.”² In other words, the nation known as the Marshall Islands as it is today is a product of the modern world hence modernity. “It takes two to tango.” The global system of exchange, which the Marshall Islands was thrown into, happened through cultural contact and is in fact a product of time and the changing global circumstances.³ However, the oppressed are often rendered voiceless. By using the moral example of cultural figures who successfully demonstrated royal hegemony at the face of cultural imperialism, Amata Kabua has redefined modernity and pushed it around the moral argument of being faultless in existing as ones self where a distinct group of people known as Marshallese are afforded equal dignity in self-determining a clan culture heritage that was God given.

¹ C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 1-7.

² See Preamble of RMI Constitution <http://www.rmiembassyus.org/Constitution.htm>

³ C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*, 10.

Self-Determination ensures Equal Dignity

Clan culture is a distinguishing feature of Oceanic societies and Marshallese are no different. Although scientists, anthropologists, and linguists⁴ alike argue solidly on their origins---claiming that Marshallese people and their culture originated from Southeast Asia due to their connection to the Austronesian and Nuclear Micronesian language families---Marshallese are more inclined to understand their past, specifically their prehistory, through their improperly labeled myths, folklores, and legends which have immortalized their proud heritage. Despite the overwhelming evidence pinpointing a Southeast Austronesian connection originating the first Marshallese to the position of the Taiwanese archipelago, Marshallese have rejected the concept that the World began there.

Although they do not reject the Christian notion of humans being the same species, Marshallese have still abided by their principle of self-design lending themselves to be the interpreters of their own beginnings citing the Human Right of Self-Determination as an integral part in ensuring basic Human Rights and fundamental freedoms of modernity. When confronted with the notion that Pacific Islanders came after Asians given their inscribed primitive qualities of imperial design, Amata Kabua slyly needles the ignorant stating that “We do not know exactly when the first people settled these islands...but we do know that our ancestors were dauntlessly sailing the vastness of the Pacific with hand hewn wooden canoes without instruments while Europeans were still arguing whether the Earth was round or flat.”⁵ In this way of

⁴Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Raan Kein*, (Honolulu: Bess Press, 2013), 22.

⁵ Paul Frederick Kluge, *The Edge of Paradise: America in Micronesia*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 55.

thinking, Amata Kabua reclaims a space for Marshallese in interpreting the origins they themselves experienced painting ignorance by redirecting the conversation along moral lines where distinct groups of people are equally valued in intellectual worth given the fact that they are one of the oldest cultures and civilizations who settled one third of the world's surface being the Pacific. Moreover, "Linguistic evidence suggests that the Marshallese variant represents the ancestral form of all the differently permuted forms of social organization in Nuclear Micronesia"⁶ revealing it to be the oldest social structure.

Existing Familial Structures

Hage and Harary reveal that "like its Tongan counterpart, the Marshallese conical clan was a socially encompassing, politically expansive structure, associated with asymmetric marriage alliance and implicated in the formation of island empires."⁷ Amata Kabua represents the last of this marriage structure that led to the combined alliances of the Western and Eastern Chains of the Marshall Islands. His father Lejolan Kabua was a chieftain from the Western Chain and his mother Dorothy Tarjikit Laelan Kabua was a chieftain from the Eastern Chains.⁸ As a child, Amata Kabua was groomed by his parents and immediate kin to be the face of the new modern nation struggling to retain self-determination against imperial super powers in the same manner his great grandfather Kabua the Great had.⁹

⁶ Per Hage and Frank Harary. *Island Networks: Communication, Kinship, and Classification Structures in Oceania*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 125-126.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Jack A. Tobin. *Stories from the Marshall Islands*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 375.

⁹ Anono Loeak, Veronica Kiluwe, and Linda Crowl, eds. *Life in the Republic of the Marshall Islands*. (Majuro: University of the South Pacific, 2004), 72-73.

Kabua the Great

It was Amata Kabua's great grandfather that would lay the structural framework to regain sovereignty. In 1855, a group of Marshallese drifted and landed in Kosrae. Had it not been for the intervention of the American Boston Missionaries, these Marshallese landing in Kosrae would have been killed by the Kosraeans.¹⁰ It was however this incident that led to a permanent mission in the Marshall Islands two years later when the *Morning Star* ship arrived in the atoll of Ebon on 1857 after being invited by the very Marshallese people they had rescued in Kosrae two years prior. As the *Morning Star* ship approached bringing the Holy Scripture, the commoners on Ebon skillfully gathered awaiting to kill the trespassers that would dare harbor on Marshallese private land.

It was Kabua the Great who leapt forward putting himself before the spears of his people using himself as a human shield. His act of kindness would save the missionaries and thus spread the Gospel making him one of the most respected chiefs of his time.¹¹ A common misconception is to assume that Kabua was merely reciprocating an act of kindness in the same way his people received it when they were stranded in Kosrae with the missionaries having to rescue them. This is highly erroneous. The point of Kabua the Great saving the missionaries with his uncle Kaibuke's¹² blessing was not just to return the favor, it goes deeper into establishing religious elements of self-determination where indigenous beliefs are interwoven into the realities of the actual circumstance. The family

¹⁰ David Crawford and Leona Crawford. *Missionary Adventures in the South Pacific*. (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1967), 103-106.

¹¹ ABCFM, *The Missionary Herald, Vol. 120*, (Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1924), 347-348.

¹² Samuel C. Damon *Morning Star Papers by Reverend Samuel C. Damon*. (Honolulu: H.M. Whitney, Commercial Advertise Office, 1861), 22-28.

asserts unequivocally that Kabua the Great saved the missionaries because he was instructed by the same God that brought the Gospel to do so.¹³ Unfortunately, missionaries felt threatened by local religions and attempted to eradicate it despite these religious beliefs of Marshallese resembling the same creation concepts in the book of Genesis where a powerful spirit speaks what becomes.¹⁴ Erdland further reveals that prior to missionary eradication of indigenous religious beliefs, Marshallese already had a sophisticated language with specific vocabulary describing Biblical concepts, characters, and figures.¹⁵ This gives Marshallese a powerful message in relaying an interpretation of identity where they rightfully determine themselves in the modern world as a distinct group of people as enshrined in Article 1, paragraph 2 of the United Nations Charter.¹⁶ It is basically Kabua the Great's Thesis stating that Marshallese experiences are part of the prime mover's hand where collective action defines the circumstance due to simultaneous existence.

American Influence

The overlooked value of American missionaries that connected the Marshall Islands to American Christian values is often taken for granted when describing identity. The American missionaries had a profound effect on the Marshallese. They had quickly

¹³ Lynn Nakit Milne (Daughter of Amata Kabua) in discussion with Author, 30 September 2011.

¹⁴ Jack Tobin, *Stories from the Marshall Islands*, 11.

¹⁵ August Erdland *Die Sternkunde beiden Seefahren der Marshall-Inseln*. *Anthropos: Internationale Sammlung Ethnologischer Moographie*. Ed. 5:16-26. (Munster: I.W. Aschedorff, 1914), 308-311.

¹⁶ Amata Kabua. "The Compact of Free Association: Restructuring a Strategic Relationship, an address by the Honorable Amata Kabua, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. 29 April 1985. Formal Address.

converted a majority of the population through Christian education.¹⁷ The mentally colonized portion of the Marshallese population often recount stories of how they automatically became enlightened at the arrival of the written gospel. The assumption often promoted by historians is to automatically assume that the Marshallese were entirely submissive to the Missionaries. This is highly erroneous given the reality of Kabua the Great who maintained his own cultural identity without shame going as far as not acknowledging his own kin who converted to Christianity during the German period.¹⁸

Robert W. Moore notes that it was in the 1850's that "the American Board of Foreign Missions in Boston spread its activities into Micronesia from Hawaii. Subsequently, they reduced the Marshallese language to writing; gave the people schools, medicines, a new religion; and brought conflicting clans to peace. To the Marshallese, America became a friendly land."¹⁹ By 1861, three mission schools had already been established in Ebon atoll. Years later in 1865, missions were already established in the atolls of Namdrik and Jaluit.²⁰ By 1869, the mission extended its realm to include the atolls of Mille, Arno, Maloelap, and Majuro of the southern *Ratak* (Eastern) chain. A year later, the mission had already converted 100 Christians and by 1872, "Marshallese now

¹⁷In an article of the *Friend*, which was the Boston Missionary newspaper, Kabua was stated as an education enthusiast who wanted more teachers/schools.

¹⁸ Stewart Firth and Paula Mochida. *Translations of German Documents Relating to Micronesia*. (Canberra: Australian National University, 1986), 58.

¹⁹ Robert W. Moore, "Our New Military Wards, the Marshalls." *National Geographic Magazine*, September 1945, 334-335.

²⁰ Julianne Walsh. *Etto nan Ran Kein*, 144-147.

held positions of leadership through the Protestant Church.”²¹ By 1873, the mission had established its dominance establishing churches in seven atolls of the southern Marshall Islands and had skillfully acquired a whopping record of 200 converts in just a short span of 18 years.

Robert W. Moore reveals that Japanese themselves saw this stating that even “Before the war, Japanese officials complained that, until they stopped American mission influence and replaced it with Japanese education, they could never hope to turn the natives their way.”²² Our biases tend to negate this fact because most of us are colonially programmed to view a non-militant Missionary body as powerless. However, no foreign influence contributing to Marshallese modernity comes close to American influence in the form of persistent Missionaries who would introduce writing as a new form of communication backed by a new Christian religion just in time for the German traders who would then introduce the majority of Marshallese natives to the monetary system using that same writing system taught to them by the American Boston Missionaries.

Germany Enters: 1879-1914

With the copra trade running rampant due to the success of the traders Adolph Capelle and Anton Debrum, the Germans would soon enter the picture to join in on the exploits.²³ However, as Amata Kabua mentions, “The Marshall Islands de jure retained many of the attributes of international personality that were recognized as early as the

²¹Julianne Walsh. *Etto nan Ran Kein*, 184.

²² Robert W. Moore, “Our New Military Wards, the Marshalls,” 334-335.

²³The Marshall Islands was regarded as a possession of Spain as early as 1857 but claim was largely ignored due to lack of physical presence.

latter part of the 19th Century.”²⁴ This position is based on a “commerce and navigation treaty concluded by Amata Kabua’s great grandfather Kabua, on behalf of the Marshallese people with an emissary of chancellor Bismark of the Imperial German Government in 1879.”²⁵ “This treaty not only recognized the national flag of the islands but it also granted the German government certain rights such as the right to establish a coaling station for its warships,” he adds.²⁶

Shortly thereafter, the imperial German government would eventually establish a consulate on Jaluit atoll where subsequently, in 1885, Germany would then officially proclaim a protectorate over the Marshall Islands pursuant to an agreement with traditional chiefs of the Marshall Islands. This agreement did not extinguish the aforementioned traditional personality of the Marshallese nation because Marshallese, for the most part, continued to administer their internal affairs under the traditional rule of their chiefs without issue.²⁷ Even at the face of German imperialism, “the German government continued to recognize some attributes of the Marshall Island’s sovereignty.”²⁸ The language of the Treaty of Friendship itself which Kabua the Great led, states within its context the same message stating that “King Kabua, as well as the chiefs Lagajimi (Leit), Nelu, Loiak and Launa, guided by the desire to protect the legal trade, which is predominantly in German hands, and to provide the German traders with

²⁴ Amata Kabua. “The Compact of Free Association: Restructuring a Strategic Relationship, an address by the Honorable Amata Kabua, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. 29 April 1985. Formal Address.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

full security, request the protection of His Majesty, the German Emperor, so that they may be enabled to maintain the independence of the area.”²⁹

As Dr. Walsh notes, “The strength and character of local leadership was a key factor in the colonial histories of many Pacific Islands.”³⁰ It was during the German times that Kabua the Great would skillfully demonstrate his dominance in ensuring royal hegemony against German imperialism. Native law ran uninterrupted for the most part as the Germans initially followed a system of indirect rule that allowed traditional leaders to retain their traditional powers to act on behalf of a colonial government.³¹

With the exploitation of the copra industry in the Marshall Islands, traders and Germany had already set up a system of trade and hence introduced a tax system.³² It was only in the Marshall Islands that taxes were paid in copra.³³ The role of land quickly shifted as land became a means of income whereas before it was a means to life through the subsistence lifestyle.³⁴ The very first people who would enjoy the benefits of a monetary system were the traditional chiefs who then introduced their people to the new resources. It was during the German administration that wages were established and it was during their colonial reign that diplomacy ensued as Chiefs began to get wealthy. As early as 1901, Marshallese had become so enmeshed in the modernized system of global

²⁹ See section I of Treaty of Friendship
<http://marshall.csu.edu.au/Marshalls/html/history/Treaty1885.html>

³⁰ Julianne Walsh, *Etto nan Ran Kein*, 181-218.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

³² *Ibid.*, 199.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

exchange that they began to take control of their own situation through their first labor strike. The effect of money became so real with the added monetary value of land that certain Marshallese and German officials sought to alter the traditional land tenure system to reap its benefits by stripping the promised sovereignty led by the Marshallese chiefs as stipulated in section I of the German Treaty of Friendship.

Kabua the Great versus his cousin Litokwa

At the inception of the 20th Century, one death followed that altered the current circumstances. The paramount chieftain for the Southern *Ralik* (Western) Chains named Loeak³⁵ passed away in 1904 leaving Kabua to be the next of matrilineal kin to inherit.³⁶ Despite traditional law that ruled in favor of matrilineal succession, a local noble named Litokwa³⁷ along with a Jesuit Priest named August Erdland attempted to change the land tenure administrative structure for their own selfish gain through the new system of land economy pioneered by the German tribunal in 1907. The situation received surprising calm when Kabua the Great won the case before the German tribunal under the existing customary procedures of matrilineal succession. However, the decision was reversed when the German official Sigwanz under advice through correspondence from Father

³⁵Loeak's mother and Kabua's mother were sisters with Loeak's mother Loj being senior. The matrilineal succession extends horizontally by seniority with elder sisters children inheriting first (See pg 19 of Amata Kabua's *Customary Titles and Inherent Rights* for explanation of matrilineal succession during absence of matrilineal heir).

³⁶Kabua the Great and Loeak are Chiefs of Southern *Ralik* often referred to as *Rakinmeto*. They are both matrilineal descendants from the Iroj clan which was a morphed royal version of the Errepra clan who conquered the Southwestern part of the Western Chains called *Ralik*. (See pg 7 of Amata Kabua's *Customary Titles and Inherent Rights* for explanation of matrilineal succession during absence of matrilineal heir).

³⁷Litokwa's father and Kabua's mother are brother and sisters making Litokwa a patrilineal heir.

August Erdland³⁸ and Litokwa, claimed that threats were made to the witnesses. Father August Erdland had inserted himself as a cultural expert claiming that Kabua the Great was not the rightful heir according to native law. Father August Erdland's supposed witness was Limoot who was the wife of the deceased Loek. Father August Erdland's letter to Sigwanz accused Kabua's family members mainly his daughter Libetok, his son Jeimata, his wife Limurelok, and his son in law Moses for allegedly threatening Limoot to testify on behalf of Kabua.³⁹

Without fair notice, Sigwanz summoned Limoot with Father August Erdland as interpreter. Sigwanz was convinced that there was foul play after confirmation from Father August Erdland who was said to have led the witness Limoot.⁴⁰ With Father August Erdland retelling the narrative, Sigwanz immediately reversed the decision and awarded Kabua's cousin Litokwa going against the traditional norm of matrilineal succession.⁴¹ Kabua the Great was furious and threatened war. The Germans however sent the warship *Condor*, threatened exile to New Guinea, and fined Kabua into compliance as demonstration of Germany's imperial might.⁴²

Kabua's Resistance Reigns Supreme

Kabua the Great, however, was not fazed by these empty threats considering he had already skillfully invested in the capitalist structure despite debt to purchase

³⁸ Father August Erdland's letter aroused suspicion with German official Sigwanz when it was sent a month later despite it stating on numerous occasion that he was having the conversation today with Limoot.

³⁹ Stewart Firth and Paula Mochida. *Translations of German Documents Relating to Micronesia*. (Canberra: Australian National University, 1986), 1-98.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 216.

schooners that would improve transportation and communication thereby solidifying his already existing empire. Native law ran uninterrupted, as various peoples remained entirely ignorant of German ways seeking instead to align themselves with their paramount chief Kabua the Great. Kabua's resistance proved formidable as one German official notes "Kabua's rank is recognized throughout the Ralik (Western) Chain."⁴³ Despite the court ruling and much to the German chagrin, life went on with Kabua asserting royal hegemony in the Western Chain showcasing an element of resistance against Germany's imperial tactics. The situation was so great that Dr. Hahl, the governor for the German New Guinea, asked that they re-evaluate the case.⁴⁴

Kabua's victory against Germany

The case was again reopened in 1910 under the orders of the imperial governor Dr. Hahl. This time they sought real interpreters.⁴⁵ The imperial district officer Berghausen commissioned a bilingual half blood named Eduard Milne, and as a safety measure, a police officer Ruben, who was also bilingual.⁴⁶ Upon closer examination of the elders which went for days on end, it was decided that Kabua was the rightful heir to Loeak's land in accordance to native law.⁴⁷ Berghausen therefore had to overturn the decision. When Limoot was reevaluated, this time with two court commissioned interpreters, it was officially revealed that Limoot had not been coerced by Kabua or his

⁴³Stewart Firth and Paula Mochida. *Translations of German Documents Relating to Micronesia*. (Canberra: Australian National University, 1986), 1-98.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

wives nor did she ever tell such a tale to Father August Erdland.⁴⁸ She flatly told the court that she must have been misunderstood by head commissioner of the time Sigwanz who had included such evidence in the minutes of her second examination.⁴⁹

The new district administrator Berghausen discovered that Father August Erdland alone had brought about the legend of the two camps which so confused the case.⁵⁰ Berghausen downplayed the blatantly obvious corruption within their company of court officials stating that Father August Erdland was leading the witness versus misinterpreting the witness testimony thereby committing perjury. Nevertheless, with Limoot's final statement taken, it was clear that there was indeed corruption in the court procedures. Berghausen also discovered that the falsification of documents were indeed done but it wasn't on Kabua's end but on Litokwa's. The Will of Loeak Litokwa produced was not an original copy and the signature on the will was signed by Adolph Capelle while the will presented by Moses in favor of Kabua had the authentic signature of Loeak and was in fact an original copy. Berghausen ended the case granting summary judgment to Kabua based on the grounds that the will of Loeak endorsed by his signature spoke for itself. With apparent evidence suggesting a corruption within their own court system, Berghausen had no choice but to declare the final ruling in favor of Kabua and that all past decisions⁵¹ in the case were deemed invalid. This included the many

⁴⁸ Stewart Firth and Paula Mochida. *Translations of German Documents Relating to Micronesia*. (Canberra: Australian National University, 1986), 1-98.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid. (Father Linkens, Erdland's superior, forbade him from taking part in this dispute).

⁵¹ Before Berghausen had closed and finalized the case deciding that Kabua was the rightful heir, several decisions before this were made by the previous acting Judge Sigwanz. Sigwanz had decided Litokwa was the rightful heir to the Southern Ralik and that Kabua had coerced witnesses. Sigwanz also decided the clan names of the chiefs Loeak and Kabua stating that they belonged to the *Ijjidrik* clan yet

decisions of judge Sigwanz that steered away from correct customary law interpretation and application. This painted the German court systems in a horrible new light and rightfully so.

The defeat of German imperialism by a primitive heathen chief named Kabua was so embarrassing that the German government sought to annihilate the feudal land tenure system all together. Even with Kabua's death in 1910, the situation turned tense as Kabua's brother Leit succeeded as next of matrilineal kin. Leit continued his brother's path of resistance to ensure sovereignty against German imperialists. At one point, Germany was being successfully challenged by Leit who refused to sell any land to the German authorities. Thus, until the first World War, the Marshall Islands retained a level of international personality through royal hegemony. At the outset, the approach taken by Germany for an indirect rule through the leadership collaboration of the chiefs was meant to improve diplomatic relations thus making Pacification efforts smooth upon agreed compromise. However, Germany had no clear direction as to how it wanted to approach the islands. Towards the end of its tenure in the Marshall Islands, Germany in 1914 attempted to change its direction by intensifying Pacification efforts. Hiery notes that the "The colonial administration had intended to expand the system of secondary education by government schools to cover all of New Guinea and the Island Territories (Micronesia) from 1915 on" in its attempt to modernize Micronesia under German lines but it was just too late.⁵² Germany was ousted by Japan the year before its planned works to complete Pacification efforts in Micronesia thus giving Japan that golden opportunity.

traditional knowledge passed down to many Marshallese and to the descendants of Kabua clearly state that these two chiefs belonged to the famous *Iroij* Clan.

Japan Re-Enters: 1914-1945

Although Germany held possession of the Micronesian territories, Japan already entered Micronesia as early as 1884 in the Marshall Islands. Moreover, “With the financial support of the Japanese government, Japanese samurai had been trading in Micronesia since 1890,” adds Heiry.⁵³ Despite Germany’s attempt to close off its territories from Japan, Japan had already skillfully penetrated the trade market in Micronesia so much that by 1913, a Japanese trading company named Nan’yo Boeki Kabushigaiisha (NBK)⁵⁴ had already controlled eighty percent of all the trade in German Micronesia paving a smooth transition to an already existing complementary structure that fed Japanese imperial interests.⁵⁵ NBK would later receive imperial Japan’s endorsement as the main trading network that handled Japan’s new colonial economy in Micronesia. This allowed imperial Japan to Pacify Germany’s former Micronesian possessions on a much more accelerated rate because the economic structure was already there.

Laying a Formal Claim through the International Framework

It was during World War I that the Japanese armed forces occupied Marshall Islands and the rest of Micronesia.⁵⁶ By September of 1914, the Japanese navy arrived in

⁵² Hiery Hermann, *The Neglected War: The German South Pacific and the Influence of World War I*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 126-158.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ With headquarters on Jaluit in the Marshall Islands, NBK put Germans out of business in the copra trade and then worked to develop the larger Micronesian Region.

⁵⁵ The South Seas fever that led many Japanese adventures to the Pacific started as early as the 1800s. Japanese Military officials have been pushing to integrate the Pacific to increase navy.

⁵⁶ Amata Kabua gave a formal address as President stating that “this was a belligerent occupation which did not as a matter of international law, affect the legal status of the islands.”

the Marshall Islands to establish a military presence in Micronesia. An existing agreement of 1902 called the Anglo-Japanese Alliance between Japan and Great Britain further smoothed the assimilation of Micronesia.⁵⁷ In their agreement, the two countries decided that Britain would occupy all of the German islands south of the equator, while Japan planned to control all of the German islands north of the equator. After Japan officially ousted Germany from Micronesia in 1914 during the outbreak of World War I, it launched an intensive effort to “Japanize” Micronesia. By 1915, the Japanese had already created six Japanese administrative regions with main headquarters in Palau. Following Germany’s defeat in Europe at the end of World War I, warring nations met at Versailles, France in 1918 to determine how Germany’s former territories would be distributed among them. A League of Nations, the forerunner to the United Nations, was created to maintain a peaceful cooperation and balance of power throughout the globe. The League of Nations granted Japan Germany’s Territory north of the equator as a Class C mandate which restricted Japan from militarizing the islands.⁵⁸ The mandate also required Japan to promote the social-advancement of the inhabitants and required that it reported directly to the League of Nations annually.⁵⁹

Limitations of Globalization through Mandate

Despite Japan gaining new territory, its influence in the Pacific was strictly limited to Micronesia. At first, Japan attempted to comply with the requirements

⁵⁷ Francis X. Hezel. *Strangers in Their Own Land: A Century of Colonial Rule in the Caroline and Marshall Islands*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 147.

⁵⁸ A mandate is an area or territory commissioned by the League of Nations to another nation for administration. The former German territories were charged, or mandated, to Japan because it was an ally of England, and it already had possession.

⁵⁹In striking contrast, the League of Nations allowed the United States to fully militarize its possession of Guam, Hawaii, and the Philippines.

primarily through the German structure that was left behind. The executions made by the Germans in relation to the Chiefs who controlled the land tenure administration was integrated into the Japanese colonial design. In other words, Japan incorporated the traditional local power structure within their colonial administration.⁶⁰ One of their first tasks was to settle the land system in the Marshall Islands using the existing Germanic land records. Under the Japanese colonial system of Micronesia, Marshallese chiefs continued to hold their position. After the official declaration of the Mandate in 1920, a Japanese presence had already been long established and thus began a civilization process in Micronesia that Hiery calls “Japanization,” which essentially was Japan’s version of bringing Modernity to the Marshallese people by making them more Japanese.

Nanyo-Cho

The Japanese civil administration for the Japanese Mandate in Micronesia Nanyo-Cho or the South Seas Bureau maintained its capital at Koror in the Palau Islands. Its governor’s administrative responsibilities were split into five independent departments.⁶¹ These five departments were concerned with: public revenue and taxation; local administration and public works; police, prisons, and sanitation; commerce and industry; and communication, including posts, telegraphs and shipping functions.⁶² There were six branch offices, and these were located at Palau, Chuuk, and Pohnpei in the Carolines; Saipan in the Marianas; at Yap, and at Jaluit Atoll in the Marshall Islands.⁶³

⁶⁰ The Japanese initiated a patrilineal system of inheritance because the Matrilineal lineage of the royal clans of the Southern Ralik (Western) Chain came to a defunct with the passing of Leit (Lakijimwe).

⁶¹ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 229.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

As it was with the Germans, the Japanese administration attempted to use the chiefs to obtain support from the Natives. It was during the Japanese colonial period that the Marshall Islands would experience material wealth on a different level. According to Peatite “Commercial fishing, freight transportation, inter-island mail, and passenger service now provided the basis of a commercial network.”⁶⁴ The local islanders exchanged copra, turtle shells, and mother-of-pearl, which were sent to Japan for processing to use for cloth, liquor, axes, weapons, and cooking utensils. This newly found economy allowed the Marshallese to participate in trade as well as enjoying luxury items that greatly mitigated strenuous manual labor associated with subsistence living. Thus, the islanders slowly began to desert the agrarian life style and started depending largely on imported goods such as rice, miso paste, biscuits, cigarettes, clothes, watches, towels, pots, pans dishes, tobacco, kerosene lamps, sewing machines, fishing gear, sugar, tea, hardware supplies, soy sauce, and canned goods.⁶⁵

With new technologies and new goods that were extremely foreign to the natives’ eyes, Japanese business men easily won the favor of the chiefs. To help illustrate the cultural superiority of the Japanese, the Japanese often awarded the village leaders and chiefs. The Japanese took them sight seeing in wonderful areas in Japan. The chiefs visited museums, cities, rode in trains, and attended Japanese social gatherings. This easily won them over for they had never seen or done such things. Assimilation of the chiefs to the Japanese culture meant the assimilation of the villagers. In fact, after the chiefs would come back, the Japanese would show footage of their trip to Japan to the

⁶⁴ Mark R. Peattie *Nan’Yo: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 135.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 122.

islanders to further convince them. These Micronesian chiefs would often impose Japanese values to their people. One chief from Yap came back from one of these trips and commanded all of his people to wear Japanese clothes and have a Japanese haircut. Hiery describes this effort as conversion. He argues that conversion to the Japanese culture was the Japanese way of civilizing the native population. Hiery uses the logic of the Japanese by saying that islanders are more civilized if they are more Japanese.⁶⁶ In fact, Micronesian customs that conflicted with Japanese customs were viewed as unethical and were easily deserted. However, not all Micronesians were easily assimilated. Instead of assimilating, Marshallese Chiefs sought instead to indigenize foreign resources to cater it towards their own cultural principles as a means of resisting for the sake of self-preservation.⁶⁷

Shifting Cultural Roles

In an effort to advance the social welfare of the Marshallese, Japan continued to integrate various locals into their administrative affairs. Chiefs began acquiring new responsibilities such as medical bills. However, as it was with chiefs during the German period, chiefs during the Japanese period had also purchased schooners to continue collecting tributes as a way of retaining the cultural structure that binded Marshallese together, an act owing to the ancient naval communal network that maintained the Marshallese Traditional empire. Chiefs and Marshallese alike in the Marshall Islands

⁶⁶ Hiery Hermann, *The Neglected War: The German South Pacific and the Influence of World War I*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 146-128.

⁶⁷ Land Tenure system began incorporating a capitalist structure expanding in the process.

sought to indigenize foreign resources instead to contextualize it to their particular circumstance. However, not all Micronesians had the same experience.⁶⁸

Japanization through School

One of the main contributions from the Japanese was their educational system that introduced not only their language but their cultural values and strict etiquettes. In these schools, the half-castes and natives alike would learn the language and the richness of Japanese culture.⁶⁹ By 1935, attendance at these Japanese-made schools was obligatory. These Japanese public school were compulsory for three years. An additional two years in Palau was possible for exceptional students, or further schooling in Japan for those who had Japanese ancestry.⁷⁰ Successful students went on to work as teachers, carpenters, police officers, or employees for Japanese businesses. In some instances, when the Japanese-filled trip ships came around to collect students, some parents often hid their children so that they would not be taken away by the Japanese. This was a sign of disloyalty and resistance to the Japanese imperial rule.

Other than school, the Japanese also formed youth groups for youngsters to help them get involved in community affairs for the betterment of the community. These youth groups served as extracurricular activities. The most gifted and talented of these

⁶⁸ Certain Chiefs in Micronesia, particularly in what is now the Federated States of Micronesia had to work their way up in the Japanese administrative structure, a far cry from what was traditionally acceptable. The Marshallese Chiefs on the other hand resisted to maintain their royal dominance. However, WWII changed everything. Amata Kabua's maternal Uncle was hung upside down and had his legs broken making him a cripple for the rest of his life.

⁶⁹Schools were segregated for native Kanaka and Japanese with Japanese students receiving a full regular education.

⁷⁰A lot of famous Marshallese people within the political and traditional sphere acquired primary education through these Japanese primary schools. Although not limited to these names, some of these students were none other than late President Amata Kabua and wife Emlain Kabua, Oscar Debrum, and many more.

youths were often accepted into special Japanese apprenticeships, carpentry schools, and many others. Students also began to learn the strong culture of Japan and began embracing it. By educating the younger generation, the Japanese not only spread their culture but also embedded and secured within the young students' mind a strong sense of Japanese mentality and patriotism. As Peattie and Myers reveal, "This classroom instruction was reinforced by other programs of social conditioning to strengthen in native Micronesians a sense of identification with Japan."⁷¹ One islander notes that the vernacular was prohibited. Japanese was the only language spoken in school. In fact, daily bowing in the direction of Japan, reciting "I'm a good citizen of Japan," and singing in the name of the emperor were common routines.⁷² It was all about control. Conformity to the Japanese modernization required the social conditioning of children to appreciate Japanese ways of knowing and being through the communal network of schools.

Japanese Policies of Controlling the Social Hierarchy

The Japanese administration's policy that all native people were legally equal though of lower status than Japanese meant that access to education was open to all and not just people of high social statuses in the traditional hierarchy.⁷³ This policy contributed to the continued transformation of the Marshallese social class system, a shift that eventually led to a breakdown of social classes allowing equal opportunity to flourish among the Marshallese.⁷⁴ The requirement for education impacted the traditional

⁷¹ Mark R. Peattie and Ramon H. Myers, ed. *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 188.

⁷² Hiery Hermann, *The Neglected War: The German South Pacific and the Influence of World War I*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 146-128.

⁷³ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 231.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Marshallese social class system because it allowed many Marshallese to acquire skills and opportunities that were desired by the Japanese administrators.⁷⁵ Marshallese who were of low class could now rise up and hold positions of social influence and prestige that never before existed but became available through positions in the Japanese government.⁷⁶ Like the missionary influence, the presence of foreigners and their needs provided new opportunities, new roles in the community, and better access to influence in local affairs that elevated ones social status painting light to modernization. From there on, Japanese would set a new standard where the most qualified get the job whereas before, the people of higher social statuses mostly the chiefs got the highest paying jobs.

Militarization

After withdrawing from the League of Nations in 1933 because of disputes in Manchuria, Japan began to send increasing numbers of civil affair personnel into its mandated territory in Micronesia.⁷⁷ Japan was than able to limit outside influences in the Mandate region and began a process of militarization. “No foreigners could access the islands without permission from Tokyo, so it was difficult for the rest of the world to learn of what was happening in the islands.”⁷⁸ Dr. Walsh notes that “though the Japanese administration denied its militarization to the outside world claiming that rapid development targeted infrastructure, many of the structures built during this period such as docks, runways, and schools with extraordinarily thick cement walls could have served

⁷⁵Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 231.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷ Mark R. Peattie and Ramon H. Myers, ed. *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, 235.

⁷⁸ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 250.

as military purposes. Japan not only sent Japanese naval men, laborers, and prisoners to the islands but they used many of the islanders to work on these construction projects.”⁷⁹

The Japanese sought to develop infrastructure using Marshallese labor in the construction of roads, docks, administrative buildings, and schools. Through infrastructure, many of the islanders learned how to built docks, bridges, runways, schools, and cement walls. One Marshallese Lautrok Lajikom, who was recruited to work on these projects notes his experiences. “We learned how to do road constructions, build buildings, manage cement, construct docks, build plane hangars”, he says.⁸⁰ There were many events in which infrastructure played an active role in promoting new construction skills. Other than providing new labor skills, infrastructure also provided more job opportunities. With great infrastructure comes great responsibility. One of the most common jobs introduced from newly built infrastructure were police officers. The police officers oversaw road constructions, taxation, harbor surveys, animal husbandry, training and supervision of the youth corps, forestry, labor supply, and agricultural matters.⁸¹ Japanese often recruited the native populous to maintain the infrastructures. Infrastructures also provided a means of modernizing the islands. One Japanese notes according to Hiery, modernization meant Japanization for Japan was an urbanized community. Modernization not only brought labor skills but it also shifted the islands to more developed infrastructure for modern civilization brought with it government buildings, hospitals, factories, radio stations, and newspaper offices.⁸²

⁷⁹Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 250.

⁸⁰Ibid., 251.

⁸¹Mark R. Peattie and Ramon H. Myers, ed. *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, 24.

Integration was perhaps the most successful method in Japanizing parts of the Pacific but as the Second World War shifted its settings towards the islands; the Japanese soldiers came and thus started adopting even crueller methods. Dr. Walsh notes that “the period of World War II, from 1941-1945, marks a key turning point in Marshallese history. During this time, the natives witnessed powers, weapons, machines, and violence in ways they had never imagined.”⁸³ One islander speaks of his experiences as a very fearful one. “I’ve never seen anything like that and I was really scared, the way the bombs opened the ground and water shot up. The holes were so big and deep that we could swim inside them”⁸⁴

Perhaps the strongest method during the World War II period of controlling the native populous was that of fear. Punishments were a strong factor in curtailing a point. At this point, the few Japanese civilian businessmen that had brought out a successful system of integration had no power. It was also at this time that many Japanese residents began to leave the islands, knowing that the U.S. in Tarawa was close enough to threaten their lives. The farmers, engineers, and businessmen returned to Japan, and many half-caste families were separated when Japanese men left for their native home.⁸⁵ In late 1943, thousand of troops arrived in Micronesia. It was Martial Law upon the lands and the soldiers had the final authority.

⁸² Mark R. Peattie and Ramon H. Myers, ed. *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, 197.

⁸³ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 249.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁸⁵ Two well known Japanese that were repatriated were Toshiaro Kudo, father of Emlain Kabua, who was the NBK director in Jaluit, Marshall Islands and the other one was Tosiwo Nakayama’s father.

Hard Times

These new soldiers were very different from the civilian administrators, businessmen, and Japanese naval officials who were more familiar with the local people and customs because they had previously resided in the islands. As the islands shifted to military rule, relationships between the native and the Japanese also shifted. The days of friendships and regular shipping schedules, bartering with copra, and access to high-status employments completely ceased. The days of hard labor and hard times had begun.

The soldiers were more concerned with their war efforts and their own well-being than they were of the natives. In fact, their methods were often so cruel that rebellion was a common factor. Suzanne Falgout notes that most islanders resorted to trickery as a form of revenge to avoid persecution while resisting the Japanese military.⁸⁶ But it was only when Japanese soldiers started losing the war against the Americans that a high suspicion began and violence remained at an all-time high. The natives were not allowed to sing church songs in their native tongue because the Japanese feared that it might contain secret messages. The islanders were also not allowed to speak English. English was the language of the Americans and if you were associated with it, you were suspected of being a spy. If you were also of European descent, you were also suspected of being a spy.

American Missionaries reflected in Marshallese Pastoral Resistance

One famous true story in the Marshall Islands was that of John Heine. John Heine was a Marshallese boy of German heritage.⁸⁷ His grandfather Carl Heine was a German

⁸⁶James West and Suzanne Falgout, "Time Traces: Cultural Memory and World War II in Pohnpei." *The Contemporary Pacific* 14, no.1 (2002): 101-131.

⁸⁷ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 268.

plantation owner turned Protestant missionary that had settled among the islands way before it became Japanese territory.⁸⁸ John's father Claude Heine was also an active Missionary who was married to a native Micronesian woman named Nenej Heine.⁸⁹ Carl had stayed behind and settled among the islanders peacefully and had become a valuable member of their society. But as soon as the battles shifted towards Micronesia, Japanese soldiers began to harbor racist thoughts against Caucasians. Anyone or anything that was associated with the Caucasian race was to be beheaded after being suspected of being a spy.

Carl Heine, in his missionary efforts, often wrote letters to Protestant headquarters in Australia about his progress.⁹⁰ The Japanese accused him of revealing sensitive information. Thus, Carl Heine, his son Claude, and Claude's wife Nenej were beheaded to set an example.⁹¹ The son, John Heine, managed to escape with the fair warnings of his parents and with the help of Marshallese natives who kept him concealed, lived on to tell the tale. If he had been captured, he would have been killed right on the spot alongside his parents.⁹²

But where there was fear there was also rebellion. In many cases, the islanders fought but useless hand to hand combat was no match for the end of a pistol. Survivor Rosetta recalls a fight that broke lose during a regular routine that the Japanese soldiers

⁸⁸ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 268.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰ John Heine (WWII Survivor) in discussion with Dr. Julianne Walsh, July 1994.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid.

had.⁹³ Everyday their routine would change but it was a common routine to be lined up and be led.⁹⁴ Some islanders got fed up with the constant mistreatment and began to fight back with their bare hands but at the end of the day they would end up running from speeding bullets.⁹⁵ Some of them managed to escape by swimming to nearby atolls that Americans had liberated at the time of the war but some were not so fortunate.⁹⁶ Islanders ranging from village elders to simple children witnessed the extent of Japanese cruelty. Rosetta claims that as a child, this particular experience deeply feared many of the islanders and thus created within them a strong fear of the Japanese race.⁹⁷

World War II brought among the islanders a new sense of mentality. The islanders were now more concerned with their own survival more than anything else. Native Marshallese began to think about their safety and that of their families first. They were no longer supportive of Japanese rule. Some Marshallese were known to have become spies for the American troops and some even developed their own ways of surviving under the harsh conditions of Japanese military rule. If anything, survival had become the new norm amongst the islanders when Japanese cruelty had reached its pinnacle. Emlain⁹⁸ claims that most of the islanders including herself learned how to adapt to war conditions and had developed a new way of survival. Emlain herself claims that she had learnt how to evade air raids. She recalls an incident in which she

⁹³ Rosetta Kisino (WWII Survivor) in discussion with Author, May 2005.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Rosetta Kisino (WWII Survivor) in discussion with Author, May 2005.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ms. Emlain Kabua is the widow of Amata Kabua.

maneuvered her way through safety by taking cover while carrying her nephew. Emlain claims that War taught them things they had never thought of learning.”⁹⁹

John Meinjin recalls his WWII experiences stating that “Some of us were so hungry that we would conceal anything in our mouths,” he claims.¹⁰⁰ One of the most common things they would pick up and eat according to him were leaves because it could easily be concealed. “Leaves and anything that was on the ground we picked up and quickly ate but it was mostly stuff that a normal person would not eat,” he claims.¹⁰¹ Although eating leaves was the safest route to take, some other islanders gathered food during the night when they could not be seen risking their lives and the lives of their families, he adds.¹⁰² “Mr. Meinjin claims that they followed everything they asked them to do, punishing them further by starving their families was something he could never understand,” says Mr. Meinjin.¹⁰³ He later figured that it was a method of controlling the native populous.

Mr. Meinjin also notes that his people had also learned things they had never been exposed to during the outbreak of World War II.¹⁰⁴ He notes that they had learned such things as turning off every light/fire before sundown out of fear of being bombed by American planes, how to properly take cover under an air raid, and passing information

⁹⁹ Emlain Kabua (WWII Survivor) in discussion with Author, May 2005.

¹⁰⁰ John Meinjin (WWII Survivor) in discussion with Angeline Meinjin, May 2005.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

amongst themselves for their own protection from Japanese actions.¹⁰⁵ “We learned how to manipulate certain situations because at the end of the day, our survival instincts got the better of us,” he claims. Most Marshallese along with Mr. Meinjin actually thought that they would perish during World War II.¹⁰⁶ They had almost lost hope. It was only when the United States initiated the strategic Island Hopping Campaign that things started to change dramatically and spirits lifted amongst the islanders. The United States had successfully bypassed islands in Marshall Islands and liberated each of them. By liberating the islands, the Pacific islanders were no longer under the control of Japan but by then Japan had already left a permanent imprint amongst Marshallese. “If War and colonial rule taught us anything, it was self-sufficiency,” claims Mr. Meinjin. “We knew that after the official surrender of Japan, we would take care of ourselves instead of depending on other nations to do it for us and I thank America for making it happen,” he adds.¹⁰⁷

Strategic Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (1946-1986)

With Japan’s surrender after the atomic bomb, the normalization of Nuclear Warfare presumed with a sudden paranoia surrounding the Cold War period. Although the United Nations Security Council officially gave them a mandate over Japan’s former Micronesian possessions, Marshall Islands included in 1947, the United States had already commenced its nuclear testing program in 1946 after relocating the natives on

¹⁰⁵John Meinjin (WWII Survivor) in discussion with Angeline Meinjin, May 2005.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Bikini atoll.¹⁰⁸ The term of the Strategic Trust stated that the United States was obligated to foster the development of political institutions to promote the development of its inhabitants towards economic self-sufficiency, self-government, social-advancement, and educational advancement.

The New Capital of Majuro

As fate would have it, the new capital was relocated to Majuro atoll in the Eastern Chains which coincidentally was the home atoll of Amata Kabua's mother.¹⁰⁹ This brought Amata Kabua to Majuro where he was educated at the local US Navy led teacher training school. In keeping with good willed intentions, the Navy began unloading tons and tons of food in Majuro harbor to win the support of the populace.¹¹⁰ This was a far cry from the self-sufficient mentality mentioned earlier by Mr. Meinjin. Dr. Walsh notes that Marshallese were more prone to favor the American service men because they practiced a level of kindness and involvement which was in striking contrast to racist segregation policies of the Japanese administration.¹¹¹

Isolationism

However, due to strategic value of the Marshall Islands at the peak of the Cold war, America initially practiced a policy of Isolationism for International Security purposes.¹¹² The enjoyed material wealth of the US Naval presence in the Marshall

¹⁰⁸ The Chief of Bikini atoll during this time was Amata Kabua's paternal grandfather, Jeimata Kabua.

¹⁰⁹ The new capital of the Trust Territory was in Saipan. Given the level of development from existing Spanish architectural structures, Saipan was chosen.

¹¹⁰ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 274-275.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 333.

Islands was short lived. In 1951, the US Department of Interior moved in with a smaller staff, less money, and less transportation.¹¹³ The annual budget for the entire trust territory was averaged around six million despite a growth in the population. The United States focused mainly on the Marshall Islands, Palau, and Saipan.¹¹⁴ The extent of isolation had its toll on Marshallese as the Trust Territory first practiced slow development. As one Marshallese scholar writes “Micronesia until 1960 was virtually closed to the outside news media. The Territory had been a sort of museum in which only authorized persons were allowed to make visitations and tours. Those allowed to visit were usually anthropologist or nuclear scientist. As a result, little was known of Micronesia in the outside world.”¹¹⁵

Educational Advancement

In fulfilling its mandated requirements as strategic trust territory administrator, the United States quickly set up public schools throughout the Marshall Islands that was mandatory for children ages six through fourteen. America was able to make education compulsory for the very first time. Each Micronesian district, including the Marshall Islands had its own educational administrator. Other educational institutions included Pacific Islands Teacher training schools previously mentioned, Pacific Island Central School, and further schooling in the University of Hawaii if awarded a college scholarship. Additionally, Jesuit Catholics were able to strengthen ties in the Marshall

¹¹³ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 333.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 334.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 335.

Islands by building a Catholic Parish in Majuro signifying the official entrance of the Catholic Faith on Majuro atoll which was led by Amata Kabua's mother.¹¹⁶

Student Activists

With scholarship to further education in Hawaii, many Micronesians of the Trust Territory, Marshallese included, began to expose themselves to ideas of sovereignty particularly by painting focus on the similarities in situation in comparison to Native Americans and Native Hawaiians.¹¹⁷ Amata Kabua was one of the students who was fortunate enough to receive a scholarship and furthered his schooling thus learning the fate of Native Hawaiians and Native Americans who lost their sovereignty due to loss of land rights.¹¹⁸ This is a strong life lesson that Amata Kabua and many other Micronesians would learn thereby providing them the precedential basis in their fight to regain their sovereignty under the new global system of exchange.¹¹⁹

United Nations Trusteeship Council

In 1953, the United States Trust Territory administration started to practice a level of inclusivity. Due to her vocal and high demeanor in Marshallese society, Amata Kabua's mother Dorothy was chosen to address the United Nations Trusteeship Council for the very first time. To groom her son, Ms. Dorothy Tarjikit Laelan Kabua took Amata

¹¹⁶ Francis X. Hezel, "The Catholic Church in Marshalls." *Micronesian Seminar*. 2003. <http://www.micsem.org/pubs/books/catholic/marshalls/index.htm?PHPSESSID=7c2ff85adb5766a972c7f2f21cf4fe05>

¹¹⁷ Glenn Petersen, "Lesson Learned: The Micronesian Quest for Independence in the Context of American Imperial History." *Micronesian: Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3, no.1-2 (2004): 45-63.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Glenn Petersen, "Lesson Learned: The Micronesian Quest for Independence in the Context of American Imperial History." *Micronesian: Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3, no.1-2 (2004): 45-63.

Kabua as interpreter despite her commanding a sufficient level of English. It was during this trusteeship council that Ms. Dorothy Tarjikit Laelan Kabua would plea for the right of self-determination. Her exact words being

“It is only in the last hundred years that our people in the Trust Territory have been aware of any world other than their own islands. However, as in the present world no group of people can remain isolated and unaffected by the rest of the world, we are working hard to establish ourselves alongside the rest of mankind. To this end our efforts toward economic self-sufficiency are uppermost in importance in our minds so that we might be a burden to no man and so that we might feed and clothe ourselves through our own talents and efforts. Of equal importance are our efforts towards greater self-government which, with the guidance and assistance of the U.S. Trusteeship Administrators who are doing their utmost to encourage us toward this goal, promises to be a reality in the not-too-distant future.”¹²⁰

Ms. Dorothy Tarjikit Laelan Kabua also made an original request to cease all Nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands.¹²¹

Bravo

A year later in 1954, Ms. Dorothy Tarjikit Laelan Kabua’s warning would materialize as the largest atomic bomb in Nuclear history, code named Bravo, one thousand times the force of Hiroshima, was dropped. The so-called unexpected shift in wind conditions led to the raking of multiple Nuclear Victims across several atolls. The

¹²⁰ Frank E. Midkiff, “Administering the Pacific Trust Territory,” *Department of State Bulletin* 29 no. 732 (1953): 151.

¹²¹ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 305. (See also *Micronesian Reporter* Vol. 14-15, 1966)

devastating results of the Nuclear Victims led to an official petition by the Marshallese led by Dwight Heine. Invited to the United Nations Trusteeship Council, Dwight Heine presented a resolution to cease all Nuclear testing however it was defeated. The Nuclear Testing period ceased four years later. As one American Official arrogantly states “We don’t consult the United Nations, we inform.”¹²²

Marshall Islands Congress

In 1956, a bicameral legislature called the Marshall Islands Congress was created to meet America’s existing commitment of developing self-government.¹²³ The bicameral legislature were mostly people important in the traditional hierarchy, which did not go smoothly with the interior administration who urged a second charter approved in 1958. The move to turn a bicameral legislature to a unicameral one was initiated by none other than the Interior Administration to limit the influence of the traditional leader. Yet, “much to the American’s chagrin, the chiefs retained their former role and, in addition, secured protections against revision of traditional rights which the bicameral body could have modified” complains High Commissioner Nucker who was charged with Administration of the Trust Territory.¹²⁴

Charter of 1958

The charter of 1958 by the High Commissioner attempted to limit royal hegemony in local affairs by rigidly defining the credentials clause to limit the number of

¹²² This is a quote from Henry Cabot Lodge Jr (Republican, US Representative to the United Nations).

¹²³ It should be noted however that the Navy established a Marshall Islands Congress in 1949 modeled after a traditional Marshallese parliament called Nitijela which was the state assembly of the Traditional Chiefs.

¹²⁴ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 334.

chieftains. Initially, Dr. Walsh notes that “the US administration thought that the large proportion of elected members of the Congress would easily be able to outvote the few chieftains and limit their influence. Instead, when the Congress met for the first time in 1960, over forty chieftains had been nominated and nineteen were seated for life.”¹²⁵ Amata Kabua was the first president of the new unicameral Congress. His election was significant because unlike the chieftains that were appointed, he was democratically elected.¹²⁶ One observer notes “Chosen as president was an elected representative who was the son of an *irooj* (male chief) and *lerooj* (female chief), had been a former member of the House of Irooj, and was a recognized spokesman for the *irooj*. He was backed by the *Iroojlaplap* (Paramount Chieftain)¹²⁷ seated at the congress and by the older fellows from the northern and western atolls.” Despite American attempts to shift the traditional structure, the local leaders chose instead to capitalize on royal hegemony to retain land rights to ensure continued sovereignty by placing their new hope of regaining its reality through the leadership of Amata Kabua. It was through his leadership that Marshallese chiefs would outmaneuver and manipulate the U.S. administration over and over again in an act of successful resistance against American imperial hegemony.¹²⁸

¹²⁵Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 355.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*

¹²⁷This paramount chieftain was none other than Amata Kabua’s father Lejolan Kabua.

¹²⁸ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 356.

The Rise of Amata Kabua

In 1963, in a surprisingly clever move, the Marshall Islands Congress amended its charter.¹²⁹ The force behind this amendment was none other than Amata Kabua who explains the reasoning stating

“I came and helped to develop the tax system here and otherwise helped to organize the District Legislature, influencing it to become a unicameral rather than bicameral body, and later to reduce the membership. There were division here between the common man and the traditional royal families, and the budget couldn’t cover all the usual expenses when we had sixty to ninety members meeting at that time. Well, when the Navy pulled out and the Interior Department came in, it became quite obvious that there was no such thing as an adequate budget to manage such a big legislature with members coming from all over the Marshall Islands. If you’ll recall, the Territory was then run on a budget of about six million.”¹³⁰

As can be seen, despite American attempts to marginalize chiefs and diminish their influence in the legislature, the chiefs emerged even stronger and more powerful at every turn.

The Tide Turns

In 1961, a visiting United Nations team came to evaluate the status on America’s progress in enacting the mandated obligations of the strategic trust.¹³¹ Amata Kabua and

¹²⁹ Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 356.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

several other Marshallese wasted no time in telling the United Nation officials how neglected they were. The visiting United Nation inspectors were extremely critical of the United States drawing light on the lack of development under its civil administration.¹³² Worldwide attention to the United States pointed that the US was only interested in the islands for military reasons and thus its inhabitants were largely neglected despite open promises. This was extremely insulting to the ego of the United States because John F. Kennedy had just delivered a speech earlier in the United Nations condemning colonialism.¹³³

Americanization

Two years later after this embarrassing fiasco, development efforts advanced rapidly through increased funding.¹³⁴ In 1963, the Trust Territory budget doubled to fifteen million dollars. Four years later, it went up to twenty five million. By 1970 it had rose to sixty million and by the end of the 1970s it had already reached more than a hundred million in addition to 166 federal programs and presence of the US Peace Corps. It was later found out through the declassified Solomon's Report that increase in funding was necessary to promote favorable ties between the Trust Territory inhabitants and the United States for international security purposes.

Congress of Micronesia

Around the same time, America had finally developed a legislative body for the entire Trust Territory called the Congress of Micronesia. This was done in 1964 through

¹³²Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 356.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 357.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

a US Administrative order so that by 1965, a Congress of Micronesia was officially formed with each of the six trust territory districts.¹³⁵ This Congress is significant for it essentially transferred a great deal of legislative responsibility from the American appointed High Commissioner to the Congress of Micronesia.¹³⁶ However, Micronesians were extremely limited given that their laws could be vetoed by the High Commissioner and even if the High Commissioner approves, the law can still be vetoed by the Department of Interior who in turn could be vetoed by the United States Congress.¹³⁷ Amata Kabua was one of the four first representatives from the Marshall Islands and just like everyone else was eager to challenge the colonial attitudes, policies, and practices of the American administration. Additionally, a group of American Peace Corps volunteers had arrived in 1966 further escalating the oppressed voices of the Marshallese who were pushing for freedom.¹³⁸

Capital & Political Developments

The rapid development of the economy through the pouring of funding led to many capital improvements on Majuro, Marshall Islands. With a Congress of Micronesia in position, Amata Kabua and several other Marshallese began pushing to modernize technology. In the 1960s, the longest road in Micronesia on Majuro was built. By 1968, Continental Air Micronesia began servicing the islands. Additionally, a telephone system began operating in 1969 just in time for the creation of the Political Status Commission whose task was to determine political status for the Micronesian states, Marshall Islands

¹³⁵Julianne Walsh, *Etto Nan Ran Kein*, 358.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Most of these American Peace Corps still live in the Marshall Islands having families there now.

included. Coincidentally, Amata Kabua had just been named the President for the Congress of Micronesia that same year in 1969 just in time to lead the political status discussions.

While US was clear in its position to try and forge Micronesian alliances through the unification of states, Marshallese wanted separate ties due to cultural difference and their nature of having more to bargain with. In the May Talks of 1970, the Political Status Commission made it clear to the United States negotiation team that the Commonwealth offer fell well below the minimum standards of self-determination along United Nations standards citing Micronesian control of their own lands as the determining factor. Although the Micronesian political status commission counter offered Free Association, America was not ready to make such a deal. It was only in the fifth round of negotiations in 1972 that the United States agreed to change its position to discuss possible Free Association bilateral relationship status.

As mentioned at the outset, Marshallese like Amata Kabua were clear on their decision to pursue separate negotiations due to cultural differences. Of equal importance, was the depleting resource base of the Marshall Islands. Amata Kabua had sponsored an eminent domain bill that would have given local Marshallese full control of their land but it was vetoed.¹³⁹ He then pushed for legislation that would return the Marshall Islands its full share of locally generated revenue but that too failed in 1973.¹⁴⁰ Weary with unity with poorer as more populous places like Chuuk raked in their locally generated income, the Marshall Islands Parliament (Nitijela) under Amata Kabua's leadership officially announced separation from the Congress of Micronesia thus creating its own political

¹³⁹ Paul Frederick Kluge, *The Edge of Paradise: America in Micronesia*, 55.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

status committee with Amata Kabua as chair.¹⁴¹ The Marshall Islands Parliament also passed a resolution endorsed unanimously by the chiefs to discourage participation in a unified Micronesian constitutional convention.

By 1977, a Marshall Islands Constitutional convention was formed. The year following, a unified Micronesian constitution was rejected by sixty one percent of the Marshallese voting population. Due to the nature of the split, by 1978, all former Trust Territory Pacific Islands officially became self-governing. Without wasting any time to capitalize, the Marshall Islands progressively established a Constitution based on a parliamentary-presidential system of government which went into effect on May 1, 1979 after being approved by the voting majority. The first President was none other than Amata Kabua who then led compact negotiations to finalize the closing end of independence.

Compact Negotiations

The difficulty surrounding Compact negotiations, particularly for the Marshallese, centered around two distinct core military situations. A chief interest being Kwajlein Atoll which hosts the Ronald Regan Ballistic Missile Defense and of course there was the unique issue of the Nuclear Victims, issues that continue to this day.¹⁴² The land lease agreement of Kwajlein was governed by a separate agreement called the Military Use and Operating Rights Agreement (MUORA) to ensure that the United States had continued access to Kwajlein even if Marshall Islands decided to terminate the Compact of Free

¹⁴¹ Paul Frederick Kluge, *The Edge of Paradise: America in Micronesia*, 55.

¹⁴² Before the first Hiroshima-sized atomic tests at Bikini in 1946, the American military evacuated Enewetak, Rongelap and Wotho islanders for their safety. Yet, during the Bravo test of 1954 which was predicted to be 250 times as strong as Hiroshima but turned out to be 1000 times stronger, nobody was evacuated until after the fact of direct exposure.

Association. An unfair tactic the Americans used to guarantee final disclosure of reparations for the Nuclear communities was the espousal clause which stated that the Marshallese could not sue the United States for more money beyond what was initially agreed in the Compact of Free Association despite them holding on to key classified evidence. Unfortunately, if the espousal clause in the 177 portion of the compact was not agreed to, the Marshall Islands would have never gained its independence.¹⁴³

Solution

Under the advice and consent of then President Amata Kabua, he introduced the Changed Circumstance Petition which would allow the Marshall Islands an alternative avenue to petition US Congress for more money should new information that could not have been reasonably identified render the Compact agreement insufficient. This changed circumstance petition was enough to secure the Compact final endorsement by Marshallese in 1983 by a majority vote. After three years of waiting, the US Congress after several amendments finally approved the Compact in 1986 thus granting freedom to the Marshallese people in the form of legitimate sovereignty in the international scene. In 1990, the United Nations Security Council terminated the trusteeship and the Marshall Islands was then officially granted United Nations membership in 1991.

Modernity Realized

In his first United Nations Statement, President Amata Kabua in 1991 confesses the posing dangers of climate change revealing that Marshall Islands is in a state of quandary because scientists are not in general consensus as to the magnitude of the problem and that there is little to nothing a small nation like the Marshall Islands can do

¹⁴³ Tony de Brum, "Acting Locally and Globally to Pressure the Capitals: What the US Owes the Islands." Speech at St. John's University. New York City, New York. September 20, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPPyQPfFTBs>.

other than to raise awareness within the international community.¹⁴⁴ A year later in the 1992 Earth Summit that led to the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), President Amata Kabua states the same thing.¹⁴⁵ Despite technological advancement and self-proclaimed sophistication being a global super power, it took the modern nation of America twenty years to finally acknowledge Climate Change through the leadership of President Barack Obama with more than 97 percent of scientists in general consensus stating that it is real.

Conclusion

To Conclude, Modernity is debatable. For Marshallese, it comes through the moral avenue where deeds not our words become our adorning.¹⁴⁶ The significance of Human Rights of self-determination led by royal hegemony through Amata Kabua's familiar representation, showcases elements of successful resistance against powerful nations and cultures that sought to demean an existence that was always here in the Pacific. The Marshall Islands through the leadership of Amata Kabua, regained a space for self-determination where global politics can be led through the direction of moral deeds despite the Marshall Islands being a small country. The role of the Pacific Island

¹⁴⁴Amata Kabua "Statement by His Excellency Amata Kabua, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands in the General Debate of the 46th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations." United Nations. New York City, NY. 24 September 1991.

¹⁴⁵Tony de Brum, "Acting Locally and Globally to Pressure the Capitals: What the US Owes the Islands." Speech at St. John's University. New York City, New York. September 20, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPPyQPfFTBS>. (See Also Appendix A)

¹⁴⁶ Amata Kabua, "Statement by His Excellency Amata Kabua, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands in the General Debate of the 50th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations." United Nations. New York City, NY. 22 October 1995.

nations in the 21st century requires us to examine holistically what Balyl refers to as an interdependent reality where nations and its people literally construct each other.¹⁴⁷

In this regard, Amata Kabua restored lost dignity under a global system of exchange by pushing the Moral voice through a country's independent representation.¹⁴⁸ Political discourse of oppressed populations such as the Marshall Islands contribute significantly to the moral worth of today. The Marshall Islands reflects a global conversation where culture and royal hegemony forced imperial hegemony to a compromise pushing for a unique Marshallese international personality. Ironically, even if people do not necessarily notice, the Climate Change fight was already embedded in the Preamble of the Marshallese constitution to remind us that self-determination and equal dignity requires a place to call home.¹⁴⁹ The Marshall Islands preamble states that

“All we have and are today as a people, we have received as a sacred heritage which we pledge ourselves to maintain, valuing nothing more dearly than our rightful home on these islands. We extend to other peoples what we profoundly seek from them: peace, friendship, mutual understanding, and respect for our individual idealism and our common humanity.”

It was through the leadership of Amata Kabua that this was realized. Many of the conversations in the international scene build on the foundation of the founding father of

¹⁴⁷Amata Kabua, “The Role of the Island Nations in the 21st Century: Statement by the Right Honorable President Amata Kabua, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.” The Federation of Island Nations for World Peace. Tokyo, Japan. 16-18 June 1996.

¹⁴⁸ Lawrence Edward, “Commemoration of the Death of H.E. President Amata Kabua.” United Nations. (New York, NY) https://www.un.int/marshallislands/statements_speeches/commemoration-death-he-president-amata-kabua (accessed January 3, 2017).

¹⁴⁹ See RMI National Climate Change Policy on SPREP: https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Climate_Change/RMI_NCCP.pdf

the Modern Republic for it was through his leadership that the traditional and modern were permanently preserved in its living Constitution.¹⁵⁰

In Conclusion, real modernity means upholding real moral standards that conform to Human Rights that promote self-determination. Modernity is inextricably linked to the moral cause and thus should be interpreted under the lens of an interactive world through a fairer share of humane discourse where the deeds of the oppressed are then pioneered in the limelight revealing modernity's true definition and we have the Paris Agreement which turned into international law on November 4, 2016 to prove that to us.¹⁵¹ It reminds us that when we modernize, we always reveal it through the mediums of physical structures without arguing the moral cause where modernity reveals itself unfiltered through an advanced form of human conscience where man is truly up with the times. Modernizing means humanizing because a modern man living in a globalized interactive reality centers on the humane revealing modernity's true definition of rationality when one takes into consideration the simultaneous players that construct the story, particularly the oppressed. Reflexively speaking, moral grounds are best reflected where modernity is preached through the moral lens of the oppressed because it entertains the value of humanity and redirects us to understand modernity for what it really is which is man's moral compass. Amata Kabua successfully bridged the modern and the traditional by using the existing international framework to regain sovereignty for the Marshall Islands so that they can truly reap the benefits of modernity by taking advantage of existential

¹⁵⁰ Samuel Menefee "Half Seas Over": The Impact of Sea Level Rise on International Law and Policy." *UCLA Journal of Environmental Law and Policy* 9, no.2 (1991): 194.

¹⁵¹ UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon "Paris Agreement to combat climate change become international law." *PRESSTVnews*. 5 November 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GppYujtTkws>

circumstance. “Independence is just a degree of a persons’ or nations’ being able to control his or her own fate and not always in an unfriendly way,” states Amata Kabua. By granting freedom of self-determination, America and the United Nations were able to enact modernity by complying to legal moralities of Human Rights of Self-Determination and the leadership of Amata Kabua demonstrated this reality where modernity is fully realized through morality.¹⁵²

¹⁵²In a Condolence letter from President Bill Clinton, Clinton writes that Amata Kabua was a champion of democratic values and that his many accomplishments contributed to International Peace and Security. Several US officials all noted that Amata Kabua was a preeminent source of knowledge in the Pacific region and through his capable leadership, he was able to bridge the modern and the traditional through the founding of an independent Republic in which he led. (See Also Appendix B for facsimile)

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Appendix A



Appendix B



The President of the United States of America
The White House, Washington, D.C.

Dear Mrs. Kabua:

Please accept my deepest sympathy on the death of your husband. President Kabua was a man whose great dignity, courage and leadership will long be remembered. Your grief is shared by the many who admired and respected him, not only in the Marshall Islands, but in the United States.

May you take some comfort in the fact that his many accomplishments contributed to world peace and security. May God comfort you as we all mourn his passing.

Sincerely,
/s/
William J. Clinton

First Lady Emlain Kabua
Republic of the Marshall Islands



The President of the United States of America
The White House, Washington, D.C.

Your Excellency:

I want to convey to you and to the people of the Marshall Islands my deepest sympathy on the death of President Kabua. The Marshall Islands has lost a distinguished statesman, and the United States has lost a great friend.

Under President Kabua's leadership, the Marshall Islands became a sovereign nation in Free Association with the United States and bilateral relations with the United States grew even stronger. As Marshallese and others mourn his loss, I hope we can all take comfort in the legacy of patriotism, dedication, and devotion to democracy that he has left behind.

Sincerely,
/s/
William J. Clinton

His Excellency
Kunio D. Lemari
Acting President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

Appendix C



Figure 1: Pic Collage of Amata Kabua's Immediate Family signifying Primary Source Evidence (Courtesy of PicCollage Technology)