

Expressing Pacific Identities Through Performance: The Participation of Nations and Territories of Western Micronesia in the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts

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The aim of this paper is to examine relationships between the arts and identity in Micronesia. It is based on an analysis of the representation of four specific areas in the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, held in New Caledonia in 2000: the Republic of Palau, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). It begins with a description of the process of choosing a representative to the festival, and follows with a discussion of the chosen group's presentation as self-representation, and an examination of the image of self and others in the newly-composed song text of the specific dance chosen to represent Palau. It concludes with a summary of differences in how the presentations from each of the four areas present the concept of "we," not as a pre-existent notion of national identity, but rather as "ourselves" in their conception of indigeneity.

Keywords: identity, art, Festival of Pacific Arts, self-representation, anthropology, ethnography, Pacific Islands Studies, Palau

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to discuss the relationship between the arts and identity in Micronesia,¹ based on an examination of the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, which took place over a two-week period from October 23rd to November 3rd, 2000 in New Caledonia. It is an anthropological study of the arts and identity based on my fieldwork related to the festival.² My main focus is on the Republic of Palau,³ as of 1994 the Pacific's newest independent nation, situated at the western end of the Caroline Islands; however, in order to illustrate that a variety of relationships exist in neighboring parts of Micronesia, I also discuss Guam,⁴ the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

The Festival of Pacific Arts could be considered an exposition of the arts of the entire Pacific region.⁵ Through participation in the festival, the island nations and

¹ The islands of the Pacific are often divided into three regions: Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. The term 'Micronesia' [tiny islands] was first suggested by the French geographer Domyen de Rienzi, in 1831 (Hanlon 1994:93) and used by the colonial powers to embrace the region that includes the Mariana Islands, Caroline Islands, Marshall Islands, Gilbert Islands, and Nauru. Geographically this usage continues today for the region that governmentally includes Guam (a U.S. Territory), the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (in this study also treated as a U.S. Territory), three entities—the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau—in free association with the U.S.), and the Republics of Nauru and Kiribati.

² This paper is based on field research I carried out in Palau, Guam, the CNMI, and the FSM in August-September 1999, 2000 and 2001, and in New Caledonia in October-November 2000. I was financially aided by the research project Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (1999-2000) entitled "Arts and Identity among the Pacific Island Nations: Focused on the Pacific Arts Festival" (Leader: Matori Yamamoto, Professor of Hosei University, Faculty of Economics), and subsequent fieldwork in Palau in August 2001 by the research project Grant-in-Aid for Encouragement of Young Scientists (2001-2002) entitled "Cultural Anthropological Research on Identity of Nations and Regions Participating in the Festival of Pacific Arts" (Manami Yasui, Associate Professor, Tenri University, Faculty of Letters). This fieldwork was reported in a paper written in Japanese (Yasui 2001).

³ In English, the country's name is written Palau; however Belau is closer to the actual pronunciation. Both are acceptable today.

⁴ Guam became an unincorporated territory of the United States in 1899, through the 1898 Treaty of Peace between the United States and Spain, signed in Paris.

⁵ Every nation and territory participating in the festival should be a member of SPC, the Secretariat of Pacific Community, the successor to the South Pacific Commission that was established in 1947 by the administering powers to "encourage and strengthen international co-operation in promoting the economic and social welfare and advancement of the peoples of the non-self-governing territories in the South Pacific." (<http://www.festival-pacific-arts.org/hisuk.htm>, 2000). In 2000, SPC comprised 27 members; 22 Pacific island nations and territories and the five remaining founding countries: Australia, France, New Zealand, the

territories⁶ aim to deepen mutual understanding and promote peace and unity throughout the region by sharing their culture through performances and exhibitions. The festival has been held at four-year intervals, each in a different location, since its inception in Suva, Fiji in 1972.⁷ In addition to the broad aim and predominant role of certain arts in all the festivals, recent festivals have had a special theme chosen by the host country to emphasize some aspect of culture, tradition, or identity.

Originally, the name of the festival was the South Pacific Festival of Arts, and as the name suggests, the main focus was the South Pacific region.⁸ Most islands in Micronesia are situated in the northern hemisphere and were not included; only the Gilbert Islands (then part of the British Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony; now part of the Republic of Kiribati) and Nauru being South Pacific islands participated in the first festival. Guam participated in the second festival, and Palau, Yap, and the Marshall Islands—all from what was then the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI)—in the third in 1980.⁹ Most of the 60 participants from Palau and Yap were dancers.¹⁰ With the addition of these new participants, the word “south” was dropped.

Palau did not participate in the fourth or fifth festivals, and sent only four observers to the sixth and seventh. The situation changed dramatically in 2000 when Palau sent a total of 76 participants to the eighth festival. I have focused my attention on how Palau presented its identity through dance in 2000 as a participant in the eighth festival in New Caledonia in order to establish a base from which to compare how it will present itself in 2004 as the host of the ninth festival, the first of these festivals to be held in the northern hemisphere. It will take place in the same year that

United Kingdom and the United States of America (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2000:2).

⁶ In the festival program, both nations and territories are listed as independent entities.

⁷ Previous festivals were held in the following years and places: the first, 1972 in Fiji; the second, 1976 in New Zealand; the third, 1980 in Papua New Guinea; the fourth, scheduled in 1984 in New Caledonia, but cancelled, then held in 1985 in Tahiti; the fifth, in 1988 in Townsville, Australia; the sixth, 1992 in the Cook Islands; and the seventh, 1996 in Western Samoa (later renamed Samoa).

⁸ The Official Program of the First South Pacific Festival of Arts states: “The South Pacific Festival of Arts is the first attempt to gather together and display the indigenous arts of the whole of the South Pacific region. The aim of the Festival is to preserve and encourage these arts, and proudly to show them – both to the people of the region and to visitors from other lands” (Anon 1972:4).

⁹ At that time, Palau was a guest participant; it became a member of the SPC in 1983 (Anon 2002).

¹⁰ About sixty delegates from Yap and Palau traveled together to Papua New Guinea aboard the Micronesian Field Trip Ship, MV *Micro Dawn* (personal communication, Faustina K. Rehuher). Palauan storyboard carvings, paintings, watercolors, and scientific illustrations were displayed in the PNG National Museum’s central gallery (Nero 1999:284).

Palau will celebrate the tenth anniversary of its independence.

I will focus on two issues: the search for identity through participation in the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, and the nature of art in the festival as self-representation. There are significant theoretical studies on the first issue, that of identity.¹¹ Jocelyn Linnekin and Lin Poyer, in discussing the relationship between ethnicity and identity, argue that “an Oceanic theory of cultural identity ... privileges environment, behavior, and situational flexibility over descent, innate characteristics, and unchanging boundaries” (1990:6), and emphasize that “Pacific theories of cultural identity differ significantly and systematically from theories based on the ethnicity paradigm (1990:7). In addition, they point out that state-level politics is becoming the most potent factor involved in the transformation of Pacific cultural identities. Life history is also used as a valuable anthropological method to approach identity issues, such as the politics of representation and stories of personal experiences. Geoffrey White explains that anthropologists use ethnographic life histories to analyze cultural identity, and acknowledges that these stories contribute important aspects about the struggle over culture and identity (1999:187). Karen Nero points out that few American scholars who have worked in Micronesia have dealt seriously with the arts (1999:256); however, there are some important works on art and identity in other parts of the Pacific. As Allan and Louise Hanson point out (1990:1), cultural identity is expressed in various ways through the arts in the Pacific. As for national identity in general, Tim Edensor states, “the national is still a powerful constituent of identity precisely because it is grounded in the popular and the everyday” (2002: vi). In order to explore the relationship of national identity to popular culture and everyday life, he takes identity, space, performance, material culture, and representation as key themes to provide a useful range of interrelated contexts that suggest that national identity is dynamic, contested, multiple and fluid.

These studies have contributed to my views on the selection of representatives to the eighth Festival and my analysis of two Palauan songs composed especially for performance there. In both concept and physical reality, the Festival provides a stage from which the people of each area of the Pacific may express themselves through their arts, and to reconfirm to the other participants and spectators that they are members of the Pacific community. Therefore, for each island nation and territory, the process of choosing representatives tends to be fraught with political significance. The preparatory committee responsible for the selection in its area must have not only a tacit understanding of what is required in international art events, but also of content that will be a valid representation of their own people. For the latter, therefore, both

¹¹ An important book on art and identity, *Pacific Art: Persistence, Change and Meaning*, was published close to the completion of this paper. Many papers in this book include discussions on arts and identity including Judy Flores's essay, “Art and Identity in the Mariana Islands” (Flores 2002). Unfortunately, I could not consider the information and perspectives presented in it, because I completed this paper before the end of 2002.

the selection of the representatives and the content of what they will present can serve as indicators through which to perceive a committee's concept of how "ourselves" relates to our "national identity" because, as Edensor points out, "a key element of the process of identification—especially in the case of national identity ... is the drawing of boundaries between self and 'other'" (2002: 24). I will discuss the selection of representatives then describe what the performers presented, and finally analyze the lyrics of songs composed for the performance at the festival.

The second issue concerns art as self-representation. In general, the *vaka* (canoe), dance and art production are at the core of the Festival of the Pacific Arts (Stevenson 1999:30). In Micronesia, the colonial role of the church is contested; however, it is clearly a center for community and culture. Although the church has in many ways erased or concealed the indigenous pre-contact histories of islanders, it is important to note how culture is represented differently in church-related rituals from island to island in Micronesia. Francis X. Hezel makes the following comment on historical representation and the genres of the performing arts:

In Yap the church history was danced; in Truk [now, Chuuk] it was sung in a number of hymns, each composed by a separate island group; in Pohnpei it was dramatized in a series of humorous tableaux underscoring the multiple misunderstandings that occurred throughout the early attempts at intercultural communication. Each of the island groups had its history, presented in an art form that best suited its genius (Hezel 1988:103).

As this comment suggests, even in the case of church discourse, it is clear that the artistic means freely chosen by the people of each area in Micronesia have served to convey the uniqueness of the people. Nevertheless, particularly in the case of Micronesia, dance has been charged with the vital task of expressing an image to represent the community. As Adrienne Kaepler points out, "Because Micronesian cultures value dancing highly and the visual components of dancing are readily recognized (even if the text is not understood), dancing is a particularly effective cultural identifier. Therefore, teams of dancers often represent Micronesian peoples and government, both abroad (as at the Pacific Festival of Arts) and in civic events at home" (1998:721).

Vilsoni Hereniko, who has broadly studied the relationship between cultural identity and the arts of the Pacific, makes a richly suggestive and relevant comment. After considering previous Festivals of Pacific Arts, he writes: "With regard to national representations at arts festivals or promotional visits to overseas countries, the usual tendency is to project images of a static culture." He then goes on to point out that "the emphasis of arts festivals is primarily on the revival of art forms of earlier times, to look back at the past rather than look ahead to the future" (1994:424). Was the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts also characterized by this same tendency? I will describe below how people in each of four areas of Micronesia perceived their turn-of-

the-century identity—acknowledging both the flow of their history and their present situation—and defined themselves through their art.

By shedding light on the above issues, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the Festival of Pacific Arts, on which little research exists (Stevenson 1999:35).¹² This article will also be my starting point for future research on the arts in relation to identity in the Pacific.

BACKGROUND OF MICRONESIA

Long before the so-called “discovery” of these islands by Europeans, the islanders’ ancestors had arrived by different routes and at different times to settle in different locations—the Mariana Islands, Palau, Yap, the coral atolls of the Carolines, Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, the Marshalls, Gilberts, and Nauru—and had developed distinctive languages, cultures and lifestyles. In spite of these significant differences, the entire region came to be ruled by the foreign powers under the rubric of “Micronesia.” Various areas of present-day Micronesia were claimed by foreign powers from the middle of the 17th century: Spain, Germany, England, Japan and the United States. Japan, without bloodshed, occupied the German territories north of the equator in October 1914, at the outbreak of World War I. Renaming the region *Nanyō Guntō* (South Sea Islands).¹³ Japan ruled the Caroline Islands, the Mariana Islands except Guam, and the Marshall Islands through a mandate of the League of Nations under the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919. As the central administration of the South Seas Agency was established in Palau, the people there were educated in Japanese. Later, with the outbreak of the Pacific War, the islands of *Nanyō Guntō* became battlefields. After the defeat of Japan, the region was administrated by the United States as a UN Trust Territory.

Nauru, which had been under the joint rule of Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, gained its independence in 1968, and became the Republic of Nauru. The Gilbert Islands gained independence from Great Britain in 1979 and became the main archipelago of the Republic of Kiribati.

The Northern Mariana Islands became a commonwealth, a self-governing

¹² Stevenson (1999:35) offers detailed information about articles on the Festival of Pacific Arts. *Pacific Arts* Volume 25, 2002, which is devoted entirely to the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, will contribute significantly to filling this lacuna. This issue includes articles by Faustina Rehuher (Ocheuidel el Olechotel Belau: Republic of Palau’s Participation in the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, New Caledonia), Margo Vitarelli (Palau’s Contemporary Artists), Judy Flores (The Re-creation of Chamorro Dance as Observed Through the Festival of Pacific), as well as significant contributions by Adrienne Kaepler (Festivals of Pacific Arts: Venues for Rituals of Identity), and other. Unfortunately, it was not ready to go to press when I finished writing this article.

¹³ *Nanyō Guntō* included three archipelagos: the Mariana Islands (except Guam), the Caroline Islands and the Marshall Islands.

political entity of the United States, in 1986. The people of the Caroline Islands except Palau and those of the Marshall Islands each concluded a Compact of Free Association with the United States in 1986, establishing the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands respectively. In the compacts, they gained the internal state functions of independent nations and received economic assistance for national development, but the U.S. retained control over defense and foreign affairs. In Palau, when a Compact of Free Association with the United States was first proposed, less than half of the Palauan voters wanted to accept it; however after many revisions and eight national elections, a compact was signed in 1994 and the Republic of Palau established. Since then, the development of the nation's infrastructure has progressed at a dizzying pace, especially around the city of Koror which, in 2002 was still the nation's capital.

In 2000, Palau's population is slightly less than 20,000.¹⁴ In 1990, the population by ethnicity was Palauan 67%, Filipino 15%, and others (persons from the U.S., Japan, Korea, FSM 1% to 2% each) (Division of Planning and Statistics 2001:23). Most Filipinos in Palau are working at low-level jobs and since 1990, many Chinese and Taiwanese have come to Palau to start businesses much as they have done in the Marshall Islands; however, their percentage of the population is still low, compared to Filipinos. About 70% of the population of the Republic resides on Koror (Division of Planning and Statistics 2001:103). Soon after 2000, in order to avoid excessive concentration, the government began constructing a new Capitol building in Melekeok State on the island of Babeldaob, the largest island in the country. In addition, the Compact Road, to encircle the island of Babeldaob, is presently under construction. In Palau as in Guam and Saipan, tourism is one of the principal industries.¹⁵ The main tourist attractions of this "tropical island" are the beautiful surrounding sea and marine sports (especially scuba diving), while storyboards and handbags and other containers of finely woven strips of palm leaves are popular tourist souvenirs.

In Guam in 2000, the largest ethnic group was Chamorro with 37% of the total population, followed by Filipinos at 25%.¹⁶ In contrast, in the CNMI in 2000, Filipinos were the largest ethnic group, followed by Chinese and Chamorro; Carolinians, whose population during part of the colonial period was larger than even the indigenous Chamorros, were less than 4% even though their culture continues to be high visibility.¹⁷ According to William Alkire (1984), the first contact with

¹⁴ In 2000, the population of the Republic of Palau was 19,129; 82% residing in the Republic of Palau, 8% on Guam and 9% on Saipan (Division of Planning and Statistics 2001:5).

¹⁵ In the year 2000, 47% of the tourists were Japanese, 30% Taiwanese and 10% American (Division of Planning and Statistics 2001:103). Yamashita (2000) provides detailed information with respect to tourism in Palau.

¹⁶ The population of Guam (154,805) is listed as comprised of Chamorro 37.0%, Filipino 26.3%, two or more races or ethnic groups 13.9%, White 6.8% and others 16% (U.S. Department of Commerce 2002b:1).

¹⁷ The year 2000 census of the CNMI shows a total population of 69,221 comprised of

Europeans resulted in a severe depopulation of Saipan, due to new diseases. Then the Spanish forcefully resettled all the surviving Chamorros of the northern islands to Guam. As a result, Saipan and Tinian had no permanent residents from 1698 until 1815. Resettlement of Saipan began in 1815 with Carolinians whose coral islands between Yap and Chuuk (then called Truk) had been devastated by a typhoon. Subsequently, the Chamorros began to resettle in Saipan and their population rapidly increased. By 1901 they outnumbered Carolinians and, as the 2000 census shows, Carolinians are now a small minority.

In the FSM, more than 95% of each ethnic group resided in their respective state (Division of Statistics, Department of Economic Affairs 2002:51). According to the year 2000 census, more than half of all its residents were of Chuukese/Mortlockese [the Mortlock Islands lie within Chuuk State] ethnicity, followed by Pohnpeians, Yapese, Kosraens, and lastly, a small group of Polynesians residing mainly in Pohnpei State.

MUSIC AND DANCE IN MICRONESIA

Most traditional music is vocal and regionally distinctive in style. Many of these music styles are associated with dance (B. Smith 2001:603). The only indigenous sound-producing instruments in widespread use today are sticks used in dancing (B. Smith 1998:716-717). Dance programs for important regional, national and international events often include stick dances in which the sticks contribute to both the sound and visual aspects of the dance, "in fact, stick dances have become 'Micronesian' dances" (Kaepler 2001:604). As I discuss later, the delegations from Palau, Guam, and CNMI all performed one of their own stick dances.

According to the ethnomusicologist Yamaguti Osamu, Palauan music may be divided into traditional and modern styles. The former flourished through the end of the 19th century in contexts of the traditional social structure; the latter, incorporating foreign elements, developed for entertainment, school, and churches. A revival of the former style, including new compositions, began in the 1970s in conjunction with the museum in Koror and the Festival of Pacific Arts. Emerging simultaneously was a new type of popular song, "*chelitakl ra Belau* (Palauan songs), with accompaniment from guitar and electronic keyboard instruments [and] distributed commercially on cassette" (2001:607-608). The Palauan delegation to the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts performed both their traditional music and dance, and their new popular songs.

On the important role of dance in Palauan culture, Faustina Rehuher emphasizes that "the respect given to dancers and the care taken in preparing dancers show the

Filipino 26.2%, Chinese 22.1%, Chamorro 21.3%, Carolinian 3.8%, Two or more races or ethnic groups 9.9% and others 16.7% (U.S. Department of Commerce 2002a:1). Locally, although not so designated in the census, a person whose parentage is a mixture of Chamorro and Carolinian is called a "Chamo-linian."

importance of dance in Palauan culture” (1998:725). There are many different types of dance in Palau. In the village community (*beluu*), customary practices called *siukang*¹⁸ offer people the chance to dance on various occasions, for example, community events such as the first-child ritual called *ngasech*.¹⁹ This type of dance is performed in the village community, but not for commercial entertainment. Generally each village community has ten lineages (*kebliil*), ranked from one to ten, that constitute the basic structure of the matrilineal society. Dance and community events, which are properties of each *kebliil*, cannot be performed without permission (The Palau Society of Historians 1997:1; D. Smith, 1983:59).

Men’s dance is called *ruk* and women’s dance *ngloik*.²⁰ To perform a dance, people line up in a fixed order according to their positions and rank in their village community (The Palau Society of Historians 1997:61-64). While *ngloik* is being performed, some women call out or lead it, but only women who occupy high ranks in the village community are allowed to do so.

In contrast to these “traditional” dances, immigrant Filipino women perform at dinner shows in the restaurants and hotels in Koror, and dancers from Tahiti and Hawaii dance in a so-called “Palauan Polynesian Dinner Show.” Furthermore, every year family and descendants of Japanese Pacific War casualties visit Palau on remembrance tours from Japan to pay their respects to the deceased. Traditional Palauan dances are sometimes performed to welcome these visitors, but on such occasions, the performers are young Palauan women volunteers.

THE SELECTION PROCESS OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE EIGHTH FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS

I am not aware of any previous studies of the selection process of representatives to the Festivals of Pacific Arts; however, I am convinced of the significance of the process to understanding how a nation’s identity is expressed through its performing arts. Therefore, I will discuss how the participants to the eighth festival were selected in each of the four areas studied.

¹⁸ Today’s *siukang* is discussed in another paper by the author (Yasui 1996).

¹⁹ The first-child ritual is performed to honor a woman who has given birth to her first baby. In the final stage of this ritual, a lavish party is held sometimes accompanied by a live performance by a hired band.

²⁰ In addition to these dances, in an article, “Palau no odori,” originally published in Japanese in 1941, Hijikata describes the following types (1993: 191-197): *Ngloik er a sechal* (a work song), *Blebaol* (a victory dance), *Rebetii* (a man’s dance based on oral-historical legends), *Klakelall* (“an alternate dance between men and women”), *OeangBoid* (a war dance), *Chelituul* (a ritualistic dance or ceremony for the gods) and *Ocharo* (to express friendship or warm feelings toward other groups).

Palau: The First National Contest

In recent years, Palau began to host events and conferences of Micronesians. In 1998, in conjunction with hosting the Fourth Micronesian Games²¹, a new venture, an "Exhibition of Palau Culture" was introduced. For the exposition, a special Cultural Village was set up in Koror City in which each of the 16 states organized its own exhibit. Both the games and the exhibition were well received by the public.

Preparations for the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts really got underway in 1999, as a number of different organizations moved into action. In September, the budget for participation in the eighth festival was formally approved, and a variety of fundraising activities were planned. In October, the *Olchotel Belau* Fair was revived. This fair, initiated about 1960 but discontinued for some time, was not only revived but served as preparation for the Festival of Pacific Arts. A bustling event, the fair featured a wide variety of entertainment including dance, paintings, traditional games, and storytelling.

In February 2000, the Sixteenth Council of the Pacific Arts gave final approval for the Republic of Palau to host the ninth festival in 2004 (Council of Pacific Arts 2000: 15). Between this approval in February and the opening of the eighth festival in New Caledonia in October, the Palauan Organizing Committee for the festival prepared not only to participate in the performing arts and as many as possible of the exhibition and demonstration categories, but also for the special social protocol responsibilities as the forthcoming ninth festival's host. They also prepared publications about Palau to give to delegations from other nations and to sell to others attending the eighth festival in order to give them advance knowledge of their nation and to encourage them to come to Palau to enjoy the ninth festival.²²

On July 9th, a large-scale selection contest was held to choose the members of the dance group for the eighth festival. The preparatory committee had already asked each state to send a group of men and women to the contest. The following groups participated in the contest:

Aimeliik State: a women's group

Koror State: a men's group and a women's group

Ngarchelong State: a women's group

Ngardmau State: a men's group and a women's group

Peleliu State: a women's group

Sonsorol State: a men's group and a women's group

The men's groups and women's groups were judged separately. There were seven judges in all, from various sectors of Palau. The judges scored each team by awarding

²¹ Launched in 1969, these games, the Micronesian version of the Olympics, are held once every four years.

²² A book, *Olechotel Belau: 8th Pacific Arts Festival 2000* (Rehuhher-Marugg, et al 2000), and two audio-cassette tapes, *Reng el Ora Kiruu* (Okabe, Tamara Imakoku, et al 2000) and *Ernguul ma Ngetelngal* (Eliteklel Belau 2000).

a maximum of five points for each of seven criteria; winners were those who earned the highest total scores. The selection criteria were as follows: (1) originality, (2) gracefulness, (3) staging, (4) decoration, (5) tune and rhythm, (6) criteria of songs and meanings, and (7) overall performance.²³ For the Festival of Pacific Arts, the criteria used to choose representatives had to be different from traditional standards of dance. An intriguing point is how the criteria formulated for selecting performers as national representatives are completely divorced from the village context. In the village community, while people no longer judge dancing, they do tend to evaluate its quality, such as appropriateness of lyrics, perfection of the dance movements, voice quality, etc.²⁴

As a result of the contest, the women's group from Ngarchelong and the Men's group from Koror were selected to be national representatives. From the day they were selected until the time they returned to Palau after the festival had ended, these two groups were temporarily separated from the context of the villages to which they belonged and assumed the role of official representatives of the government. The choreographers began immediately to provide intensive training to the two groups during a two-month period before departure.

Guam: Who is a Chamorro?

In Guam, the government agency responsible for the arts, the Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities Agency (known as *KAHA*), had previously been solely responsible for all preparations for the Arts Festivals. For the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, although Guam's budget for the festival had not been set due to the worsening economic condition in the region, a new organization was established called the Festival of Pacific Arts & Cultures 2000 Task Force (Festpac). It included both *KAHA* and the newly established Department of Chamorro Affairs.

It is said that "Most of the original myths and oral traditions of Chamorro pre-contact culture were lost or substantially altered after the Spanish conquest" (Rogers 1995:25). Therefore, one of the major issues faced by Guam was how to present Chamorro culture through various artistic genres. I was fortunate to obtain permission to attend the task force meeting that was held on September 1, 2000 during which the members discussed the procedure for selecting representatives to the eighth festival, and held a heated debate on the question of ethnicity.

Fifteen officials and 50 artists had already been chosen to participate in the festival. They included 35 dancers and 15 producers and artisans of handicrafts and preservers of traditional techniques that were to be displayed in the visual arts exhibition. The exhibition was to feature the following five fields: painting, carving,

²³ Rehuher points out three aesthetic elements that make up a well-staged performance of Palauan dance: 1) a performer's physical appearance and impact; 2) the composer-choreographer's artistic creativity, and 3) the content to be conveyed (1998:725-726).

²⁴ Kathy Kesolei, the leader of women delegates of the Republic of Palau at the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts (personal communication, 2001).

architecture, navigation, and blacksmithing. It was decided that there would be three representatives from each field. For representatives of blacksmithing, of the five candidates, Joaquin “Jack” Lujan, the first person of Guam to be awarded a National Heritage Fellowship and the model for a poster of “Chamorro Masters of Tradition” (KAHA 1998), was chosen unanimously. However, for the other two, questions were raised about appropriate criteria for the selection. The suggestion was made that members should take into account what sort of people the festival expected to be the representatives of each nation. One member declared, “They expect an indigenous artist of Guam, a Chamorro.” However, another immediately objected asking, “Who is a Chamorro and who is not a Chamorro?”

This led to a discussion of ethnic identity. Another participant asked, “In defining a Chamorro, which is the essential thing: the person or the work?” The issue of “work” ultimately became a part of the selection criteria, and in the end, those at the meeting settled on a policy of choosing participants not on the basis of their ethnic identity, but rather that the work they produced had an inherent Chamorro character. It was agreed that they would collect data on the remaining candidates and discuss the topic again at the next meeting. The interesting aspect of this discussion about the selection of representatives to the Festival of Pacific Arts is that it focused not the actual ethnicity of the candidates, but on the *style* in which they worked and thus the best *representation* of Chamorro identity.

To return to the performing arts, for the Seventh Festival of Pacific Arts in 1996, three of four performing groups—Fama’GuOn Itano (Children of the land), IrenSia (Our culture), Paraisu (Paradise), Taotao Tano (People of the Land)—had wanted to participate, but dancers had been selected from only two, those of the third being considered too young to take part. In contrast, for the eighth festival it was decided that those to represent Guam would be selected through an open and equal competition of all dancers from the four teams who wanted to take part and were 16 years of age or older. The task force sought to encourage participants to use their experience to educate other members of their groups after they returned from the festival. Indeed, some dancers regarded their participation in the festival as a valuable experience and subsequently made the most of it in a variety of activities.

Frank Rabon, leader and choreographer of the Taotao Tano group, was chosen as the general director based on his experience in the sixth and seventh festivals. He played the principal role in selecting and forming a new team of dancers for which the main criteria for selection were knowledge of Chamorro culture or professional dancing experience. The dancers selected ranged in age from 17 to 52.

According to Rabon, who had been involved in creating Chamorro dance for 18 years, “It is almost impossible for us to imagine what authentic Chamorro culture was before the period of colonial rule, and the greatest challenge we face is to invent Chamorro dance anew. At the same time, however, this is also a creative act.”²⁵

²⁵ Frank Rabon (personal communication, September 2000).

While a Chamorro identity was expected of both the dancers and the content of their dances, we can see that it needed to be created anew by adapting itself and responding to the changing times. Of course, it is also true that the long history of colonial rule continues to cast a shadow, determining the present circumstances in which people find themselves.

Another dance group, Guma'Palu Lie, launched in 1998, has also been gaining increased attention in recent years. Leonard Iriarte, the leader of the group, has conducted research on the old Chamorro language, and incorporates it in the lyrics of his compositions. Through using chanting, this group undertakes to create a "classical Chamorro dance." Iriarte regards the purpose of this dance group, not as entertainment for others, but as a means to seek their identity.

CNMI: Holding on to Roots

In the CNMI, preparations for the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts were conducted with scrupulous care over the previous two years. Until the seventh festival, participants had been chosen separately for each competition, but it was decided that this approach would be abandoned since it had given rise to many problems of ethnic identity among Chamorros and Carolinians.

Alkire describes how the Carolinians tried to reinforce their ethnic identity through different activities, such as the building of the *ut* ("traditional canoe house"), revitalizing traditional Carolinian dances and other art forms (1984:279). In addition, Juliana Flinn, when analyzing the story of the first Carolinian settlers in Saipan according to their oral tradition, points out that the Carolinians' effort to assert tradition and mark contrasts with Chamorros were intended to support their social and economic position on Saipan in relation to the Chamorros (2000:165).

These movements of the ethnic groups in Saipan could have deeply influenced the process of choosing which dance group would represent the CNMI. However, to avoid issues of ethnic identity, the preparatory committee of the eighth festival commenced their planning for the event early on by setting guidelines and holding a public contest, not mentioning Chamorro or Carolinian. Not having directly discussed ethnic identities as was done in Guam, the organizers of the CNMI reached the following conclusion: "We do not care whether a dancer is Chamorro or Carolinian. However, since 'Chamorro dance' has already disappeared, our only recourse is to select 'Carolinian dance'."²⁶ In this case, "Carolinian dance" refers to the stick dance, which is well known throughout in Micronesia. Unlike Guam, the committee did not consider the option of creating a new form of Chamorro dance.

FSM: Indecision and Identity

The Federated States of Micronesia, comprised of the four states—Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae—each with its own distinctive culture, faced different challenges

²⁶ The preparatory committee (personal communication, 1999).

in selecting participants for the eighth festival. As of September 2000, when I carried out my research in FSM, no progress had been made in preparation for the eighth festival, even though the event was just two months away. One could cite a variety of issues, such as the lack of a national-level budget for the festival, the absence of a designated organization in charge of planning and preparation, the difficulty of holding a selection competition because of the geographical distances separating the different states, or bias toward one particular area over another. But these problems all stem from its multiculturalism and actually point to the fallacy of trying to represent the FSM as if it were a single cultural entity. It could be argued that the lack of national-level enthusiasm and initiative for festival organization was the result of the central government's desire to be fair to all of its constituents, choosing a group from a different state to represent it at different festivals.

Including the group from the island of Pulap, three other dancing groups had been preparing for the festival, including another team from Chuuk State and one from Pohnpei State. In the final analysis, the reason the Pulap group was chosen was partly due to their valuable experience—they had participated three times in the Micronesian Festival held every May in Guam—and partly due to political influence. In the end, no decision was made on whether or not to participate in the eighth festival until the day of departure. The most important factor in the selection of the group from Pulap was the mundane fact that they all had valid passports and able to depart immediately, when funds from UNESCO arrived.

During my field studies in the FSM, I learned that an official in the FSM National Government Historical Preservation Office held a vague hope that someday the FSM would be able to form a national dance group. However, I did not learn if he hoped for a large group that would embrace a contingent from each state, a smaller group whose members had learned to perform representative works in each of the culturally distinctive styles, a group that would create a new style synthesizing stylistic elements from the various traditions, or something entirely different. Because such different forms would express different concepts of the nation's cultural identity, I plan to watch for any future development of a national dance group.

DANCE PERFORMANCES AT THE EIGHTH FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS

All the participating nations and territories had an opportunity to present a short dance during the formal gift exchange held in the Festival Village in the afternoon of October 24th—the de facto opening ceremony, since what had been scheduled as the opening ceremony the preceding evening had to be postponed. The gift exchange followed a ceremony on the adjacent beach at Anse Vata Bay to welcome the arrival of canoes (Photo 22, p. vi). It was scheduled to last two hours; however, because almost all of the delegations' activities took longer than their allotted time, it lasted almost four hours. For this protocol, each delegation in turn and in a prescribed order, entered the central area of the Festival Village (Photo 23, p. vi), presented their gifts,

and then performed a carefully selected short dance (or portion of a dance). I will describe the CNMI delegation's participation in it.

Participants from the CNMI presented a miniature canoe symbolizing Chamorro culture, beads (*lighatutuur*) symbolic of the Carolines, paper currency (a \$10 bill) as a symbolic expression of helping to defray the cost meals for everyone, and a pack of cigarettes (Photo 24, p. vii). These four gifts were wrapped in cloth (*te'er*) and fastened with palm leaves, to form a small bundle. According to the explanation by the head of the CNMI group, the gifts were intended to symbolize the unity of the Pacific. While everyone observed, the gifts were handed to one of the New Caledonian chiefs; and then part of a stick dance was performed.

Their gift exchange that combined Chamorro and Caroline cultures contrasts with that of the multicultural nation of Fiji, in which included Fijian dance, Indian dance, Chinese dance and Rotuman dance were performed as needed to meet its internal political situation.²⁷

Publicizing Modern Palau

There were 76 participants from Palau, and in their performances and exhibitions they conveyed a level of enthusiasm one would not have expected from a nation that had not taken part in the festival for 20 years. The Palauan exhibition was held in the hall of the conference unit of the SPC building, an excellent location that drew many visitors and contributed to Palau's publicity efforts. In addition to this exhibition, storyboard figure carvings were on display and for sale in Palau's thatched-roofed kiosk in the Festival Village, and the works of two Palauan artists were exhibited in the Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Nouméa, an exhibition of contemporary art held in the Tijbaou Cultural Centre.

During the festival, the dance groups performed several times. In the performance held in the garden courtyard of the SPC Headquarters building, the music was entirely vocal, and men and women danced separately. The men wore loincloths and fake beards and performed both a stick dance and a *matmatong*.²⁸ The women, their bodies rubbed with yellow turmeric, wore "grass skirts" (of hibiscus fiber) and performed a dance that was created for the performance at the eighth festival (Photo 25, p. vii).

In a two-part performance held in the main venue of the Festival Village, the women wearing "grass skirts" danced in the first part, and in the second part, several vocalists accompanied by electronic keyboard and electric guitars performed contemporary Palauan music (Photo 26, p. vii). The audience in the jam-packed

²⁷ Robbie Robertson (2000) provides detailed information on contemporary Fiji.

²⁸ Kaeppler offers the following explanation for *matmatong*: "*Matmatong*, marching songs, developed around 1900 from the sight of German soldiers marching; in them, boys and girls dance together in verse-refrain alternation, featuring traditional Micronesian movements alternating with a marchlike refrain" (1998:724)

square looked on with excitement, either because they liked the particular pieces performed by the band, or because they simply enjoyed listening to vocal music with electronic instruments. One of the band members, Howard Charles, said that both the traditional and the modern give expression to the present state of affairs in Palau.

The Making of “Chamorro”

Many people who attended the festival were eager to see a performance of the dance designed by Frank Rabon, the choreographer who had offered the solution to the long-standing challenge of reconstructing a traditional Chamorro dance. Before the performance entitled “Guam traditional dance—*P’a teautean tano*” began in the SPC courtyard, he explained to the audience that the dance was characteristic of the Chamorro culture in the Mariana Islands. During the first half of the 30-minute performance, a group of men, accompanied by a drum and guitars, performed Rabon’s newly choreographed a stick dance—a variant of a dance type seen throughout the Caroline Islands (Photo 27, p. viii). Then a group of women performed a dance characterized by slow, leisurely movements. Following that, in time to the chorus in which all took part, a young man dressed in a cloak and headdress walked slowly around the dancers and chanted words in a sonorous voice using a microphone fastened to a wooden staff. This technique of having a narrator’s voice play over the singing voices of the dancing chorus had been seen at the previous Festival of Pacific Arts.

In the second half of the performance, a group of young women wearing white blouses and blue skirts performed a dance holding hands with a group of young men. The performance was reminiscent of the period of Spanish colonial rule. In both cases, Rabon’s choreography left a clear mark on the performance and his style seemed to be taking root among the dancers.

Stick-dancing, Carolinian-style of the CNMI

One of the performances of the CNMI dancers was at the Kiosque à musique, a place of recreation for residents of the city of Noumea. The program distributed by the SPC headquarters stated that the “traditional dance: *Talaawog women*” would be performed that day. There were 16 male and female dancers who formed two lines. After the mixed-gendered dance ended, the male dancers performed a stick dance. With thin palm-leaf bands wrapped around their arms, they performed a stick dance characterized by movements that were quite complicated in comparison with the stick dances of Palau and Guam (Photo 28, p. viii). Because this was the final performance for the CNMI dancers, who had already been on stage several times, they performed a farewell dance singing the words “bye bye, sayonara” to the tune of “Auld Lang Syne” (the Japanese version of this song, entitled *Hotaru no Hikari*, is very popular in Japan). Then, they gave the flower garlands they had been wearing on their heads to members of the audience who had been sitting in the blazing sun throughout the program. Since there had been so few opportunities for performers and the audience

to dance and sing together throughout the festival, this gesture by the performers of stepping forward to place garlands on the heads of some of the audience members was very well received.

Dances of Pulap

The nine dancers representing the FSM began one of their performances under the blazing sun in the SPC garden courtyard (Photo 29, p. viii). Sitting on the lawn, six women wearing yellow waistcloths called lavalava began to sing. In time with the music, three men of strong build entered the square and danced toward its center. The audience was immediately enthralled by the powerful dancing and beautiful singing unembellished by any instrumental accompaniment. The program was a tightly organized performance of “Navigator *Werieng*,” “*Patu*,” “*Katilpwos*,” and then a repetition of “Navigator *Werieng*.”

Navigator Weriang

Werieng is the name of the god worshipped by canoe navigators. There are two main types of canoe navigation techniques handed down in the central Caroline Islands, one of which, the *Werieng*, originated in the island of Pulap (Komatsu 1985). The song praises the *Werieng*. Even today, people in Pulap have great respect for men possessing the title, *pwo*, for traditional navigation techniques. When a boat arrives at their island, the Pulapese, the men standing and the women sitting, sing this song to greet its arrival and to show their respect.

Patu

This song describes activities when a large school of fish, forming a tight mass visible to the eyes, comes toward the shore. People get excited and the men set forth in a group to corner and capture the fish, while the women dress themselves up and wait on the shore for the fish to be brought in. It is sung by men and women separately.

Katilpwos

This song is sung only by women. It was composed, almost three decades ago by Eulelia Lokopwe, the mother of the future chief of the island, to express her worry about her son when he went away to study in the Philippines. Today, the son is the chief and the mother is still alive. In a study on dance, Juliana Flinn discusses the differing male and female perspectives of Pollapese (Pulapese) (1993:558). She points out that “Singing of the past is the male province, especially when celebrating past heroic exploits. Female concerns are immediate; Watching their young people leave for school may bring pride, for example, but it also brings a sense of loss and worry, emotions dramatized through dance” (1993:562). In this sense, *Katilpwos*, is a song expressing the mother’s emotions combining both pride and worry about her son.

Their performance immediately reminded me of my good fortune to have been on the Island of Pulap during a ritual in which a man was granted a title for traditional navigation technique (Yasui, 1999). After the ritual, the islanders danced from morning until evening to celebrate the occasion. On that occasion, the men and women did not dance together, but at the eighth festival they did so because the number of dancers was so small.

After the performance in the SPC courtyard ended, a number of journalists gathered around the dancers and, one after another, started to interview them. The exuberant dancers at first said "We come from the Island of Pulap which is not even on the map," and then added proudly "We are the representatives of the Federated States of Micronesia." One of the reporters said "This was a very natural performance unlike those of the other countries." It was fascinating to watch as they moved from defining themselves as being "from the Island of Pulap" to being "the representatives of the Federated States of Micronesia." Toward the end of the festival, one of them burst out with the comment that she "wanted to dance more so that people would know the Federated States of Micronesia better."

PALAU'S SONGS: AN EXERCISE IN SELF-REPRESENTATION

For each of the nations and territories included in this study, I have shown how they approached the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts through selection of dancers for their delegations, described a performance at the festival, and discussed how their performing arts relate to their identity.

What then did each delegation try to express at the festival? As Hereniko points out, one might say that the performing arts of Micronesia are generally focused on the past rather than the future (1994); however, the performers themselves do not necessarily sing and dance to preserve traditional culture, nor are they necessarily trying to recall the past or to glorify it. Even in performances that strike spectators who are not well informed about island cultures as "traditional," the performers may, consciously or unconsciously, give expression to contemporary aspects of their islands.

To illustrate this, I present a song sung by the delegation from Palau that was composed and choreographed by Riosang Salvador especially for performance at the eighth Festival. Among the elements the performers thought of as "old-fashioned" are archaic words and dialectical words from Ngarchelong State (from which the composer-choreographer and performers came) that are woven into the lyrics, which blend the past and the present. Here is an English translation of the song:²⁹

²⁹ This was translated into English by Bernice Erechus, who works at the office of the Ministry of Education in Koror, Palau. *Tia Story er Belau ra irechar mechelchal sils 1. Tekmo, lemeseseba chuab er ngetelkou eng mlomeringel meng millolk meng, chirridii Ngeaur emlo kebengkangk elmo Beluu. Aii-Chii! 2. Eue, ngmleukel E mleutech emeng mlo chemau a Keiulk*

This is a story of Belau from ancient time 'til present.

1. They say when Uab of Ngeteklou was burnt he suffered much pain and kicked Angaur away and fell forming land. Aii – Chii
2. EUE, he tipped and tilted falling facing the west thus his back became the eastern coast and his head became Ngerchelung. Aii – Chii
3. EUE, they tricked him and that's how he became our Belau, he didn't have much strength to carefully and successfully direct himself. Aii – Chii
4. They say foreigners came to conquer land, so came Spain, Germany, Japan and left, then came America. Aii – Chii.
5. EUE, Mr. America came and “dressed-up” Belau, thus pushing itself up and opening its eyes to see. Aii – Chii
6. EUE, today Belau walks on its own searching to do what it wants to do as it talks to U.N. Aii – Chii
7. Therefore our Belau has picked up sail, so let us join in unity and persevere so when we row, we row in unity ensuring success to our Belau.

The first three stanzas are based on the Palauan creation myth about the formation of the islands in which Uab,³⁰ suffering such pain from his burns because he had eaten up all the food for the people in the village, kicked away Angaur island which,

ma Desbedall a mloulkel, meng Ngerchelung a mlo btelul. Aii-chii! 3. Eue, metulmelau er ngii, misei a uchul eng mlo Belau er kide, dimlaka klisichek dingii el mounkil lloraelerngii. Aii-Chii! 4. Etekmo, regebard a mleolsarch e Beluu, meng mle Sebangiol ma Dois ma Siabal e merael, eng me Merikel meralungil. Aii-Chii! 5. Eue, ngikal Ngiramerikel a mlal siungii Belau meng tukekla chimal, e mesachela medal omes. Aii-chii! 6. Eue, mechelchaia Belau a dingii kul merael mesaikel mosoual loruul. emengedecheduch ra U.N. Aii-chii! 7. Emalouaise, eng omekella Belau er kid mebol tarngud edesisichid, ma bodoyus el tabedesid, mebodungil medilungil Belau er kid.

³⁰ The Palauan song composed for the festival does not specify the sex of Uab. The translator refers to Uab as a male. Today, in one of the most common versions of the Palauan creation myths, Uab is described a giant baby or a boy (The Students of the Community College of Micronesia 1983:3-4). In contrast, according to a book published for the eighth Festival *Olechotel Belau; 8th Pacific Arts Festival 2000* (Rehuher-Marugg, et al 2000:15), Uab is referred to as a giant goddess. In an older version of the creation myth, Obekhad, the progenitor of *chad* (human beings) brought the goddess Turang into the world by virgin birth. Then, Turang likewise gave birth on her own to the great goddess Chuab (Uab) (Hijikata 1996:9).

therefore, lies to the south. When Uab fell, his body became the Belau archipelago with his head at Ngerchelung (the performers' home village), and he was unable to get up. Stanza four lists the succession of colonial powers and stanza five metaphorically describes the transition to independence. Stanza six is a confident statement about contemporary Palau and its admission to the United Nations, and the final stanza looks to the future.

The fifth stanza that reads "Mr. America came and 'dressed up' Belau" follows the practice in some other Palauan songs of using Mr. X to represent or personify certain institutions or practices. It corresponds, for example, to the expressions "Mr. War" and "Mr. Famine" that are found in another Ngarchelong song about the Pacific War (Nero 1989:117-121). It is important to note that, in this song, America is imagined as male and, in contrast, Belau as a child or a female. As Tessa Morris-Suzuki points out, "constructions of national identity almost always embody explicit or implicit images of gender" (1998:135). However, using the argument of Jan Jindy Pettman (1996:49) about the "male-gendered State" and the "female-gendered Nation," she emphasizes that Japan was envisioned at times as male and other times as female, based on its situation (Morris-Suzuki 1998:111-139). At the time when Japan was defeated in the Pacific War, for example, it was imagined as the "mother country," as demonstrated in another song (originally in Japanese):

Our departure was very sudden
 For us Islanders and our mother country.
 We're sad for such sudden good-bye.
 Japan, our mother county,
 Was destined to be defeated.
 We won't forget you good Japanese people
 Who were our teachers for thirty years.
 My favorite sakura.
 Our relationship with you has ended.
 We don't know which direction to go next.
 (Palau Department of Education 1986; Nero 1989:133-134).

Returning to the "Mr. America" in the song for the Festival, it is easy to understand how, in a colonialist context, Mr. America would be thanked for having "dressed it up," the once naive childlike or female Palau then being able to "grow up" and stand on its own. In the same sense that Japan was her teacher-like "mother," perhaps America is here seen as the "father" who pushed her out into the world. Such metaphoric symbolism raises many questions about the Palauan's national identity. One could ask if this is truly representative of Palauan beliefs about their relation to colonial powers and issues of self-determination and, if so, to what extent colonialist discourse influences the ways in which Palauans choose to represent themselves. However, these issues are beyond the scope of this paper.

Nevertheless, as shown in stanzas six and seven, despite the metaphor of parenting in a colonialist sense, it is clear that Palau is imagined as a child who has “grown up” and is now on its own. This rhetoric, championed, for instance, by Ronald Reagan in his farewell TV address to the newly independent nations of the Marshall Islands and the FSM, portrays former colonies or protectorates as weak children who, through the benevolent guidance of the “parent” country, learned to stand on their own two feet (O’Rourke 1986). Regardless of these implications, Palauans appear to see themselves as embarking on a new and independent journey. Tellingly, the United Nations, for example, is envisioned not as “Mr. U.N.” or “Mrs. U.N.,” but as an equal. Therefore, although this song suggests a colonialist vision of history, it simultaneously imagines a successful and independent future. The metaphors of “sailing” and “rowing” that recall the islanders’ traditional oceanic navigation—and a prominent theme in most of these festivals to date—suggests navigation in uncharted waters and the need for cooperation and solidarity. And in comparison to the uncertainty of the song sung at the end of the Japanese period (‘we don’t know which direction to go next’), this song shows a strong sense—if not about where, at least about *how* – Palau needs to proceed in the future.

I do not know if the eighth festival’s theme had been announced and was known to Salvador before he composed this song and if so, if he consciously created the lyrics to conform to it, but certainly they are a beautiful and distinctively Palauan expression of the theme for the eighth festival: “Words of Yesterday, Words of Today, Words of Tomorrow” (The Committee Organization for the Festival of Pacific Arts 2000).

The theme song of the Palau delegation to the eighth festival (and the lead song on the audio-cassette of the same name) is entitled “Reng el Orakiruu.” It was composed by Paul Paulis, one of the band members, and has the following lyrics in English (originally in Palauan) (Rehuher-Marugg, et al 2000:17):³¹

An island in the Pacific, full of beauty and charm
Its people are kind and generous, loving and respectful

Chorus:

The full moon is a symbol of one’s heart, our hopes and dreams
Waiting to be fulfilled
When opportunity permits, come visit, and together we’ll gaze at

³¹ The Palauan lyrics follow: *Imol beluu el ngara taiheio, klebokel e ungil a chesel/ Ma rechad er ngii a bekokuii e kaukerreu, e kakull e kaubltikereng/ (chorus) A reng er a chad a okesiul a didichel a buil maikel dolatk el ketmekill/ A dolsingch sel bol temel/ Altang morgii a techellem e kuk dime moldingel e desa tial Belau/ Mui ra reng el orakiruu./ Meklekilt a chimorir ra urerir ma kldachelbil a klechad/ Mengkerngel a menguteling loba blakelreng, ta rengrir el kaiuerenges.*

The full moon, the heart of Belau

With agility and skill, they perform their tasks
The leaders guide with dedication and cooperation

The book the Palauan delegation prepared for the eighth festival explains that “The song lyricizes the full moon that is represented on Palau’s national flag. Reng literally means heart, and orakiruu means full moon. The song depicts the beauty of Palau’s islands, the warmth of its people with hearts as overflowing with hospitality as the full moon” (Rehuher-Marugg, et al 2000:17). Furthermore, it is clear that “the leaders” referred to in this song are Palauans, not “others,” thus expressing confidence in their maturity as a nation.

CONCLUSION

This was a study of how the peoples of four Micronesian governmental entities—the Republic of Palau, (Territory of) Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia—were represented through their performing arts at the Eight Festival of Pacific Arts in New Caledonia in 2000. It is based primarily on what was presented and how it was selected.

In Palau, there was the selection of representatives through a national contest of village groups, and the presentation of a women’s dance with a characteristic and readily identifiable Palauan style of choreography set to newly composed song lyrics that recounted Palau’s mythological and colonial past, and its present and future prospects as an independent nation. This clearly manifested its conscious effort to develop and proclaim its identity as a nation-state, ready and competent for a leadership role in the whole Pacific region as host country of the ninth festival.

In Guam, in the selection of both its representatives and the content of its dance presentation, the official task force established for the eighth festival emphasized Chamorro ethnicity—though it decided not to do so through genetic ethnicity but rather through knowledge of and style in its representation. Through these, Guam clearly privileged its indigenous people.

In the CNMI, the preparatory committee for the eighth festival selected a dance type shared by many Micronesians as the most appropriate of their islands’ dance types for presentation at the eighth festival even though it is the ancestral heritage of only a very small minority of its population. Then without any mention of ethnicity, it conducted a territory-wide competition to select dancers for its presentation. Through these, the CNMI acknowledged that its indigenous Chamorro dance had been lost and chose to represent itself as a member of Micronesia at large.

In the FSM, until the last moment without financial resources for participation in the eighth festival, as in previous festivals, performers from one island in one of its four states went to serve as de facto representatives of their whole multicultural

nation, through performing their own island's dances. Through this, the FSM acknowledged its status as a federation of states of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and its respect for the value of their own performing arts.

Based on my analysis of the selection process of four areas, there are significant differences in how the concept of "we" was expressed through the arts in the eighth festival. One could say that the Festival of Pacific Arts mirrors various current conditions in the nations and territories of the Pacific, irrespective of whether all participate in the festival or not. Though dance is only one of many components comprising identity, it can express a people's or a country's identity at a given time. Such expressions may be retained and become part of a people's heritage, but the relationship between arts and identity is not static but fluid, so new expressions will continue to be created.

Future developments in the Festival of Pacific Arts will constitute a fascinating theme for understanding the relationship between arts and identity in the Pacific. A number of interesting questions arise. What will the ninth festival to be held in Palau in 2004 be like? What will distinguish it from the eighth festival held in New Caledonia in 2000? How will Palau present itself in relation to the theme it has chosen—"Oltobed a Malt: Nurture, Regenerate, Celebrate"³² for the festival to be held in its own country? How will the neighboring government entities present themselves in the first of these festivals to be held in the northern hemisphere, and with a theme chosen by their neighboring nation? The author plans to continue her investigation as the next Festival of Pacific Arts approaches.

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³² *Oltobed a Malt: Nurture, Regenerate, Celebrate: 9th Festival of Pacific Arts*. (Belau Organizing Committee 2002) and Website: <http://www.palaunet.com/html/fpa/fpa.htm> (22 November 2002).

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